



PARTNERSHIP

Pro/Con List

Creating a church partnership is a big step in the life of a congregation. This list highlights benefits, and challenges often associated with forming a multi-congregation parish.

PRO

“Three-fold cord” advantage: Strength in numbers

Renewed enthusiasm for/understanding of the mission of the Church

Sharper strategic focus

Renewed commitment to outreach

Expanded view of the body of Christ

Expanded view of the mission field

Greater awareness of neighboring congregations and their activities

Encouragement through walking together (“We’re all in this together”)

New ideas from the partner church

Solves supply/demand challenge: A reasonable solution to demographic pressures

Congregations can maintain Word and Sacrament ministry and a Lutheran presence in their respective locations

Combining programs, events, and activities (e.g., confirmation classes) is an efficient use of resources (i.e., good stewardship)

Shared resources (e.g., expertise of individual members with special skills; equipment)

Shared financial load (e.g., pastor’s salary; program expenses)

Ability to provide suitable support for a pastor and family

Potential for more opportunities for laypeople to serve

Individuals and groups benefit through sacrifices and compromises made for the sake of the larger mission



These congregations are extremely willing to work together and do whatever is necessary to make this arrangement work. They all seek to put their own congregational egos on the shelf and do whatever it takes to help each other. ... There is no quibbling on how much is spent by whom. To them, it’s not a question of “sibling rivalry.” It’s a fellowship of faith, united in our one Savior, spread out over four congregation in several counties and thousands of square miles.

PASTOR MICHAEL FICKENSCHER, WEST TEXAS

Zion, Kermit; St. Paul, Monahans;

Faith, Fort Stockton; Redeemer, Alpine

CON

Won't be able to satisfy everyone's preferences; will need to compromise

Loss of control/independence

Requires more time and energy for communication; distance between congregations might make communication and contact difficult

Possible issues with interpersonal dynamics (individual or group)

Might be difficult to merge congregational cultures (but on the plus side, might yield new insights in the process)

Scheduling challenges (worship; classes; other activities)

Lack of available support staff/volunteers (e.g., organists; Bible study leaders) may increase the burden

Could create inefficiencies (e.g., duplication; time pastor spends traveling)

Pastor might not be as available; might not live in your city; family might not be members of your church (i.e., one congregation might feel slighted)

Pastor may feel like he wants to do more the church in the other location but can't

Could lead to pastor burnout

"Fair share" tensions (finances)

Congregation may sacrifice voting privilege (but not voice)

If the arrangement isn't formalized, ministry activities may not be represented accurately (e.g., in directories; for succession planning)

Lots of preparation work in hammering out details (but on the plus side, could yield dividends later)

Danger of "maintenance ministry"



A primary pastor challenge is the inability to establish a presence in the community he does not live in. I live in Natoma and was established here for seven years before the dual parish began; it's harder to go to Plainville events because I don't live there. ... Post-church fellowship at Plainville, for example, is one event I've not been able to attend. I always have to leave to get to Natoma, but they always make sure to send me with a plate of treats when I leave.

REV. MICHAEL SCHMIDT
Peace, Natoma
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FOR DISCUSSION

How significant is each of the factors above, both pro and con, in your deliberations?