

OUR STORY

Partners International was born in 1943 when Dr. N.A. Jepson, lay leader and a founder of the Christian Business Men’s Committee, called together four businessmen and a missionary to China. Meeting in Dr. Jepson’s living room in Seattle, they agreed that if China was to be reached with the Gospel, the work would have to be done by Chinese Christians.

At the time, the idea was remarkable: that indigenous believers could be entrusted with the resources to do God’s work.

The organization was named China Native Evangelistic Crusade (CNEC). Our first partnership was with a gifted Chinese evangelist, Calvin Chao, and his “preaching bands” that took the Gospel into China’s interior. Since then, that one extraordinary partnership has led to hundreds of



partnerships in more than 50 countries.

It wasn’t until March 1960 that Partners International decided to hire its first paid, full-time director. Allen Finley was hired from his position as west coast director of International Students to fill this role. Under his leadership from 1960 to 1987, the organization grew from a “one file drawer, one desk ministry” into a multi-national, multi-partner ministry.

During this time our name was changed to Christian Nationals Evangelism Commission (still abbreviated CNEC), reflecting a global outreach into other regions of Asia and to Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

In his years as president, Allen Finley helped define and

deepen our commitment to national Christians as the most effective way to reach the unreached with the Gospel. Allen’s vision sparked a major philosophical shift in missions as it became evident that national leaders in many countries were becoming the frontrunners in reaching their nations for Christ.

Affiliate CNEC offices developed in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The heart of this Partnership Alliance was to model “the sharing of resources with good results,” without extending its structure to the ministries it assisted. In 1985, CNEC changed its name to Partners International to reflect its commitment to global partnership.

After Finley’s retirement in 1987, Luis Bush, an Argentinean, former pastor of a large church in El Salvador, and Latin America coordinator for Partners, became president. Under his leadership, Partners gained exposure at international conferences including COMIBAM, a very influential Latin American missions conference and movement. When God led Luis to lead the AD2000 and Beyond Movement in 1991, he was succeeded by board member Chuck Bennett, formerly of Mission Aviation Fellowship and Food for the Hungry.

Partners International began a change in ministry focus in 1999 with the appointment of Paul-Gordon Chandler as President/CEO. The board of directors instructed staff to re-examine the purpose and place of Partners International in the global missions movement. The most immediate outcome of that re-examination was a focus on the 10-40 Window. Chandler received a call to pastoral ministry in Egypt in 2003, and his successor, Jon Lewis of Mission Aviation Fellowship, received the board’s mandate to build on the changes.

Lewis has initiated a wide-ranging discussion about the nature of mission partnership in the 21st century, the external realities affecting partnership, and its biblical basis. (See Our Covenant of Partnership.) As these discussions progress, Partners International remains faithful to our core ethos: the empowering of locally-led ministries to carry out their God-given vision.