

Area Mission Conversations

Area Mission Conversations are Christ centered. The goal of the conversations is to maximize and focus the mission and ministry of the participating sites. The partnership creates the opportunity to share ideas, energies, leadership, and resources for mission and ministry.

There is no standard set of criteria that defines a Shared Ministry in the IK Synod. This means that almost any arrangement that can be agreed upon by the participating congregations is within the realm of possibility.

What might Area Mission Conversations offer?

- Unify and strengthen the witness of the ELCA in a community
- Opportunity to clarify mission and vision for the church
- Pray for each other
- Strengthen and support individual ministries
- Gain strength, support, and hope from other congregations
- Make ministry more efficient
- Stimulate Growth
- Help a congregation extend beyond itself
- Financial savings
- Improved relationship, individually and organizationally
- Strength in numbers
- Improved programming in each congregation (sharing ideas, creativity, talents)
- Allow clergy and staff to be more effective
- Increased lay leadership
- Opportunity to learn about and try new things

What are some of the challenges?

- Reason for developing a shared ministry should be mission driven and not survival driven
- Discerning God's will for the community
- Promoting growth in discipleship that is expressed in mission
- Building infrastructure
- Communication
- Fear of Change, Failure, Risk-taking

- Ambiguity (Chaos during transitions)
- Feeling that change offers no rewards for our own congregation
- Theology of scarcity – not enough resources
- Loss of control, power, prestige – Change threatens position

What makes Shared Ministries effective?

- Effective shared ministries share a common mission and vision – Discerned through prayer, study, dialog, and trust
- Congregations in shared ministry identify strongly with the ministry and provide strong lay leadership to strengthen and guide the ministry.
- Congregations in shared ministry have active prayer and spiritual lives, vibrant worship, discipleship, relational evangelism, an outward focus toward the community and its needs, caring ministries, and shared leadership

What Shared Ministries are Not

- About survival. The mission of the church is not about survival. If “keeping the door open” is the mission statement (written or unwritten) this is not for the congregation.

What Shared Ministries Are

- Creative – ministry can expand with a different pastoral configuration and new resources. We gain diversity and enjoy gifts that are shared.
- United Witness – When churches don't compete but work together, nonmembers see unity under the Gospel. Two or more congregations can share and live out the Gospel together, yet respect each other's history.
- Mutual support – prayers, hope, and fellowship
- Shared expenses – in a shared/cooperative arrangement, a congregation that cannot afford a pastor's salary can continue.
- Efficient – pastors in adjacent congregations see that they often duplicate efforts – visit the same hospitals and nursing homes, instruct confirmands, work with youth from the same school districts, etc. – a shared/cooperative ministry can allow pastors and other leaders to work more in their individual gifts and passions.