

Ministerial Ethics in a Small World

By

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Since 1966 many have heard of “It’s a Small World After-all”; the well-liked interior boat cruise featured, at one time or another, at each of the Walt Disney Parks in California, Florida, Tokyo, Paris, and Hong Kong. The enchanting presentation showcases three hundred brightly dressed dolls representing children from around the globe. It promotes a spirit of international unity and global peace. Its theme usually boasts something like “The happiest cruise ever sailed around the world.”

The world is becoming smaller after-all. No longer are we taking a boat to sail around the world. An ever-expanding array of airlines allow us to travel anywhere; and accomplish it very fast. I can be in St. Louis on one day and at just about any point on the globe a day or so later. Information technology and social media have brought about rapid communication via websites, blogs, e-mail, Facebook, and cell phones. Coupled with this is the growing popularity of the United Pentecostal Church International, the radical advancement of the gospel everywhere, and the desire of our ministers and saints to fulfill the Great Commission. The times call for the proverbial all hands on deck.

With globalization, rapid communications, and the spread of the gospel comes invitations to preach overseas in and out of the United Pentecostal Church in a given country. Having seldom or never traveled this way before, you may feel that your course is uncharted. One question that comes to mind is, “What is the correct protocol, channel of communication, or ethics involved in accepting an invitation to preach or teach overseas in an organization or church outside of the UPCI?” Everyone wants to live an ethical life, doing what is right, but it is not always easy or as simple as it sounds. We trust this article will assist in establishing and extending ministerial ethics when traveling overseas. Our desire is to see the truth spread to the four corners of the earth, to gather a harvest, and to sustain it. The intention or motivation is not to control or to micromanage global revival. We simply want to provide a guide to help you understand some things you may not be aware of or would want to consider.

When considering or accepting an invitation from a church or an organization outside of the United Pentecostal Church our plea would be for you to contact the UPCI leadership in that country allowing them to be aware of the invitation and that you are planning to fulfill the request. This helps minimize misunderstanding and miscommunication. Nationals have difficulty understanding how a minister of the UPCI would be in the country without contacting the leadership of our organization. Generally speaking, the same ethics that would apply to accepting an invitation to preach in any non-UPC affiliated church, in any city, in North America applies overseas as well. The principles of ministerial ethics remain the same regardless of crossing cultural lines.

Simply making UPCI leadership in the country aware of the trip may also open additional doors for your valuable ministry. It would be great if you could minister at a UPCI event as well as one outside

of our organization. Of course, this is not always possible. Contacting our missionary on location or national leadership provides the opportunity for clarity and connection. Perhaps, you will want to invite the local UPCI representatives to be present in the event you are preaching. This is effective networking and provides for ministry connection to continue after you have returned to North America.

Our office will furnish the contact information for the needed UPCI representatives in each location. This will also give you an avenue of gaining knowledge in cultural differences, background of the group you will be ministering to, government restrictions or requirements, and a host of other helpful things. Again, I emphasize that we are not asking that you have our permission, merely observing ministerial ethics in notifying the leadership of the UPCI in the country involved.

We anticipate your missions trip to the regions beyond to be the happiest experience ever and to be productive in taking the gospel to new territories while networking with what the United Pentecostal Church International is endeavoring to accomplish in any and every nation. It's a small world after-all.