

*HOW TO CALL
PART TIME PASTORS IN ABCNYS CHURCHES
(And guidance for churches considering the emerging
opportunities to share a pastor with another church)*

*NOTE: This document will be in constant revision as we learn more from our churches. The original document was authored by Rev. Jerrod H. Huguenot
Associate Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of New York State
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INTRODUCTION

The average ABCNYS church is served by a part-time minister, one who serves a church who provides only part of the funds necessary to maintain a full-time pastor with salary and benefits.

Sharing this information, I see expressions of surprise across the table, meeting with lay leaders about pastoral transitions. In the memory of the older congregants, their church had pastors who served full-time, without any need for income beyond the funds provided by the church. The model of a full-time pastor with a full-time package is no longer normative for the majority of our 270 congregations. And pastors, like the rest of the congregants, have to be able to live with the current cost of living!

This shift to part-time pastors did not happen overnight, nor did it happen just in the last ten years. And moving into the future, part-time pastors will continue to be the type of pastors our churches will need most!

Why Part-Time Became the Norm:

Particularly first in the Northeastern United States and gaining throughout the nation, churches are less likely to have large numbers of active and tithing congregants. Our church membership is much smaller than some may remember. Concurrently, our historic church buildings keep consuming more and more of the funds available to the church through its tithing and other sources of income. One difficult year of unexpected repairs or market instability impacts investment dividends can readily impact a church's financial forecast without warning. Further, as the older generations of regular tithers pass away, not replaced by similar "giving units" in the church's annual tithing receipts.

Sometimes, the shift to part-time pastors happens as part of a painful yet necessary budget cut, which impacts the current pastor who must work under reduced financial support. Frequently, the financial need is understood and discussed, yet the lessening of expectations for that pastor by the congregation remains ambiguous.

Another familiar situation: a pastor serves a congregation for many years and then retires. The church may or may not have kept up with the changing costs of living in their pastoral pay, yet they do know that moving forward, they cannot call a new pastor at the same financial level that their retiring

pastor was earning when they departed. Again, the financial change will be readily acknowledged, yet there are many instances of the expectations of a fuller-time, or more available for ministry needs, type pastor still operative in how congregants think of the role their minister plays.

These experiences frequently lead to the scenario much too frequently of a pastor who is paid part time yet with the church keeping its full-time expectations of their pastor. Ignoring this new and normative reality in congregations can be unfair to the minister serving part-time, and therefore in need of other sources of income to make ends meet. It is also not helpful in the least to the long-term health of a congregation that needs to live within its means if it does not adjust to the necessary changes brought about by those changed finances.

In essence, part-time pastoral calls have been necessitated by these challenges. How churches have navigated these times has not been easy, nor has it been methodical. Not surprisingly, when money issues become a stressor, we find ourselves more reactive than proactive.

This resource will address how to be more reflective and better prepared for meeting our local church ministry needs and in turn, helping our churches and our pastors work more collaboratively together, even as we live within limited finances.

Moving forward

To keep moving forward, American Baptist congregations working with part-time pastors must focus their energies on these areas of concern:

- Understanding Local Church Autonomy and Congregational Responsibilities
- Church Communication Skills Throughout the Congregational Body
- Adapting Pastoral Roles in a Church: Pastor Centric versus Collaborative Ministry
- Looking for new opportunities: Should we share a pastor with another church?

Following these sections, two appendixes are available. The first appendix is a template ABCNYS developed for churches calling a part-time pastor (and can be adapted for sharing a pastor). The second is

a series of case studies to provide conversation among church leaders and clergy about the common challenges of a part-time pastor as well as a pastor shared between two congregations.

LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY AND CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Each American Baptist related congregation is autonomous, or solely in charge of its major decision making and setting of priorities for its ministries. It is a long-held principle that guides how American Baptist congregations function. Autonomy gives Baptist congregations freedom, yet it also means the local church has only its voting eligible members who are responsible for making and implementing decisions. In essence, with great local church freedom comes great responsibility!

Each American Baptist church chooses whom they call as their pastors and sets the terms of that call, including budgetary needs related to the salary, benefits and reimbursable expenses incurred by having a pastor. How each church calls, retains and dismisses a pastor is solely that of the local church, who is beholden to no outside oversight from outside religious authority. We are congregational, not episcopal or presbyterial, in polity, so our pastors are not appointed by a bishop, nor is the responsibility for maintaining a local church's financial affairs or "HR decisions" carried by any outside judicatory (ie., an American Baptist Region).

In terms of responsibility, the buck stops with the congregation. In terms of finances, the bucks only come from the congregation! Therefore, the church must be aware and a good steward of its autonomy related responsibilities during its ministry and "big picture" decision making. It is not anybody or anybody else's responsibility! By our history and heritage, we are congregationalists by conviction and choice, and that means we deal with matters differently than some other Christian traditions who went with another model of governance and organization.

Look closely at your church bylaws (and for any ABCUSA church incorporated in New York State, the section pertaining to Baptist churches in the NYS Religious Corporations Law), and you will see that the setting of the church budget, property management decisions, the election of church officers and the call of a pastor are by vote of the congregation at a duly warned church business meeting.

The members of a congregation make the decisions that matter most to a congregation's annual budget and management of its ministry and mission! To be healthier, American Baptist churches never lose sight of this core principle of autonomy and work diligently to maintain the fuller participation of the church body when decisions of consequence are to be made.

In the increasing shift from full-time to part-time pastors, each church forged its own path, which again is perfectly healthy and ordinary for an American Baptist church. Whether or not that decision was made with precision or imprecision again rests upon the local church's ability to function autonomously and responsibly.

One often discussed element of American Baptist autonomy: We cherish our autonomy yet sometimes forget to look over the horizon of the four walls of the local church to other similar churches for ideas or insight into how they have addressed challenges in their own way. Talking with other churches and learning together is often a hallmark and strength of American Baptist ministry and mission. To no great surprise, when we talk with other churches in our area, we may learn how we are not alone in wrestling with commonplace issues challenging our churches today.

Historically, American Baptists have developed resources within Associations, Regions and on the national and international levels to call and send missionaries and to provide funds and support to sister churches in our common causes of preaching and sharing the Gospel. Certainly, the training of pastors remains a common cause for Baptist cooperation, even as the times change. Older models of theological education may be financially out of reach for pastors who will be called to serve our more income restricted congregations.

If autonomy means freedom *with* responsibility, a church searching for its next pastor or deciding if a pastor's position needs to be adjusted in light of other concerns (i.e., financial), it would serve our churches best to remember clearheadedly throughout the decision making process to engage the congregation in all aspects of a decision regarding a pastoral position. This means the communication within a congregation is also key to make good decisions about the call of a pastor (as well as the

retention/supervision of a pastor, and most importantly, being able to lessen any conflict that might arise about the pastor, the church's lay leadership, and the overall ministry of a local church.)

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE CHURCH

While we live in a world saturated by messaging and images, we still need the ability to discern what is most important to our daily lives and wellbeing. Not every message or messenger has our best interests in mind, so we know that we have to be aware of misinformation, partial information and even where to look for the right sources to know much about anything these days!

In congregations, we deal with being a group of people, all with varying levels of energy to be involved in the church's upkeep and health, just like any other organization that depends on human beings to exist, let alone cooperate and collaborate to further its aims and purposes!

In churches, communication can be a matter of reading the church bulletin faithfully (and gently reminding one another, "Yes, it was in the bulletin!" when necessary). Communication can be a matter of what happens in a formal church business meeting, and it can be also what is said more frankly out in the parking lot afterwards. For churches, we depend on one another, frail and limited as we may be, to take care of all the needs of maintaining a church body as well as a church's organizational upkeep.

Communication that is healthiest is frequent and inclusive. In other words, we know what is most important to be shared or discussed, and we know how to provide and maintain multiple ways to ensure the average congregant is kept "in the loop". A church potluck requires a level of communication that a called business meeting to discuss an unexpected building repair cost might not, yet it is helpful to see both as opportunities to practice how to communicate and understand how effective we are with communication.

And if we discount the little things like a church potluck as important to communicate, we also realize we have lost ground in building up a congregation for when the truly difficult times like an unexpected and sizable building repair bill happens! Good communication cultivates and grows trust and deepens one's investment in the life of the church. Inconsistent communication never helps in the end!

A “big picture” decision is better addressed when the process leading up to it has been intentional with informing the decision makers of key information and letting there be time to address concerns and hear feedback. Church conflicts are often the consequences of persons feeling unheard or uninformed, or worse, not properly allowed to have a voice in the decision. Conflict can arise also when persons feel snap or hasty decisions were the only option allowed.

When a church is financially at a place where the funds are more likely to sustain a part-time minister, running the numbers and then helping people understand the financial snapshot of a congregation will be perhaps hard news to share and hear, yet it will be shared! We talk about stewardship somewhat in churches, yet the budget and its month to month, quarter to quarter activities are rarely shared (and sometimes even more rarely welcomed) with the average congregant. Addressing the financial situation of a church will be a work in progress, yet the effort to build financial awareness of the congregation’s situation is always time well spent!

When a pastoral transition occurs, it also adds an element of anxiety to the system. Many people just want the disruptions (real or more likely, feared) that will happen to be fixed as quickly as possible. For example, a church hears from the pulpit that their pastor is leaving. A person turns around in the pew to the person behind and says, “Well, when is the new pastor going to start?” In some traditions, that will be a known factor, yet in our local church tradition, such a time means we have work ahead of us as a congregation! Some will be needed to serve on a pastoral search committee. Others will be needed to help support the transition by finding pulpit supply and/or a transitional interim pastor, and we may be even better served by having persons who help us think through and experience the transition more intentionally.

While space does not allow for a long appeal for interim ministry and congregational economics sometimes preclude hiring a specialist interim who will form a transition team to guide the first part of the interim period (i.e., not rushing headlong into a pastor search), the idea informing such congregational experiences is sound. Find ways within your congregation to engage the congregation as a whole in the key needs of a transition process!

For smaller membership churches (under 30 persons), this “all church” effort will be easiest to achieve by realizing the numbers are compact enough that you can gather people together for times when a discussion topic can help inform the work of a search process, particularly when a change in the minister’s budget necessitates a change in the availability and reasonable time weekly time commitment of the next pastor to be called.

A financial snapshot conversation where persons most knowledgeable of the church’s finances can make a presentation will be helpful. It may also not be the most exciting topic, so ensure the conversation happens with some social time beforehand (i.e. a potluck). Then when persons have spent time in fellowship around the table, you have introduced another dynamic to the room before bringing up a topic: money!

Focusing a conversation around the financial side of the church may have its risk in overshadowing the rest of the church’s work. We need to celebrate the work of the congregation alongside the budget’s tracking of income and expense, yet we are living in a time where financial transparency and honesty about our sustainability to maintain buildings and other commitments cannot be left to a future time. The time of “kick the can” on having a conversation about the church’s financial health is too risky these days.

In shaping a conversation around the financial health of the church, it can be fairly straightforward (if one is keeping the church ledger on Quickbooks) to generate a report that shows “money in” and “money out”. If you need to have some preliminary help in getting your financial snapshot assembled, there is no shame in working with a CPA or other experienced person to help get your financial household in order. When a church has a stronger sense of where money is spent, it can also educate your congregants, who again are the people most involved in making decisions and need to be kept up to date.

Taking the snapshot, a congregational gathering can review how the church receives funding from various sources of income (offering plate, pledges, and other streams of income) and then how it is spent.

To focus the conversation, show the expenses the church incurs in three broad categories (following the model given by Episcopal priest and consultant Fr. Gerald Keucher):

COST OF BUILDING AND OTHER OPERATIONAL NEEDS: What goes into maintaining the building, paying the customary bills for energy, heating, water/sewer, office supplies, etc., and see below under “pastoral staff” my suggestion that you consider the costs of non-ordained staff salaries/benefits in this category rather than combining pastoral staff expenses with other staff costs.)

COST OF PROGRAMMING: What does the church spend on its ministry work? For example, what is spent on Christian Education curriculum? What funding is spent on the fellowship time after worship? All those things that directly impact the discipleship and “life” part of the church, not so much the monthly utility bill or the pastor’s mileage reimbursement type line items.)

COST OF PASTORAL STAFF: Under this category, please note the total amount needed to offer the pastor’s salary (compensation, housing allowance/parsonage, and Social security offset) and the cost of benefits (medical and pension) and the reimbursable expenses that are given for mileage, continuing education and other needs as agreed in the pastor’s terms of call.

(*Here, I am presuming a church using this resource will not have multiple pastors, yet likely have on payroll other persons who fulfill non-ordained staff needs such as secretarial/administrative, custodial, or church musicians, etc. I suggest you count those expenses above in operational needs, so you can focus this exercise on the pastor, who is often the central person employed by a church, and therefore the most likely to have the most expenditures.)

Presenting these three general expense categories will provide the church with a framework for what they may not have considered in the past. The church has its facilities and upkeep, the cost of programming and the expenses incurred by having an ordained pastor, yet they may not have seen it presented this way.

It could be sobering to translate your expenses into percentages to show how much of the church's spending is going into the building itself. Many churches will find that they are spending somewhere close to half of their expenses just on the building.

As costs go up, so does the amount of money needed to keep the lights on. And little by little, if giving to the church and other forms of income have eroded, the money available to fund the church's core needs will be already tight, if not unsustainable.

Why would this have bearing on the pastoral transition? If anything, this exercise will let the congregation see in broad terms what choices are at hand. We increasingly find that pastoral transitions are a time to look at more than "who is going to be our next pastor?" Pumping the brakes at this point would be in order. If the building is beginning to outweigh the ability of the congregation to keep it up. Your time for decision making at such moments in the life of the church should not overlook other "big picture" discussions! Indeed, the time to make some changes may be right now, so you can keep the church's core mission: to share and spread the Gospel at the forefront!

Oftentimes, churches will keep cutting the pastor's part of the budget back without this sort of "moment of clarity". It is easier to reduce payroll than admit you have a facility that needs to be dealt with one way or another. And, as our churches have become smaller in active membership, buildings have become less needed for their acres of brick and mortar, pipes and aging shingles or slate roof!

Communicating this general knowledge will spark some conversations, though they will not be easy ones. Yet it will help the congregation be more informed and help a decision about pastoral leadership in the end, as you will be untangling some other knots that you did not realize in the moment have a real impact on the church's ability to swim, sink or tread water. We prefer churches that thrive over those that dwindle or die, so getting a church on board with "we need to talk about more than finding a pastor" will be crucial as margins for trial and error are less available than before.

It also helps the church identify what its priorities are for ministry. If you want a large building with escalating costs, that will be your choice as a congregation. Yet, will the building be able to care for

you at the hospital bedside? Will the deferred maintenance walloping the church with big repair bills be to the furtherance of the preaching and sharing of the Gospel?

Too often, churches struggle to understand cause and effect. It's part of being human in some ways, yet if we are to pay a pastor fairly for their work and to be fair in what we can expect a pastor to do within the limits of being one human being (just like us) and in need of certain income to have a reasonable living meeting expenses for housing, food, health and other basic needs (just like us), we must admit as a congregational body where our church budgets have consequences when some expenses cannot be overcome (short of a really big decision to rethink how we use our church buildings that overconsume our diminished income) and where the spiritual needs of the congregation must be met, even if it means rethinking how we have an ordained pastor in our midst and more likely, what role the lay leadership of the church will play in helping the pastor collaboratively to further the aims and purposes of the church and its mission!

ADAPTING PASTORAL ROLES IN A CHURCH: PASTOR CENTRIC VERSUS COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

With the above conversation in mind, it is most likely more and more churches will be working with a part-time pastor. With fewer people active in membership and financial concerns more likely ever present than before, the economics of ministry would say it is time to find a new balance in how we search and more importantly retain and sustain pastors in our midst!

Most congregations seeking a pastor really are interested in finding a pastor who stays for a good long tenure. When I meet with search committees and talk with church leaders, they really would like some stability in the pulpit and not fall into the under five-year tenures that many Protestant traditions (American Baptists included) seem to report for the number of years a pastor serves.

It would seem, then, that a church that is very clear about its financial situation needing a part-time pastor to go the extra mile and work out some understandings of what "part time" looks like in terms of covering the needs of the congregation while understanding a pastor must seek out and maintain other sources of income. If a pastor is retired and drawing a pension from prior life experiences in the work

force, I would discourage the pastor and the church from getting too comfortable with the idea that the pastor can work full time for the church, as it will set up the next pastor who may be still dependent on pre-retirement employment, with maybe the promise of a pension some day (but not necessarily robust) in the distant future. Live within the means of the church, so that then the church will remember what its means provide pastors to live on!

Understanding a part-time pastor's baseline duties will be again a good opportunity to engage the congregation in rethinking what it means to have a pastor. If it is agreed the cashflow is such that a part-time pastor is necessary, then what is reasonable for the pay that can be sustainably offered to pastoral candidates?

ABCNYS recommends all local church pastors have the same time needs every week to prepare the sermon, get the worship order and bulletin together and then spend the time on Sunday morning before, during and after worship. Essentially, we recommend all churches presume their preaching pastor is engaged in ten hours per week with everything that goes into Sunday morning needs.

And then the following week, the same is needed: ten hours again must be earmarked for the assurance that worship will happen just as it did on Sunday!

If churches are dealing with very limited resources that the weekly amount available to be offered is \$250 for a pastor (presuming no other church-based compensation/benefits are offered), we would suggest the church likely has the finances available (\$13,000 per annum) to have a pastor who serves as dedicated pulpit supply, with potentially the general agreement that the pastor might be available for funerals and emergency visitation. We do have churches right now that offer this sort of arrangement with a pastor.

Moving beyond the "just Sunday only" type pastoral call, if you have a financial snapshot as discussed above, you can look at the pastoral budget being offered at a level sustainable to what the church is able to afford, and do some additional math to think through what other duties can be added to Sunday morning's needs.

Most churches want a local church pastor to be competent in the areas of preaching, teaching and caregiving. So, if you build upon the 10 hours discussed for worship needs, ask the congregation what other needs should be considered when preparing a pastoral job description for the search committee.

For example, many churches would like a pastor to go and see weekly those who are in the hospital or members who live in care homes or are homebound. Some churches welcome a weekly Bible study. Some pastors are asked to attend board meetings. All of these tasks take a certain amount of time, yet we know that if money is limited, we must choose carefully where we want our pastor's additional margin of time to be spent. (And if we are talking about this sooner than later with the congregation, it is more likely that more congregants will be in the loop to help other congregants who may struggle with a part-time pastor not being "available" like they remember from times now past.)

A scenario: A church has a parsonage with provided utilities (valued with a fair market rental value of \$1200 a month with \$250 in utilities/heat, aka \$1450 per month or \$17,400 total toward the pastoral budget). They also have \$20,000 to work with from the rest of the budget this year.

While we cannot predict how a given pastor might ask their non-parsonage related budget funds to be allocated between salary, Social Security offset or towards some type of healthcare or pension premium), we do know that the budget total is \$37,400. We cannot offer any more than this.

If a pastor is preaching weekly (10 hours per week), it could be considered that the pastor is likely a part-time pastor who should be expected to work 25 hours for the church every week. A helpful reminder is to base the current Region-provided estimate for a full-time pastor. (Here, we will presume a full-time pastor with full benefits will entail a pastoral budget of \$80,000). Simple math will show that we are providing resources for something closer to half-time than anything approaching full time.

A pastoral job description will be formed based on this knowledge that we have likely up to 10 hours per week that are left over after we deduct the customary 10 hours per week needed for worship related time. How do we ask the pastor to use those ten "other" hours most wisely?

Again, it will be helpful if the church has made some wise decisions in advance as well. A church looking at their "needs" versus their "wants" will have a better time doing this work. A need is something

essential. A want is something that would be nice but ultimately up for debate or an “extra” that may need to be left undone.

A congregation could say to the pastor that they would like the minister to spend five hours a week involved in visitation. And then they would like a weekly bible study.

But what about a pastor attending board meetings? Again, this is where a church has the responsibility to say to the pastor where they understand the limits must be.

If a pastor and a congregation find the right level of trust and communication, this will work itself out. Not every week of the year will need a Bible study. (We do like to take the summers off.) Some board meetings can happen without a pastor, though if it is necessary to have a pastor present, then the given board chair needs to notify the pastor so adjustments to the other ministry tasks that week.

What happens, though, when visitation needs increase for a given time, due to an emergency or a temporary crisis in a congregant’s life that would benefit from more of the pastor’s time? Again, a healthy and ongoing dialogue about how pastoral time is managed will help adjust. In fact, it may lead to our other solution to part-time pastors: lay involvement!

In our tradition, American Baptist churches often claim every active member of the congregation is indeed a minister. Lay or ordained, each person involved in the congregation can have a role to play! In a church where fewer paid pastoral ministry hours are available, the church can work within its membership to lift up and bless individual congregants to be more involved with ministry work.

For example, a small membership church that depends solely on the pastor to “care” for the congregation is missing an important part of being a church. The Spirit gifts all believers with gifts, yet sometimes, we do not encourage lay members to explore and exercise their gifts for ministry.

The pastor can benefit from having a small number of dependable lay assistants, who can take turns being “on call” (especially if a minister’s “day job” means the pastor is not available during certain scheduled hours), or they can work out a rotation to go and visit those in hospital, carehomes, or home bound.

Churches are encouraged to “do the math” when it comes to their budgets and financial forecasts. Yet, it can be an opportunity for churches to look at their active members with new understandings.

The biggest mistake a church makes is depending on ministry happening only if the ordained person is available. The pastor, whether part or full time, is still one person. And a congregation, by its very nature, is made up of people, plural! Shifting to part time may be a necessary cost savings, but can it also be a chance to reclaim what it means to be church, where all active members are to be engaged in sharing the Gospel: in word and deed alike!

SHARING A PASTOR BETWEEN TWO CONGREGATIONS:

Around upstate New York, one American Baptist church sharing a pastor with another church is not unfamiliar, though not widespread. The relationship of two churches sharing a pastor is more likely given the economics outlined above. And it may be an opportunity for two churches to live within their means and their limits, strengthening their chances in calling pastoral leadership who in turn have more financial support (even if in some cases, a third stream of income will be needed.)

Sometimes, this is the result of two American Baptist churches, near one another geographically, deciding to work together to find a pastor. Other times, it is an ecumenical matter, where a Pastor is comfortable serving two churches (American Baptist and other Protestant) who benefit from the shared pastor being available to both churches and can navigate the polity differences and other ways that the churches understand and express their type of Protestantism.

From the earlier sections of this guide, we do stress that you need to be clear about who your church is and what it expects of pastoral ministry. The need for that clarity is even greater when you add a second church to the equation.

At this point, it might be helpful to think of the adage “To thine oneself, be true”. From conversations with Churches who have had successful and not so successful, it may be best to begin as one would expect for Baptists: call for a congregational conversation and a decision that allows all active members to have their say. A formal vote would be helpful, but also a measure of success in the conversation could be how close to consensus did the conversation get to by the time it is to vote on it. A

good conversation process will lead also to heightened buy-in for the eventual decision to be implemented.

The church will need to assess its pastoral need and time commitment (see above regarding how to shape an understanding and agreement for part time pastoral leadership), yet there will be other needs that come into play with how the addition of a second church to the equation impacts the life of your congregation.

This resource refers to churches “sharing” a pastor, in part due to naming more clearly what is necessary. We learn to share and understand it is a fluid and organic experience of give and take. This resource recognizes sometimes such pastor sharing agreements might term it as a “yoked” experience, tethered together. The idea has some positives and negatives in our experience. On one hand, yoked is not necessarily a “bad” term, though it has been known to chafe Baptist ears long attuned to local church autonomy. Shared is a softer term, and it’s still a benchmark phrase nonetheless for assessing how our ideas turn into congregational outcomes. Did we share well? Was there a sense of balance in the two churches sharing a pastor, particularly if one church is even more part time (1/4 time) than the other one in the sharing agreement?

To share in order to further the Gospel as two congregations is the ideal we aspire. To share is a recognition of our church’s needs being different than they were a generation ago.

Sharing a pastor with another church also asks each church to understand ministry is more shared by its nature. We sometimes slide into the idea that the pastor is the only active provider of care.

Sharing the load and deepening discipleship

Harder to achieve as most churches usually arrive at a time when a part time pastor or sharing a pastor with another church has come at the end of a longer season where decline in active membership and finances have eroded the ability of the church to maintain a comfortable and familiar status quo. Moving into these times is a matter of seeking equilibrium, yet the people are likely tired, burned out, conflicted or anxious. (Often, a mix of all four are present.)

As we have seen above, an American Baptist church is solely in charge of its decisions. And when we feel depleted or without direction, it can be hard to maneuver into new directions for our church. Working with the Region to identify where the church is at can be an opportunity to have some big picture conversations among church members and church leaders that simply do not happen that often by the more informal ways of talking in the parking lot or coffee hour.

If a church is willing to reframe ministry with a part time pastor, they will be better willing to consider other adaptive ideas, particularly sharing a pastor with another church!

Pastoring sharing agreements happen only after some intentional conversations up front. American Baptists follow a local church decision making polity, so once again, we return to the all church conversation and a possible vote to bless a new direction like sharing a pastor will be most helpful.

Before one church approaches another church to see if it's possible to share, it is best to get your church to work out what they are willing to bless, as a shared pastor will mean some give-and-take between the two churches to be sustainable! Further, it will be helpful to agree as a church body that the decision making process will require some time to arrive at an informed decision, so keeping the matter just within the membership is important if you are not involved with the tasks of researching other possibilities and scenarios.

Questions to explore:

What time is Sunday worship here at our church?

Not surprisingly, every church who explores sharing a Pastor will be quick to ask how this will impact their Sunday morning worship schedule. Worship is the most important corporate act we do as a local church, yet it can be difficult sometimes to imagine worship earlier or later than we may have become accustomed.

For example, even asking the question of changing the worship schedule may be what deadstops any further thought to a sharing relationship.

Therefore, the church working through a process to gain consensus on whether or not this can happen is a good "stress test" for how the church as a body can handle a conversation that really needs to

include everybody. A healthy experience of handling this question will give the congregation, especially its core leadership, a chance to see how the church can handle complexity, which will be a key early sign of how well a second church sharing “our” pastor will play out.

Understanding our pastor will have two calls

A church willing to make its worship schedule flexible can start working on possibilities, but first, also build upon the evolving conversation by asking the church body to explore what a part time minister’s time commitments and priorities should be. Earlier sections speak about understand the “dollars and duties” and the impact of financial realities limiting how much time a pastor can be available yet find other sources of income to remain personally solvent and pastorally sustainable. If you have a better understanding of what your part time needs are (and what they are not), then you have a better chance of approaching a second church to see if something is possible.

When working at the exploratory phase of a possible shared pastor opportunity, I recommend that two churches only have an official meeting once both have conducted a thorough internal conversation about the above factors. Why meet if there is still lingering uncertainty about one church’s worship time flexibility or the other church has not run some numbers to show what they can offer sustainably.

If both churches have worked well on their own internal conversations, surely now we can have a productive exploration with another church to see if our needs and offer of collaboration can indeed work!

Each church should appoint a group of leaders who can meet with a counterpart church’s same type of leaders. An outside neutral party like the Region or a similar facilitator can help the two groups share and listen more attentively to what is possible.

If the worship hour can be adjusted to allow reasonable time between services for the pastor, then you can start sorting out other things. For example, two churches sharing a pastor learn that the first service benefits from the congregants who want to chat with the pastor to be intentional about having those sort of meetings or chats before worship with a little advance notice. (Note: The pastor likely needs the last 20 minutes before each service to check last minute details and of course, gather with persons involved in worship to pray before the prelude begins.). Then after church, the church leaders

take turns ensuring the pastor can make a discrete exit to travel to the other service and agrees to be available to guests and others who might have needs to address that would otherwise bog the pastor down without that consideration.

The other church who goes later in worship will need to consider the opposite: being available before worship to welcome guests and answer basic questions that come up. Perhaps the first part of worship can be intentionally designed that a lay leader can provide the first section of worship (welcome/announcements, opening prayer), so when the pastor might be delayed due to traffic or road conditions, the service is underway without too much disruption. And then after worship, the pastor is available to have any conversations or meetings as needed.

This arrangement of weekly worship will be most likely successful when both churches identify and train lay leaders to cover some parts of worship or take turns being a lay leader available to cover any questions or needs that go beyond the duties of greeters or ushers.

Beyond Sunday: Sharing a pastor the rest of the week

Each church will have a set of duties beyond Sunday morning for the shared pastor, dependent as well on the financial limits that are also in play. One church may provide financial resources for $\frac{3}{4}$ time pastoral ministry, and the other church may offer $\frac{1}{4}$ time equivalent. The pastor will give earnestly of their time to both churches, yet each church will benefit from building up their abilities to be collaborative with the pastor nonetheless. Agreeing to support the pastor's limited time, each church may write into a covenant agreement the baseline duties to be covered for the ordained minister's part time call, yet it will be helpful to offer at the outset where the church understands their sweat equity comes into play. Agreeing visitations are to be shared by lay volunteers or the office needs for weekly bulletins will be carried by a certain group of lay volunteers are examples.

Further, as each church and the shared pastor get into a rhythm, communicating and checking in with each other should be a regular experience. A church may realize only after some time is passed that

they need to work with the pastor to readjust what is most important. Ministry is fluid by nature, and especially so in the case of two churches!

The communicating with the shared pastor may help both churches also learn how to live with one another. It is certainly a matter of finances and managing a shared ordained employee, yet the two churches could begin imagining what other areas of church needs could be met with the collaboration. Some churches may find other positions of their church paid staff can be helpfully shared (an organist). Two churches could share a common Secretary/office administrator.

More intriguing, churches can explore sharing joint ministries: a weekly Bible study or something occasional like a joint VBS or youth event. Sometimes small active membership churches need help. A larger than normal funeral dinner needs extra hands to serve. A church fundraiser could have some help.

Such work shows the beauty of Christian fellowship and reinforces that we are never alone in the furtherance of Gospel principles. Nonetheless, if there are misgivings or times for hard conversations about how it is going in a shared pastor situation, paying attention to the little acts of sharing and being cheerfully collaborative will help ease the tensions along the way.

One imperative in a shared pastor relationship: each church is still autonomous. The pastor is called to each church separately. Any agreements should understand that each church is free to decide to back out of an agreement with sufficient notice (90 days) and reserves the right to dismiss a pastor regardless of what the other church wishes to do.

Communicating frequently and allowing more honesty in sharing what we really think of a shared pastor's efforts at each church will be necessary. Working productively and proactively will be the best way to keep a shared pastor able to serve yet not be burdened again and again by misunderstandings or misgivings that could have been addressed earlier or at least more often.

Each church should realize that the other church is an equal in that they too will have special services (Christmas Eve observances) and times when tragedy strikes one church but not the other. A measure of how healthy such a shared pastor church responds to the news that it is a rough week over at

the other church would be the expression of concern for a sister church, an understanding that the pastor may have to pivot to meet the temporary unique crisis needs of the other church and best of all, an offer from the unaffected church to be in prayer and potentially of assistance with any basic needs. Such a church realizes this is a virtuous way of being sisters and brothers in Christ to the other church. It also serves as a reminder that when their church has a similar unanticipated crisis, the other church will be there for them!

From the financial standpoint, each church should be prepared to adjust how they allocate the pastoral budget to reflect what the pastor may need when combining the two incomes. One church may provide the resources for a parsonage or housing allowance. Another church may have their pastoral budget now in the areas of ensuring a pastor's healthcare or pension premiums get paid on schedule.

Working with an appropriate financial consultant or accountant may be needed once the candidate is called and has given some notes on where they wish the two sets of pastoral funds available to be best utilized. Working out what is needed and also what makes the most sense to a given pastor's allocation needs for compensation and benefits will be best worked out early in the call process to avoid any unfortunate issues!

The two churches may wish to form a shared search committee. If one of the churches involved is from a different polity structure than the American Baptist congregation lives within, it will be helpful to discuss early in the process if there are criteria or expectations by the other church's denomination that will require extra time or consideration in the process of searching. In the ABCNYS Region, there is a long history of federated and united churches where baptismal methods differ, so the candidate pool will be necessarily limited to those pastors, particularly Baptists, who are comfortable with baptizing in ways that meet the baptismal and communion understandings of each church's core convictions.

In a shared pastor type arrangement between a pastor and two churches, it can be economically motivated, yet such relationships will remain far more "business" than they could be about sharing the work of ministry together. The church that shares a pastor may gain a deeper appreciation for what it means to be part of the greater Church.

American Baptists love being local churches and may that never change. Yet in the end, we will be able to do more for the cause of Christ when we realize we are not alone and a nearby sister church will help us as we help them navigate these times when funds are fewer but opportunities to thrive could increase when we are willing to risk and step beyond what we have done before!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MacDonald, G. Jeffrey. *Part-Time Is Plenty: Thriving without Full-Time Clergy*. (Westminister/John Knox Press, 2020).

ABC-NYS Resources:

“Part-Time and Shared Pastors”, facilitated by Rev. Jerrod Huguenot (ZOOM, February 2024)

“Part-Time Is Plenty”, facilitated by Rev. Steve Reynolds (October 2021, six one hour videos)

Both viewable: <https://www.abc-nys.org/part-time-ministry-in-upstate-new-york.html>

Appendix I:

MINISTRY COVENANTS

We recommend that all pastors be called with a ministry covenant document. This document describes the call to a pastor by the congregation and outlines the terms of the call, particularly with regard to the time commitment, general sense of weekly and ongoing pastoral duties reasonable to the amount of time a pastor is called to serve per week or month, and gives all parties a sense of mutual accountability to ensure that the habit of over-functioning (on the part of a pastor) or over-expecting (on the part of the congregation) is kept in check (or balance, if you prefer). And keep everyone accountable not to under-function, lay or ordained leaders alike!

A ministry covenant can be holy work, drawing together in written form the understanding of how the church and the pastor will collaborate in carrying out the ministry and mission of the church. Acknowledging our limits as human beings and our fidelity to carry out the Gospel with integrity (even to ourselves and our pastor) allows ministry in a part-time church to get about the work of the church, while not expecting the pastor to be the only worker in the ministry! A ministry covenant that stresses this call is a collaborative effort will help when it's time to return to the document and check to see how we are doing fulfilling what we promised to one another!

[SAMPLE COVENANT OF CALL AGREEMENT FOR A LESS THAN FULL-TIME POSITION]

Provided by the American Baptist Churches of New York State

Items in green may or may not apply to a given situation.

Believing that God has called us to share in a mutual ministry in Christ, the members of _____ Church in _____, New York, at a regularly-called meeting held on _____, voted to enter into covenant with _____ to become the church's pastor beginning on _____.

I. TERMS OF CALL

This is an agreement between _____ Church in _____, New York and _____ (*name of person with title, if ordained*) _____ called as pastor. Believing that the cause and mission of Christ's church will be forwarded under *his/her* pastoral and spiritual leadership, the congregation joins in this agreement.

The terms of call outlined in this agreement are contingent upon the pastor holding or expeditiously pursuing recognized ministerial standing with American Baptist Churches of New York State. Should ministerial standing be suspended or revoked for any reason, this agreement can be terminated immediately by a congregational vote.

The church calls the pastor to accept the responsibilities and duties as pastor, including those described in our Articles of Incorporation (if applicable) and Bylaws of this church and those by the customs of the pastoral office of American Baptist Churches USA. These include the responsibility of participation and leadership in the mission of the Association, the Region, the denomination, and the wider Body of Christ. The church further expects that the pastor sign and abide by The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches (attached) and complete and sign the Statement of Personal Conduct (attached). A call to this church's ministry is contingent upon a background check completed and reviewed by the search committee or the appropriate church officer.

II. PASTORAL BUDGET AND WEEKLY MINISTRY NEEDS

NOTE: All figures listed in this section are annual amounts and will be pro-rated during the remainder of the current budget year.

The terms of call for this pastoral work is understood by all parties to be a less than full-time position. It is acknowledged that the pastor may be dependent on sources of income other than those provided in this call agreement. The congregation understands they offer a call that does not provide for a pastor to be solely employed by this church and will work collaboratively with the pastor to ensure appropriate time commitments and limits are observed to support a healthy balance of ministry work and employment beyond the congregation.

The position shall be considered part-time, expected to be the equivalence of _____ hours per week. The total pastoral compensation budget (including salary, housing, benefits, and Social Security offset) will not exceed \$_____ in the present year.

By mutual agreement, the pastor directs this amount to be designated as:

Cash Salary

Beginning on _____, the church will pay a salary of \$_____ on a (weekly / biweekly / semimonthly / monthly) basis.

Housing Allowance

The church will designate \$_____ of the above salary as housing allowance, at the pastor's discretion, in accordance with Internal Revenue Service guidelines. This housing allowance may include the costs of housing, utilities, maintenance, and furnishings.

The church will provide the pastor with a church-owned parsonage. The church will assume responsibility for the maintenance, upkeep, and utility costs for the parsonage. The fair rental value of the parsonage along with the cost of utilities and any additional designated housing allowance shall be considered the housing allowance for all calculations in this covenant.

Compensation and Weekly Schedule

By agreement, the church expects _____ hours per week devoted to the ministry of the church. Church leadership and the pastor shall develop a job description that outlines the duties expected to be fulfilled. It is understood that a minimum of ten hours per week will be given to the needs of the preparation and delivery of weekly Sunday preaching and related worship needs. If congregational needs of a given week exceed reasonable limits, the pastor has discretion to work less time the following week to compensate for the extra time expended. Also required will be the commonly expected special services requiring the pastor's leadership and presence.

If the pastor is employed by other employers, it is understood that immediate availability for congregational care cannot be expected at all times. The congregational leadership will work collaboratively with the pastor to ensure the ministry of the church is not solely upon the pastor.

A helpful guide for weekly schedule: *up to 15 hour work week (¼ time)*
20-25 hour work week (½ time)
30-35 hour work week (¾ time)
35+ hour work week (full time)

Social Security and Medicare Offset

The church will compensate the pastor for the portion of Social Security and Medicare tax an employer would pay if the pastor were a non-clergy employee of the church. This amount is the percentage established annually by the IRS. The current percentage equals _____ (presently, 0.765%)_____ of cash salary and housing allowance. This amount will be included in the regular paycheck.

III. BENEFITS

MMBB

The church will pay, on the pastor's behalf: (1) an amount equal to 16% of salary and housing allowance or (2) a retirement only contribution of \$ _____ into the pastor's account into the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of ABCUSA.

Health and Dental Plan

The church will provide coverage for the pastor and eligible immediate family.

Future Designations

The minister may choose to negotiate with church leadership in the future to have a portion of their salary reallocated to fund the provision of benefits.

IV. OTHER PASTORAL MINISTRY EXPENSES

The church recognizes that to call forth the gifts God has given the pastor to lead the church faithfully, they must provide both resources and support that will assist the pastor in remaining vital, creative, and energetic for this ministry. Therefore, the church will provide the following reimbursement for expenses.

Professional Expenses

The church will reimburse the pastor for professional expenses not to exceed _____ per annum. Professional expenses include such items as books, journals, entertainment expenses for church guests, professional dues, meetings, and ministry related travel. The pastor will submit expense items for reimbursement on a monthly basis.

The church values the pastor's participation in our American Baptist Churches national, regional, and other meetings. When these events occur during a time the church regularly gathers for worship, the church will make other provision to provide leadership for worship services, upon approval of church leadership. The amount established for these meeting expenses is included as a portion of professional expenses.

Continuing Education

The church encourages and supports the pastor's opportunities to participate in continuing education programs. The church has budgeted \$ _____ annually for the cost of educational opportunities. The church expects the pastor to discuss with church leadership, in advance, the nature, timing, and programmatic impact of these opportunities so that they can negotiate the dates and types of events that best support the church's programs and the pastor's needs for development.

V. WEEKLY SCHEDULE, VACATION, FAMILY AND COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

Weekly Schedule

The church realizes that the demands of church life come at all hours of the day and night. The church recognizes the pastor's need each week to take time for self and family. Therefore, the church encourages the pastor to take the equivalent of _____ days off per week for rest, relaxation and time with family and friends.

Vacation

The church provides the pastor four (4) weeks of paid vacation leave per year, accrued at one week for every three months served. The congregation is responsible for the church programs and worship life during vacation. A reasonable amount of time devoted to sharing in state and national work, continuing education experiences, giving leadership at camps and conferences, and similar activities shall not be considered as part of the vacation period. Church leadership, in consultation with the pastor, will determine if unused vacation days can be carried over from one year to the next and if a departing pastor will be compensated for unused vacation days.

Personal/Sick Leave

The church realizes that life is not always predictable or within our control. Therefore, in the event of special circumstances, compassionate leave is available. The church understands special circumstances to include the death of an immediate family member, sickness, or personal crisis. The church provides the pastor with up to _____ days per year. Compassionate leave does not accrue, and unused compassionate leave is not payable upon departure of the pastor.

VI. REVIEW OF PASTORAL COMPENSATION

Through the Church Council/Governing Board and in accordance with the church's budget cycle, the church will negotiate with the pastor, annually, to update the financial aspects of this agreement, keeping in mind increases in the cost-of-living, possible merit increases in salary, and consequent increases in benefits based on salary and housing.

VII. OFFICE PROVISIONS

The church agrees to provide you with office space, either in the church or parsonage. All equipment, files/passwords, keys, and other items provided by the church or integral to the church's ministry must be returned at the end of a pastoral call.

VIII. EVALUATION OF OUR CHURCH'S MINISTRY

The church accepts its responsibility to live faithfully and in covenant with the pastor. Accordingly, at the end of the first year together and every year thereafter, the church covenants to review and evaluate the priorities and total ministry of the church. The church will establish a Pastoral Relations Committee with responsibility to conduct this review evaluation.

IX. MEDIATION PROCEDURES

The church acknowledges that even as we pledge our faithfulness to God, to one another and to the pastor, there may be times when difficulties within our relationship begin to overwhelm us. In those instances, the church covenants with the pastor to seek the support and guidance of our Regional Executive Minister in order that we actively work to maintain the health of our relationships. Either the pastor or an elected body of church leadership can request such a consultation, if in the opinion of either party, our relationships are becoming ineffective or unhealthy.

X. TERMINATION OF PASTORAL CALL

The church recognizes that relationships are always changing and that many reasons can lead to a separation. Thus, either the pastor or the congregation can terminate this pastoral call agreement by giving at least 90 days' written notice to the other or upon other terms to which we both mutually agree. The pastor is an at will employer under New York State law.

AGREEMENT

In witness thereof, we have signed our names on this ____ day of _____ 20_____.
For the congregation:

Moderator/President: (Signature) _____

Pastor-Elect's Acceptance: (Signature) _____

APPENDIX 2:

Case Study #1:

Pastor Smith came to First Baptist seven years ago. While the pastor works at the local school district as a bus driver and substitute teacher, some congregants complain that the pastor does not keep office hours every weekday morning like they are accustomed to previous pastors. (Until Pastor Smith was called, First Baptist's pastors were full-time. Finances have changed, so Pastor Smith is paid about 60% of what the previous pastor received in his last three years before retirement.) Pastor Smith takes very little time off from either job, as it is the only way to keep up with bills and other financial stressors, particularly with student loan payments from seminary training years ago.

Somehow, every Sunday morning goes with a 20-minute sermon and worship planned by the pastor. A midweek Bible study happens on Tuesday nights. The pastor will make the rounds to see the sick and hospitalized. Pastoral care happens on an emergency basis, and sometimes also by advance appointment at the church office. And, if there is a funeral on a weekday, the pastor somehow officiates, even if it comes from taking a day off from his school district position's paid time off. People still talk at coffee hour and in the parking lot, wishing they saw more of their pastor visiting them at home and being out in the community more to represent the church (and hopefully attract more people to attend First Baptist!). The board of deacons hears these concerns, yet they wonder how to address these issues with Pastor Smith.

Meanwhile, Pastor Smith sincerely wishes more time could be spent on ministry. Pastor Smith works five days a week at the district, plus occasional Saturdays when extra drivers are needed. Pastor Smith feels tired at best most days. Pastor Smith is also contemplating leaving ministry altogether as the stressors mount.

Also of note: No formal agreement between Pastor Smith and the church was set up when the call was extended.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- 1. At the outset, what would have been more helpful to have worked out between the church and the pastor now that we see what things look like for the church and the pastor seven years later?*
- 2. How familiar are the sentiments expressed by the congregants about the pastor working part-time versus what they remember from previous pastorates where the pastor served with the church as the pastor's only source of income/employment?*
- 3. Pastor Smith preaches, plans worship, offers a Bible study and provides pastoral care, even if only on an emergency basis. What could help the church members and Pastor Smith at this point in their ministry together? How involved are the church members in the ministry of the church?*

Case study #2:

Sunnyside Baptist is a long-time presence downtown on Main Street in their small city. About thirty years ago, the average congregant walked or drove a short distance to worship and church activities. With urban sprawl, the fewer congregants of Sunnyside today live a greater distance away, so no walking to church any longer! The neighborhood around Sunnyside Baptist has seen some transition, moving from long-time home owners to a higher number of rental units per capita. The local public library branch began stocking more books in languages other than English and offering increased support services to those needing English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and help navigating the complexities of state and federal assistance programs.

Sunnyside's membership is much older on average these days, and a few saints have recently gone on to be with the Lord. The pastor who served Sunnyside has left for a new call out of state, and some in the church wanted a new pastor to start the minute after the last pastor's taillights went over the horizon.

One thing the Trustees know: the pastor left somewhat due to the financial stressors of the church budget. In the last five years, the pastor received no pay raises, and in the past year, the church approved a budget that reduced the pastor's package by fifteen percent. Even then, the Trustees see what's coming: the church will not be able to call a new pastor, short of a miracle, at the recently reduced pastoral budget. Yet they do wonder how to communicate this to the congregation, as it will be received as "more bad news".

Reflection Questions:

- 1. At what point in the pastoral transition should the Trustees share the financial concern they have about the overall budget and its impact on future pastoral packages?*
- 2. What questions might be helpful to prepare for a church business meeting to discuss the impact identified by the Trustees? Should a search committee have started their work before this meeting happened? Is the only consideration the church's budget or what other factors about their church and community might have some bearing?*
- 3. After discussion, what action steps might a congregation give to its leadership and search committee about the work of searching for a new pastor? Are the solutions forward looking or made with financial duress alone informing next steps?*
- 4. If you were Sunnyside Baptist Church, what type of pastor and pastoral skill sets would you be looking for in a new minister? Is it more of what we knew, or informed by more what we know now?*
- 5. What does this case study suggest for your church's own conversation needs about pastoral ministry needs into the future? How well does your church communicate such information about its internal and external challenges in a way that engages more people than just lay leaders alone?*
- 6. Above, it is suggested that a transition period allow for time to think about big picture issues. Are we willing to take a breath and let some time pass before the next pastor is called? Further, what sort of pastor should serve us in the meantime? Do we want/need a trained interim pastor or do we wish to go with the model where a consultant steps in from time to time to help the church body be in dialogue about our future while a "temporary shepherd" type interim helps us maintain the basic needs of the church's preaching, teaching and caregiving?*

Case study #3:

Pastor Nic is new to Community Baptist Church. It's in a rural community, surrounded by acres of beautiful upstate New York farmland. The church called Pastor Nic with the understanding that the pastor would provide weekly worship and receive a financial package that they have worked out will represent sufficient funds for twenty-five hours per week. Pastor Nic has found another part-time job that will be thirty hours per week, though it will be a thirty-minute commute to this other job.

Pastor Nic knows the weekly worship commitment alone is ten hours, but how does Pastor Nic use the other fifteen? The search committee talked about five home bound/nursing home resident members that needed regular visits and communion. A weekly Bible study would be great. And then there are meetings that the church said the pastor could choose to attend (i.e. board of Deacons, board of Trustees) when time allowed.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. What steps did the church take before the search committee sent out its job description for the pastor search?*
- 2. If Pastor Nic is working 25 hours at the church and 30 hours (with 1 hour round trip commute time each day), how does the church assess how well this particular pastorate is going with regard to meeting the church's needs yet also realizing this pastor is working 50-60 hours per week?*
- 3. For your church and its needs, how would you describe the duties spent weekly on the "other fifteen hours" at your church? Make a list for what you think is most likely the best use of this allocated limited time for a pastor. Then share around the room with other participants to see what people think is "fair" use of a pastor's non-Sunday morning related duties.*
- 4. Communication is lifted up frequently in this guide as a key part of a part-time pastor and a church relating well together. What is in place already with your church to facilitate good communication and what are some areas where the church and pastor could improve?*
- 5. After six months, Community Baptist Church realizes Pastor Nic is burning the candle on both ends, just like many members of the congregation (especially the younger and not retired households). What are some constructive ways Community Baptist Church can adjust Pastor Nic's duties and find ways to have lay ministry support of these areas in need of more focus from the church?*

Case study #4:

Bob is at the local post office when he runs into Jane, a friend from Rotary. After the usual exchanges of pleasantries and grumbling about the weather forecast, Jane mentions to Bob that her pastor is leaving for a new call, yet the congregation is struggling with how to move forward after some budget challenges over the past three years. Bob agrees that his congregation is in the same boat. Both churches are approximately fifteen miles from one another.

Bob wonders if this might be an opportunity to share a pastor. His pastor might be willing to serve the other congregation if things can be worked out. Jane agrees to ask her lay leaders if this might be something to explore with Bob's congregation nearby.

As it happens in small towns, word gets around, and Bob's pastor is perplexed to hear this new idea. How did this idea get started? The pastor would enjoy more time in religious work than the day job at the local insurance company. Nonetheless, it seems a lot of questions are percolating at the next week's coffee hour after worship.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. What does this case study reflect about the communication skills in the congregation? How do we understand in smaller communities, the grapevine is active, yet maintain some order in the fray, so that each church can approach the question of pastor sharing better than no process at all?*
- 2. When does a church need to inform their clergyperson and include them in such a discussion?*
- 3. If our church was to ask such a question, what would be the basic steps to decide if we want to seek a partnering church to share a pastor?*
- 4. Was there a time previous in your congregation when a pastor sharing agreement happened? How did it go? What did you learn about this experience that you wish to build upon and what do you wish to do better the next time? Are there persons in your congregation for whom this arrangement is not readily embraced? How do you listen and process their concerns?*
- 5. What do you believe would be the negotiable part of Sunday morning scheduling with the worship hour and the pastor's availability before/after worship? How do you plan to provide support to the pastor and congregation with others stepping in to cover Sunday morning incidental needs?*

Case Study #5:

After worship, a conversation between two lay leaders Liz and Betty happens to turn to the pastor. For the past year, the relatively new pastor began serving this church and a nearby church twenty minutes away. Both churches have agreed with their shared pastor that twenty-five hours will be spent equally each week at each church. Duties include weekly worship and related preparation (10 hours per week), offering two separate bible studies for each church due to scheduling preferences, and a modicum of office hours and visitation to homebound congregants and persons in hospital or care home. Further, the pastor attends at least 2-3 committee meetings at each church as they are scheduled (usually on weeknights for up to 2 hours).

Betty says people feel the pastor is not here enough. Liz asks, "Which people are you speaking about?" She wants names. Betty declines, and just says back, "People are complaining, Liz. We need to do something about the pastor."

Meanwhile, in the car traveling between the two churches, the pastor is drinking coffee for the caffeine jolt needed for a second full service that morning. Three people in one church are ailing, including one in critical hospice care. The minister also is planning a funeral for the other church as the funeral home called Saturday evening and asked if a non-member's funeral could be officiated as they were somewhat Protestant and preferred a Baptist service. Given the shortage of pastors in other churches in the greater area, increasingly, this pastor is one of the few still keeping traditional office hours, and therefore, often contacted at the office by the funeral home or the hospitals in search of community care needs.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. How could Liz and Betty's conversation go better with some other choices in their communication skills reflected above?*
- 2. What sort of lay leadership should be in place to help the pastor and the congregation of each church keep in conversation about how the sharing agreement is going for the individual churches as well as the pastor?*
- 3. Each church has its own unique identity and internal culture. How would you describe your church and its understanding of pastoral ministry? After this discussion at each church, has your church asked for a meet-up with the other church's leaders to discuss their own findings? How might this discussion lead to better communication and a pastoral model that does not lead to a short-term pastoral tenure?*
- 4. Not noted above is the pastor's schedule for time off each week. How is your church encouraging your pastor to take time from your church? (We'll let the other church have that conversation as well.) What might your church do to help provide the pastor some strategic assistance?*