

Cooperative Parishes: One Body, One Spirit, One Hope

“Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Creator of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.” –Ephesians 4:1-6

Paragraph 206 of the 2016 Book of Discipline begins this way: “Local churches, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may enhance their witness to one another and to the world by showing forth the love of Jesus Christ through forms of mutual cooperation.” A **cooperative ministry** is when groups of people representing two or more churches share their ministries to meet the needs of the community. Example of this are local churches completing a mission project together or working together in a community feeding ministry. A **cooperative parish** is an ongoing structured way to employ cooperative ministries between churches within a defined region. The cooperative parish will have a Parish Council with clergy and laity from each church in the cooperative parish to discuss, plan and make decisions regarding mission and ministry through the cooperative parish.

The Cooperative Parish provides the opportunity for all churches to engage in ministry together that they cannot do as individual churches. These mission and ministry opportunities are possible in a cooperative parish. Cooperative Parishes also offer the laity access to different and new ministry opportunities, experience the gifts and leadership of other clergy and laity across the parish, and use their gifts and calling in new contexts and settings across the parish. Through Cooperative Parishes, the laity are empowered and equipped to live into their unique ministries.

Cooperative Parishes are a Wesleyan model of our connection to expand our church’s ministry to the communities, using our churches and our parish ministries as the center of transformative possibility to all the people in the parish and beyond.

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