

Ministry Partnerships

As patterns of worship attendance and the cost of calling a full-time pastor have changed, congregations have begun to explore the possibility of partnering with another congregation or another agency to accomplish the ministry God is calling the congregation to do.

Partnering to accomplish ministry is not a new idea. From the 1950s through early 2000s, the norm in many communities became one pastor for one congregation, but for much of our church's history, pastors served multiple congregations or were multi-vocational. Given the changing nature of ministry today, it appears that a return to ministry partnerships could be extremely beneficial in some situations.

What is a Ministry Partnership?

A ministry partnership is an agreement between congregations or a congregation and an agency to share pastoral leadership. A partnership is not a formal parish agreement because it does not require a change to a congregation's constitution, but it is a covenant between partners to share leadership.

How does a Ministry Partnership work?

Congregations that are interested in ministry partnership work with the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop to do the following:

- Determine if a ministry partnership is appropriate in their context
- Explore options for potential ministry partners
- Identify the congregation's areas of ministry focus and look for alignment with a potential partner or partners
- Negotiate a Ministry Partnership Agreement to define the expectations of the partnership
- Use the Ministry Partnership Agreement as the foundation for identifying pastoral leadership to serve the partnership

What does a Ministry Partnership look like?

Since each ministry context is different, there is no one-size fits all template for what a ministry partnership will look like, but currently within the Virginia Synod, we have partnerships which include:

- Three Lutheran congregations across two Synod in the process of calling a pastor.
- Two Lutheran congregations that share a pastor who is half-time at one congregation focused on congregational ministry and half-time at another congregation focused on campus ministry.
- A Lutheran congregation and a Presbyterian congregation beginning a call process.
- A Lutheran pastor serving 75% of the time at a congregation and 25% of the time at a local non-profit.

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