

A Brief History of The Columbia Partnership 2005 to 2011

A deep commitment to transforming North American congregations and denominations to pursue and sustain vital Christ-centered ministry birthed The Columbia Partnership in 2005. A year earlier a group of Christian consultants and coaches began to meet to talk about the type of organization that needed to fulfill this mission. After a period of discernment and dialogue The Columbia Partnership was launched.

While many denominational and parachurch consulting and coaching organizations existed, the founding partners realized there were too few who were focusing with effectiveness on the need for transformation and the full potential of both congregations and denominations. The founding partners were interested in risking innovation, testing creative learning, collaborating with one another and others, and using coaching models to move leaders and organizations from where they are to where they sense God desires them to be.

The founding partners were George Bullard, Dick Hamm, Eddie Hammett, Ken Kessler, Norman Jameson, Shane Nixon, Jim Royston, Jane Creswell, Chad Hall, Bill Copper, and Linda Miller. All ministry colleagues were committed churchpersons, seasoned congregational and denominational leaders who believe in the spiritual and strategic vitality and vibrancy of congregations, denominations, and those parachurch organizations who advocate for the work of the Church.

The forward actions of The Columbia Partnership, known warmly as TCP, are divided into two phases. Phase one was 2005 to 2008, and phase two 2008 to 2011. During phase one the following actions deserve highlighting:

- Launched a Christian coaching certification process and practice recognized by the International Coach Federation. This ultimately has included a doctor of ministry degree in Christian coaching.
- Launched a book publishing venture, called the TCP Leadership Series, with Chalice Press. To this date venture has resulted in the publication of two dozen books.
- Staffed the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence process funded by Lilly Endowment that was centered at Hollifield Leadership Center near Hickory, NC.
- Engaged in consulting and coaching with leaders, congregations, and denominational organizations from four dozen different denominations throughout North America that includes a wide spectrum of theological and ecclesiastical denominations.

With the success of the coaching focus of The Columbia Partnership, in 2008 it was determined a new organization was needed to journey deeper into coaching, while the core TCP could remain broader and diverse in the services it offered to clients. To accomplish this core The Columbia Partnership sponsored and funded the launch of Coach Approach Ministries. This was the transition to phase two.

During phase two the following actions deserve highlighting:

- The ministry of TCP was organized around five teams: Coaching Leaders, Funding Ministry, Sharing Knowledge, Transforming Congregations, and Transforming Denominations
- The most significant addition was the Funding Ministry Team which provides services to congregations, denominations, and parachurch organizations in annual giving, planned giving, and capital campaigns.
- As part of Sharing Knowledge an emphasis called *Travel Free Learning* was launched. In response to the economic crisis that began in 2008 this emphasis highlighted the print, conference call, and webinar aspects of the client services offered by TCP.
- A partnership was established with Northern Seminary in the Chicago to offer degree and non-degree work in Coaching Leaders, Funding Ministry, Transforming Congregations, and Transforming Denominations. Certificates, professional certifications, and doctor of ministry degrees are offered as part of this partnership.

Currently 12 people make up the TCP Ministry Community. They are Ann Updegraff Spleth, Bill McConnell, Dick Hamm, Don Durham, Eddie Hammett, Gary Straub, George Bullard, Ken Kessler, Larry Sykora, Norman Jameson, Ruben Swint, and Suzanne Goebel.