

Scenario One

Three churches each with an average attendance of under 100 are located within a few miles of each other in an urban area in south Florida. One church is more of a ministry than a traditional church in that the focus of its ministry is on feeding the hungry and caring for the poor and broken. It is unable to pay 100% of its apportionments. The pastor is an Elder. The other two churches are ethnic churches with appointed Elders which also struggle to pay apportionments. One of the churches receives equitable salary support. The future is questionable for all of the churches. They need a new way to engage in ministry and find new hope for the future.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating an Urban Mission Cooperative Parish. In this arrangement, the pastor of the mission-oriented church would become the Director of the cooperative parish. The Director needs to be the strongest member of the team and will be the highest paid staff person.

Staffing Options

Replace the other two elders with supply pastors, deacons and/or candidates for ministry. This would result in a decrease in pastoral costs for the churches in the parish. It should also allow them to be more able to pay apportionments at 100% and invest more funds in mission and ministry.

Other possible cost-reducing scenarios:

- If one or more of the churches gave up its charter, there would also be a reduction in total cost to the cooperative parish
- One of the church facilities might not be necessary after the cooperative parish was formed. If it was sold, total costs would be reduced and additional funds made available for investing in ministry.
- One of the churches might sell its facility and invest that money in a longer-term lease of a smaller, more suitable facility for doing the mission ministry of the cooperative parish

Scenario Two

A healthy growing church averaging over 400 in worship is located near two smaller churches which average 100 and 50 in worship, respectively. The two smaller churches have been declining in worship attendance for most of the last decade. The pastoral salaries are higher than might be expected at the two smaller churches since they have not been adjusted to reflect the decline of the congregations. Both of these churches have appointed elders. Both of these churches pay about 50% of their apportionments.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a Cooperative Parish designed to mentor the smaller churches and strengthen the ministry of all of the churches.

Staffing Options

Retain two elders and replace the other elder with a deacon or a lay person with skills in one or more areas of needed ministry (such as outreach, evangelism, conflict resolution, missions, etc.). One of the elders could preach at both of the smaller churches while the deacon or lay person (ministry specialist) could work throughout the cooperative parish. The staff and church leaders at the three churches would share their ministry expertise with the other churches in the parish.

Other possible cost-reducing scenarios:

- It may be possible to reduce the number of support staff in the parish by pooling resources (custodial, secretarial, etc.)
- A single ministry specialist (such as a youth worker) may be able to meet the needs of all of the churches in the parish. In this example, perhaps youth ministry would be based at one or two of the churches and all of the churches would participate in the youth ministry
- Some equipment (and the accompanying leases) may no longer be needed if the churches share items such as copiers and computers.

Scenario Three

A church effectively served by an elder and located in a relatively rural area has five small-membership churches located within 20 miles of it. Most of these churches are served by supply pastors (full or part-time). The churches pay an average of 80% of their apportionments. There is a desire to increase the knowledge and skill of the supply pastors as well as provide some form of elder oversight and assistance for them.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish designed for the purpose of supporting the ministry of the supply pastors and strengthening the mentoring ministry of the elder.

Possible strategies for implementation

- The elder would be available for consultation if the supply pastors had any questions
- The pastors could meet periodically to discuss ministry, brainstorm creative solutions, coordinate calendars, investigate possible joint activities, etc.
- The pastors could agree to preach and/or make hospital visits when one was sick or out of town or when the hospital was significantly closer to one of the pastors than the one with a parishioner in the hospital
- The elder could hold periodic training sessions, workshops, book discussions, etc. in order to increase the knowledge base of the supply pastors. Training in practical ministry skills could also be provided.

- The elder could invite one or more of the other pastors to join him/her in performing weddings, funerals and other special services in order to provide practical experience in conducting such services prior to the supply pastor being called upon to conduct such a service on his/her own
- The mentoring opportunities for the elder can sharpen his/her skills in coaching and expand his/her ministry of teaching

Scenario Four

A mid-size church has three smaller churches (average attendance of 120, 90 and 70) within ten miles. All of the churches fall in the “dying” or “maintaining” category on the Church Transformation Survey. Each of the churches struggles to pay its apportionments and morale is relatively low. There is an openness to change within each congregation but resources and leadership seem to be lacking. Of the three smaller churches, one is served by a local pastor, one is served by a commissioned minister and one is served by an elder.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish for the purpose of intentional congregational transformation. The new pastor appointed to the largest church would serve as the Director of the cooperative parish. This person would be selected based on a track record of growing churches and effectively serving in turn-around situations. This person would also need skills in coaching and overcoming congregational resistance. This person would be the highest paid person in the parish and the key player in this ministry arrangement.

Staffing Options

One or more of the pastors would be replaced in consultation with the Director (as called for in the Book of Discipline). One or more of the new pastors may be retired, student or supply. Each church would make a contribution to the parish budget. Some of the funds could be invested in the salary of the Director to allow for the appointment of a highly-skilled pastor that previously was beyond the salary the largest church in the parish could offer.

Scenario Five

Two churches located 15 minutes apart are both facing serious difficulties. One church is about to run out of money while the other is probably just a couple of years from closing. Attendance at the first church is over 200 while attendance at the second church is about 100. The first church is burdened by a lot of debt and past-due bills. The second church has a congregation with an average age of 70. The first church has just experienced its third split within a year. The second church does not have any attendees who live within a mile of the church (and it is located in a full residential neighborhood). The second church does not have a parsonage. An Elder with a base salary of \$45,000-50,000 is appointed to each church. Neither church has significant financial assets in the bank.

There is a desire to save both churches. Both of the current pastors will be moving. Neither church is paying more than 30% of its assigned apportionments.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish for the following purposes:

1. Short-term: keep the churches open and get them financially self-supporting
2. Long-term: bring transformation to both churches

The following is a description of what was done as the scenario above describes the churches that form the South Sarasota Teaching Parish.

Staffing

An elder was appointed to be the Director of the cooperative parish. His salary was set at a very low level (approximately \$35,000) in order to help the churches. The Sarasota District paid his salary for the first five months as the churches were unable to do so. His role was to be the administrative leader of the parish and work on transformation issues. He also served as the Senior Pastor of the larger church. He lived (and still resides) in Sarasota in a house owned by the Sarasota District and the district paid the mortgage. The parsonage is about 35 miles from each church.

A retired Elder was appointed to serve in the cooperative parish. His role was to serve as the Senior Pastor of the smaller church and provide pastoral care for both churches (hospital visitation, follow-up visits, etc.). His salary was set at \$30,000 and he lived in a home he owned about 20 minutes from the church.

A candidate for ministry was appointed to serve as the Assistant Pastor. He was appointed to the larger church and they were responsible for paying apportionments on his salary. He lived in the parsonage at the smaller church and his salary came mostly from the contributions of the smaller church. In addition to housing and utilities, he received a cash salary of \$20,000. His role was to split time between the two congregations and to learn as much as he could. He worked with the youth program and made some pastoral visits for the larger congregation and worked on transformation issues, made pastoral visits and preached once a month at the smaller congregation.

Compensation costs

	Previous	Cooperative Parish
- pastoral salaries and fringe benefits	\$90,000	\$85,000
- health insurance	\$17,520	\$8760
- pension	\$12,000	\$6000
- housing allowance (larger church)	\$15,000	\$0
Total	\$134,520	\$99,760

How the funds were handled

Both churches sent a check to the Sarasota District office every month for expenses related to the teaching parish. The district acted as the source of the checks but did not add money to the teaching parish account. The smaller congregation directly paid utility expenses related to the parsonage. Both churches continued to directly pay other church-related expenses (power, water, office expenses, church secretary, etc.). The district sent salary checks to the pastors drawn from the teaching parish account.

Other ways expenses were reduced

A significant number of cost-cutting measures were introduced at the churches in order to balance the budget. Among these were the following.

- the parish nurse at the smaller church was eventually released
- the number of phone lines was reduced at the larger church
- some ministries were funded through the use of designated funds
- the interest rate on the mortgage at the larger church was lowered
- youth and children's ministry budgets were reduced but activities were increased and staffed with volunteers
- yellow page advertising was reduced in size with a resulting decrease in cost
- a small loan (\$50,000) was obtained from the Florida UM Foundation; this was only secured when 11 families within the church co-signed on the loan

The results

The teaching parish has been in existence since June, 2002. The Director began working part-time with the larger church December 31, 2001. Both churches receive more pastoral services than prior to the formation of the teaching parish at a reduced cost. The budgets have been brought into line with income. Attendance and giving have increased for both churches. The larger church is now a "transforming" church on the Church Transformation Survey while the smaller church has moved from "dying" to "maintaining." The mortgage of the larger church was just refinanced with the Florida UM Foundation at a considerable savings to the church. The teaching parish anticipates hiring a full-time staff person in Youth and Family Ministry early in 2004. The youth group at the larger church has grown to 75. Both churches are reaching out to the communities in which they reside and anticipate taking part in a Celebrate Jesus Mission in July 2004.

Scenario Six

Two historic churches are located less than one mile apart. One is an historically ethnic church and the other is an historically Anglo church. The ethnic church is growing in spirit, numbers and ministry but lacks adequate facilities for expanding its outreach to the community. The Anglo church is declining in spirit, numbers and ministry but has nice facilities that are woefully underutilized. Both churches have an appointed Elder. The Anglo church has paid very little towards its apportionments while the ethnic church has paid all of its apportionments.

Together, the two churches could have a wonderful ministry but apart they are both unable to be all they were created to be.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cross-racial cooperative parish for the purpose of strengthening both churches.

Staffing Options

The ethnic pastor becomes the Director of the cooperative parish and the Anglo pastor is replaced with one or more retired/student/supply pastors. A significant savings results from not having the fixed costs related to a second appointed pastor. The cost savings is used to pay apportionments and invest in additional ministry to the community.

Scenario Seven

An established church recognizes the need for a new faith community in neighborhood beyond its reasonable service area. The need for a new church is great and the established church wants to be a ministry partner with the new congregation. There is a willingness to invest in this situation but not enough resources to completely underwrite the cost of the church planting project. The Conference agrees with the assessment of the church that a new community of faith is needed in that location.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish for the purpose of starting a new church.

Option One

The current Associate Pastor of the church has the gifts and skills needed to plant the new church. The Conference agrees to invest in the situation and provides roughly 50% of the cost of the Associate Pastor's compensation. The established church invests the other 50% and releases the Associate to work on the planting project. The support services needed for the new church (secretarial, copies, etc.) are provided by the established church.

Option Two

A second established church in the area is contacted and expresses a willingness to invest in starting a new church. The churches pool their funds to provide for the compensation and support of the new church. The Conference might invest funds in this situation or find yet another church to join in the project.

Scenario Eight

Three struggling ethnic churches are located within two miles of each other. Two of the churches are served by local pastors and one has an appointed elder. All three churches are housed in a facility given to them after an Anglo church was

closed. The costs of insuring and maintaining the buildings are like a millstone around the necks of these hard-working people.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cross-cultural (multi-ethnic) cooperative parish for the purpose of strengthening each church. The primary savings in this scenario would not come from a change in staff or compensation. It would, rather, come from the three congregations sharing one facility and thereby eliminating a lot of fixed costs. All three churches would have more funds to invest in ministry and would be more likely to grow and provide dynamic ministry to their respective communities.

Scenario Nine

A larger, growing church desires to increase its participation in mission and ministry. It is seeking an alternative strategy to spending a large amount of money to purchase additional property adjacent to the church. Within the district is an urban church that is engaged in mission but which is struggling to meet its budget and is unable to fulfill its apportionment obligation.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a mission participation cooperative parish for the purpose of expanding the mission presence of the churches and lowering the fixed costs of ministry for the urban church.

Staffing Options

The staffing could remain the same with the larger church investing people and financial resources into the urban church. The pastor of the urban church could be listed as the Associate of the larger church with the larger church assigned the apportionments based on his/her compensation. A deacon could be brought in to direct the mission element of the parish and a retired/student/supply pastor brought in to conduct worship services.

Scenario Ten

Two or three small to mid-size churches are struggling to meet their budgets and grow. Each has invested in a staff person in a specialized area of ministry (youth, children, family life, etc.). None of the churches has more than about 20 participants in the ministry program. Apportionment giving is suffering due to the investment in these staff positions.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a staff sharing cooperative parish for the purpose of lowering expenses, increasing the effectiveness of ministry and reinvesting funds in apportionments.

Staffing Options

The three churches would pool their resources to hire one staff person with a higher level of competence or bring the most effective staff member up to full-time employment. This would result in a lower total staff cost and improved stewardship.

Scenario Eleven

A church located near a college/university wants to extend ministry to the students, staff and faculty of the college/university. A United Methodist Campus Minister has been appointed to serve at that college/university and has about 30 students regularly involved in student ministry. The church does not want to duplicate efforts or compete with the campus minister but recognizes the large number of people who could become involved in such an outreach. Campus Ministry funds are tight and it is becoming more difficult to invest in campus settings.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a campus ministry cooperative parish for the purpose of effectively and efficiently ministering to the students, staff and faculty of the college/university. Fewer Conference resources would need to be invested in this setting if church facilities were utilized instead of leasing/owning space on campus. The same would be true if the campus minister also served as the Associate at the church and split his or her time since a group of 30 or 40 or even 50 people would rarely constitute or call for a full-time appointment.

Scenario Twelve

A church with abundant facilities is located near to one or more churches struggling with one of a variety of issues. These could include situations such as struggling ethnic churches, churches saddled with terrible facilities, a new church start that will not be financially viable by the end of its three year funding, a dying (very small membership) congregation or a church that loses its facility in a disaster and may need to share space for 1-2 years. The surrounding church(es) have needs and the other church has the resources to meet those needs.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a shared space cooperative parish in which the church with abundant facilities invites one or more other churches to share space with it – either for a short time or as long as forever. The cost savings comes from sharing the use of one facility, the reduction in associated costs and, perhaps, sharing staff.

Scenario Thirteen

A group of churches share a common interest in a particular ministry expression. Each is working to create a plan to address the ministry and identify resources to

invest in it. The ministry need is greater than any of the churches can adequately address.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a specialized ministry cooperative parish for the purpose of working together to address a specific ministry concern. Examples could include: homelessness, affordable housing, foreign missions, education of children and mentoring. The cost savings is the result of pooling finances and integrating ministry plans.