



# Getting Started in Ecumenical Shared Ministry

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ESM TOOLKIT

PRAIRIE CENTRE FOR ECUMENISM



## Matthew 13:44

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- "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."



## A long history of sharing in Canada

- Cooperation and local unions (beginning 1908) in anticipation of the Church Union of 1925
- Shared Buildings
- Formal ESMs: building, clergy, programs -- begin in early 1960s

# ESM's Defined

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- “An Ecumenical Shared Ministry is people worshiping and serving God in a unified way while still maintaining their denominational identity and connections.”  
- *ESM Handbook*
- ESMs are two or more denominations sharing at least one of:
  - Building
  - Worship
  - Ministry Personnel
  - Program
  - Outreach
- ESMs operate within a covenant agreement they have shaped under the oversight of their denominational **judicatories** (Diocese, Presbytery, Region, Synod)

# Participating Denominations

(in 11 congregations)



Anglican Church of Canada	93	84%
United Church of Canada	63	56%
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada	62	56%
Presbyterian Church in Canada	16	14%
Roman Catholic Church	7	6%
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	2	2%
Mennonite Church Canada	2	2%
Moravian Church	1	1%
Baptist Church	1	1%

# St. Peter's Ecumenical Church, Slave Lake AB

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- 1976 - Begin worshipping together
- 1981 – First “Tri-Church Board” elected
- 2011 – Fire devastates Slave Lake on Pentecost Sunday, but spares new church under construction
- 2012 – New Church opens
- Board makes equal space for Anglican, Lutheran, United Church, and “Other” reps





## **Broadway Disciples United, Winnipeg**

- Formed in 1997
- 2 UCC and 1 Disciples of Christ congregations join in all aspects of parish life in “dying” downtown church building
- Filipino and Anglo-Canadian



# Shell Lake, SK – Perfect Pitch

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- 1998 – Lutheran and United Churches begin to share services
- 2000 – Formally signed their ESM Covenant and renamed the congregation “Partners in Worship”
- 2001 – Joined both churches physically – the roof lines fit together perfectly
- Worship with a “blended” liturgy

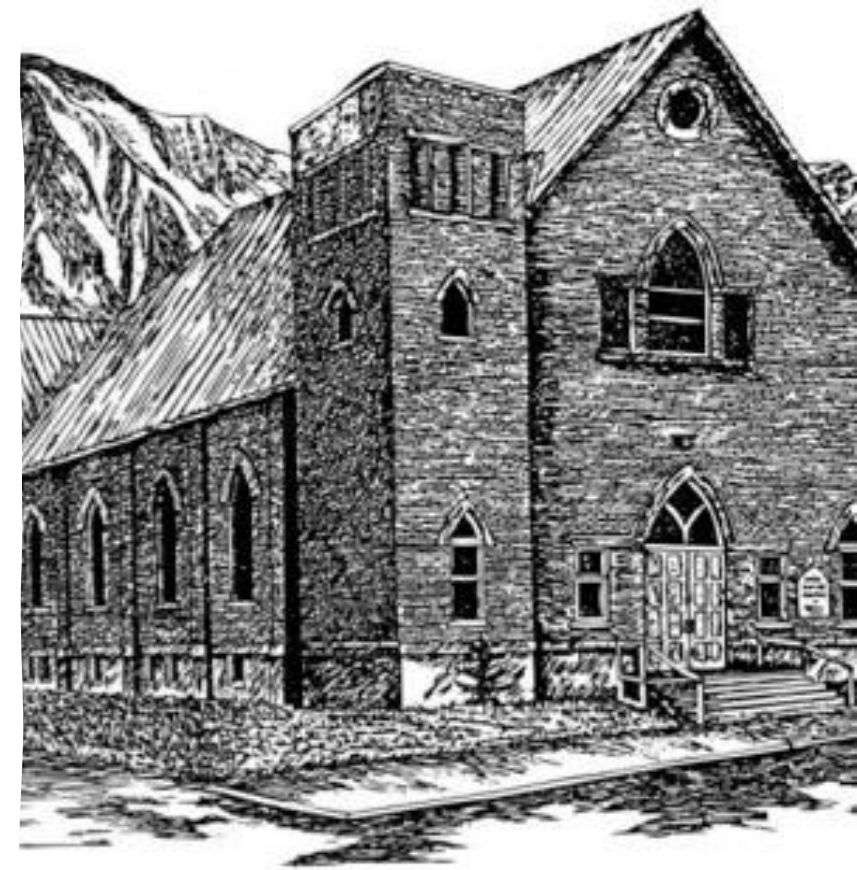


# Calvin Presbyterian and Deer Park United

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- Formed 2008 in uptown Toronto
- One building, shared worship
- Calvin: "A Vibrant Ecumenical and Reformed Community of Faith in the Heart of Toronto"
- Deer Park: "in God's hands: praying, thinking, working together"





## ***Knox United & Christ Anglican Fernie, BC***

- Began sharing the ministry leadership of the Rev. Andrea Brennan in Fall, 2019
- Planned to share worship “someday”
- Pandemic hastened the sharing – now they worship together weekly; alternating buildings and Anglican/United Church rites

# Why Do they Try It?

Factors in Shared Ministry Formation from a survey of ESM practitioners (lay, ordered)

## ▪ Practical/Financial Necessity:

Very Important	69%
Somewhat Important	31%
Not Important	0%

## ▪ Desire to provide a more unified witness in the community:

Very Important	54%
Somewhat Important	36%
Not Important	10%

## More Factors in Shared Ministry Formation

- **Desire to be together and know one another better as Christians:**

Very Important 42%

Somewhat Important 48%

Not Important 10%

- **Opportunity to share programs (e.g., Sunday School, youth group):**

Very Important 29%

Somewhat Important 46%

Not Important 25%

- "The ... thing that always annoys me is that people say, 'Oh, you just want me to get into it for the economics.' ... There is a text, I think, about that, to be blessed and poor. I think it is neat that we did in fact, need each other. Maybe we are rich because we needed each other."

- *Rev. Clare Holmes, UCC minister in AC/UC ESM, sharing building with RC church Northern Vancouver Island (1960s-70s)*

- "There is a sense of 'not waiting' for official ecumenical achievements, but rather a determination to act together locally and to receive the gift of unity in anticipation."

- *What are the Churches saying about the Church? (Faith and Order Paper 236, 2021), par. 12.*

# Why Try? Theology in Practice

# How do we get started?



# First Steps

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- **What are your needs for ministry?**
  - What does your parish/community of faith need?
  - What does the wider community need?
- **Who are your “natural” ecumenical partners or friends in ministry?**
- **Invite them to join the discussion**
- **Start with the main or presenting issue:** Is it the need to sell or leave a building? Ministry personnel? An outreach project? Something else you can do or do better by sharing? Most ESMs start “small.”
- **Do some things together and see what works**
- **Are there others who might want to come on board?**



# Then What?

- Include your **Judicatories** in the discussion
  - Bishops, Diocesan personnel
  - Synod, Region, Presbytery staff
- *Their support is crucial all along the way.*



Andrea Brennan, Kathy Davies, Lynne McNaughton at Fernie covenanting



# Get to Know the Handbook

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- It's FREE!
- Walks through processes for formation, clergy appointments, governance, finances and property
- Handy Glossary of Terms
- Helpful even for non- "PAUL" churches



## ECUMENICAL SHARED MINISTRIES HANDBOOK

Ecumenical Shared Ministries Task Force  
2019

# Work Out a Shared Ministry Agreement or Covenant

## IT MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Property and Assets
- Membership
- Council/Governing Board/Officers for the ESM
  - Denominational Decision-Making Bodies
- Pastoral Leadership – how clergy are appointed
- Worship – how and who decides
- Financial Support
- How denominational records will be kept
- Conflict Management
- Opting out clause
- Orienting ourselves to the ministry – both lay and clergy
- How and when you will review the ministry agreement
- **REMEMBER: You can start small!**

# Helping Each Other on the Journey

- Cultivate a climate of open and mutual respect
- Think of it as something we are trying out: “experimenting” at being a faithful Christian community together
- Use the ties you already have in the community to strengthen your partnership
- Remind ourselves that we are *sharing* our gifts, not competing to overtake each other – what can I learn from you?
- *“I am most anxious to have added to my life the richness of your ways.”*

- Clare Holmes

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a vast, golden field. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, orange glow across the sky and the field. The sky is filled with scattered, wispy clouds, some of which are illuminated from below by the setting sun. In the distance, a line of trees and a few buildings are visible against the horizon. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

*A treasure hidden in a field ...*

*Is there one near you?*