



Minnesota North District

Church Partnership Model for the Bemidji Circuit

Regional (3 + Congregations) Model



Regional Model



From the Kansas District came several partnership models.

<https://kslcms.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Partnership-Doc-7.1.20-revised-06.28.22.pdf>

The following presentation is a detailed analysis of the Regional model which might serve the congregations in the Bemidji Circuit.

This presentation model will also allow for the future of, if, or when, other congregations need to be incorporated.

This presentation is intended to provide additional information for the Vacant congregations as a possible starting point for further discussion.

This presentation is not officially from the Minnesota North District but has been reviewed by President Finnern



Regional Model



With the congregations of [Bagley](#), [Bemidji](#), [Blackduck](#) and [Cass Lake](#) currently vacant, the selected model is for the Regional model.

This presentation can be shared with all congregations in the Bemidji Circuit and can be shared with any other Circuit as deemed appropriate.
It is intended for all members who are interested.



Regional Model



Description

- One church is the hub and partners with 2+ sites around it
- Lends itself to multiple staff
- Helps if the hub church has resources to share
- More flexibility in the kinds of churches involved
- Can accommodate more distance between churches



Regional Model



Advantages

- Strength in numbers
 - This would allow for more financial stability when joining together to support multiple pastors.
 - Offers a way to provide a suitable salary for both pastors.
 - ❖ The Minnesota North District provides access to a link for a Pastor Compensation program.
<https://tc.cbiz.com/CompToolCPS/Login.aspx>
 - ❖ In addition the congregations would need to combine resources and provide an Administrative assistant so that the pastors can focus their attention on Preaching, Teaching and Shepherding the multiple flocks. *(See slides 14 through 17 for more details)*
- Team approach (akin to Jesus sending out disciples in pairs)
 - The two pastors would work as a team to support the needs of all the congregations.
- Consistent presence in the pulpit
 - With two pastors serving, they can serve two congregations each Sunday – rotating locations.



Regional Model



Advantages (Cont.)

- Increased efficiency
 - Only one pastor would need to write a sermon on a weekly basis
 - The office manager would only need to create one bulletin for all the congregations.
 - All contacts with the Pastors office would be in a central location for easier communications.
 - Bemidji has the Hospital – so those calls are usually there. (Some are in Fargo)
- Promotes a regional mindset
 - This mindset is to draw all the congregations together – realizing that we are all members of the body of Christ, not just separate congregations.
- The ministry can grow (add congregations)
 - Growth may be from adding existing congregations to the regional group. (Especially if their pastor takes another call or retires.
- Creates a network ?



Regional Model



Possible Challenges

- Unequal influence
 - The smaller congregations may feel that the larger congregation receives more attention from the pastors – since they are located at the hub.
 - If the region grows, the pastors will have to split their time between more congregations and members.
 - If the hub church is vibrant and growing, will the other congregations fall into a mindset of just maintaining the status quo?
 - How would this affect groups such as LWML?
- Would the Bemidji congregation fit as the vibrant hub and be willing to serve in that capacity?



Regional Model



Possible Challenges (Cont.)

- Communication can be more complicated
 - Requires good time management and an ability to manage a more complex arrangement
 - The time management would be for all the non standard duties.
 - ❖ Agreements would be required for:
 - ✓ Lenten Services (Possibly also on a rotating parish basis)
 - ✓ Advent Services
 - ✓ Confirmation Classes (Possibly through Zoom meeting where the youth can discuss directly with the pastor in a question and answer basis)
 - ✓ Voters Meetings
 - ✓ Special Events (Marriages, Burials, Shut-in visits, etc.)



Regional Model



Possible Challenges (Cont.)

- Keeping everyone well informed; allowing too much time to elapse without sharing info with a broader group
 - There are several technology methods that can be used to assist in meeting this challenge.
 - It would be the responsibility of the Administrative Assistant to closely coordinate with the pastors to disseminate the information.
 - This can be done through a variety of methods including:
 - ❖ Sending text messages
 - ❖ Sending emails.
 - ❖ Using a web based company such as “Dial My Calls” which allows for sending voice recordings of messages.
 - ✓ The messages can be recorded on a case by case basis or pre-recorded (Such as worship is cancelled due to the blizzard)
 - ✓ The messages can be grouped in any fashion required, such as;
 - All congregational members, Each separate congregational members
 - Elders, church council members, parents of confirmands, etc.



Regional Model



Possible Challenges (Cont.)

- Weekly schedule can be hard to figure out
 - Multiple small congregations experiencing challenges agree to worship at different times so two pastors can serve them all.
 - If all four congregations join in this model, the pastors would need to perform Worship Services at two locations each week.
 - This leads to similar considerations pointed out in the Kansas Circuit Rider model
 - Are congregations flexible on worship times and days? Especially during the Lenten and Advent seasons
 - Need to keep things simple (same bulletin; same music)
 - ❖ However, each weekly bulletin would require separate inserts to address the concerns of each separate congregation.
 - ❖ Listing those who are on the sick list
 - ❖ Special meetings such as the Elders, the Evangelism committee, or the church council, etc.



Regional Model



Possible Challenges (Cont.)

- Maintenance ministry can be an issue
 - The congregations need to see this as a model which can be used to grow the Church as specified in Christ's Great Commission to all believers. Rather than just getting by.
- Calling two Pastors to our area.
 - Agreed upon by all congregations
 - Nearly simultaneously so one pastor is not burdened while waiting for a second pastor
- Pastor burnout and Pastor retention
 - With a potential larger budget from combining all congregations in paying for two pastors, there might be a better chance to offer a salary to help retain both pastors.
 - The quality of an Administrative Assistant can be a huge factor, either plus or minus.
 - If additional congregations join – more work for the pastors
- Accountability of pastor
 - Any called Pastor(s) would need to have good records and reports available to all the congregations. Need details of how much time is spent where.
 - May require the Administrative assistant to compile the information and distribute.



Regional Model



Possible Challenges (Cont.)

- Death by meetings
- Minimizing doctrinal or cultural differences; lack of clarity about non-negotiables.
 - These meeting with the congregations that agree to this or any other model would need to clearly address the sharing of the resources of the Pastors and the Administrative Assistant. Each congregation needs to clearly communicate with them to best resolve any potential conflicts.
 - In addition, the multi-parish agreement needs to be written in great detail so that the Pastors, Admin Assist. and each congregation understands the duties and responsibilities.
 - As always the MN N District is available for assistance in any conflict that can't be easily resolved. Which may require a modification to the "Agreement".
 - Some future multi congregational meetings will be required to address such things as Cost of Living raises shared by the congregations.
 - How will two pastors be able to attend all the meetings and lead Bible studies at 4 locations. (Or more if other congregations join)
- This would need to be worked out in any Multi-Parish Agreement Contract



Regional Model



Regional Model

Summary

Each congregation retains it's individual location and personality

Each parish supports and shares two Pastors and administrative assistant (High fiscal burden, but possibly each congregation may offer different amounts of the financial costs [i.e. not equal shares])

Each congregation has a worship Service at their location weekly and receiving the sacraments weekly if desired.

Many challenges for all involved (Pastors and congregations) were listed but;

As discussed in the 2023 convocation, it is Christ that *Grows* the Church, not us.



Regional Model

Financial Discussion

Thanks for coming to our convocation!



Rev. Brady Finner

MN North District President

From the Bemidji Circuit Convocation held October 29, 2023, our District President stated that a Full time pastor with family would require a financial package of at least \$85,000.

This includes

- Salary,
- Healthcare,
- Retirement,
- Milage and
- Continuing Education



Regional Model

Financial Discussion

Salary

- Actually, looking at the resource from the district website, the Salary alone should cost \$85,000 as the midpoint pay for a Pastor with 5 years of experience. (Sample calculation and details are available as [Bemidji Circuit Compensation Estimate.pdf](#)) Attached separately
- A higher range would be \$96,000 per year.
 - Considering the work load of both pastors called to shepherd all four congregations, this higher value would be the more reasonable number.
 - This would break down into \$48,000 from each of four congregations.
 - A lower amount may be considered if the plan calls for a pastoral assistant of some form.

Healthcare (*Concordia Plan Services*)

This might cost an additional \$60,000/yr or \$15,000 per congregation. Includes:

- Health Insurance, Accident Insurance Plan, Concordia Disability Survivor Plan and Concordia Retirement Plan



Regional Model

Financial Discussion

Housing Allowance

- The average cost of a mortgage for a home in the Bemidji area was about \$1100/month
- If that value were raised to \$1200/month for the tax benefit, it would run about \$1000/mo. per congregation. (Accounts for homeowners insurance possibly) Another \$7,200/yr for each congregation.
- This also may allow for the lower proposed salary of \$85,000/yr (Differential of about \$10,000/yr each pastor)

Milage allowance

- With an average of less than 30 miles from Bemidji to each of the other three congregational sites, the pastors would travel (120 miles round trip times 52 weeks plus advent and lenten services) ~8,000 miles a year.
- Then add in Shut-in visits, hospital calls, extra meetings – he would add another 6,000 miles easily.

At the Federal allowed rate of 65.5 cents per mile that equals \$9,200 or another \$2,300 per parish

- Requiring recordkeeping of actual miles traveled would be an extra burden. Possible thought would be to allow the pastor to keep track of the milage the first year and then adjust a flat rate milage package based on that.



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Financial Discussion Summary

Salary Two Pastors	\$42,500
Healthcare	\$15,000
Housing Allowance	\$ 7,200
Milage allowance	<u>\$ 2,300</u>
	\$67,000 per Congregation
Administrative Assistant (Bemidji ~ \$18/hr)	\$37,440 per year
Per congregation	\$ 8,360 per congregation
Plus Healthcare at (\$7,500 each congregation)	<u>\$ 7,500</u>
	\$15,860
Total financial per congregation (approx.)	\$82,860



Minnesota North District
THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

Regional Model Discussion/Notes:
