

Should churches help each other?

By [L. Gail Irwin](#)

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Sometimes, when one church is struggling, another church helps out. One church I interviewed (for the [From Death to Life project](#)) was a new ethnic church development that was given a building, basically for free, from a church that died. But we all know you get what you pay for, and the building they got had more than a few structural problems. They received some support for the pastor's salary from their denomination, but the building was weighing them down with repair bills.

After developing a partnership with a church in another city, the partner church raised \$50,000 to assist the new church development with the purchase of a new boiler.

And [here's another story](#) from the Huffington Post about a church that stood up for their belief in the rights of gay and lesbian people and, because of the ensuing controversy, has lost members and is on the brink of collapse. In their case, a large church in another state reached out to support them with a financial gift that will keep them open a few more months.

A small town church I know of held a meeting with its twenty or so members to decide on whether they should close their doors. They shared a pastor with a more lively church 20 miles away. At the 11th hour, the sister church offered to subsidize the dying church to keep it going a few more years. While this was a good outcome for the 20 members, it will not be enough funding to truly strengthen their ministry. Is this like offering "life support" to a church that would otherwise die?

I sometimes feel that our healthier churches could be assisting small ministries that are providing a unique witness in their communities. These might include churches serving the poor, college students, gay and

lesbian Christians or other underserved groups. Or it might include churches that have a unique theological footprint in their communities.

However, there may be times when accepting help from another church isn't the best course of action. Is the gift designed to sustain a meaningful mission? Or is it just a way of avoiding the inevitable fact that a ministry has become unsustainable? How do you know the difference?

I struggle with this: is it a good idea for churches to help each other or not? What do you think?

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