

## **The Partnership Mindset**

- Why would we even want to have this conversation (look at this option)?
- What does Scripture say?
- How would a partnership benefit the members of the congregations? In other words, what makes the partnership "better" than the two (or more) congregations going it alone? (I.e., How can we be "better together"?)
- How can we best serve the proclamation of the Gospel in this region?
- What are the idols that keep us from doing what is best for the kingdom?
- How do we deny ourselves to serve others?
- What resources are available to help us move in a new direction?

## **Assessment/Exploration (Pre-Partner Stage)**

- What are the pros and cons of forming a ministry partnership?
- Who are our potential congregational partners?
- What other organizations are potential partners in ministry? (E.g., RSOs, community organizations)
- What partnership models are available?
- What are our assets as a congregation?
- Does this mean we have to merge?
- Will this force one of us to have to close?
- What are the characteristics and demographics of our communities? What do they need?
- What would energize the congregations involved to serve the community?

## **Development/Planning (Partner Identification and Early Planning)**

- With whom will we partner?
- What partnership model will we adopt?
- How do we manage the transition process?
- Who should be involved in the planning discussions? When?
- How will the congregations intentionally work together?
- What strengths/assets does each partner/pastor bring to the table?
- How will decisions be made among partners?
- What will each congregation/partner need to give up?
- What will each congregation/partner gain?
- How can partner ministries be structured to complement the partnership and joint ministry (with the aim of multiplying ministry opportunities/reach)?
- How can redundancy/overlapping be avoided?

## Increasing the Odds of Success

- What will "success" look like?
- What could threaten this partnership?
  - Is there discord or unrest in either/any partner?
  - Is there potential of division?
  - Is there any contingent of disapproving/disgruntled people who could undermine the partnership?
- What language will be used to describe the partnership? (This is key! Is it a partnership or a merger?)
- How will we ensure that as many members as possible are heard in this process (with the goal of ensuring people feel like their concerns/questions have been heard/addressed)? Listening sessions, asset mapping, brainstorming meetings are useful.
- What forms of communication will be used to promote/perpetuate the partnership?
  - Special meetings?
  - Voters meetings?
  - Council meetings?
  - Worship?
  - Newsletter?
  - Online?
  - FAQ?
- How will partners ensure effective communication between churches? Syncing information across multiple platforms/ministries is challenging. How will partners ensure this is done effectively? How can we utilize technology (especially shared electronic calendars) to ensure communication stays up to date? What regular in-person meetings will be scheduled?

## Creating the Ministry Agreement

*See the LCMS Council of Presidents documents (e.g., 6.2.6-8) for guidance on ministry agreements. Your circuit visitor, district president, and district missions executive can provide additional useful information.*

- How will the partnership be governed?
- How will the partnership be perpetuated?
- If a Divine Call is involved, how will it be impacted?
- How will we handle salary/benefits, etc.? Will overall compensation meet salary guidelines?
- Division of finances: How will each congregation contribute to "shared" expenses (salary, benefits, mileage, etc.)?
- Who will be in charge of/responsible for what?
- Allocation of pastor's time: How will this be arranged to prevent burnout?
- What is the plan for representation at circuit forums and district conventions?
- What if there are disagreements in the future? How will these be resolved?
- Are there provisions for dissolving the partnership?

## Implementing the Plan

- How will partners ensure that members of the congregation understand the partnership has begun? (e.g., celebration service, newsletter, mailing, online announcements, etc.)
- If we have a celebration service, what should we include? Who should be involved?

- If a congregation is closing, what steps should we follow?
- Is our public information accurate and up-to-date?
- How will we continue to monitor the transition in the months following the launch?
- How will we evaluate the partnership going forward?