



MISSION INCREASE

The Parachurch and Church Relationship

with Scott Harris, Missions Minister, Brentwood Baptist

Mission Increase's quarterly webinar, The Parachurch and Church Relationship, sparked a variety of conversations within MI Communities and nonprofit partners. We've asked Scott Harris, our guest speaker, to respond to questions that were asked during the webinar and since the airing to continue the conversation. We encourage our nonprofit partners to reach out to their MI Area Director to dig deeper into the concepts Scott shared.

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS AND SCOTT'S RESPONSES

1. The State of the World (GFM) video and Level 3 Missions were very powerful features of this training. Can you speak about two things:

- How do you see church members as volunteers in parachurch ministries?
- How do you see these partnerships with the church changing with the millennial and younger generations beginning to take leadership roles?

At Brentwood Baptist, we desperately need/want our members significantly engaged with nonprofits. Our church members have gifts and calling to be leveraged for the Kingdom – both inside and outside the church walls. Local churches need to have a posture of generosity in encouraging their members to serve with nonprofits. It's a five-way blessing! Here are the 5 zones that get blessed:

- The volunteer
- The nonprofit
- The Church
- The broader community
- The 'client'; the person/s who are being served

Millennials and younger generations – it's even more imperative that we model 'generous partnership.' Millennials are skeptical of organized church – churches working positively with nonprofits models the expansiveness of the Kingdom. It's also a great antidote to the perceived provincialism/territorialism that clergy/ministry leaders perpetuate.

2. What would be your advice to nonprofits that often have churches wanting to partner through large group volunteer opportunities, but your nonprofit is not set up to handle those types of groups and ultimately it would not be beneficial to the nonprofit. I find that churches are less likely to partner when nonprofits can't offer this opportunity.

Stick to your principles – but get creative where possible. What about a couple of nonprofits getting together to offer a joint opportunity to a larger group? Also – while you never want to compromise those you serve, think of the missed opportunity to introduce your ministry to a large number of potential volunteers (and givers?).

3. What's the best approach for a nonprofit to start the conversation with a local church?

Don't lead with asking for money. First – start with your own local church; also, what about your board members and key volunteers...are their local churches involved? Do you and your key leadership model healthy local church involvement personally? Do you have a compelling approach that shows the local church how you can serve them by offering a ministry platform for their members?

4. What about overlap? For example, what do you think about church pastoral staff that also run a nonprofit? How would you approach that? (From the church's perspective?)

This can be problematic. It all depends – how clear are the lines of authority? Is there an established conflict of interest policy? Have precautions been taken to avoid any perception of double-dipping? Transparency is key. Also, who with authority/objectivity is regularly reviewing the relationship to ensure that the overlap is mutually beneficial and not cannibalistic or in some way overprotective? It's possible that an overlap relationship can be healthy; but, more often than not, it's a constant challenge.

5. How does a nonprofit narrow in on the right person/connection point within a church?

It's like finding a needle in haystack many times. Keep asking – develop relationships. Know when to back off and when to probe; don't grow weary in doing well. Also – examine your motives; maybe God's protecting the church from a nonprofit's predatory approach! For every instance when a church is non-responsive, there's another story where a nonprofit is inappropriately aggressive. Also, keep in mind that once you find the right contact person, it can often change. You might want to develop a touch point system where you check in quarterly with the contact person.

Also, realize that any churches (regardless of size) are inundated with requests/asks. Develop a heart and a love for your local church specifically and for the role of the church more generally. That will help protect your heart from developing an "us vs. them" mentality. Don't for a minute think that churches don't pick up on the vibe when they're being judged and/or manipulated. Similarly, many times they will sense when they are being honored, served, and prayed for.