

## Establishing a new Yoke

Sometimes the presbytery approaches one or both congregations to suggest a yoke as an option for obtaining pastoral leadership. In other situations, members of one congregation initiate discussions with another and then invite presbytery to help them work out the details. Before seeking a pastor, the sessions of the congregations work out a formal partnership agreement as to how they will share in ministry. A written covenant signed by the two Clerks of Session, the new, shared pastor, and the presbytery COM moderator is recommended so that the agreements are clear.

### Things to consider in forming a new yoked ministry:

- What are the needs of each congregation for the time and talent of a pastor? What will the pastor be expected to do with each congregation in a normal week or month?
- What proportion of full-time service will be expected by each congregation?
  - ...50% and 50%?
  - ...60% and 40%
  - In proportion to membership?
  - 100% and 100% is **not** a realistic expectation!
- Will the pastor live ...near one church? ...between the two?
  - ...in a manse? ...a rented home? Buy a house?
  - Since the pastor cannot live in both communities (unless the congregations are in the same town), s/he will have to divide his or her time between the communities. Don't expect this to be 50/50 since shared tasks like sermon preparation will be done in only one place.
- What assumptions are there about involvement of the pastor and family (if any) in the congregations and communities? (It is not fair to expect spouses to attend 2 worship services or to expect pastors to attend football games in both communities each weekend.)
- How will planning be coordinated?
  - 3 - 4 joint session meetings per year can be very valuable - 1 before Lent, 1 in late summer, 1 before Advent, 1 at annual review and budget time. Another model is to use a Parish Council.
  - This keeps communication strong and allows the sessions to share ideas and concerns without relying on the pastor as the go-between.
- What will the total cost of shared ministry be?
  - Be sure to include:
    - Cash salary
    - Housing allowance or manse maintenance
    - Utilities

- Medical and pension dues
  - Continuing education allowance
  - Reimbursed professional expenses (travel, etc.)
- Pastor Search expenses - (travel, lodging, meals, photocopying, telephone, and postage), Moving expenses
- Other things to consider -
  - Pulpit supply for 6 weeks per year (vacation and continuing education)
  - Shared administrative expenses (bulletins, newsletter, postage, etc.)
  - Costs of joint programming
- Will the costs be shared in the same proportion as the time sharing?
- How much funding will each congregation provide each year? ...each month?
- How will expenses be handled? Will there be a parish treasurer?
- What are our commitments to each other as partners in ministry?
- How will our shared ministry be evaluated?
- Who will represent the parish at meetings of Presbytery? COM voted June 18, 2012 that one member of the council should be designated to attend meetings of presbytery and have a vote as the commissioner to presbytery.

How will we proceed if one congregation is dissatisfied with the arrangement?

It is usually helpful to discuss these matters in a joint session gathering with the moderator of session and Committee on Ministry representatives to help process the discussion and share information that may be constructive. An initial draft “Covenant for Shared Ministry” (*see below for an example*) might be drawn up from this discussion, then shared with all participants for review, amendment, and adoption. It is very wise to share the document with the congregations as well (for information, not for approval at this time) and have a well-informed elder respond to questions so that the relationship gets off to a good start. Congregational approval may be necessary later when the agreement is perfected. Joint fellowship and worship celebrations should be encouraged among partner congregations. Small congregation members love to see their pews filled and gather around good food!

Some sample forms appear on the following pages. Printer (or copier) ready versions are included in Chapter 8.

### Sample Forms

(Next page.)

**SAMPLE 1** [This is a sample only. Each agreement should be made to fit the needs of the congregations involved.]

**YOKED MINISTRY AGREEMENT**

We, the

\_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_ Church  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_, South Dakota

agree to be participants in a YOKED MINISTRY for the following purpose:

To provide strength and support to one another, spiritually and financially, so that both congregations may more effectively serve the Lord in their respective communities.

To fulfill this purpose we agree to work together, sharing a pastoral ministry and related financial obligations as follows:

A. Sharing Pastoral Ministry

1. We will seek and call a pastor to provide pastoral leadership and ministry in accordance with the attached job description.
2. The pastor shall be expected to attempt to distribute pastoral duties and functions between the two congregations on a basis proportionate to membership and need.

B. Sharing Financial Responsibility

We will share responsibility for the following financial obligations: [This will vary with each agreement.]

**Pastor's Compensation** [cash salary; continuing education; professional/travel expense; pension/medical insurance; use of manse or housing allowance; manse utilities allowance]

**Pulpit Supply Expense** [cash remuneration; travel expense; social security/Medicare tax]

**Office and Administrative Expense** [office supplies; equipment and repair; telephone; secretarial help]

**Manse Repairs** [arrangements for regular maintenance]

The \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ will provide \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or) \_\_\_\_\_ % of these shared obligations per \_\_\_\_\_ (time). The \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ will provide \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or) \_\_\_\_\_ % of these shared obligations per \_\_\_\_\_ (time).

The session of the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be responsible for the annual review of the adequacy of the pastor's compensation and preparation of the budget for the shared obligations. [This may be a joint responsibility.]

**C. Worship Times**

Worship times shall be determined by consultation among the sessions and the pastor.

**D. Joint Session Meetings**

To facilitate communication, cooperation and fellowship between the two congregations, the session shall meet together at least once during the year and shall confer regularly throughout the year. [Some sessions may want to meet together more often.]

**Review and Amendment**

This agreement shall be reviewed annually by both sessions. Amendments may be made to this agreement by consultation among the sessions, the pastor, and Presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

**Termination of the Yoked Agreement**

This yoked ministry agreement may be terminated (a) only after one year has elapsed from the time when either congregation votes to terminate the agreement or (b) at a time mutually agreed upon by the congregations.

_____ Clerk of Session	_____ Date	_____ Clerk of Session	_____ Date
_____ [Church Name]	_____ [Church City]	_____ [Church Name]	_____ [Church City]
_____ Moderator of Sessions	_____ Date	_____ Presbytery's Committee on Ministry Moderator	_____ Date

**Other Possible Items for a Yoked Ministry Agreement**

- |                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Parish Council            | Joint Christian Education Program |
| Joint Personnel Committee | Joint Youth Program               |
| Joint Use of a Building   | Joint Accounting Arrangement      |

**SAMPLE 2** [This is a sample only. Each agreement should be made to fit the needs of the congregations involved.]

## **YOKED MINISTRY AGREEMENT**

We, the

\_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_ Church  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, South Dakota \_\_\_\_\_, South Dakota

agree to be participants in a YOKED MINISTRY for the following purpose:

To provide strength and support to one another, spiritually and financially, so that both congregations may more effectively serve the Lord in their respective communities.

To fulfill this purpose we agree to work together, sharing a pastoral ministry and related financial obligations as follows:

### **I. Pastoral Relationships**

A. Pastor's Responsibilities to the congregations:

1. To conduct worship services in both congregations.
2. To hold office hours at the non-resident church for a minimum of two half-days per week.
3. To attempt to distribute pastoral duties and functions on a 50/50 basis.

B. Congregations' Responsibilities to the Pastor

[List Terms of Call.]

The financial obligations shall be divided between the congregations as follows:

### **II. Worship**

A. Worship times shall be determined by consultation among the congregations and the pastor.

### **III. Parish Council**

Purpose: To provide and foster good communication and cooperation and establishment of good relations between the two congregations and the pastor.

- A. The parish council shall consist of one active ruling elder and two members-at-large from each congregation.
- B. The members of the parish council shall be elected by their respective congregations.

- C. Each parish council member shall serve one term of no more than three years unless one year has elapsed since the last term of service.
- D. The parish council shall meet a minimum of three times per year.
- E. The parish council may be called to meet by the two ruling elder members, either session, the session moderator, or by the parish council moderator.
- F. One ruling elder from each congregation and one member-at-large from each congregation shall constitute a quorum in a parish council meeting.
- G. The parish council shall serve as an advisory committee to the sessions. It shall not have any policy-making authority or responsibility.
- H. The parish council shall be responsible for electing its own officers from among its membership.
  - 1. The moderator shall be responsible for chairing each meeting.
  - 2. The secretary shall be responsible for taking, recording and reporting minutes of each meeting.
  - 3. These officers shall serve for a period of one year, and may be eligible for re-election. The election of these officers shall be conducted by the immediate past moderator.
- J. The parish council shall report on a regular basis to each session through the ruling elder representative.

**IV. Termination of the Yoked Agreement**

This agreement may be terminated only after one year has elapsed from the time when either congregation votes to terminate the agreement or by mutual agreement.

**V. Review and Amendment**

- A. The sessions of each congregation shall review this agreement annually.
- B. Amendments may be made to this agreement by the session of each congregation in consultation with each congregation and the Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry.

Clerk of Session	Date	Clerk of Session	Date
[Church Name]	[Church City]	[Church Name]	[Church City]

Moderator of Sessions	Date
-----------------------	------

Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry Moderator	Date
---	------

**SAMPLE 3** [This is a sample only. Each agreement should be made to fit the needs of the congregations involved.]

**Sample Covenant for Shared Ministry**

**PASTOR.:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE CALL EFFECTIVE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CONGREGATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **and** \_\_\_\_\_

**PASTORAL ACTIVITIES:** (indicate activities for each congregation)

**We understand this shared ministry to be approximately**

\_\_\_\_\_ % for \_\_\_\_\_ Church

**and** \_\_\_\_\_ % for \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

**COMPENSATION:**

Cash salary

**Housing**

Utilities

Medical and Pension dues

Travel reimbursement @ \$0. \_\_\_\_\_ per mile

Other ministry cost reimbursement (telephone calls, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing education or book allowance \_\_\_\_\_

Vacation time \_\_\_\_\_ Continuing education time \_\_\_\_\_

Moving expenses \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER SHARED MINISTRY EXPENSES:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF EACH PARTNER CHURCH:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **CHURCH**  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ FOR THE YEAR 20\_\_\_\_, \$ \_\_\_\_\_ PER MONTH

\_\_\_\_\_ **CHURCH**  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ FOR THE YEAR 20\_\_\_\_, \$ \_\_\_\_\_ PER MONTH

**WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO SHARE IN MINISTRY, WITNESSING TOGETHER TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN A MINISTRY TO OUR COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER AS WE LIVE AND GROW AS CHRISTIANS.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Pastor**  
**date of session action:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Clerk of Session**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Presbytery COM Moderator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Moderator of Session**

**SAMPLE** [This is a sample only. Each pastoral job description should be made to fit the needs of the congregations involved.]

## **PASTORAL JOB DESCRIPTION**

### **Qualities Desired**

Abilities and desire to become an active part of a farm/ranch community, with a sincere interest in common people. Someone who will provide spiritual leadership.

### **Purpose**

To provide ministry to people of varying types and backgrounds in a community where there are great human needs.

### **Accountability**

Accountable to Presbytery and the session in accordance with the *Book of Order*. Performance evaluation will be completed annually by the session based on job description responsibilities.

### **Responsibilities**

1. To preach and to lead in worship and celebration; providing a Biblically-based ministry which will result in the spiritual growth of the congregation and community each Sunday in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. To serve communion in both churches the first Sunday of the month.
3. To lead services at the nursing home with members of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ churches the first two Sundays of the month, including serving communion on the first Sunday of the month.
4. To lead the congregation in providing pastoral care to members through visitation and help in crisis.
5. Hospital visitation and visitation of the elderly is a priority.
6. To counsel with those to be married, those seeking baptism, those planning funerals, and in other situations as necessary.
7. To work with the deacons in the church's outreach to the local community and mission to the world community.
8. To equip the session with skills in planning and development of the activities of the congregation.



9. To assist the church school, Presbyterian women, choir, and young people's groups in the effective accomplishment of their activities.
10. To provide a teaching ministry in areas of mission, stewardship, and adult Bible study.
11. To provide for new member and confirmation class education.
12. To plan leadership development activities for congregation officers.
13. To have bulletins prepared.
14. To direct the work of the church secretary, if necessary.
15. To work with community leaders as well as the clergy council.
16. To serve on presbytery committees as called.

### An Outline for Calling a New Pastor

Detailed Procedure and appropriate forms for calling a pastor are in the next chapter, Pastoral Relationships, but the entire process is outlined as follows:

1. Dissolving the present pastoral relationship
2. Planning the transition
3. Engaging the congregation in a mission study
4. Assessing the congregation's finances
5. Electing the pastor nominating committee (PNC)
6. Orienting and organizing the pastor nominating committee
7. Writing and submitting the Ministry Information Form (MIF)
8. Collecting and screening Personal Information Forms (PIF)
9. Interviewing potential pastors
10. Choosing the nominee
11. Making official decisions
12. Installing the new pastor
13. Follow up with support after installation

