

 GUIDELINES

small
membership
church

*Serving with
Significance
in Your Context*

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General Board of Discipleship

SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCH

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Some paragraph numbers for and language in the Book of Discipline may have changed in the 2008 revision, which was published after these Guidelines were printed. We regret any inconvenience.

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Welcome

You are so important to the life of the Christian church! You have consented to join with other people of faith who, through the millennia, have sustained the church by extending God's love to others. You have been called and have committed your unique passions, gifts, and abilities to a position of leadership. This Guideline will help you understand the basic elements of that ministry within your own church and within The United Methodist Church.

Called to Spiritual Leadership

Each person is called to ministry by virtue of his or her baptism, and that ministry takes place in all aspects of daily life, in and outside the church. As a pastoral leader or leader among the laity, your ministry is not just a "job," but a spiritual endeavor. You *are* a spiritual leader now, and others will look to you for spiritual leadership. What does this mean?

First, *all* persons who follow Jesus are called to grow spiritually through the practice of various Christian habits (or "means of grace") such as prayer, Bible study, private and corporate worship, acts of service, Christian conferencing, and so on. Jesus taught his disciples practices of spiritual growth and leadership that you, as a disciple, are to share with others as they look to you to be a model and guide.

Second, it means that you always keep your eye on the main reasons for any ministry—to help others grow to a mature faith in God that moves them to action on behalf of others, especially "the least" (see Matthew 25:31-46). This is an aspect of "disciple making," which is the ultimate goal of all that we do in the church.

CULTIVATING VISION AND MISSION

As a spiritual leader, a primary function you carry is to help those you lead to see as clearly as possible what God is calling your church to be and to do. Ideally, your church council first forms this vision and then forms plans and goals for how to fulfill that vision. As a leader, you will help your team remain focused and accountable to honor the vision and goals to which the church is committed. You will help your team create and evaluate suggestions, plans, and activities against the measure: *Does this move us closer to our church's vision to bring others to God in this place and time?*

CHRISTIAN CONFERENCING

While there are appropriate and useful businesslike practices that apply to church life, Christian practices distinguish the church as the church. In the United Methodist tradition, how we meet and work together is important. “Christian Conferencing” involves listening not only to each other, but also listening intently for the will of God in any given task or conversation. This makes prayer essential in the midst of “business as usual.” As Christians, we are called to “speak the truth in love.” This is a special way to speak in which we treat one another as if each of us were Christ among us. As a spiritual leader in your ministry area, you have the privilege and opportunity to teach and model these practices. By remembering that each of us is beloved of God and discerning the presence of God in all that the church does, every task becomes worshipful work.

THE MISSION OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The United Methodist Church is a connectional church, which means in part that every local church is interrelated through the structure and organization of districts, conferences, jurisdictions, and central conferences in the larger “family” of the denomination. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* describes, among other things, the ministry of all United Methodist Christians, the essence of servant ministry and leadership, how to organize and accomplish that ministry, and how our connectional structure works (see especially ¶¶125–138).

Our Church is more than a structure; it is a living organism. The *Discipline* describes our mission to proclaim the gospel and to welcome people into the body of Christ, to lead people to a commitment to God through Jesus Christ, to nurture them in Christian living by various means of grace, and to send persons into the world as agents of Jesus Christ (¶122). Thus, through you—and many other Christians—this very relational mission continues.

(For help in addition to this Guideline and the *Book of Discipline*, see “Resources” at the end of your Guideline, www.umc.org, and the other websites listed on the inside back cover.)

Small Churches Truly Matter!

Time to face facts: the majority of churches (75 percent) in our denomination are small. These congregations are under 200 in membership or under 150 in worship attendance. Some may see size as a problem: “What do we do with all these small churches?” Yet, size can also be a major, missional advantage: “What can God do through all these small churches?” Our smaller churches are uniquely situated for mission and ministry where there are still people outside any faith community. Consider:

- Who do these congregations nurture in the faith?
- What unique outreach ministries do they make possible?
- How do they witness to the love and grace of the living Lord?

Statistics prove small churches faithfully pay apportionments, excel at recovering people who fall away from church, and make a significant impact on lives beyond their members—albeit with declining populations and limited resources. These “mustard seed” churches exceed expectations time and again.

Reading this Guideline will help you be an effective leader in your smaller church by:

- claiming a vision of what God is asking your small church to do for the sake of the gospel
- supporting your faithful service in your local church, your community, and the world
- helping your small church reach its full potential in mission and ministry.

For guidance on how to use this resource in your local church or cluster, review article #1, “Ideas for Using This Guideline,” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

Vital Small Churches

A church’s existence is not justified merely because of its age or historic location. A church exists solely for God’s mission of making disciples. When it ceases to do this, it ceases to be a church. Let’s take a realistic rather than a romantic view of small churches. We need vital smaller churches—not congregations that have settled for mere survival. The distinguishing factor is a clear vision, a strong sense of purpose that guides everything the church does. This does not require a lot of people. Vitality happens when even a few people possess a powerful sense of God’s presence and call upon their lives!

Vital small churches can radically change the face of United Methodism in the twenty-first century by reminding the rest of the Church what inspired our denominational forebears to form faith communities and by applying it today. What healthy factors are demonstrated in your church?

- Being a signpost of the kingdom of God
- Being a Christ-centered, transformational, relational community
- Nurturing faith in each person by sharing the Bible, their story, and service
- Celebrating traditions that invite participation in the work of God
- Preserving a sense of continuity and presence despite obstacles or changes
- Responding to human need in a caring way with dignity and respect
- Living in grace regardless of life's lessons
- Knowing each other by name as children of God
- Recognizing how each person is gifted for ministry
- Working together to make a significant difference in each local community while in connection for mission globally.

SMALL CAN MEAN SIGNIFICANT

Many small churches actively proclaim their faith by the amazing things they do in God's name. Ironically, the list of creative ministry in smaller congregations is not limited by numbers or resources but by the members' capacity to reach beyond themselves and care for others. A small church with this ability does not describe itself in terms of scarcity—what it is not—(“But, we're only a small church . . .” or “We're not like . . .”). It describes itself in abundant terms of what it is: a faith community gathered where God is present with them and through them! God's power transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary. Vital small congregations exist that raise more money than their annual budget for mission, run an emergency shelter, feed the hungry, visit the sick, offer a hospice ministry, or tutor children to read.

These church ministries embody Christ's activity in the world. Size may determine how you go about it, but it does not excuse not doing it! It does not take a big building or an impressive crowd to be significant; there are other factors more important to effectiveness:

- esteem that makes possibilities for people happen
- relevance that seeks ways to renew and relate God to all
- hospitality that treats each one with respect and dignity
- spirituality, sustained by God's grace, which is deep and wide.

What is your church's strength? Does it have a dynamic ministry or is it in "maintenance" mode, repeating past activities? Is it focused on service or simply seeking to survive?

BASIS: THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

There are four basic theological assumptions that guide all healthy small churches:

- 1. The congregation has a strong sense of the *Missio Dei* (God's mission) in the world.** This purpose drives the vision, stewardship, and commitment of the congregation. Mission is not an optional consideration! It provides our primary ministry momentum and renews our purpose.
- 2. The ministry of the baptized is claimed and celebrated. We are all called and important in the work of the body of Christ—lay and clergy.** Respect for and inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity exists. Baptism fosters a deep cohesion and identity. Discovering and using spiritual gifts is crucial to mutual ministry.
- 3. There is a strong connection between church and community.** The church knows the community in which it is located and feels responsible for its well-being. The congregation is clear about its capacity to serve and seeks effective ways to do so.
- 4. Discipleship is primetime not pastime.** Making disciples and growing in discipleship is the priority of the congregation and guides every decision.

A BIBLICAL WITNESS

Take heart that God has a special love and purpose for things that are small. Just as God once lifted up the tiny nation of Israel to be a witness, God still calls the small church to do the same today. The writer of Deuteronomy reminded Israel that God chose and loved them not because they were numerous but because they were "the fewest of all peoples" (7:7a). Jesus taught that the tiny mustard seed had great potential (Luke 13:18-19), that the meek and lowly were especially blessed (6:20-23), that the widow's mite was a valued offering (21:1-4), and that seeking the one lost sheep truly mattered (15:1-7). These New Testament parables illustrate that while size does not guarantee success, "small" should not be a negative judgment. Amazing ministries are happening in tiny churches who believe they have a special ministry from God.

See also "A Biblical and Theological Basis" in the later sections on Nurture, Outreach, and Witness ministries and review article #2, "Biblical 'Greats' for Small Church Leaders," at www.gbod.org/smallchurch. Before continuing, take the "Healthy Church Index" (article #3) or on the Guidelines CD-ROM.

A Ministry COMPASS[®] for Vitality

The world is changing. Population shifts, lifestyle choices, and cultural diversity make us aware that our life experiences are not the same as others'. As we "navigate" in this new world, we will need a good compass! The "Ministry COMPASS" offered here is especially developed for your church(es) to help you find and build on the unique strengths of the small church. Work through each COMPASS point with others in your congregation or circuit. They may be explored in any order, as long as all are covered. Celebrate what you are doing well; note where you can improve.

C: A Christ-Centered Community That Connects

Key Words: *Christ focused *Called (not complacent) *Community
*Committed to Care

This COMPASS point focuses on Christ. We receive our primary direction, focus, and power for ministry from Christ. Nothing else will work as the driving core of life together as a congregation or parish (not the past, not strong personalities, not sheer will or determination)! "The heart of Christian ministry is Christ's ministry of outreaching love. . . . All Christians are called . . . to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment" (*Book of Discipline*, ¶125).

By our baptism, we are each called a child of God—gifted by God for the work of ministry. This is full-time work for all of us. Some are called to be clergy, and some are called to be laity. Some teach, lead, parent, and care for others. Through baptism we are called to become "true disciples" and "made to share in Christ's royal priesthood" (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, pp. 35, 37). In the small church there is a job for everyone, and the job is more than just serving on a committee or a board. Church members in smaller churches (and churches of every size) are called to pray, study the Scriptures, do works of caring and compassion, reach out to those in every kind of need, and witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ. It's not just the preacher's job. It's ministry shared by everyone!

To learn more, see article #4, "Examples of Pastoral Leaders," at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

A Christ-centered community asks itself frequently: “What is God’s will for this church and community?” which is more important than “What should we do next?” Furthermore, a Christ-centered community is not afraid to build upon its connections both locally and globally to be the family of God. A healthy small church relates to other churches, its district (and district superintendent), and others as partners (not adversaries!) in ministry.

Leaders who take this point seriously:

- use their spiritual imagination to discern God’s will for today rather than to just repeat past traditions or activities because they are familiar
- care about the community in and around the church
- appreciate differences while dealing with change and resistance
- discover and respect the gifts of laity and clergy in ministry
- create learning communities that grow in knowledge and grace (and practice it)
- look at what’s working and celebrate that, then renew or revise what can be improved
- boldly commit resources for ministry and not merely for maintenance.

For further exploration of this point with discussion questions, see article #5, “The Christ-Centered Church,” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

O: Options and Opportunities for Ministry

Key Words: *Options for Pastoral Leadership *Opportunities for Sharing Ministry *“Outward” Movement *Ongoing Presence

This COMPASS point reminds us that there are always options and opportunities for ministry: options for pastoral leadership and congregational style as well as for opportunities for new ministry today that reach real needs in relevant ways that people will respond to well. This point is not about busy-ness or survival but about making the right choices for vitality. It is about appropriate leadership and perhaps even relating to other congregations so that your ministry is accomplished. Small churches can find vitality through choosing the appropriate pastoral leader and congregational style. Making the right choices can make the difference between a budget that goes mainly for salaries and maintenance costs, and one that includes funding for mission and ministry as well. It’s important to make these choices while the congregation still has time to do so.

One of the strengths of the smaller church is a strong sense of family. You can feel this easily if you are born (or marry) into a congregation. It is not always as easy for a pastor who is appointed or assigned to a congregation to fit into the family. Another challenge from a family perspective is the coming together of various congregations on a circuit, parish, or other cooperative arrangement that may not see each other as truly related for ministry. Different school systems, town identities, and even diverse occupations prevent cooperation for ministry. It is harder to see what is shared. So, often what is shared is only the pastor. To look at opportunities and options, a church considers its strengths as a family, not its limitations or similar needs.

Today, rising clergy health-care costs; shortage of available, sustainable pastors; and aging membership can force a congregation to make hard decisions regarding pastoral placement (including going part-time, accepting a licensed or certified minister instead of an elder, or even sharing a pastor with other congregations). Congregations who face these challenges honestly for the sake of ministry do better than those who don't. There are negative influences both spiritual and social that can threaten the congregation's future or spark the desire for revitalization. See if these pitfalls threaten you and work together to make healthy adjustments as needed.

- **Spiritual influences** (loss of vision, passion, or love for people): they become “keepers of the aquarium rather than fishers”; unresolved conflict, pain and broken relationships; focus more on membership rather than discipleship; desire to reach the lost but not disciple them; church-centered versus God-centered; understand church as a place or building rather than people.
- **Social influences:** churches located in a culturally changing community they do not understand; disconnected from the community as it is today; depopulation (business leaving and so on); stressed economy; growing community; restrictive community (only our type of people welcome); resistant community (we're a remnant and won't change).

OPTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONAL SHARED MINISTRY

Despite a similar call to mission, no two congregations live out that call in quite the same way. Location, theological expression, and the discernment of effective ministry offer unique ways to be the body of Christ. There are many equally valuable yet distinct ways to be a faithful church today. Smaller churches differ from larger ones in one significant area: activity. Instead of being all things to all people, your church must build other-directed ministry on the gifts of the people present. A church grows weary when it tries to

copy what works elsewhere or simply repeats what once worked. It must focus on what it has to offer. Being in mission to the community in the name of Jesus Christ should be your primary motivation for ministry.

It is helpful when considering options and opportunities for ministry to realize the difference between things worth preserving and things that can change without destroying the integrity of a congregation. For example, it is important to preserve the mission of the church, a God-centered passion for people, core values, and principles. You can meet these requirements and adjust the church's vision, its specific ministries, and the particular goals and strategies used to accomplish those ministries. Congregations that confuse this truth often find themselves fighting over the time of worship as if it is written in stone rather than realizing worship is essential—the time is secondary.

CHOOSING A CONGREGATIONAL STYLE

Some churches are formed around a single faith community. This style of church is a *station* that has one pastor and one place of worship. Other congregations are organized as a *charge* for the purpose of pastoral appointment or assignment. Other churches are composed of several faith communities, such as a *circuit*, and served by one or more pastors. Review the list of organizing congregations to see the variety provided.

FAITHFUL STYLES FOR CONGREGATIONS

- Station (single congregation served by a pastoral leader)
- Multi-point charge (more than one congregation served by a single pastor)
- Circuit (several congregations or faith communities served by one pastor)
- Parish (an arrangement of congregations with pastors/staff to serve a region)
- Federated parish (two congregations of different denominations under the same roof)
- Local shared ministry (indigenous lay ministry team with an equipping elder)
- Shared mission area (an association of any of the above for mission)
- Faith community (usually an unchartered developing congregation; ethnic mission)
- House church (congregation or faith community that meets in home[s])

Some small churches (and larger churches too) have found new vitality by forming partnerships with other area churches, including non-Methodists, to share ministry cooperatively. Cooperative ministry occurs when a congregation shares with another church, group, or organization in the wider community. Working cooperatively can strengthen a church's mission and ministry. That is, cooperative ministry means doing (or doing better) together those things that cannot be done alone or that are better done in partnership.

Several different forms of cooperative ministry are defined in the *Book of Discipline* (§206.3). They range from informal to formal relationships. Because each style is unique and has implications for how the cooperative ministry is formed, they should be examined and chosen carefully.

Formal Cooperative Ministries

- Cooperative parish
- Cooperative ecumenical parish
- A blended parish (one church in different sites)
- Mission church partners
- Federated church
- Cluster group
- Group ministry
- Extended ministry
- Shared facilities

Informal Cooperative Ministries

- Sharing facilities temporarily with another congregation
- Sharing a ministry project (such as youth ministry or VBS)
- A collective or covenant (several congregations serving a community outreach)
- Seasonal events such as a Holy Week Worship Series by several congregations

ALTERNATE CONFIGURATIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS

Sometimes a district superintendent provides encouragement for emerging ministries that can be accomplished when congregations cooperate.

Cluster Ministry: Arrangements by which several autonomous congregations work cooperatively to share the expenses and the expertise of their pastors (clergy and lay). In the United States, this is often called a cooperative parish. Sometimes clergy cluster to share ministry that meets real issues and concerns.

Ecumenical Shared Ministry: Situations where two or more congregations from different denominations come together to form one pastoral charge or congregation. Such congregations are also sometimes called union or co-operating churches.

Local Shared Ministry (LSM): A model in which the entire ministry of a pastoral charge is delivered by unpaid, trained lay members of the congregation(s) under the guidance of an equipping clergy. Throughout the world, LSM is known by a variety of names, including Total Ministry, Mutual Ministry, Baptismal Ministry, Local Ministry Through Lay teams, Collaborative Ministry.

Sometimes, the time comes for a congregation to consider going out of existence so ministry may happen in the area in a fresh, dynamic way. These choices include: discontinue (church ceases to exist), merger (congregation

re-forms with another to establish a new ministry presence), house (congregations that have less than fifteen members may meet in a home for worship and study, regional (congregations surrender their charter so they can do a new thing in the area; sometimes called a regional church). It is important to realize that each option has validity. For more information on Certified Lay Minister visit www.gbod.org/.

OPTIONS FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

A pastor is the significant spiritual leader placed in a congregation by the authority of The United Methodist Church through your district superintendent and bishop. The pastor may be an elder who has graduated from seminary, a licensed local pastor who has completed the course of study, or a certified lay minister. (For more information on Certified Lay Ministry, go to www.gbod.org/laity.) Your pastor may be ordained or lay, full or part-time, or perhaps retired. All of these persons are “real” pastors.

The question to ask is: “Who is the appropriate pastor leader for our congregation’s mission and ministry?” Consider these questions carefully:

- What expectations (tasks and time commitment) do you have of a pastor?
- What funds are available for salary and health care?
- Are you willing to share your pastor?
- How committed are the laity to using their spiritual gifts?

OPPORTUNITIES: MAKING CHOICES

A small church serious about considering its options and opportunities for ministry will do the following:

1. Invite four or five people to be part of a dream team. Their job is not to make decisions but to gather information for the congregation. They should be people the congregation trusts who can also be objective and creative about the congregation’s future. (See Church Vitality Indicator in Resources.)

2. Choose a tool to gather data internally. These should include:

- congregation small group conversations
- survey or interviews
- facility use and evaluation
- ministry evaluation of staffing, relationship to other congregations, effectiveness, ministries started in past year, new members in past year
- values audit to determine what the congregation values by what it funds (look at the checkbook for the last twelve months), what decisions were made in the past year (what values were they based on), and what theology the congregation believes.

3. Choose a tool to gather data externally. These tools should include:

- door-to-door surveys
- windshield surveys—drive around and record observations
- mapping projects—identify where the church building is located in your community, where your people are located, where other institutions are located.
- demographic studies
- community assessment tools.

4. Analyze the situation carefully. What does the information gathered tell you about the congregation? about the community? about ministry? about options?

A church that takes this COMPASS point seriously:

- recognizes its challenges and celebrations equally
- considers appropriate options for pastoral leadership
- is not mired in failure or the past glory days but desires a future
- is a partner in choosing opportunities to be in ministries.

For further exploration see article #6, “Options and Opportunities for Sharing Ministries,” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

M: Ministry and Mission

Key words: *Mission *“Means of Grace”

Ministry does not happen in a vacuum. Without a sense of mission (purpose) and vision, the church will be in a constant state of disequilibrium and mutiny. Therefore, it is important to define the congregation’s mission (or purpose). Ask yourself, “What business are we in?”

THE CONGREGATION’S MISSION

Regardless of size, each congregation is called to be a community of Christian people organized to carry out God’s mission for the church as defined in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” This is the primary task of any church. Accomplishing the mission of making disciples requires:

- reaching out into the world surrounding the congregation and joyfully receiving into the family of faith all who would respond

- encouraging people in their relationship with God and inviting them into a meaningful commitment to God’s love in Jesus Christ
- providing opportunities for people to be nurtured and to practice the disciplines of faith in their daily lives and not just in meetings
- supporting people to live and act as faithful disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit for the transformation of the world.

MEANS OF GRACE

John Wesley believed that Christians should practice the “means of grace” to grow closer in love of God and neighbor. These means include worship, family devotions, Bible study, sacraments, prayer, fasting, and Christian conferencing. These acts of vital piety are the fuel for acts of mercy or service to the wider world, which are also means of grace. For the small church, these Christian practices are the core for healthy congregational life and form the basis of our life together. Any other activity is in addition to, not in place of, these means. A church that forgets this simple rule loses its vitality.

MINISTRY AND MOVEMENT

Every small church says that it is a friendly church that welcomes others. This COMPASS point is where that statement is proven. List the ministries of your congregation not as activities, but as connections with various age levels or groups that accomplish your mission. Think about the ways you invite people, relate people to God, equip them for service, and send them into the world to make a difference. (List your activities that serve each group. When was each activity started? When was the last time you began a new group?)

Age or Group	Activity or Event	Purpose or Goal	Number Involved	Results
Children				
Youth				
Adults				
Elderly				
New Residents				
Church Leaders				
Other				

Leaders who take this COMPASS point seriously do the following:

- Reflect on the beginning of your congregation. Why was it formed? What symbols are powerful in your building that remind you of your purpose? How visible are they?
- Would you say your congregation is more like a nonprofit organization that tries to do good with what it has? a club or voluntary association where people control what it does? a spiritual community clear about its mission and committed to it? Why?
- How intentional are you about planning for ministry? Review your church calendar for the past year. Place a star beside all the items that make disciples or develop faith (directly support your mission as understood by the primary task statement). Count the total items listed. Next, count the items starred. What do your totals tell you about where you are spending your time?

For further reflection on these points see article #7, “Questions for a Discussion on Mission and Ministry,” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

P: Passion for People!

Key Words: *People *Passion *Prayer *Partnership

ENSURING PEOPLE MATTER

Small churches can have 20/20 vision depending how they use their two “I’s”: Intimacy and Involvement.

Developing a keen sense of *intimacy* means being a place of belonging.

A healthy small church calls people by name. In larger churches it may be possible to attend worship regularly and never hear your name called out by another. You may be a “number” or “newcomer.” In smaller congregations, your name is not only known, it is also respected. People who are new to a community (or newly seeking faith) can find a place of deep caring in a smaller congregation. One of the benchmarks of a vital small church is how far the fellowship and caring extends—often going beyond the active membership to those who live, work, and struggle in the community. Who does your church welcome and call by name? Is anyone excluded? If so, why?

***Involving others in meaningful ministry* means offering a place of service that matters.** Not only does the small church call you by name—it also calls you “gifted.” Because people are special to God and gifted by God for ministry, a healthy small church is passionate about identifying,

nurturing, and using the gifts, talents, and resources of people. In a small church, each and every person is necessary in completing God's purpose. Small churches need to be careful stewards of the gifts of each person so that those people feel needed as they are invited to participate in ministry. Review carefully your strengths of intimacy and involvement. Are you building on your strengths or exhausting them?

Prayer. People in a strong, vital small church pray! The writer of Hebrews reminds his readers that Christian leaders need one another's prayers to surmount the difficulties and challenges of their work (13:18-19). Without this mutual prayer support, it is easy to succumb to discouragement and sin.

Not only should the congregation be praying for its ministries, it should also be praying for individuals and their relationships to God. For example, one church with small membership has several "prayer warriors," including choir members and teachers, who arrive early on Sunday and pray that God will bless the pastor, the choir, and other leaders during the service and in classes. They also pray that God will help any visitors to the service find the meaning and direction they need for life and faith. Since this program was instituted, that small church has seen a remarkable growth in worship attendance and its church's vitality.

While it is important to protect confidences and respect privacy, it is nevertheless necessary that people in small churches pray regularly and request prayers for persons who have not yet professed faith in Jesus Christ. Often, persons who pray in this manner will discover natural and appropriate ways to share their faith with others or to provide needed acts of kindness to them. These opportunities channel and help mobilize the church's witness ministries. There is no substitute for praying for the church's ministries. Churches that leave this important dimension out of their life together find it difficult to minister effectively.

What is the role of prayer in your church? How does who or what you pray for influence your ministry?

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS THAT MATTER

Relationships are crucial in the small church. In fact, the strength of the small church depends on the strength of its relationships. There are four relationships that can make or break the church with small membership. These relationships can be viewed as partnerships.

Partners and Participants With God. The congregation must first be God- and Christ-centered, for God is in the midst of our lives, regardless of whether we pay attention! Whenever we come together in God’s name to worship, study, engage in a small group, or help out in a service project, we not only participate in something sacred but also become partners with God. Through this relationship, we grow in knowledge and grace of God and become God’s beacon to others.

How strongly do members of the congregation sense that they and God are partners in the ongoing life of the church? How well do the worship, education, fellowship, devotional, and service opportunities enhance a sense of participation in the sacred?

Partners in Leadership. The goal of good leadership is empowerment, not gatekeeping, goaltending, or controlling. By virtue of our baptisms, all congregational participants are called to ministry, some to positions of leadership as clergy and others as laity. Vital churches share leadership and ministry with one another. Their leaders understand that one of their responsibilities is to mentor and encourage one another in the faith and in developing leadership skills. A congregation that is growing closer to God’s purpose has individuals who are doing the same. Persons in ministry together who respect, trust, and depend on one another form an awesome team that accomplishes far more working together than they can alone.

How well do people in leadership positions in your church work together to accomplish ministry? Who makes the key decisions? How? Are people eager or reluctant to serve as leaders in the church? Are the same people always doing the activities of the church, or are there new faces sharing new ways of being effective? How are leaders trained and supported?

Caring Partners. At its best, the small church is a strong family whose members care deeply for one another. An essential task of any church is to “make space at the table,” which can be understood as a sacramental metaphor. Is there a place for everyone at the church family table? How long does it take to be accepted in the church? If someone has a need, how and when does the church respond, and does the congregation share the joy of meeting those needs? Are there people who are “in” and people who are “out”? How does the church resolve conflict or difference of opinion?

Partners With the Community. Sometimes it seems as though the best-kept secret in the community is the church. Though church members live in the community, how well does the congregation know the community? Is the church known and seen as a vital partner with the community? What quality

of service is the church known for providing? How does the church provide ministry to people beyond its membership? What groups or people outside the church are respected partners to accomplish projects and meet needs?

For further discussion on this COMPASS point, see article #8, “Passion for People,” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

A: Attitude That Acts

Key Words: *Attitude *Assets *Actions

ATTITUDE AS A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

It has been said that “our attitude affects our altitude.” How far you go, how high you soar is dependent on how you feel about yourselves and your abilities to maximize your assets, act on your dreams, and achieve your goals.

Attitude is heavily influenced by language, so a crucial activity is first to listen to how you talk about yourselves. An attitude of negativity, deficits, and defeat sets you up to achieve little or nothing because you start out assuming you will fail. “I can’t,” “we can’t,” “we won’t,” “we’re only . . .” all lead to nothingness. The number one factor in small membership church failure is a defeatist attitude.

On the other hand, “I can”—or more appropriately, “through us, God can”—leads to animation of spirit, action, and accomplishment. When God is at the center, your gifts are sufficient. Remember the Apostle Paul’s observation (2 Corinthians 12:8-9) that God’s “power is made perfect in weakness”; what you may consider to be barriers or deficits need not be. When you look with an attitude of abundance at whatever you have, whatever you can do, you maximize your assets for mission and ministry.

ACHIEVING SMALLER CHURCH POTENTIAL

First, focus on assets and what can be done. In sorting through your current situation, you may identify what you consider to be barriers. Some really are barriers; some can be transformed; some can be ignored.

Next, consider these assets, easily found in small membership churches: **faithfulness** (to Christ and to one another), **community presence** (knowing and addressing the needs, concerns, and issues of the community), **perseverance** (establishing covenants to “stay at the table” and to make a differ-

ence), and **communication** (taking the time to listen to and speak to one another about your lives together). *None of these assets costs anything, but they are invaluable for achieving your church potential.*

Then, list your assets. What is your current situation for ministry? What physical property do you have and where is it located? What are the qualities and gifts of the congregation? What other “intangible” assets do you have (such as an excellent reputation)?

Of these assets, which seem limiting, even to the point of being a barrier? (*Our sanctuary holds eighty people comfortably; we have only four rooms for our classes and groups.*) If there is no feasible solution, eliminate it from your list. Work with your realities and move ahead. If something can be done, plan for the appropriate short- and long-term solutions. For the “open-ended” assets, what can you do to use them in the best possible way? What opportunities are lurking just underneath what seems at first like a limitation? (*Given that we have only four classroom spaces, we have the opportunity to expand our outreach through house groups.*)

Remember that you do not have to have or do every conceivable ministry or program, so free up your energy to accomplish what you can. (*The Church Vitality Indicator—CVI—can help you find a particular focus of ministry that has the most influence. See Resources.*) This may lead to a “niche” ministry not offered elsewhere in the community. If, for example, your membership is mainly middle to older adults, consider working with adult day care or with a “grandparenting” ministry to children of working parents.

If you take this “Attitude” COMPASS point seriously, you will work with others to list your assets using the best and most hopeful attitude possible. Questions to ask yourself include:

- What limitations or barriers are just in your minds?
- Which ones can be overcome or let go so that you can focus on reachable goals?
- What self-denigrating or immobilizing language or perception can be eliminated? How can you help the congregation see itself more positively?
- What have you learned about your attitude of abundance or scarcity?
- How high can your attitude take your spirit and ministry?

For other guiding questions see article #9, “Checking Your Church’s Attitude” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

S: Stewardship

Key words: *Service *Stewardship

Each of us promises, upon joining a United Methodist congregation, to uphold it with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. This covenant extends beyond the walls of the church to intersect with each place our lives touch. We are likewise called to offer our gifts and service in the community and world.

Certainly, a part of our commitment is to the congregation: accepting our own obligation to continue the ministry by offering our money, gifts, prayers, and hands-on help. If not us, then who does pay the bills and take care of each other? One of the ways we are stewards, or caretakers of God's gifts, is in the continuation of the congregation beyond maintenance to real service.

Of course, it takes money to make some things happen, and we may equate wise fiscal management with the sum of our stewardship efforts. Yet, stewardship is much more than raising the annual budget, or saying yes to a church job. Stewardship is the self-giving way that says thank you to God. Stewardship, then, defines and structures our lives as grateful recipients of God's grace who respond to that love by extending ourselves fully (at home, school, work, and church) to offer back what we can in the most responsible way possible.

Persons who have accepted a position of leadership within the congregation can consult the appropriate Guideline in this series to learn more about their specific responsibilities and ways to develop their ministry area.

Several key stewardship questions are:

- What are the needs and gifts of the congregation and the community?
- What is the will of God for this church and this community?
- Where do the gifts and needs intersect so that there is meaningful ministry?
- Do the majority of our members embrace this understanding of God's will and have the desire to follow through?
- How can the church maximize its assets to accomplish God's desires for the congregation?

SEVEN STEWARDSHIP IDEAS

As you help cultivate a stronger practice of stewardship in smaller churches, help people see a real need—not just the bottom-line amount. Whenever possible, “place a face” on special appeals, needs, or crises by inviting those involved to speak on what is happening. Small churches are relational!

- Create fun fundraising events that involve the larger area (village, town, or city).
- Celebrate the church’s ministry throughout the year.
- Invite individuals to share how the church makes a difference in their lives.
- Be practical! Post a wish list for the nursery or Sunday school and allow people to donate the items needed and cross them off as received.
- Encourage leaders to be role models in stewardship.
- Tell people often you believe in them and their generosity of spirit.
- Participate in county or school surplus auctions to obtain furniture and equipment at an economical cost.

For further thought see article #10, “Ideas for Stewardship in Small Churches,” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

S: Structure That Has Spirit!

Key Words: *Structure *Support

The purpose of organizing for ministry is not simply to plan activities that fill up a calendar and exhaust you. A small church should never fall into the trap of substituting “busyness” (activity) for business (spiritual formation). The “bigger is better” mentality does not support the development and implementation of ministry in the small membership church. It is a matter of wisdom—choosing the right things and doing them well.

The United Methodist Church affirms three specific areas of ministry for local United Methodist churches—nurture, outreach, and mission. These provide a way of organizing ministry that is helpful for congregations of every size. This way of organizing ministry is called NOW (for nurture, outreach, and witness). Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries depend on organized resource ministries (rm) in the local church. Resource ministries include the support that four groups in the church provide: trustees, finance, staff/pastor-parish relations, and nominating and leadership development. Together these emphases provide for the administration of the church’s organizational and temporal life (*Book of Discipline* ¶252).

NOW and its resource ministries (rm) are summarized as NOW(rm). NOW(rm) is based on biblical foundations, current realities and possibilities, and responding to needs. Using the NOW(rm) model for ministry can help your congregation balance its life effectively as a dynamic community of faith. Remember, you can adapt NOW(rm) to fit the size of your church—with as few as seven people, you can have a functioning church council!

The work of organizing and administering the church's ministries always requires careful planning, implementation, and evaluation. However, the administration and organization of the church's ministries is never an end in itself; rather it must be seen as the means to your actual ministry.

Leaders serious in developing this COMPASS point reflect on the following questions:

- Review the nurture, outreach, and witness ministries of the church. Are they balanced? If not, which order would you place them in and what does this say about the priorities of the church? What changes could be made?
- As you examine the resource ministries of the church (finance, trustees, staff/pastor-parish relations, and nominations and leadership development), how would you characterize their support of the total ministry of the church? What concrete examples can you give?
- What ministries is the church known for with members? What ministries does the community know about?

For more information see article #11, "Tips for Making NOW(rm) Work in Your Church," at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

The NOW(rm) Model

nOW(rm) provides a variety of options for organizing church ministries. Regardless of which organizational system you adopt or invent, it is imperative that your church (1) take a close look at its own current situation, (2) develop its own vision of the future, and then (3) decide its own avenues for ministry and its own organizational system. In doing this with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church will have the flexibility and the freedom to truly “reinvent” itself.

NOW(rm) can suggest means of organizing that can become as elaborate as necessary, but organization can also be quite simple. Some small churches, particularly those with an average worship attendance of less than twenty-five persons, simply do not have enough members to form committees. These churches function with one organizing group, the church council. Churches in this category can still use the NOW(rm) model by having a single ministry group person responsible for each of the ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness. Thus, when the church council meets, for the time devoted to planning nurture (or outreach or witness) ministries, the church council itself can serve as the committee for nurture (or outreach or witness) ministries. The key is in placing primary emphasis on the ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness while understanding that the various resource ministries exist only to support the NOW ministries, not as ends in themselves.

Three Necessary Keys

There are three important keys to designing successful ministries using NOW(rm).

Leadership Commitment. People who make the ministry decisions in the church must support a common understanding of being in ministry, and they must commit themselves toward working together to its success. They must be trained and encouraged. NOW(rm) is not about doing things right, but about doing the right things. A dynamic church must do more than simply nurture the people who come into the building—it must reach beyond itself and live out its discipleship. Leadership commitment must expand to more than the task of balancing nurture, outreach, witness, and resource ministries. It must also be a commitment to journey together. This happens when leaders know, respect, and trust one another and when leaders understand and name what the church expects of them as well as what they offer the church.

Assessment of Current Ministry and Needs. Honestly review the needs and activities of people or groups in the church and community who are truly being served. (A tool such as CVI would be helpful.) Successful leaders discern where the place of greatest potential is for ministry. Leaders who know the community well (through demographic studies, “pounding the pavement,” interviews, informal conversations, and so on) are ready to respond to those decisive moments that may open or deepen a spiritual experience for someone. Does the church do an equal job of taking care of those outside the church and those within? Are nurture ministries balanced carefully with outreach and witness? Is the church focused more on maintenance than mission? Does the leadership know where unchurched people live and what they need in order to respond to the gospel? Is survival or service the deciding factor on what happens in the church, how it is done, and with whom?

Meet with other leaders in your church to discuss these questions:

- What is the membership of your congregation? Who attends? What is the average worship attendance? average Sunday school attendance? Are the answers to these questions acceptable to you? Why or why not?
- When you think about your church, do positive or negative images come to mind? How are these images affected by your size? Why do you think this way? When the rest of your congregation thinks about your church, what do they think about first: its size or that it is a Christian church? In what way does your congregation’s thinking influence the faith, self-esteem, and actions of its members as individual Christians?

Creativity: Willing to Risk and Try Something New. Sometimes the patterns of ministry can become our prison. The more successful past ministries are in our minds and hearts, the more powerful they can be in controlling the present and ultimately the future. We do the same activities in the same way year after year (and wonder why we are not getting the same response we once did). A new day often demands a new faithful response. Is there a way to honor traditions and people’s needs and expectations at the same time? Do new ideas thrive or die in your church? *Remind your church that it needs to be willing to take some risks.* Some of your efforts will produce growth; others won’t. Do not waste time dwelling on the latter. Learn from both your successes and your mistakes. Move on.

As you set goals for nurture, outreach, witness, and resource ministries, it is important to do regular evaluations. The traditional Wesleyan quarterly conferences is one way to do this. The church council should review its annual goals quarterly to see which goals have been accomplished and which are still in need of implementation. One church council publishes for the entire congregation a quarterly report of its annual goals and their progress. Much to the council members' surprise, they have discovered that such methodical attention to detail usually results in their having achieved most of their annual goals in the first six months of the year. This gives them the second half of the year to work on the quality of their service and to plan for the next year.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

- What vision for ministry was expressed by your church's founders? How has that vision changed over the years? What is your congregation's vision for its ministry today? Is that vision adequate for the present? Why or why not?
- What do you think God wants for your church? How are you moving toward that hope?
- What do the Bible and church tradition tell you about leadership?

Nurture Ministries (N)

People need a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community. “Nurture” identifies the need for Christians to be nurtured in the Christian faith if they are to cultivate the spiritual resources necessary to provide effective outreach and witness ministries.

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

The *Book of Discipline* defines the work of nurturing ministries as giving attention to educational, worship, and stewardship components of ministry. While the entire Bible tells the story of God’s nurturing love for humanity, Jesus Christ is God’s nurturing love made flesh. Jesus called and then taught the disciples so they could grow in faith. For example, when one of the disciples asked Jesus how they should pray, Jesus taught them what we know as the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 11:1-4).

Jesus was intimately involved in the care of his disciples as a diligent shepherd cares for his flock (John 10:11-18). He made sure they had enough to eat (Mark 6:30-44). He calmed the storm when it threatened to drown them (Luke 8:22-25). He challenged them to learn and practice the hard lessons of discipleship, constantly reminding them of the power of the ancient Scriptures while further illuminating those words through instruction (see John 6:60-71).

MANY EXPRESSIONS OF NURTURE MINISTRIES

Nurture brings to mind activities like Sunday school, visitation of the sick and those who find it difficult to leave home, and the worship program of the congregation. However, it is helpful to remember that the church’s nurturing ministries are much broader than just two or three emphases.

The Christian formation ministry of the church, for instance, incorporates the Sunday school program and may include other opportunities for Christian education and formation, such as Bible studies, prayer groups, and short-term classes. Short-term classes can address a variety of needs in the congregation, from instruction on Christian parenting, to care of the elderly, and even congregational conflict management. The educational program of the church also includes leadership training for church officers, Sunday school leaders, teachers, and other small group leaders.

Perhaps the most urgently needed type of nurturing ministry today is simply assisting members of the congregation in their daily walk of faith. Persons who seek to grow in faith are people who are constantly assailed by a variety of activities that compete for their time and energy. Growing disciples need help in developing habits that include the daily practice of the means of grace (Scripture reading, praying, listening to God, and so on).

Fellowship, another type of nurture activity, should be designed to meet the needs of everyone in the congregation. Plan events that meet the needs of families, older persons, single persons, children, youth, and those who feel discriminated against or marginalized by society. Sometimes this can be accomplished through intergenerational activities. At other times a particular group of folk in the congregation may find mutual support by spending time with one another.

Members of a congregation need to know that others in the church care about them and pray for them. Lending a helping hand—when someone is sick, ill, or injured or when a baby is born or when a loved one dies—is another way to demonstrate care and love. Although overlooked in many churches, having fun together (fellowship) is another way to provide joyous emotional support to all members of the congregation.

The Sunday worship service is an important vehicle for nurturing the congregation. Take care to plan worship that appeals to everyone in the congregation, realizing that no one can be pleased all the time. In general, the more the members of the congregation have an opportunity to plan and participate in the worship services, the more meaningful these services are for them. Overall, the worship program of the church should be inspirational and spiritually stimulating.

A SAMPLER OF EDUCATIONAL NURTURE AND/OR DISCIPLING MINISTRIES

- Short-term (two to twelve weeks) Christian education study classes for adults
- DISCIPLE Bible study (within a church or offered cooperatively)
- Spiritual gifts discovery classes
- Church retreats
- Ongoing or short-term Bible study or Covenant Discipleship groups
- Vacation Bible school for children, youth, and/or adults
- Lenten, Advent, or other seasonal studies and devotions
- Confirmation and membership classes

FELLOWSHIP NURTURE MINISTRIES

- Hospitality training for worship greeters and key leaders
- United Methodist Men, Women, Youth
- Midweek evening program for children, families, or intergenerational groups
- After school or Saturday care programs for children (like Kid's Club)
- Church camp scholarships

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT NURTURE MINISTRIES

- Being supportive, such as providing meals during trying times
- Providing wheelchairs and other accessibility equipment and building features
- Good financial stewardship (provides for the church facilities and paid staff)
- Leadership training and prayer support
- Sending cards and devotional material, such as *The Upper Room*, to homebound members
- Pastoral, caring, and listening lay ministries, such as Stephen Ministry

WORSHIP NURTURE MINISTRIES

- Monthly lectionary study for people who want to help plan and participate as worship leaders
- Special music for worship services (children's choir; special selections; spirited singing involving a new instrument, such as guitar, synthesizer, drums)
- Dramas and short skits
- Special Sundays (social, such as Mother's Day; denominational celebrations, such as Native American Awareness Sunday and Christian Education Day)
- Involvement of various people in worship services in a variety of ways
- Special worship services, such as Thanksgiving, Good Friday, Easter Sunrise
- Ecumenical worship celebrations, such as Church Women United World Day of Prayer
- Fifth Sunday Charge Worship and Fellowship Dinner

These lists are not meant to be exhaustive. To find more questions and ways to reflect on your nurture ministries, see article #12, "Assessing Your Nurture Ministries," at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

Outreach Ministries (O)

United Methodist churches of all sizes are called to provide outreach ministries on the local, state, regional, national, and international levels. Doing local outreach is a good way initially to get people involved.

To provide appropriate outreach ministries, first analyze the needs of your community. Start by interviewing persons in your community who are aware of these needs, such as a public school nurse, police chief, senior citizens center director, fire department chief, county or regional social service director, county or regional health director, community organizing project director, and others who serve the community. Ask these and other questions:

- Who are the people with needs in this community?
- What do they need?
- Are there different kinds of needs?
- How can the church respond to these needs?

Be bold. “Because of God’s abundant grace, there is never anything inherently small about any church!” This proclamation tells us that while some tasks may seem enormous, the infinite availability of God’s grace makes it possible for a church of any size to address these tasks. The church with a small membership may not be able to do everything, but it can do something! Outreach ministries may take expression in several forms:

- **Ministries of compassion** involve a congregation in addressing the immediate needs of individuals, families, and communities. The congregation may respond to local disasters and/or provide food, clothing, emergency housing, counseling, employment opportunities, and so forth in its community.
- **Community ministries of concern and advocacy** call for a congregation’s involvement in the enrichment of community life and advocacy for justice—changes in local communities related to welfare, long-term housing, education, community economic development, health services, and so on.
- **Regional, national, and global outreach ministries** call on a congregation to engage the structures and values of society and to move toward justice and righteousness in public policies, such as basic human rights, land use and control, ecology, and the world’s economic systems.

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

The *Book of Discipline* defines the work of the outreach ministries: “The outreach ministries . . . shall give attention to the local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy. These ministries include church and society, global ministries, higher education and campus ministry, health and welfare, Christian unity and interreligious concerns, religion and race, and the status and role of women” (§252.2.b).

Many of the best-loved stories of the Scriptures portray Jesus and his disciples caring for the immediate needs of people. Jesus feeding the multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21) and Peter and John healing a man in Jesus’ name (Acts 3:1-8) are examples of the ministries of compassion. In John 21:15-19, the risen Christ has a poignant conversation with Peter in which Jesus repeatedly instructs Peter to “feed my sheep,” thus underscoring the importance of responding to the needs of persons who suffer from hurt and want.

However, Jesus’ concern was not just with the needs of individuals. Jesus wept over the entire population of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44); he sent his disciples to a multitude of towns (Luke 10:1); and he devoted himself to healing the sick (for example, Mark 6:53-56). It is obvious from these passages that Jesus was concerned with communities. By his own example, Jesus taught his disciples how to address the needs of entire cities, towns, and villages.

Jesus’ ministry addressed systemic evils within his culture. His teaching that Samaritans, the traditional enemies of the Jewish people, could be perceived as good (Luke 10:25-37) and his open relationships with women (John 4:7-30, Mark 3:31-35, Matthew 12:46-50, and Luke 8:19-21) are examples of Jesus’ willingness to overturn the restrictive social patterns of his time. Jesus saw the effects of greed upon the communities he visited, and he proclaimed a new ecology of living based on the sustainable use of resources (Matthew 6:25-32). Jesus’ life and teachings caused the apostle Paul to proclaim that with the coming of Jesus there was no longer any validity to racism or sexism (Galatians 3:28).

OUTREACH MINISTRIES THROUGH GIVING PLUS

Many churches with small membership are doing much-needed and exciting outreach ministries of compassion. One traditional way of doing this in United Methodist churches is by supporting United Methodist missional and benevolence apportionments. United Methodist apportionments help fund outreach ministries in local and annual conference settings as well as in the fifty states of the United States and in more than 108 countries.

With few exceptions, small membership churches can pay 100 percent of their apportionments. Clergy and lay leadership in these churches need to find creative ways to inform the congregation about how these apportionments are used in ministry. One way to do this is to offer a “Church in Action” report during worship (monthly or weekly), summarizing our denominational outreach work. It is also important to provide opportunities to celebrate this missional giving and its results.

Outreach ministry includes more than simply giving dollars; congregation members should be encouraged to experience a hands-on project, such as working on a Habitat for Humanity building or serving food in a soup kitchen. The resulting sense of satisfaction and accomplishment often far outweighs placing a donation in the offering plate. Hands-on outreach ministries also provide opportunities for church members to reconnect experientially to their local community, nation, and world.

Effective churches with a small membership both support and do outreach ministries. They also embrace John Wesley’s belief that the world is their parish. That is, they see the need to reach out to the local, state, regional, national, and international communities. Sometimes members of the congregation resist supporting international outreach, stating that they prefer “to take care of their own people first.” Kindly remind them that God’s creation knows no such artificial boundaries, especially as our world grows ever closer to becoming a global village.

EXAMPLES OF MINISTRIES OF COMPASSION

- Giving childcare scholarships to young mothers in the community to help them complete high school
- Providing free funeral dinners to nonmembers
- Supporting terminally ill persons and families as a Hospice volunteer
- Volunteering to deliver Meals on Wheels
- Providing emergency financial aid such as utilities, food, clothing, shelter, medicine, or serving as an emergency medical technician or volunteer firefighter
- Doing errands or providing transportation for older persons as needed

COMMUNITY CONCERN AND ADVOCACY MINISTRIES

- Donating seeds, fertilizers, and canning equipment to low-income households and teaching them how to garden, can, and freeze foods
- Donating to the Heifer Project International
- Sponsoring work camps designed to improve substandard housing, construct church camp buildings, or support Habitat for Humanity
- Hosting work trips to mission sites in the United States or other nations

- Financially supporting and volunteering to help with local domestic violence assistance programs
- Paying the cost for a reading teacher in the local elementary school or volunteering as tutors

REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL OUTREACH

- Collecting special offerings, such as One Great Hour of Sharing, Native American Awareness Sunday, or Rural Life Sunday
- Recycling and contributing the proceeds to an outreach project
- Sponsoring a refugee family (perhaps with two or three churches)
- Organizing voter registration or holding political office
- Participating in a Volunteers in Mission trip outside the United States
- Being involved in community, state, or regional issues

These ideas are intended to generate the development of outreach ministries in your church rather than to serve as a grab bag for activity. Several examples are mentioned here, or go to www.gbod.org/smallchurch for article #13, “More Outreach Ideas.”

ORGANIZE AND ASSESS YOUR OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Form a team of people who will work on developing outreach ministries. Begin by asking what outreach ministries are already being supported financially and how, in general, your church members actually engage in outreach. Then inventory the current outreach ministries according to type (local, state, national, international) and means of support (financial, hands-on, advocacy).

When you have a portrait of current practice, look for what could be next:

- What needs exist in your community?
- What talents, abilities, and experiences exist among your members that could be used to address these needs?
- Think and talk about the needs of your state, nation, and world. What needs currently exist?
- How might your congregation address these needs? What biblical teaching supports it?

It is important to develop a balance of ministries aimed at local, state, national, and international concerns. Also work to develop a balance between outreach ministries that your church supports financially and those in which church members actively participate.

Witness Ministries (W)

The ministry of witness gives people the opportunity to share their faith understanding of personal and corporate salvation, reconciliation, worship, celebration, spiritual development, and discipline. It also provides people with opportunities to share their faith with other persons and to work for justice, righteousness, and the redemption of the world.

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

The *Book of Discipline* defines the work of witness ministries: “The witness ministries . . . shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; lay speaking ministries; and other means which give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ” (§252.2.c).

A careful reading of the New Testament tells us that the first Christians were drawn to the faith for a variety of reasons. This should not surprise us because we know that a witness approach that appeals to one person may not appeal to another. We see, for example, that on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-42) the disciples spoke in their native tongues to the people who came to Jerusalem. They gave testimony to God’s deeds of power to thousands of people. Three thousand people responded to their testimony and were baptized that day.

Acts 17:16-32 describes the apostle Paul in Athens, speaking to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, taking an intellectual approach to describe the gift of salvation to them. Upon hearing of the Resurrection, some of the philosophers scoffed, some agreed to hear Paul again, and some became believers.

Elsewhere, we read the account of Philip initiating a relationship with an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace (queen) of Ethiopia, in order to share with him the story of the Christian faith. At the urging of the Holy Spirit, Philip ran to the Ethiopian’s chariot and helped him interpret the Hebrew Scripture he was reading. At the Ethiopian’s request, Philip baptized him (Acts 8:26-40). A recurrent theme found throughout Acts is that people respond to a personal invitation to hear and believe the story of Christ. Peter, Paul, and the other apostles again and again invite people to believe in salvation through Jesus Christ, and many respond in faith. The invitation to come, hear, believe, and belong is repeated throughout this book of the Bible.

WITNESS MINISTRIES TODAY

Most people who become members of churches with small membership are attracted to the congregation because of one or more of the following reasons:

- They are born into the congregation.
- They are attracted to the ministry of the pastor, often because of the pastor's ministry to them during a personal crisis.
- They find a warm, intimate, family-type fellowship in the congregation.
- They are able to fill a need in the church's ministry.
- They are recruited through participation in a fellowship or service group related to the church, for example, the choir, Scouts, and so forth.

Expanding Our View of Witness Ministries. The Great Commission of Jesus Christ is plain and simple: Christians are supposed to tell others about the gospel and encourage them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. There are four building blocks for witness ministries in any church, including the small church:

- a concern for unchurched persons living in your community and a willingness to befriend these persons with Christian love
- a commitment to talk to God about your concern for these persons
- a willingness to develop effective and appropriate skills for sharing your faith with those who have no faith or who may have lost it along the way, which includes planning for witness ministries in your church
- a pastor and lay leaders willing to teach members of your church how to accomplish the first three building blocks.

People do not make a commitment to Jesus Christ by chance. They do not learn by accident what faith demands regarding their relationship with humanity, other living things, and the land with all its rich resources. Witness ministries must be thoughtfully planned and implemented.

Examine how people who visit your church can become accepted members of your congregation. Most churches with small membership like to think of themselves as “friendly, happy families.” However, friendliness does not guarantee that new members will easily become part of your church family. Just like most families, your church family has a shared history, language, and behavior. Would you still feel the welcome and support of the congregation if you were the visitor? of a different ethnic background? an elderly person? a teenager with a tongue stud?

Newcomers must be offered ways to learn (and longtime members need to be reminded of) this family background in order to be truly integrated into the congregation. They must also be offered a meaningful role in

their new church family that includes sharing a faith and ministry focus they believe they may be called toward. There are several ways to accomplish this.

- Tell the congregation's story on United Methodist Heritage Sunday or at "Homecoming."
- Assign new members and friends a mentor from the congregation. The role of the mentor is to make the newcomers feel acquainted, to facilitate their adoption into the congregation, and to help them discover opportunities for study, fellowship, and service in the church.
- Include newcomers in opportunities for fun and play. Congregations, like all families, need to play together in order to enjoy one another's company and to learn more about one another.

EXAMPLES OF WITNESS MINISTRIES

There is a close parallel between witness and outreach ministries, especially those that address the structures and values of society and move toward justice and righteousness. Witness ministry, alone, may seem unclear and may happen (if it does happen) with little focus or intentionality. Be concerned and mindful about sharing the Good News.

These ideas are intended to generate the development of witness ministries in your church; the list is suggestive, rather than exhaustive. See also article #14, "More Witness Ideas," at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

SPEAKING AND WORD WITNESS MINISTRIES

- Church members visiting with their friends, relatives, coworkers, fellow students, church visitors, and others about the meaning of the Christian faith in their life
- A door-to-door community canvass, including an invitation to worship (using brochures or informative door hangers—like the ones delivery restaurants use)
- Providing worship services at nursing homes or in a park before ball games or other activities that attract people
- Sponsoring a lay speaking course in your church
- Offering an event open to the community, such as a concert with contemporary Christian music, or having outdoor tent revival services

BUILD UPON KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR COMMUNITY

An accurate awareness of both the unchurched people in your community and the potential for new members in your church is absolutely essential in planning for effective witness ministries. Before you begin reviewing or developing ministries of witness, however, invite other church leaders and members to gather information relating to the wider community (make specific assignments from the list below). Your research should include the following:

1. The recent United States Census Bureau population statistics for your community. Call your district or conference office for any demographics they may have of your community. You can also obtain demographic information from the General Board of Global Ministries Research Office (<http://research.gbgm-umc.org>). Your local school superintendent and public library may also be sources for this kind of information.
2. The breakdown of the total population into the following age groups:
0–5 years 6–17 years 18–29 years
30–47 years 48–65 years 66–80 years
81 + years
3. Total number of churches and other houses of worship in your community:
_____ a. Number of members for each
_____ b. Average attendance for each
4. On the basis of the answers you receive to numbers 1 and 3 above, determine the number and the percentage of unchurched persons in your community.
5. Determine the following using the United States Census information:
_____ a. Percentage of racial or ethnic persons in your community
_____ b. Annual number of newcomers to the community
6. Identify and describe five groups in your community who, for whatever reason, are going through challenges or are difficult to love.
7. Who are the impoverished, hardworking, unchurched persons in your community?
8. Who are the persons in your community who cannot worship on Sunday morning because of their work schedule or a disability?

DOING AND ACTION WITNESS MINISTRIES

- Making the church sanctuary available to the community for funerals, memorial services, and weddings (with clear policies approved by the trustees)
- Offering ecumenical worship services
- Peaceful demonstrations in the community to bring about awareness of social challenges and to press for actions to resolve those problems
- Church-sponsored scholarship program for graduating seniors
- Recycling
- Mobilization of community resistance to hard liquor sales, drug sales and use, gambling, or other activities destructive to the community
- Hosting an art exhibit to display work that answers a question such as “Where do I find God”

GOOD COMMUNICATION ENHANCES WITNESS

Effective smaller congregations use good public relations techniques. Some churches may feel uneasy about thinking of public relations as a way to witness to their faith. However, it is an indispensable part of witnessing to the local community.

There are three important keys to doing effective public relations. They are advertise, advertise, and advertise. That is, keep the story of your church’s ministries in front of the public as much as possible. This can be achieved in several ways.

Place temporary signs in front of the church. These signs should be attractively designed and used to promote such activities as vacation Bible school, special seasonal programs, rally days, and so forth.

As a general rule, make some recognizable change to the outside of your church building and property annually. This reminds the community that your church is active and present within the community and gives it a fresh look. The change need not be substantial. Something as simple as putting an attractive canvas banner across the front of the building, planting different colored annual flowers, or painting the front door a different color is enough to attract the attention of those who pass by.

Make good use of your church website, local newspaper, radio, or cable company. Think beyond simply listing your worship services. Placing articles describing the ministries of your congregation and upcoming events can be highly effective.

When decorating the church for celebrations, do not forget the outside of the building. Wreaths and lights are helpful during Advent and Christmas. A simple wooden cross draped with purple fabric during Lent and changed to white during Eastertide is especially attractive.

BEING INTENTIONAL IS THE KEY

You may find you need more preparation for doing witness ministries than for nurture and outreach ministries. If the pastor has little or no training or experience in this type of ministry, he or she may need to attend a continuing education event designed to give direction, resources, and ideas for how to do witness ministries together.

Members of the congregation may need to participate in a witness ministry training event or series of workshops. While this type of training should be made available to anyone who wishes to participate, it may be helpful for the pastor, lay leader, or witness committee chairperson to pick several key persons to be trained.

If your congregation feels that there is potential for numerical growth in your community, you may want to consider forming a “church growth team.” Such a team would include the pastor, statistician, new member development worker (who assists new members in becoming involved in the congregation), church council chairperson, youth sponsor, Sunday school superintendent or leader, outreach captain (who focuses the congregation’s attention on reaching out to unchurched persons), and others with a special interest or skill. The church growth team’s primary responsibility is to devise, resource, and monitor church growth ministries in the congregation.

Members of the team should be seen as coordinators and coparticipants in this ministry, not as the only ones responsible for this work. Together, examine these issues:

- Based on the local data you have collected, is it possible that effective witness ministries might result in numerical growth for your congregation? Why or why not?
- How do people become a part of your congregation? Do they reflect the biblical situations described in this resource?
- Do people who have become part of your church in recent years reflect ways that people become members of small churches as described in this resource? If not, in what ways did they become members?
- How does your church understand witness ministries? Where do you need continuing education in witness ministries?
- Do you personally know unchurched people? Are there unchurched people in your community? Is your congregation equipped to do effective witness ministries?

- What witness ministries are currently taking place at your church?
- What witness ministries would you like your congregation to add to those being accomplished already?

Resource Ministries (rm)

The work of organizing and administering the church's ministries always requires careful planning, implementation, and evaluation. While the work of administration and organization of the church's ministries is absolutely essential, it is never an end in itself; it must always be seen as a means to bring about the actual program ministries of the church. Each group has different tasks, but all provide support for the ministries of the church. The finance, staff/pastor-parish, nominations and leadership development committees, and the trustees should occasionally meet together to coordinate their support of ministry and communicate with one another.

Consult the *Book of Discipline* (§258) for further description of the committee on finance, board of trustees, staff/pastor-parish relations committee, and church treasurer. Look at the Guideline for each of those ministry areas for helps in leading those ministry areas. A brief description follows here.

TRUSTEES

The trustees manage the building and site as a resource for ministry (see the *Discipline*, §§258.3; §§2524–2549). They ensure that everything is in proper working order. Among their responsibilities, they will:

- review the site as a place for ministry and make sure that everything is easily located and accessible
- maintain facility appearance, cleanliness, safety, and function
- manage risk reduction and guarantee safety both in the facility and during church activities
- develop policies for the use of the building, property, facilities, and equipment for members and community
- develop signage for rooms, directions, and so on so that people know where to go for worship, nursery, classes, and other activities.

Imagine that you are a visitor to the church with little or no knowledge of the floor plan. Take a brief mental tour of the church to see what, if anything, can improve your appearance, accessibility, and hospitality.

FINANCE

Developing a budget can both interpret and support ministry. Using the NOW(rm) model as a guide for developing the church's general budget is another way to interpret the model—and the focus on ministry—to the congregation. A church budget set up according to your nurture, outreach, and witness priorities is not only an informative interpretation tool but is also a theological document that clearly delineates the Christian ministries of the congregation. Consider using the NOW(rm) model for outlining your line item budget.

The responsibilities of the finance committee can be found in the *Book of Discipline* (§258.4). In the main, the finance committee creates and administers the church's budget, which may also include taking responsibility for raising the money through stewardship efforts.

Raising money for ministry is essential. There are many ways to raise money for ministry in the small membership church:

- offerings
- fundraisers
- memorials
- rent for space
- grants
- book table
- special appeals
- capital improvement gifts
- sales
- financial partnerships with others
- conference funds
- foundations

A key to supporting ministry financially is intentionally setting guidelines for fundraising. Another consideration is finding out where the grant sources are in your area. *It is crucial to keep in view that money is not what drives the budget and fundraising.* Rather, look to the ministries to which God has called the church, and work to establish the practical means to carry out those ministries. The why of fundraising is the heart of the matter, and that is one thing that separates the church from a small business and that demonstrates our stewardship.

STAFF/PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS

The staff/pastor-parish relations committee, or team, is defined in the *Book of Discipline* (§258.2). The main focus of this group is to help bridge the gifts and abilities of the pastor (and other staff) and laity in the church. Building the bridges that will link the faithfulness of the past with the possibilities of the future is crucial. Staff/pastor-parish relations committees that want to do effective work will learn about:

- understanding the nature of chaos and change
- resolving and transforming conflict

- establishing a covenant to guide behavior
- developing clear, open communication
- developing ministry support from district strategies (especially inside the Church), conferences, and general Church agencies

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The work of this committee is described in the *Book of Discipline* (§258.1). Think of this group in your church as the gardeners, whose task is to nourish the roots of the plants. In a church, it is this team that identifies the gifts of individuals and provides training and support for ministry.

An engaged committee on nominations and leadership development will offer opportunities for spiritual growth that include spiritual gift discovery. The committee (or team) members will also take the time to talk with people in leadership positions to find out their experience of serving in the church. Pay particular attention to what the leadership believes it has accomplished, what would have helped support its work in the last year, and what improvements can be made in leading.

Visit www.gbod.org/smallchurch for article #15, “More Pointers on Lay Leadership Selection.”

NOW(rm) Tips

Go to www.gbod.org/smallchurch for article #16, “Encouragement for Leaders in the Small Church.”

DEVELOP AND USE A CALENDAR

A planning calendar, whether it is maintained by the pastor or lay leader, is essential in smaller congregations. Ministry groups and other committees should check with this calendar before scheduling church programs and events. It is also appropriate for the church council to supervise this calendar.

PLAN WITH THE END IN MIND

Ministry fails when insufficient attention is given to the details concerning:

- who is being served
- what will be done
- why it is important
- how it will be done
- when and where it will happen
- by whom and how we will know we have been successful.

When we simply take an idea and duplicate it without regard to these details being fully considered, we drain the limited resources of the church and unintentionally build a climate for failure. Plan! Some churches plan for ministry throughout the year in teams or committees, while others have quarterly sessions or an annual leadership planning retreat. When you plan is not as important as how well you plan!

USE AN AGENDA

Use of an agenda has numerous advantages:

- shorter meetings
- no surprises
- involves as many as possible
- pain-free meetings when participants are prepared
- keeps people informed
- aids in promptness (beginning and ending on time)

All should look for efficient meeting time and give each other room to work. The agenda for the meeting states clearly the focus for coming together. The agenda helps the flow of the meeting so that people leave with a sense of accomplishment and purpose. An agenda sets the priorities and establishes relationships among leaders.

CONSIDER A NEW AGENDA

One of the most dangerous signs of ineffective churches is doing the same things repeatedly, even when results are unsatisfactory. This is often observed in the way church leaders set their agendas and conduct meetings. Instead of organizing around “old and new business,” meetings should be structured by emphasizing the spiritual life of the congregation and celebrating its ministries. See article #17, “Sample NOW(rm) Agenda” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch.

The council chairperson should be able to keep to the agenda time and items with sensitivity. Make sure that all participants have an opportunity to be heard and not just a few. Whenever you sense there is a split over a decision, ask the group: “Is this a decision that needs to be made at this meeting or can it be made later?” If the group decides to make the decision later, get a consensus on the date. Ask what else the group needs in order to make a good decision. If it is more information, invite the appropriate people to assist.

Discern: Whatever is done in the name of the church is done for God and with God’s help. As leaders, share in Christian practices that help you work as spiritual partners with each other and with God and that provide an avenue to discern the direction that God would have you go. Such discernment helps you determine faithfully not only how best to serve God but also how best to use your gifts and resources. You can’t do everything; are you doing the needful thing?

Evaluate and Celebrate Ministry: Take stock regularly of the following:

- what you are doing
- how you are doing it
- why you do it
- what the results are
- what impact it has on the spiritual and material lives of the participants

Impact awareness is a key factor in determining whether and how to proceed to use the finite resources of any church. While personal benefits are usually intangible, they can be described and observed, and therefore, in some way, quantified. Consider a few of these possible measures of spiritual growth:

- regular participation in worship
- regular participation in other Christian formation group(s)
- personal stories attesting to spiritual growth and change
- move from “member” to “leader”
- personal involvement is Christ-centered and other-directed
- invites and/or mentors others
- invests in the ministry and nurture of children and youth
- habituated in one or more means of grace
- seeks continuing education and formation activities

Leaders guiding vital ministry answer these three crucial questions:

- What is the will of God for this congregation and community?
- Who are our partners in ministry committed to this vision (and how well will they work together)?
- Does (or could) the church have the resources necessary for ministry?

For more information see the article #18, “Organizing for Ministry,” at www.gbod.org/smallchurch .
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CELEBRATE!

Thank God and others who make ministry possible and fruitful. Continue to set new goals that sustain a sense of vitality and purpose as well as point toward a hope-filled future. Guided by God's spirit, your small church/charge can prosper to serve this age and the next.

Reminder: Now that you have completed this Guideline, answer the "Healthy Church Index" again. (See page 8.) Compare your previous responses carefully with the ones you have just completed. How has your awareness of ways to revitalize ministry in your small church/charge grown? Pay attention to the concrete examples given for each question that seems important to you. Gather with other leaders in your church/charge to discuss these ideas and decide next steps together.

For more information about Small Membership Church/Shared Ministry:

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AN INVITATION

The Office of Small Church and Shared Ministries is looking for examples of exceptional ministries to be highlighted on our website. Specifically:

- Small Church with an interesting story (history, outreach, situation...)
- Pastor who is providing excellent leadership
- New Shared Ministry formed (Cooperative Parish, Group Ministry...)
- Presenter of a workshop you found helpful (with contact information)
- Ministry idea you'd like to share with others

Please send information and any pictures to Julia Wallace (address above).

Resources

** Indicates our top picks

WEB, CURRICULUM, VIDEO, FLIERS, PDF BOOKLETS

- The General Board of Discipleship website has articles, links, event information, and other material for leaders (www.gbod.org/smallchurch)
- *Church Vitality Indicator* www.cvindicator.com.
- *The One Room Sunday School* (curriculum for small churches). Quarterly material for ages 3–12 with teacher’s book, reproducible student material, class pak and music/story cassette.
- *Single Digit Youth Groups* (curriculum for small church youth groups). Series designed to guide adults leading groups with less than 10 youth.
- *Small Church Fliers Series* available online at gbod.org/smallchurch from the Office of Small Church and Shared Ministries, GBOD on *Christian Education, Resourcing Ministry, and From Survival to Service*
- Vital Ministry in the Small Church Booklets (downloads from www.gbod.org/smallchurch: *Biblical Virtues*, by John Freeman; *Christian Education*, by Myrtle Felkner and edited by Jack Gilbert; *Healthy Esteem*, by Tony Pappas; *Insiders/Outsiders: A Theology of Evangelism*, by Karen Spencer and M. Eugene Barnes; *Mission*, by Betty C. Whitehurst; *Sharing Stories—Shaping Communities*, by Mike Mather.

BOOKS

- *Administration in the Small Membership Church*, by John H. Tyson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-687-64643-2). Describes church administration as a ministry in the small membership church.
- *Can These Bones Live?: Bringing New Life to a Dying Church*, by Kevass J. Harding (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-687-33557-2).
- *Christian Education in the Small Membership Church*, by Karen Tye (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-68765-099-6). This book invites pastors to lead their small membership churches to develop an imaginative and holistic vision of Christian Education.
- *The Church Transition Workbook: Getting Your Church in Gear*, by Bill Kemp (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2005. ISBN 978-0-88177-422-1).
- *Effective Small Churches in the 21st Century*, by Carl Dudley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002. ISBN 978-0-687-09090-7). Dudley explores the key components that contribute to a small congregation’s sense of unity and that motivates its members to more faithfully live out their faith.
- *Ending with Hope: A Resource for Closing Congregations*, Beth Ann Gaede, editor. (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2002. ISBN 978-1-56699-263-3.)

- *Evangelism in the Small Membership Church*, by Royal Speidel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-687-33579-4). Small membership congregations are often more effective in evangelism than their sister megachurches.
- ** *Ezekiel's Bones: Rekindling Your Congregation's Spiritual Passion*, by Bill Kemp (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007. ISBN 978-0-88177-498-6).
- *Help! I'm a Small Church Youth Worker: Achieving Big-Time Success in a Non-Mega World*, by Rich Grassel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002. ISBN 978-0-3102-3946-8).
- *Holy Places, Small Spaces: A Hopeful Future for the Small Membership Church*, by Bill Kemp (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2006. ISBN 978-0-881774566)
- ** *The Indispensable Guide for Smaller Churches*, by David R. Ray (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8298-1507-4).
- *Local Ministry: Story, Process, and Meaning*, edited by Robin Greenwood and Caroline Pascoe (London: SPCK, 2006. ISBN 13-978-0-281-05713-9. www.spck.org.uk.)
- ** *Opening Ourselves to Grace: Basic Christian Practices (DVD)*, by Mark V. Purushotham (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007. ISBN 978-0-881775082).
- ** *Partnersteps: Developing Cooperative Ministries Today*, by Ed Kail and Julia Kuhn Wallace (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003. ISBN 978-088177-3576)
- *Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church*, by James L. Killen, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. ISBN 978-0-687-34326-3). An introduction to pastoral care for pastors of small membership churches.
- *Releasing the Power of the Smaller Church*, edited by Shawn McMullen (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, 2007. ISBN 978-0-784-72146-9).
- ** *Shepherding the Small Church: A Leadership Guide for the Majority of Today's Churches*, by Glenn C. Daman (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publishing, 2002. ISBN 978-0-825449-6).
- *Small Congregation, Big Potential: Ministry in the Small Membership Church*, by Lyle E. Schaller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004. ISBN 978-0-687-03656-1).
- *Spiritual Leadership in the Small Membership Church*, by David Canada (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. ISBN 978-0-687-49482-8). Helps small membership church pastors see the spiritual development of their church in ways that are directly to their own spiritual formation.
- *Where 20 or 30 are Gathered: Leading Worship in the Small Church*, by Christine O'Reilly and Peter Bush (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2006. ISBN 978-1-5669-9322-7).
- *Worship in Small Membership Churches*, by Robin Knowles Wallace and Terry R. Heck (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007. ISBN 978-0-88177-500-6).
- *Worshiping in the Small Membership Church*, by Robin Knowles Wallace (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008. ISBN 978-068765-101-6).