

A Resource for Persons Considering Forming a Multiple Point Parish

*Kenneth W. Inskeep and Jacqueline Skrypek
Department for Research and Evaluation
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Based on a study of rural, multiple point parishes conducted by the Small Town and Rural Team of the Division for Outreach. The research members of the Team include: Leonard Dale, Kathy Gerking, Helen Harms, Richard Mork, Dave Preisinger, Glenn Simmons, Jennifer Johnson-Wrege and Keith Zeh. Sandra La Blanc served in an advisory capacity.

More and more congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are considering ways of bringing the church together through the sharing of challenges and opportunities of ministry. This is especially important to small town and rural congregations. Often times, challenges in these congregations are financial, and so, sharing the costs of staff, programs and pastors becomes advantageous. One way to share these costs is to form a parish—a multiple point parish. Traditionally, these parishes are a trusted way that rural congregations have dealt with mission, ministry, pastoral care and staffing issues throughout the years.

In 2001, the Small Town and Rural (StaR) Team of the Division for Outreach was asked to study and develop a resource for persons considering, or helping others to consider, forming a multiple point parish. The need for such a resource is based on the fact that congregations, particularly in rural areas where the population is declining, are finding it more difficult to call a pastor without some sharing of the costs. The number of congregations facing this difficulty is also increasing rapidly. In 1988, 1,547 congregations reported no called pastor

but by 2001, this figure increased to 2,431 (about 23 percent of all ELCA congregations.) Forty-seven percent (1,077) of those congregations reporting no called pastor worship less than 50 on a typical Sunday. The average total giving in these congregations is about \$30,500 while average operating expenses are \$32,700.

Currently, about 15 percent or 1,600 ELCA congregations are part of multiple point parish arrangements and 69 percent of these congregations are in rural farming or rural non-farming areas. Another 21 percent are in small towns of 10,000 or fewer persons. Nearly 1,200 of these congregations are linked with one other congregation. Multiple point parishes are most likely to be in synods in the Midwest. Synods where 50 percent or more of the congregations in the synod are part of multiple point parishes include Eastern North Dakota (140 congregations), Northwestern Minnesota (119), Southwestern Minnesota (101), South Dakota (112), Western North Dakota (90), and Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (80).

(See Appendix A for additional information on multiple point parishes.)

This report is a resource designed to assist persons who are considering becoming part of a multiple point parish.

WHAT IS A MULTIPLE POINT PARISH?

There is no standard set of criteria that define a multiple point parish in the ELCA. This means that almost any arrangement that can be agreed upon by the participating congregations is within the realm of possibility. There is, however, a kind of continuum along which multiple point parishes position themselves from two or more congregations agreeing to share some aspect of their ministry while maintaining their separate identities to those parishes that, for all practical purposes, share a single identity with multiple sites where ministry takes place.

The one thing almost all multiple point parishes have in common is that they share a pastor. Most do retain their own separate identities with their own building, council, budgets, and so on. When the congregations share only pastoral leadership, agreements about how that leadership is shared can be maintained by relatively simple oversight structures. For example, a mutual ministry committee made up of members from the separate church councils (or the oversight committee can be elected/appointed in any agreed upon way) from the participating congregations.

Many existing multiple point parishes also share some programming which most often has to do with youth ministry including confirmation ministry, or Sunday school, or vacation Bible school. Less frequently congregations share other staff persons

in addition to a pastor (or pastors) like an organist or a secretary (parish coordinator). Some share a parsonage. When the extent of sharing goes this far, the agreements are typically negotiated and managed by a parish council. These parish councils are often composed of members from the individual congregation councils with the proportion of parish council members reflecting the size of the individual congregations. The parish council would meet less often than a church council, perhaps on a quarterly basis, for example.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO FORM A MULTIPLE POINT PARISH?

Just as there is no single set of criteria for defining a multiple point parish, there is no single way of forming a multiple point parish.¹ Because congregations are sometimes very independent, perhaps even more so when they are in the midst of making difficult financial decisions, most Bishops (and their staffs) express caution about proposing, at least in detail, how ministry should or could be shared. Forming a multiple point parish can also be extremely complicated particularly if the financial condition of one congregation is significantly weaker than the others or an extensive amount of sharing is needed. Because of the complexities, there are many places for things to go wrong and if they do go wrong, the synod sometimes becomes the

¹ If the multiple point parish includes a congregation from another church body, which is in full communion with the ELCA, there are very specific procedures to be followed that are set out in Chapter 9 of the ELCA constitution.

focal point of discontent. So, in most cases, the synods have played a more passive role and let the congregations engage each other on their own terms. The congregations can take whatever route that seems most appropriate to them given their setting and characteristics. Then, as the process moves along, the synod will offer its support and, hopefully, its approval.

While there is no single process for forming a multiple point parish, the following important and helpful insights come from a study of multiple point parishes. Eight multiple point parishes in four synods were interviewed by teams of researchers selected by the Small Town and Rural Team (STaR) of the Division of Outreach, ELCA. (See Appendix B for hypothesis, research methodology and sample questions.)

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Over the course of the study, one principle emerged as key—so key that everything else was dependent upon it. **In short, the success of a multiple point parish depends on the strength of the relationship that can be established and maintained between the various partners.** Because this relationship is so foundational, considerable attention should be paid to it. It is like a marriage. If it is impossible to establish a positive, supportive, caring relationship of respect between the partners, the partnership will be limited, if not totally dysfunctional from the start.

The components of the relationship are presented below.

Common Purpose

It is very important that the congregations establish and agree on the validity of, at the very beginning of the process, a clear sense of their common purpose in sharing. What will be shared? Why will it be shared? How will this sharing strengthen the ministry of all the congregations in the parish?

Secondarily, each congregation in the parish should be committed to building up the other—to making each partner stronger and more effective in ministry. This building up should serve as the litmus test. If any agreement is proposed that makes one of the partners weaker or less effective in its own ministry, then some other way of achieving the desired outcome should be considered. If any agreement is proposed that does not receive the support of a plurality of congregational members in all the participating congregations, then some other way of achieving the desired outcome should be considered.

Identity as an Asset Instead of a Liability

As noted above, most of the multiple point parishes maintain their own identities. Given this fact, the STaR Team study suggested that it is best to build a strong relationship between the congregations, not by breaking down the individual identities, but by building them up. The goal is to achieve unity through diversity rather than unity through similarity. This means forming a complimentary whole that is strengthened by different assets. What are the strengths of each of the congregations? (An asset based approach is a good strategy for

identifying strengths.²) What gives each of the congregations its personality or character? How can these strengths be enhanced through the arrangements for sharing?

There is some evidence to suggest that members of congregations divide into two camps with regard to their views of forming a parish. Some see the rich history of their congregation (and its identity) and they fear that it may be lost. Others feel just as strongly about the financial and administrative benefits of sharing. The idea is to show that in many, many cases the identity of the existing congregations can be maintained while simultaneously gaining the financial advantages of sharing costs.

Communication

The more members of each of the congregations in the parish know and understand about each other, the better. This knowledge base should include familiarity with the history and traditions of each of the congregations. Secondly, there should be an ongoing means of communicating directly to the members about the activities of each of the congregations in the multiple point parish. This can include shared bulletins or common bulletin inserts, a parish newsletter, etc.

Pastoral Identity

The demands on the pastor (or pastors) in multiple point parishes are significant and complex. Each congregation in the parish has its own identity and therefore, in addition to its special gifts, its own special needs. Then, there are simply the difficulties of having to “rush off” to be at another service or late because of not rushing off soon enough. The members of each of the parishes should be helped to see these challenges as part of the larger picture of doing ministry together as part of the parish.

Cultural Context

It helps when the parish service area is within the boundaries of a single school district, particularly, if youth ministry activities are to be shared. In general, however, parish service areas cross school district boundaries, thus creating a challenge for youth ministry activities.

Stewardship issues are also important to address. The added members in a multiple point parish may give an illusion of increased contributions, when in fact a decline in per capita giving exists.

The setting of worship times appears to be a source of regular conflict. Flexibility on behalf of the whole should be emphasized.

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

Chapter 20 on Parish Authorization in the ELCA model constitution for congregations specifies three provisions with regard to parishes. The first provision requires that a written

² See, for example, the Asset Based Community Development Institute Religious Network at <http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd/abcdrn.html>

agreement between two or more congregations should be “developed in consultation with the synod and approved by the voting members of each congregation participating in the parish.” The written agreement should also specify the “powers and responsibilities that have been delegated to a Parish Council.”

In most cases, the written agreement also clarifies the common purposes of the congregations forming the parish; the composition of the parish council; a detailed plan for the sharing of pastoral leadership; worship service times; the nature and extent of other shared programmatic activities; all financial obligations and a provision for amending or ending the parish should it seem necessary. There may also be other more general understandings that set out guiding principles for the cooperative work. (See Appendix C for Examples of Parish Agreements.)

CONCLUSION

While forming a multiple point parish is complex, there is much to be said for the process. If undertaken with a spirit of adventure and discovery, the congregations involved can learn much about themselves and each other. Secondly, the sharing of a pastor and important congregational programming can make scarce resources go further with regard to mission and ministry. The most important factor in determining an effective multiple point parish agreement is the strength of the relationship on which it is built. As a result, considerable up-front and intentional time should be devoted to relationship building. Then, that relationship needs to be maintained through regular and effective communication that focuses on the actual members of the parish’s congregations as its audience.

ELCA MULTIPLE POINT PARISHES

<u>Community Context</u>	<u>Multi-Point</u>	<u>All ELCA</u>
Rural Farming	59.7%	21.1%
Rural Non-Farming	9.0%	5.7%
Small Town < 10,000	21.3%	19.9%
Small City 10,000 to <50,000	1.7%	11.8%
Medium City 50,000 to 250,000	0.5%	9.8%
Suburg of Medium City	0.4%	3.5%
Large City 250,000 +	0.9%	8.3%
Near Suburb of Large City	0.4%	7.3%
Distant Suburb of Large City	0.2%	4.2%
No Answer	5.9%	8.0%

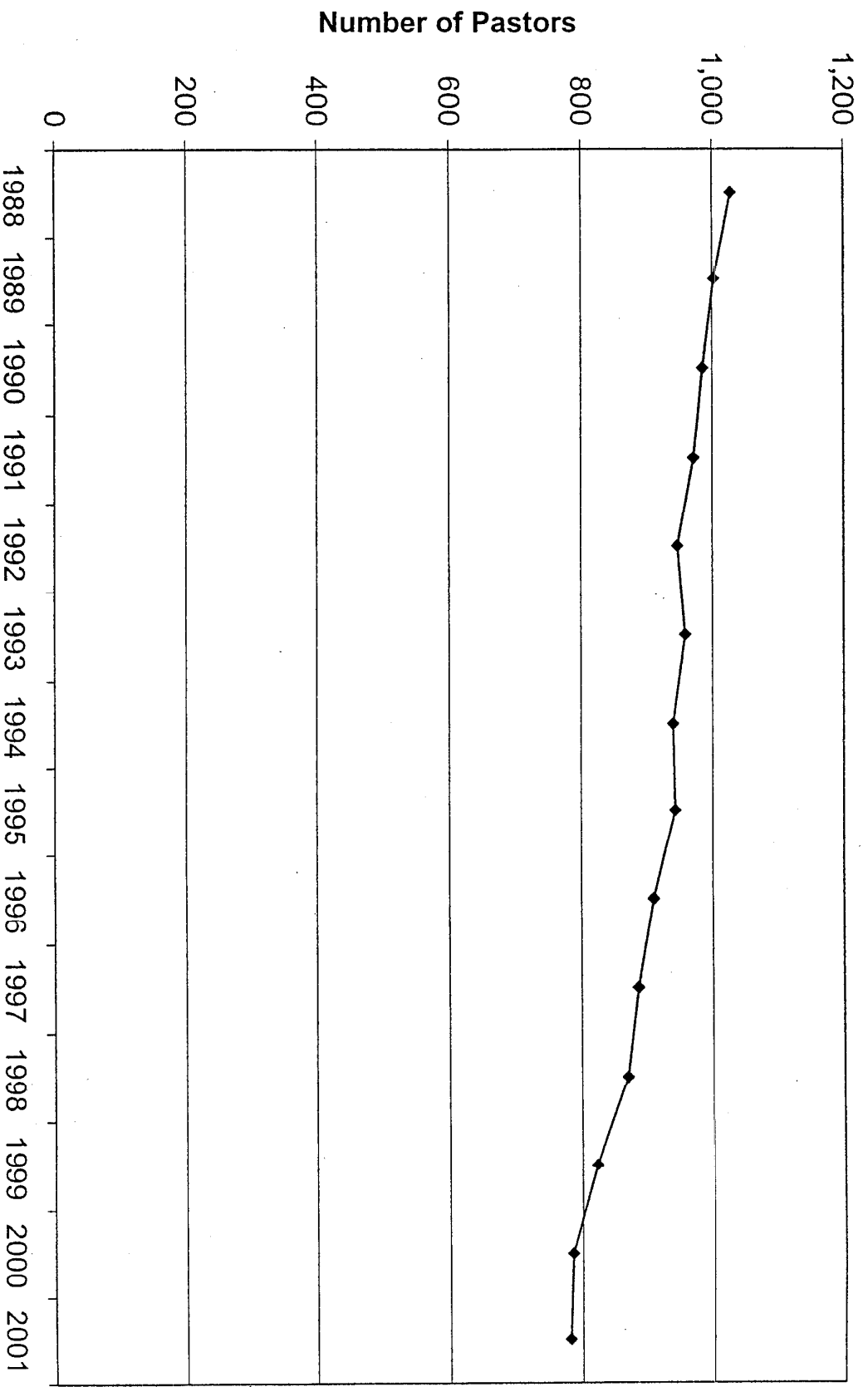
Preliminary Data Indicates:

- 369 growing
- 76 stable
- 1,160 declined
- 369 declined more than 30%

Estimates of Multipoint Configurations Where There is More Than One Pastor

	<u>Number of Occurrences</u>
2 Pastors Serving 2 Congregations	24
2 Pastors Serving 3 Congregations	11
2 Pastors Serving 4 Congregations	9
2 Pastors Serving 5 Congregations	3
2 Pastors Serving 7 Congregations	1
3 Pastors Serving 7 Congregations	1

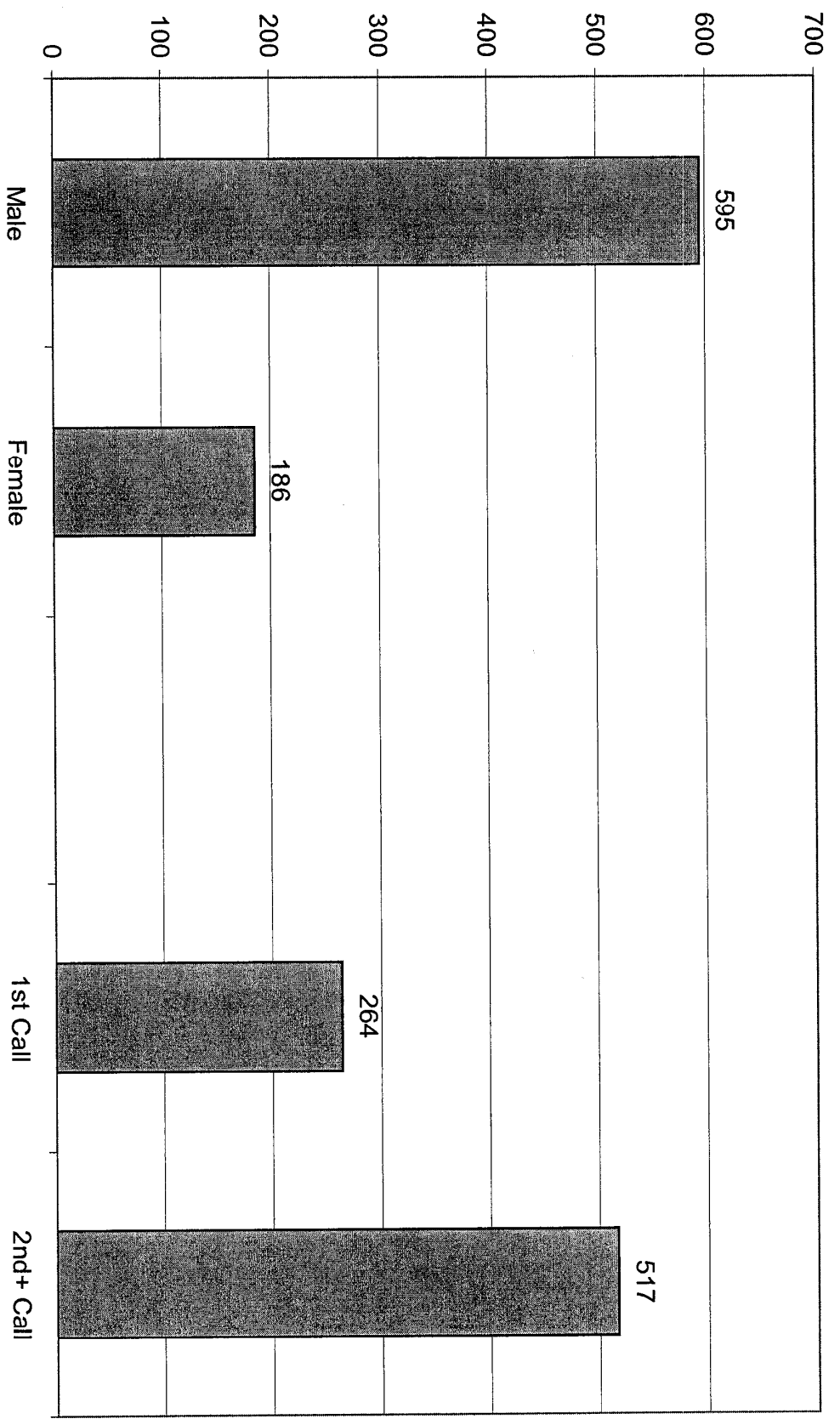
Number of Pastors with Congregation Calls Serving Two or More Congregations



Data from the Leadership Roster, ELCA Office of the Secretary. Prepared by the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation.

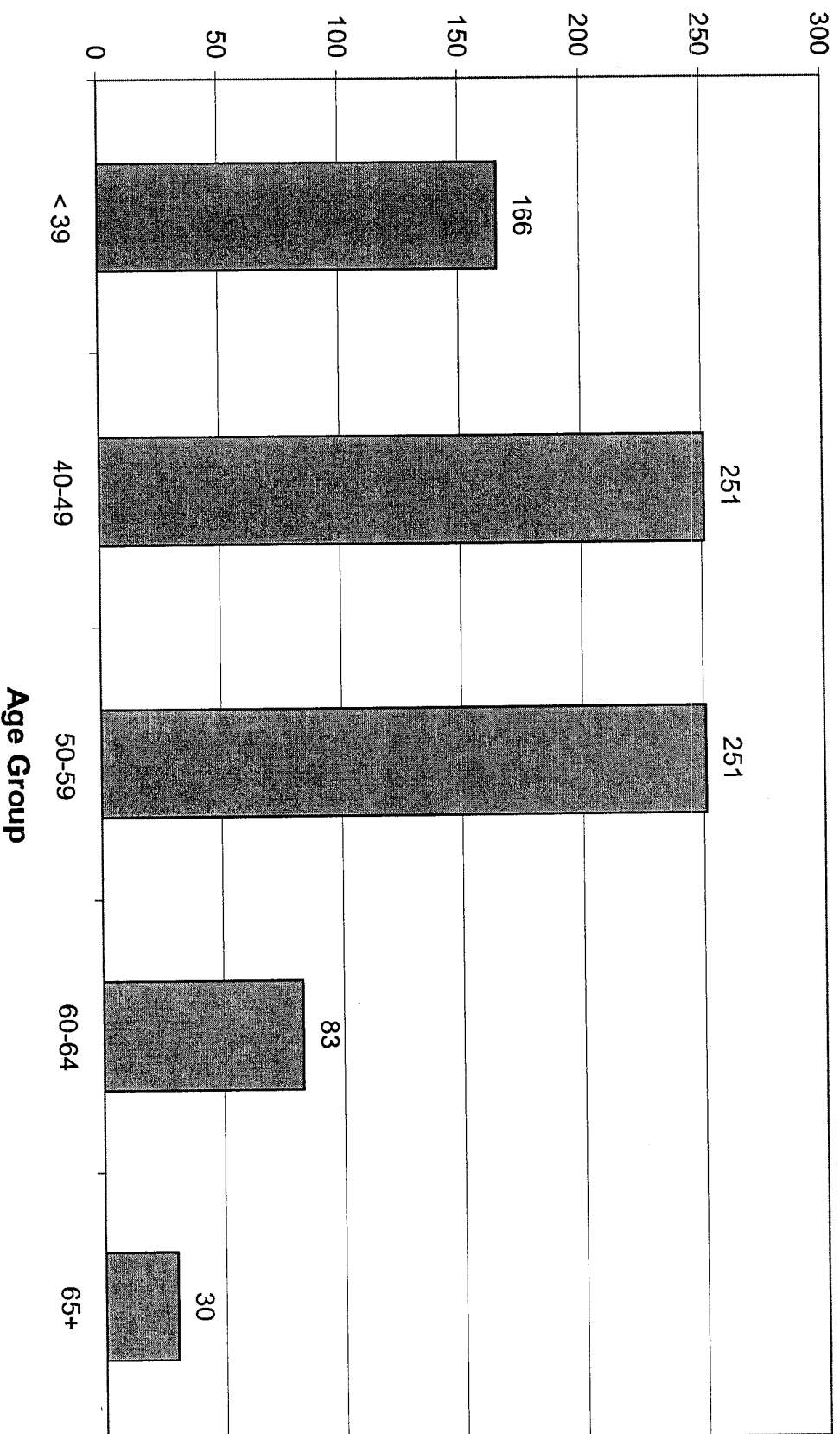
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Gender and Call for ELCA Clergy Serving Multiple Point Parishes



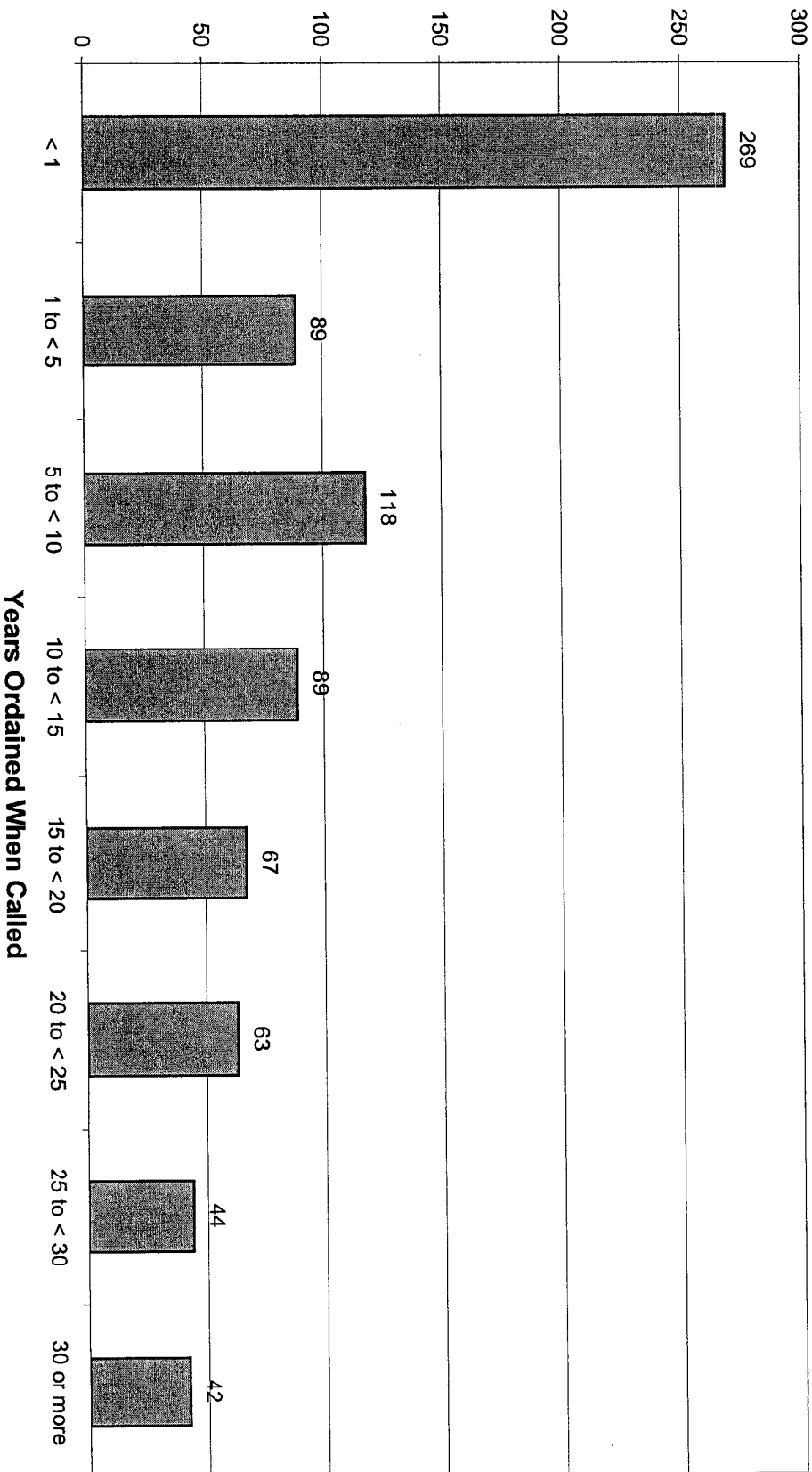
Source: Roster database. Produced by the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation. 1/18/01

Age of ELCA Pastors Called to Multipoint Parishes



Source: Roster Database. Prepared by the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation. 1/18/01

Number of Years Ordained When ELCA Pastors Are Called to a Multipoint Parish



Source: ELCA Roster Database. Prepared by the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation. 1/18/01

**Size and Average Worship Attendance for the 1,613
ELCA Congregations Which Have Multipoint Calls to Pastors**

	<u>Baptized Members</u>	<u>Average Worship Attendance</u>
Average	277.6	77.15
 <u>Percentiles</u>		
10	91.8	30.0
20	134.8	43.0
30	172.0	52.2
40	205.0	60.0
50	234.0	69.0
60	270.0	76.0
70	311.0	86.0
80	375.0	100.0
90	466.6	125.0

Multiple Point Parishes and Calls to ELCA Congregations

	Congre- gations with No Called Pastor	Percent with No Called Pastor	Congre- gations with Called Pastor	Total Congre- gations	Multiple Point Congre- gations	Percent Multiple Point	Percent One Point with Pastor
1A Alaska Synod	4	13.3%	26	30	2	6.7%	80.0%
1B Northwest Washington Synod	28	23.5%	90	119	0	0.0%	75.6%
1C Southwestern Washington Synod	12	12.5%	82	96	4	4.2%	81.3%
1D Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod	26	23.4%	84	111	12	10.8%	64.9%
1E Oregon Synod	23	18.9%	97	122	4	3.3%	76.2%
1F Montana Synod	25	16.9%	123	148	51	34.5%	48.6%
2A Sierra Pacific Synod	35	16.4%	174	214	6	2.8%	78.5%
2B Southern California (West) Synod	22	15.6%	116	141	0	0.0%	82.3%
2C Pacifica Synod	16	12.8%	105	125	2	1.6%	82.4%
2D Grand Canyon Synod	12	11.4%	90	105	4	3.8%	81.9%
2E Rocky Mountain Synod	27	14.9%	146	181	4	2.2%	78.5%
3A Western North Dakota Synod	68	32.7%	139	208	90	43.3%	23.6%
3B Eastern North Dakota Synod	65	25.7%	188	253	140	55.3%	19.0%
3C South Dakota Synod	52	20.3%	203	256	112	43.8%	35.5%
3D Northwestern Minnesota Synod	90	31.8%	193	283	119	42.0%	26.1%
3E Northeastern Minnesota Synod	33	22.1%	116	149	33	22.1%	55.7%
3F Southwestern Minnesota Synod	43	15.4%	235	279	101	36.2%	48.0%
3G Minneapolis Area Synod	19	11.0%	151	173	0	0.0%	87.3%
3H Saint Paul Area Synod	7	5.8%	110	120	2	1.7%	90.0%
3I Southeastern Minnesota Synod	22	11.9%	162	185	61	33.0%	54.6%
4A Nebraska Synod	67	25.2%	198	266	42	15.8%	58.6%
4B Central States Synod	69	31.4%	149	220	34	15.5%	52.3%
4C Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod	13	22.0%	45	59	4	6.8%	69.5%
4D Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod	31	26.1%	86	119	2	1.7%	70.6%
4E Southwestern Texas Synod	40	23.1%	129	173	14	8.1%	66.5%
4F Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod	30	22.4%	98	134	10	7.5%	65.7%
5A Metropolitan Chicago Synod	51	22.2%	170	230	0	0.0%	73.9%
5B Northern Illinois Synod	27	16.5%	136	164	9	5.5%	77.4%
5C Central/Southern Illinois Synod	43	27.0%	116	159	15	9.4%	63.5%
5D Southeastern Iowa Synod	22	14.4%	129	153	22	14.4%	69.9%
5E Western Iowa Synod	39	22.5%	133	173	37	21.4%	55.5%
5F Northeastern Iowa Synod	30	16.3%	153	184	55	29.9%	53.3%
5G Northern Great Lakes Synod	16	17.0%	78	94	25	26.6%	56.4%
5H Northwest Synod of Wisconsin	34	16.0%	179	213	80	37.5%	46.5%

Source: Congregational Annual Reports and the Leadership Roster. Prepared by the Department for Research and Evaluation. November, 2002.

Multiple Point Parishes and Calls to ELCA Congregations

	Congre - gations with No Called Pastor	Percent with No Called Pastor	Congre - gations with Called Pastor	Total Congre - gations	Multiple Point Congre - gations	Percent Multiple Point	Percent One Point with Pastor
51 East-Central Synod of Wisconsin	13	8.8%	133	147	35	23.8%	66.7%
5J Greater Milwaukee Synod	9	6.4%	131	141	0	0.0%	92.9%
5K South-Central Synod of Wisconsin	19	12.4%	132	153	29	19.0%	67.3%
5L LaCrosse Area Synod	5	6.2%	75	81	42	51.9%	40.7%
6A Southeast Michigan Synod	32	21.5%	114	149	0	0.0%	76.5%
6B North/West Lower Michigan Synod	22	16.9%	106	130	6	4.6%	76.9%
6C Indiana-Kentucky Synod	58	24.4%	177	238	20	8.4%	66.0%
6D Northwestern Ohio Synod	35	18.2%	156	192	12	6.3%	75.0%
6E Northeastern Ohio Synod	40	18.8%	172	213	9	4.2%	76.5%
6F Southern Ohio Synod	54	22.3%	185	242	24	9.9%	66.5%
7A New Jersey Synod	38	19.3%	156	197	0	0.0%	79.2%
7B New England Synod	35	18.2%	156	192	0	0.0%	81.3%
7C Metropolitan New York Synod	52	22.8%	173	228	6	2.6%	73.2%
7D Upstate New York Synod	32	16.2%	165	197	25	12.7%	71.1%
7E Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod	73	24.7%	222	295	27	9.2%	66.1%
7F Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod	35	19.7%	138	178	0	0.0%	77.5%
7G Slovak Zion Synod	15	45.5%	18	33	0	0.0%	54.5%
8A Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod	26	28.3%	65	92	23	25.0%	45.7%
8B Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod	54	24.2%	169	223	34	15.2%	60.5%
8C Allegheny Synod	38	28.8%	94	132	49	37.1%	34.1%
8D Lower Susquehanna Synod	70	25.5%	204	274	25	9.1%	65.3%
8E Upper Susquehanna Synod	33	23.1%	110	143	50	35.0%	42.0%
8F Delaware-Maryland Synod	31	16.7%	152	186	27	14.5%	67.2%
8G Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod	21	26.6%	56	79	0	0.0%	70.9%
8H West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod	17	26.6%	47	64	18	28.1%	45.3%
9A Virginia Synod	40	24.4%	122	164	33	20.1%	54.3%
9B North Carolina Synod	52	21.9%	182	237	4	1.7%	75.1%
9C South Carolina Synod	38	22.8%	126	167	10	6.0%	69.5%
9D Southeastern Synod	45	25.6%	123	176	8	4.5%	65.3%
9E Florida-Bahamas Synod	48	22.3%	161	215	0	0.0%	74.9%
9F Caribbean Synod	11	32.4%	22	34	2	5.9%	58.8%
Total ELCA	2,232	20.6%	8,471	10,831	1,614	14.9%	63.3%

Source: Congregational Annual Reports and the Leadership Roster. Prepared by the Department for Research and Evaluation. November, 2002.

HYPOTHESIS

Effective? By Who's Definition?

The original STAR Team design of the study put considerable emphasis on developing a resource that would not only be helpful in the process of forming a multiple point parish but in identifying factors that were associated with effectiveness in mission among the congregations in multiple point parishes. The Team set out three basic hypotheses that they hoped the study would test.

1. Effective multiple point parishes share a common mission and vision.
2. Congregations in the multiple point parishes identify strongly with the parish and provide strong lay leadership to strengthen and guide the parish.
3. Congregations in the multiple point parishes demonstrate an active prayer and spiritual life, vibrant worship, discipleship, relational evangelism, caring ministries, and shared leadership.

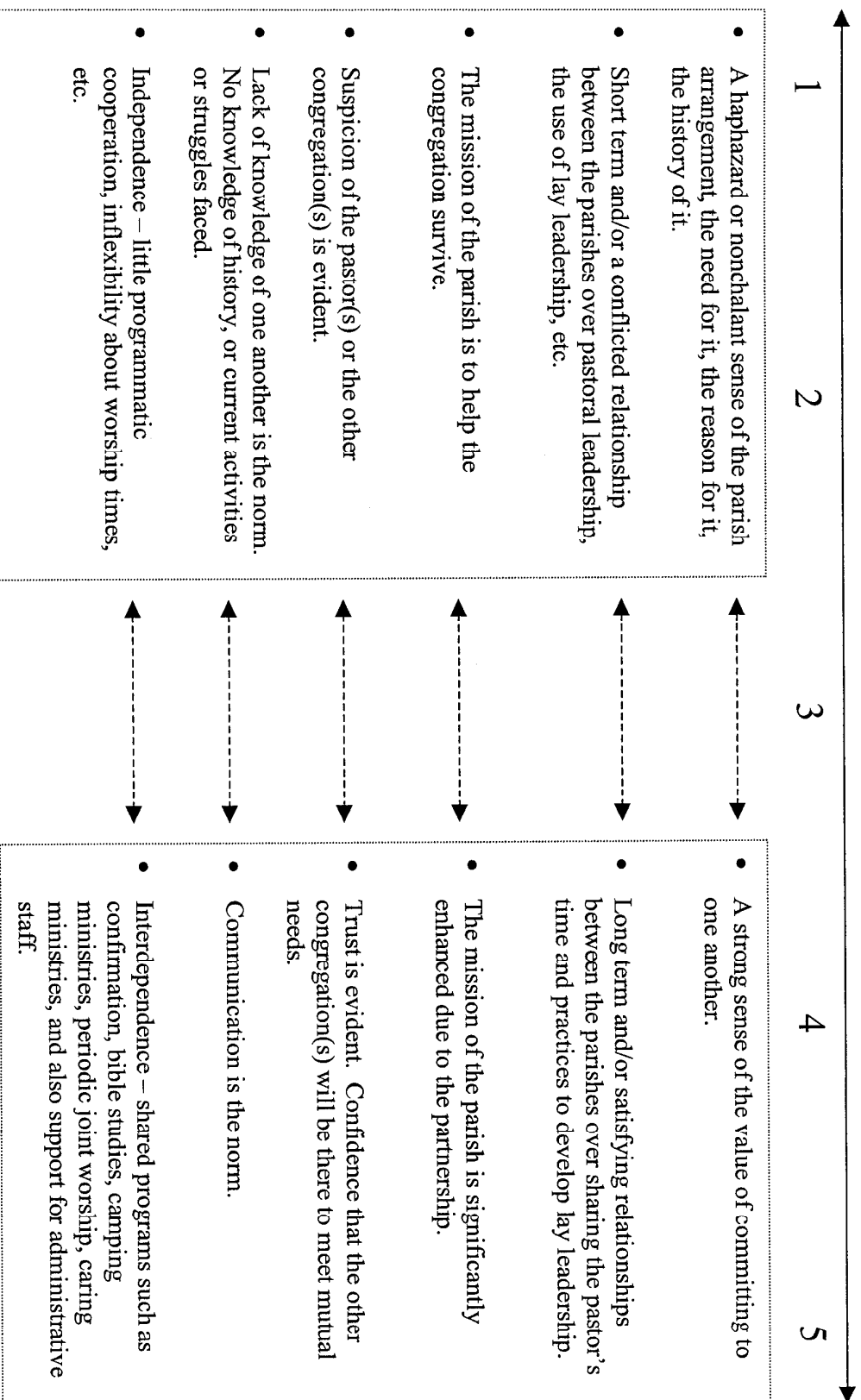
Secondly, if there were factors that related to parish formation that lead to higher or lower levels of effectiveness, the team wanted to know more about them.

In the field study, however, it was impossible to verify either the validity of the hypotheses or to establish with certainty that any of the factors related to the formation of the parish were directly related to presence or absence of best practices.

Instead, the parishes in the study tended to define effectiveness in a straightforward manner. How well did the agreement to share pastoral leadership work from the point of view of the members of the congregations in the parish? In the end, it was this definition of effectiveness—the definition of people in the parish—that the Team took most seriously. Based on this definition of effectiveness the Team set out the “Multiple Point Parish Effectiveness Continuum.”

(continued →)

Multiple Point Parish Effectiveness Continuum



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

DETERMINING THE SITES

The STaR Team and researchers involved in the study selected synods that provided a geographic distribution. Four synods chose to participate in the study. Each synod was asked to provide a multiple point parish that was “effective” and another that was “ineffective”, or rather, parishes that functioned “differently”. It was up to the synods to determine the meaning of “effective,” “ineffective” and “differently.”

The team visited the following multiple point parishes:

New Effington Parish, New Effington/Claire City, South Dakota
Lyman County Parish, Presho/Kennebec, South Dakota and Vivian, South Dakota
First and St. John’s, McGregor/Farmersburg, Iowa
Liberty Valley Lutheran Parish, Liberty, Pennsylvania
Clayton Valley Parish, Guttenberg/Elkport/Elkader, Iowa
Mountain Grove Parish, Mountain Grove, Pennsylvania

GATHERING THE DATA

Three teams of two STaR team members attended at least one service in one of the congregations of the parish. Interviews about the multiple-point parish setting were conducted with a/the pastor(s), council members and select members of the congregation. After each interview, a written report was sent to the Department for Research and Evaluation for analysis.

ANALYSIS

Each report was read and common themes to questions were grouped together. Once this process was complete, a written report was produced and provided to members of the STaR team.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The congregations asked to participate in the study received a questionnaire prior to the interview day. The following questions were asked:

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General Information:

Name of parish

When was your parish formed?

Why was it formed?

Please list the names of the congregations with average worship attendance.

Which, if any, of the congregations has been part of a multiple point parish of some kind in the past?

Written Parish Agreement:

Does your parish have a written agreement of some kind?

(If yes, please attach a copy to this form.)

How important is this document to the parishes?

Parish Structures:

Is there a parish council?

If yes, how often does it meet?

How are representatives chosen?

The Community

Briefly describe the community or communities served by your parish. Include information about population growth or decline, economic factors, minority representation in the area. Also indicate the size of the geographic area served by the parish.

Please attach a map that shows the location of each of the congregations in the parish and their distance from one another. A hand drawn map is fine.

(Continue with Interview Questions →)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interviewers asked the pastor and spouse, parish council members, congregation presidents and various other groups a series of questions about the functionality of a multiple point parish. Interviewees were asked some or all of the following questions:

The Parish

Why did you become a multiple point parish?

What is working well in your parish relationship? Please describe.

What are the difficulties in being part of the parish?

What have been your most challenging decisions?

What are the unwritten rules in the parish?

What advice would you give to other congregations that are considering forming a two point or a multi-point parish?

What resources have been helpful as you have formed or retooled the working of the parish?

The Congregation

How does your congregation and this parish help you grow in faith?

How does your congregation reach out to the community?

What difference has being part of this parish made in the life of your congregation?

What are your dreams for the parish and congregations?

What are you proud of about your congregation or the ministry?

Leadership

What skills do lay leaders need to lead effective parishes?

What particular skills does a pastor need to bring to a parish setting?

How are leaders selected? How is the call process handled?

When was the Holy Spirit leading you? How is the Spirit leading you now?

EXAMPLES OF PARISH AGREEMENTS

Example 1: A Shared Ministry Covenant

General Understandings

1. Each congregation shall maintain its own identity, corporate structure, and its own program of activities.
2. Each church agrees to pay a percentage (to be determined annually by the Joint Council) of the “ministry budget,” which will include the terms of compensation and other related costs in providing a pastor and meeting the needs of both congregations.
3. The pastor and each church council shall strive to promote greater cooperation between each church and work to provide the best possible ministry program to each.
4. At the Joint Council Meeting, each congregation shall list its top priorities relating to both joint and separate areas of pastoral ministry. It will be the responsibility of the congregation(s), in conjunction with the councils and pastor, to determine how these priorities can best be met.
5. There will be at least one Joint Council Meeting between the churches (more as needed), held as designated by both councils. At these meetings the pastor will provide a written or verbal pastor’s report.
6. The people on the Joint Council will provide feedback as to how the pastor is meeting the ministry needs of both congregations.
7. The Covenant for a Shared Ministry shall be reviewed, revised, and approved yearly by each represented council.
8. A special Joint Council Committee shall be used as needed and will:
 - a) consist of the vice-president and treasurer of each council and/or interested members of the congregation.
 - b) meet annually with the staff to review their roles and performances for that year, and meet as often as deemed necessary by the Joint Council.
 - c) help to annually assist in preparing the “ministry budget,” to be presented to each congregation at the annual meetings.
 - d) assist in coordinating worship schedules for each church. subject to council approval.
 - e) provide assistance to the staff in matters of communication, coordination, or grievance(s).
 - f) provide reports to the Joint Council.

Adoption

This agreement shall be in effect upon approval of a majority of members of both elected councils at a scheduled Joint Council meeting.

Amendments

Amendments to this “Shared Ministry Covenant” agreement shall be in effect when approved by a majority of each elected church council, voting at a properly called meeting.

Dissolution of Agreement

Each congregation hereby agrees not to withdraw from this agreement until after consultation with the bishop of the synod or a representative of said office and not without due notice having been given. Due notice will be a period of not less than six months. A majority vote of members present and voting at a properly called congregational meeting is required to approve dissolution of this agreement.

Example 2: A Plan of Operation

Purpose

1. To unify the work of the parish as it provides ministry in this place and in its relationship to the work of the conference, the synod, and the churchwide agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
2. To help the pastor to work out a balanced program of worship services, educational opportunities, and various group activities within the parish as a whole and within the congregations, as well as working to support the initiatives of the wider Church.
3. To encourage the congregations in fulfilling their respective obligations in regards to staff salaries, parish apportionment support and other parish financial matters.
4. To insure the proper care and administration of property held or administrated in common, such as the parsonage.
5. To work together with the synod in times of pastoral vacancy both as regards the calling of a new pastor and obtaining a suitable supply pastor.
6. To deal with all problems and opportunities that arise within the congregations and parish.

Membership

The parish council shall consist of the pastor of the parish and the members of the duly elected councils of the parish congregations. Membership on the parish council shall begin at the same time as does the term to which they are elected.

Meetings

1. parish council meetings
 - a) The parish council usually will meet every other month, but shall meet at least quarterly. Additional meetings shall be called at the request of the pastor, president of the parish council, or the council of any of the congregations. Fifty-one percent of the membership of the parish council shall constitute a quorum.
 - b) The parish council shall hold a meeting within one week of the annual parish meeting to present the proposed budget for approval, elect parish officers, and act on any other parish business.
2. parish-wide meetings
 - a) The meeting to be held during the third full week of January shall be known as the annual meeting of the parish.
 - b) Notice of all parish meetings shall be given at the worship services on the preceding two consecutive Sundays or by mail to all voting members at least 10 days in advance of the date of the meeting.
 - c) Special parish meetings may be called by the pastor, the parish council, or shall be called at the written request of one tenth of the voting members. The call for each special meeting shall specify the purpose for which it is to be held and no other business shall be transacted.
 - d) All congregational voting members shall be eligible to vote in all parish meetings.
 - e) Any number of members present shall constitute a quorum.

Officers and Duties

1. The parish president and vice-president shall be elected from among the council members. The election shall normally take place at the parish council meeting preceding the annual parish meeting. A secretary and treasurer shall be elected at the same time, although it is not necessary for these officers to be elected council members. These officers shall serve a one-year term, beginning at the close of the annual parish meeting. All are eligible to be re-elected.
2. The president shall be chairperson of all parish council meetings and ex-officio member of all committees of the parish council.
3. The vice-president shall be chairperson of the parish council in the absence of the president. The vice-president also shall assume other such duties as requested by the president.
4. The secretary shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the parish council in a volume provided by the parish. These records shall be preserved permanently in the archives of the parish. The secretary shall also be responsible for all correspondence pertaining to the parish council.

5. The treasurer shall receive from the congregational treasurers of the parish all moneys for the parish council's use, keep an itemized account of receipts and expenditures, pay salaries, wages and all bills as provided in the annual budget. Bills above the budgeted amount in any category may be paid upon order of the parish council.

Committees

1. Members of the parish committees shall be appointed by the congregation councils before the annual parish meeting. Committee members serve a one-year term, and are eligible for re-election.
2. The president of the parish council may appoint other committees as may be necessary for the work and ministry of the parish.
3. The pastor shall be ex-officio member of all committees.
4. The chairperson of the standing committees shall rotate annually alphabetically. Parish One begins this rotation in 1998. The chairperson of each committee is responsible for making a report to be shared at the parish annual meeting.
5. The standing committees shall be:
 - a) Executive Committee. The committee shall consist of the parish council president, the vice-presidents from each congregation, and the pastor. This committee shall be responsible to act on matters not necessitating the action of the full parish council or items that need immediate action.
 - b) Audit Committee. This committee shall consist of one member from each congregation. This committee shall be responsible for the annual audit of the parish council treasurer's book and shall report the results of the audit at the annual parish meeting.
 - c) Budget Committee. This committee shall consist of one member from each congregation of the parish and the parish treasurer. It shall be responsible for presenting the proposed parish budget for the coming year to the parish council at the November meeting and deciding on the apportionment of the budget according to the active membership roll of each congregation.
 - d) Mutual Ministry Committee. This Committee is responsible for discussing relations between the Pastor and parish members. This committee also shall be responsible for discussing the ministry provided by our parish within the community and world. This committee shall consist of two members from each congregation of the parish. These members shall be nominated by the current Mutual Ministry Committee and appointed by the parish council. Members are appointed to two-year terms, with three members being appointed annually. Members may serve no more than three consecutive terms. The President of the parish is an ex-officio member.

- e) Parish Picnic Committee. This committee shall consist of one member from each congregation of the parish. It shall be responsible for the planning and implementing of the annual parish picnic.
- f) Parsonage Committee. This committee shall consist of one person from each congregation. The responsibility of this committee shall be to inspect the parsonage periodically, recommend needed repairs and renovations, and see that adequate insurance coverage is maintained. Upon approval of the parish council, it shall be this committee's responsibility to arrange for improvements and see that they are carried out.
- g) Scholarship Committee. This committee shall consist of one member from each congregation of the parish. It shall be responsible for awarding the scholarship funds according to the parish scholarship policy.
- h) Worship and Music Committee. This committee shall consist of two members from each congregation of the parish. It shall be responsible for the selection of hymns for worship and can be involved in the planning of special worship services. This committee could also be called upon to provide ideas and suggestions for altering existing worship services.

Constitutional Control

When duly adopted by the parish, this "Plan of Operation" shall govern the parish council in its actions, but it shall not supersede the constitutions of the member congregations, the synod, or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Specific Functions

1. Payment to the parish treasurer. Payments by the congregations toward the parish budget shall be arranged in monthly installments.
2. Pastoral vacancy procedures. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the parish council shall meet with the proper officials of the synod and conference with regards to securing a new pastor and supplying the parish during the vacancy. The current synodical procedures for calling a pastor shall be followed.

General Spirit

It shall be the aim of the parish council to maintain a spirit of peace and harmony throughout the parish, to provoke the congregations in love to a wholesome rivalry in the doing of good works, and in all things, seek the greatest good of the whole parish while serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

Example 3: Operating procedures

Purpose

1. To unify the work of the pastoral charge (a) in relation to the general opportunities of the place it embraces and (b) in relation to the work of conference, the synod, and the churchwide agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
2. To cooperate with the pastor in jointly working out a balanced program of worship services, education, organized group activities within its three congregations, and to secure cooperative support of the church-at-large objectives.
3. To encourage the congregation in the performance of their respective obligations with regard to the pastor's salary and related items, faith commitment and similar matters.
4. To deal with all church issues as bear upon the life of the associated congregations.

Procedures

1. The parish consists of three churches, of which one church is a union church with another denomination, and the other two churches are Lutheran churches.
2. Parish has a parsonage which is located in . . . and is owned as follows:
Congregation One paid and owns $\frac{1}{2}$ of the parsonage.
Congregation Two owns $\frac{2}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the parsonage.
Congregation Three owns $\frac{1}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the parsonage.
3. The funding of the parish is as follows:
 - a) Each church pays \$60.00 per regular service.
Congregation One has 52 services.
Congregations Two has 52 services.
Congregation Three has 26 services.
 - b) Parsonage expenses are as follows:
Congregation One pays $\frac{1}{2}$ of expenses.
Congregation Two pays $\frac{2}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the parsonage.
Congregation Three pays $\frac{1}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the parsonage.
 - c) The balance of budget is financed by taking total communing and contributing membership of the three churches as . . . of current year (or other date as agreed by three churches) and dividing that into balance of budget to obtain the cost per member and each church paying for their members.
5. Time for church services are set by agreement between the pastor and the three church councils.

6. Pastors are called by a joint call committee, consisting of two members from each church, recommending a candidate. The candidate is approved by joint council and then must be approved by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of the members present and voting on the Sunday that a trial sermon is preached.
7. Parish is governed by a joint parish council which consists of up to 27 members, with a maximum of nine members from each church council.
8. Parish joint council meetings are held as agreed to by pastor and joint council and rotated between the three churches.

Officers and Duties

1. The joint parish council officers are elected at the first meeting of the new year and serve for a one year term, officers consist of a president, which rotates between the three churches, who will preside over all meetings.
2. The pastor shall be the vice president and shall preside over all meetings in the absence of the president.
3. A secretary whom shall keep accurate minutes of all meetings of the joint council in a volume provided by the parish, which shall be preserved permanently in the archives of the parish.
4. A treasurer whom shall receive from the treasurers of the individual congregations in the parish all moneys for the joint council's use, keep an itemized account of receipts and expenditures, pay salaries and wages and all bills upon order of the joint council.

Committees

1. The joint council shall appoint the appropriate committees as agreed by the pastor and joint council.
2. The parish has a parish-pastor relations committee consisting of two members from each congregation who will hear any complaints and concerns of the pastor or the members of the congregations.
3. The parish has a parsonage committee consisting of one member from each congregation who are responsible for any necessary repairs with authority to spend up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00) on each repair.
4. A finance committee prepares a budget and recommends it to the joint parish council for approval. Upon approval by the joint parish council it must be approved by each church council and congregation at their annual church meeting.

Constitutional Control

When duly adopted, this plan of operation and procedures shall govern the joint parish council in all its actions, but it shall not supersede the constitutions of the three congregations or the constitution of synod where they apply to the matter at hand.

Specific Functions

1. Pastoral vacancy procedures. When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the joint parish council shall meet with the proper officials of the synod with regard to securing a pastor and supplying the parish during the vacancy. Procedures will follow the direction outlined by the bishop of the synod or his/her representative.

General Spirit

It shall be the aim of the joint parish council, reflecting the love of Christ, to maintain a spirit of peace and harmony in all parts of the pastoral charge, to encourage the three congregations to cooperative efforts in doing of good works, and in all things, seek the greatest good of the whole pastoral charge.