

AN OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE POLICIES ON COOPERATIVE PARISH MINISTRY

1. Appointments to cooperative parish ministry will, in accordance with the Book of Discipline, be given priority during the making of appointments (206.2, 206.6, 433.5b).
2. Appointments to cooperative parish ministry will begin with the selection of the Director of the cooperative parish. The Director will be expected to demonstrate leadership, teamwork, collegiality, missional focus and active participation in the empowerment of lay and clergy leaders within the cooperative parish. All appointments (and non-appointed staff selections) shall be made based upon spiritual gifting and the ability to constructively contribute to shared ministry (206.6).
3. The staffing decisions in a cooperative parish shall include the intentional consideration of candidates for ministry, Local Pastors, Lay Supply, Lay Speakers, Deacons, US 2's and retired pastors. The creation of a multi-cultural and/or multi-racial team shall be considered.
4. Cooperative parishes will only be formed for missional purposes. Merely reducing costs is not a sufficient reason for the establishment of a cooperative parish. Congregations that choose to remain as stuck, dying churches will not be eligible for inclusion in a cooperative parish. All churches are expected to become transforming congregations. Cooperative parish ministry is an appropriate tactic for accomplishing this in many congregations. Once formed, a cooperative parish can only be dissolved by the Cabinet (206.1).
5. It is hopeful that congregations will choose to become involved in shared ministry when the opportunity to do so is presented to them. Information about cooperative parish ministry and other forms of shared ministry shall be made available to all churches. The Cabinet may, however, assign a church to be part of a cooperative parish if the missional need outweighs the preference of allowing churches to choose to be part of a cooperative parish (206.2, 206.5, 206.6).
6. The definition of a parish is as follows: A parish consists of the people groups and communities significantly impacted by the ministries of a particular pastor, church staff, church (congregation) or churches. These people groups and/or communities are their intentional focus of ministry and are so identified for the purpose of increasing the number of disciples of Jesus in a manner that is loving, just and inclusive.
7. Training shall be provided for those persons who are appointed to serve as the Director of a cooperative parish (206.5).

8. The Director of a cooperative parish may be an Elder, a Commissioned Minister, a Deacon or a Local Pastor. The Director of a Teaching Parish must be an Elder (205.3).

9. Equitable salary support shall be made available to a cooperative parish only for the purpose of intentional transformation following an approved plan submitted by the Director of the cooperative parish and approved by the District Superintendent and the Director of the Office of Congregational Transformation.

10. The creation of a cooperative parish may necessitate an investment of funding during the start-up process. The primary responsibility for providing these funds belongs to the district in which the cooperative parish is located.

11. District boundaries shall not be an obstacle to the formation of a cooperative parish or other form of shared ministry.

12. Cooperative parishes are encouraged to create a Lay Council of some form for the dissemination of information, enhancing the effectiveness of the cooperative parish and fostering communication and cooperation between/among the participating congregations (206.3, 258.2.c, 258.2.d).

13. It is recommended that the Board of Missions in each district, along with the District Superintendent (and any other persons he/she invites to be part of the conversation), review the churches in the district and suggest congregations that for missional purposes may be candidates for participating in an existing or a future cooperative parish (206.2, 213).

14. The missional purpose will determine the churches that participate in any given cooperative parish. For some cooperative parishes, proximity will not be the primary factor determining eligibility for inclusion in the shared ministry (206.3).

15. While appointments are made annually, the stability and effectiveness of the cooperative ministry will be enhanced by longer staff tenures. It is anticipated that most staff appointments will last for at least two years with Directors serving at least three years.

16. The formation of a cooperative or shared ministry will be enhanced if demographic information is obtained and a review of the values and mission of each participating congregation is conducted.

17. Elders who have served as effective Directors in cooperative parish ministry shall be considered when appointments to multi-staff churches are being made. Certain cooperative parishes may offer experiences and a setting which could indicate the ability of the Director to successfully pastor a church with multiple staff members.

18. Some form of evaluation shall be conducted annually to determine if a cooperative parish is meeting the goals created for its ministry.