



Multilateralism and Mutual Accountability

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Years ago, I served as the pastor of a new church start. Although small in number, members of the congregation wanted to find ways to live their faith in action. Given our size and resources, we were limited in how we could participate and what we could provide to address the injustices we saw in our community. What was clear was that the concerns we had for our community and the world were best accomplished in collaborative spaces that allowed for better coordination of efforts and interests, the leveraging of resources, and the identification of needs and solutions from multiple perspectives. Our efforts in ministry and mission were more successful when we partnered with others. It was clear that we could achieve far more in partnership than we could alone.

Coordination, cooperation, collaboration and communication are interconnected and essential to communities and organizations. Even in faith communities, the 4-Cs are important for the ways in which ministry and mission are attained. Whether with community organizations, interfaith partners, or ecumenically, the opportunities to collaborate and coordinate programmatically have addressed social challenges in meaningful ways by providing solutions for hunger, homelessness, refugee resettlement, affordable housing, after school care, education, elderly care, prisoner re-entry and a host of other challenges facing people and community. A successful process necessitates communication and mutual accountability for the common commitments established.

In the global community, [multilateralism](#) describes international politics and diplomacy, where many



countries with different views and goals work together. This type of collaboration happens in the United Nations system, which is the principal multilateral forum where countries come together to solve global problems. Through their participation at the [United Nations, member states](#) can address challenges facing people around the world. Since its inception, [“one thing has stayed the same: it remains the one place on Earth where all the world’s nations can gather together, discuss common problems, and find shared solutions that benefit all of humanity.”](#)

No one country can solve the myriad of issues emerging and existing in the world, just as no one person or organization can address the challenges in local communities or neighborhoods. The United Nations has been a place where nations together can provide the resources, programs and solutions needed to address war, civil unrest, economies, migration, as well as matters of peace keeping.

[The president of the United States addressed the 80th United Nations General Assembly in September 2025 in New York City.](#) In his address to world leaders and the leadership of the UN, the 47th president focused on US exceptionalism, exaggerated his leadership and accomplishments since taking office, and questioned the value of the UN, while denying the interests and importance of other nations. Missing in his speech was any recognition of the 4-Cs in addressing the long list of global concerns.

These days, multilateralism is needed more than ever. In the face of war, forced displacement¹, genocide, and failing economies, multilateralism offers the framework for collaboration towards global safety and peace building, as well for the accountabilities needed when human rights and rule of law are violated by governments. When places of accountability such as the UN system go unsupported and are undermined by governments, the very systems that were created for peace and safety are eroded, which in turn affects the rights and thriving of the people.

Faith communities are a part of the multilateral system. They give thriving. Participation in multilateralism brings people of faith as

voice to, advocate for, and are committed to justice and human thriving. Participation in multilateralism brings people of faith as active supporters for change and action in the world through collaboration, cooperation, coordination and communication.

¹Though placing this in a list of negative things might run the risk of leading your readers to think that you would categorize migration as a catastrophe on the level of war, etc. I would consider removing the item or replacing it with something like “forced displacement.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson serves as the General Minister and President/Chief Executive Officer in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

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