

# Ethnic Church Planting

## *Hosting/Hosted Church Partnerships*

Ethnic leaders in New York City are partnering together with positive results. Paul Kraus, Intercultural Ministries Director for the New York District and US missionary, conducted an interview with two ethnic pastors under the theme, “Hosting/Hosted Church Partnerships.” Haniff Bacchus, born in Guyana, is the lead pastor of Calvary AG, a multicultural church in a mixed community in Queens, New York. Pervez Khokhar, born in Pakistan, is the hosted Pastor of Sutun E Haqq AG (*Pillar of Truth*), an Urdu speaking Pakistani/Indian church sharing space with Calvary AG and launching a new Urdu language church plant.

**I have four basic questions: How did this partnership come about? What structure are you working under (e.g., memorandum of understanding)? What are some of the specific challenges faced (cross-culturally or regarding sharing space)? And, finally, what has been the fruit? Specifically, how have you been strengthened personally through this partnership, as well as your churches and your ministries?**

**PERVEZ** – I migrated to this country and first visited so many churches never feeling or sensing anywhere my place. One day I went through the AG district directory prayerfully and contacted Pastor Haniff Bacchus and the former pastor (Jay Paul Singh). It was amazing. The same evening they visited me. I shared. They were so kind. I did not have a car or transportation but they were so willing to delegate one of the leaders, Pastor

Lance, to pick us up from the place and take us to the church. And in the first meeting, Pastor Glen, that time youth pastor, he saw me and he said, “I saw you in a dream and as you’ve been preaching, so many Indians have come and are hearing the preaching.” Pastor Jay Paul Singh and Pastor Haniff Bacchus have always had a burden to reach out to this community – Indian and Pakistani. So I very much wanted to be a part of this church. I went to the foundation course, the beginner class. I sat in the class and became a member of Calvary AG. But at the same time, they felt my gifting, my calling. I had been a church planter in UAE (United Arab Emirates). These brothers encouraged me to plant a church, an Urdu speaking church, to reach out to Muslims and the Pakistani-Indian people.

I remember we started this church with five people in the basement of one of the properties the church owned. They set up everything. Some members from Calvary sat in the meetings, though not knowing the language. We started with that. The Calvary church became a model in every aspect. I sat in their board meetings learning so much about their ethics, the way that Calvary had come to grow, their commitment, and their leadership style. By God’s grace I can say one thing, that up to this day, we have never felt like strangers in Calvary. We have always felt we were a part; the sense of belonging was always there.



Paul Kraus, Pervez Khokhar, and Haniff Bacchus

Pastor Haniff and Pastor Singh were such friends and like spiritual fathers to Sutun E Haqq. They introduced me to the district and I was placed under MANY (Missions Advance New York).

From initially meeting in the house basement, we moved into the church after Calvary completed building their new sanctuary. We started in the basement

level, then in a second room, and today we meet in the big fellowship hall. Our church has

grown from 5 to 100 people working to purchase our own property, but still, as a daughter of Calvary AG – for we are not yet 18 years old (*laughter*). So I don't know...

**This may be a little off the topic but for the future, what will the partnership look like when you enter into your own building?**

**PERVEZ** – It is so difficult, even some of the people were saying we should not buy our property and forever to remain with Calvary. But now we have seen Calvary grow in such a way by God's grace. And they are so generous. Still, whatever we need [for building use], we always ask them and they sacrifice and give us, really, all the time. In reality, Calvary really cannot accommodate us at this point, the way they have grown. Their activities have grown so much.

**Brother Haniff, in your church meetings, your board looks at schedules, expenses, and space.**

**Hosting a church is a sacrifice for the church and people of the congregation. What were some of the challenges you faced especially for hosting a**

**congregation in your building that would grow to that significant size?**

**HANIFF** – To begin with, for a host church to grow and partner together with a hosted daughter church, you first of all need to have a partner like Pastor Pervez. He has been a

wonderful man since the first time we met. We visited their home and right away we saw a man of integrity – a man with good intentions and a passion for Christ. I don't know if Pastor Singh (senior pastor at that time) had detected that this would develop into a church plant. I don't know that. We just knew that we wanted to be in fellowship with Pastor Pervez and his family and they came along, became members and all of that.

And then he started to bring a couple of Pakistani friends. Pastor Singh, at that time, arranged for them to start having their own cultural and language group together. Back then, I did not know that this would become a church plant. Once the group started to develop though, we saw obvious signs that this is growing and that it will become a church plant. At that time, Pastor Singh decided that we should ask them to meet separately, outside of our service time, so they could have their own service using one of the neighboring buildings that we owned, not in the

main sanctuary. They started to grow. By the time Pastor Singh went home to be with the Lord, we had developed relationship and partnership.

As they grew, we saw the needs of the church. They needed supplies for various things, whether its communion or feast days, supplies for different things. And so, they were sharing our supplies, and that was fine; it was a pleasure for us. As the church grew, they had to move out of that building and come back into the main building, and we had to share time. We did not share the main sanctuary but they met in the downstairs fellowship hall. Then we adjusted the times so we wouldn't interrupt them and they wouldn't interrupt us, because we have Sunday school classes in the fellowship hall area. It worked very well. We helped train their Sunday school teachers, and some of their folk joined our various departments. We helped work with them and train them.

Meanwhile Pastor Pervez developed the group, getting it launched into a new church planting, and getting it to incorporation. Then he started sitting in on our board, not as a board member, but he would come to report developments in the daughter church. I think that was a splendid thing, and I have not seen too many people who are willing to do that – to come to regular board meetings, to report what's going on in the daughter church. And if we know the progress and we know the needs, it's easier for us to facilitate and support. That relationship worked really very well. The challenge is, as our congregations both

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grew, there was a little jostling of people coming in and out. We had to really train our people to have patience and to tolerate these others who were not our church. They were a church on their own, incorporated. We had to be training our people and talking to them to be tolerant. It worked well. We shared many things together – kitchen, even our public address system. As they grew, they started to install their own things and get their own supplies.

**When brother Pervez first came, did you consider him on staff or independent? Did he receive any reimbursement or salary? Where did that come from?**

**HANIFF** – Pastor Pervez joined the church as a regular member, not staff. As the Pakistani group grew and friends were added, we decided that he should have his own cultural worship time.

**PERVEZ** – What happened was this – my own salary was insufficient, and Calvary started to give me a transport allowance of \$200 a week.

**HANIFF** – I forgot about that (*laughter*).

**PERVEZ** – Then during the time of Pastor Singh, we brought all the offerings to Calvary for some time. We were using all the facilities of Calvary. When we became incorporated, we opened our own accounts.

**HANIFF** – I remember that before the Sutun E Haqq incorporation, Calvary opened a special checking account in the Calvary church name but

arranged for the Pakistani group to be the signatories and have control over the account. We never asked the Sutun E Haqq group for rent of the space, but voluntarily on their own, as they started to grow, they would give us something every month but it was not actually a charge or price.

**PERVEZ** – It was just like peanuts.

**HANIFF** – But as they grew they became more generous.

**There is a fabulous article, “Church Partnerships,” in the *Enrichment Journal* (spring 2013). A similar partnering model like yours is discussed from the Southern California District. Great stories, like your church planting experience, are becoming known – word is getting out. These are partnerships built on mutual trust.**

**HANIFF** – It’s important that people have the right spirit and attitude when it comes to partnership. It must be for

the glory of God. It requires the spirit of humility and submission. Pastor Pervez would come to us every month and say, “I am here to report to you, here is what I am doing, here are my needs.” And

at the same, as Pastor Pervez has said, he is sitting in our meetings, picking up our systems and our motivations, as well as our goals. And he’s picking up some of that for himself to take back to his own leadership. Not everybody has that humility to submit to that.

**Did you have an official MOU Memorandum of Understanding?**

**HANIFF** – No, we never had an official laid out plan, signed. We just had an understanding that Pastor Pervez was beginning to grow a church and that we knew we would support that. We had the understanding that we would be tolerant with the brethren, working together in the same facility. We were not going to pressure them financially, we are sharing our supplies, and we are proud of this moment. Even now that Sutun E Haqq has

grown to more than 100, is fully incorporated, looking to purchase their own facility, we are still supporting, still helping along with

the processes of purchasing a property, looking to see what else we can do to support them, until they become better established. It’s all for the glory of God. Pastor Pervez has a wonderful

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attitude. You want to work with him; you want to partner with him.

**You are talking about two different cultures. Is there a particular thing of interest, perhaps absent in your own particular culture that by engaging in this particular partnering experience, you have learned, picked up, or made your own?**

**PERVEZ** – It is hard to answer that but I think the love of God is so powerful. Really, it breaks all the barriers of culture and anything. The day I met

these brothers, there was great respect and honor, and our relationship has grown greatly. In the beginning, Pastor Singh indicated that somehow in the future I would be a part of the pastoral team.

But God has ordained other plans. It was hard for us to get a release. For me it was easier to learn and grow in that, but God brought about this different shift.

And what I say, I think adoption is the best thing, as God adopted us even though we were sinners and especially when compared to his son. In adoption, only love can cover those lacks be it cultural or whatever. The tolerance shown us was tremendous. Sometimes we made mistakes and blunders, sometimes left the garbage, left the lights on, and all these things, but never came a harsh word. Only in love were these things pointed out. We tried our best to meet the

standard, did not all the time, but tried not to provoke our brothers.

**HANIFF** – The test of that comes when you have special events, like Christmas. One group wants its service on Christmas Eve, the other on Christmas morning. On New Year’s Eve we would have our midnight watch-night service. Sutun E Haqq would have their service at 11:00 on New Year’s Day. But it has to do with how you arrange the opening of the building, and the closing of the building. Who is going to do that?

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**PERVEZ** – That was a real challenge and sacrifice (*smiling*).

**HANIFF** – And

we had to get our personnel well organized to facilitate that kind of thing.

**Do you feel that your church has grown more mature because of the extra duties and challenges in working with and adapting to this experience?**

**HANIFF** – I can say two things to that. Number one regards our leadership. Our leaders have grown through this experience, because we have had to turn over in our minds many times the issues at hand, the needs at hand. Our relationship is with a daughter church, which is not a daughter church outside or a satellite model location, but it is right

in the same facility. So our leadership has matured a lot dealing with issues.

The second thing, concerns the growth of the congregation as a whole. The principle of supporting a mission or a church plant, which then turns around and inspires the believers so that they can feel more encouraged to reach out to lost people with the gospel, is helping us and we are growing. I think our growth has directly to do with the church plant.