

Just What is a Ministry Partnership?



The Gospel, God's Good News in Jesus Christ, is the power to transform lives and change the world. Proclaiming the Gospel in word and in deeds of love and mercy is the church's joyful calling. We can do this best when we work together, partnering in ministry and mission that links congregations, pastors and resources, crossing all kinds of boundaries — even Pittsburgh rivers!

Partnerships can be donations of goods, services, or money from one congregation to another. They can mean volunteers assisting with a particular ministry like a kids' club or retiling a floor after a flood. Some churches have figured out a way to share staff. Through presbytery grants, seminary students get urban ministry experience and small churches get student help. Groups of pastors gather for prayer, mutual support and to hold each other accountable in ministry. Congregations adopt sister churches. Joint ventures can be a one-time thing or for the long haul.

We will celebrate all kinds of partnerships at the April 15 Presbytery meeting. Following are articles on how congregations have been connected.

REMINDER!

The Administrative Commission for Transformation (ACT) is planning a pre-presbytery Conference Hour on June 3 to share how-to's of partnerships, so there will be an opportunity to learn more. Join us!

The Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon & Mt. Nebo United Presbyterian Church

Submitted by the Rev. Don Ewing

CPCBA and Mt. Nebo have entered into a 'youth ministry partnership' although that is more of a description than a title. Together we have employed a youth director to conduct Junior and Senior high ministries at both churches and in conjunction with each other, as the churches serve the same school districts, primarily Avonworth. He is a three-quarter time employee spending half-time at CPCBA, and quarter-time at MNUPC. The Director reports to a team comprised of folks from both churches. We are working at having youth participate in previously scheduled work camps at the churches, VBS and other events. The partnership has spilled over into other areas and the churches will be joining together for various events this summer and hopefully into the fall.

We don't know where the Spirit will lead us in the future but we are very open and willing to follow.

**First Presbyterian Church,
Duquesne, & John McMillan
Presbyterian Church**

Submitted by the Rev. Judi
Slater

First Presbyterian Church, Duquesne has been partnered with John McMillan Presbyterian Church since at least 1999 for the purpose of outreach to children in the Duquesne community. Volunteers (adults and youth) from John McMillan come to Duquesne on Monday evenings and provide a Kids Club for children grades K-5. We currently have 19 children involved in the program. Many of our new members over the years have come to the church from connections made through the Kids Club. Whole families have been baptized because of these outreach connections. We also combine worship for Ash Wednesday, do a pulpit exchange once a year and other activities but the main purpose has remained the outreach to children.

**First Presbyterian Church of
Pittsburgh**

Submitted by Debra Meyer,
Publicist

First Church supports Christ's work of more than 50 organizations and missionaries in Pittsburgh, the United States and around the world, and our members are involved through prayer, volunteer work, financial contributions and/or [mission service](#).

[Ligonier Camp and Conference Center](#), an outreach of First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, has provided Christian camping for youth since 1914. In addition to the summer youth camp, LCCC also houses a retreat/conference center that accommodates 5,000 people every year.

First Presbyterian Church donates basement space to Pittsburgh's Downtown [Campus Life](#) to be used as a café and drop in space for high school students in the Downtown area: City High, CAPA and Northside Urban Pathways, as well as the many high school student commuters who come through Downtown. This space, called The Cellar, first opened in January 2009 and continues to be open after school four to five days a week providing a safe environment where students can interact with their peers and caring adults.

First Presbyterian Church provides office space to [CARE](#) (Coalition to Affirm Real Estate) Ownership, a ministry that mentors individuals who are working toward more productive lives in the skills of real estate management. CARE Ownership purchases and renovates multi-family homes in low income neighborhoods while teaching individuals how to maintain the property and become the landlord. Mentored individuals receive free rent and may eventually purchase the home from CARE Ownership, providing them with long-term financial stability.

**The First United Presbyterian
Church, Crafton Heights**

Submitted by Jason Dix,
Executive Director of The Open
Door Youth Outreach Center

The Open Door Youth Outreach Center, a ministry of The First United Presbyterian Church, continues to be a vital ministry in the West End of Pittsburgh thanks to the many partnerships it has created within the Presbytery. In 2009, seven different churches financially supported The Open Door (Carnegie, Fox Chapel, East Liberty, Ken Mawr, Sewickley, Union, and Westminster). Specifically, that money has allowed The Open Door to offer free meals during our after-school program, offer an eight-week parenting class, offer a six-week summer day camp at no cost to the participants and much more. Some of our partnerships have gone beyond just financial support. Members of our partnership churches have held work days at our site, have participated in our fundraisers and have volunteered for some of our programs. Without these partnerships, The Open Door could not offer the many programs that it does.

**Hampton Presbyterian
Church**

Submitted by the Rev. Theodore
Martin

In February, the Session of Hampton Presbyterian Church officially approved a partnership in ministry with Bidwell Presbyterian Church. We have not yet had an opportunity to celebrate this connection formally with a worship service or gathering but sure as the sun rises in the morning this will be in the works!



Neville Island Presbyterian Church

Submitted by the Rev. John Sweitzer



Neville Island Presbyterian Church is richly blessed by our full-communion, five-year partnership with Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Coraopolis, a nearby congregation.

Fifteen people from both congregations participate in our weekly Bible study and it keeps increasing. Our church hosted Vacation Bible School during July of 2009 in cooperation with Zion Lutheran Church in Coraopolis. 12 children and 24 adults participated. This year we will join our partners at Zion during the month of July.

We have hosted four Lenten and two Advent mid-week services in our two churches, inviting the Zion Lutheran congregation of Coraopolis to join us....we alternate between Neville Island church and Zion in Coraopolis.

We have hosted special ecumenical services during Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for our full communion partner and attended two outdoor worship services and picnic lunches with the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church with an attendance of over sixty persons.

Five of our Neville Island members attended Bible Discovery Week which is an Adult Vacation Bible School held at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church every summer. Pastor Sweitzer taught on the Gospel of Mark. Sessions were held during August Monday through Thursday. The Lord's Supper was celebrated on Thursday evenings. A total of eighteen adults attended.

The proprietor of Gino's Restaurant on the island provides free spaghetti dinners to the Neville Island and Zion Lutheran congregations following our joint Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service the last Sunday of January. The two partner congregations have enjoyed this dinner for the last three years.

Our organist at Neville Island, Patricia Allison, is a member of House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Aliquippa and has graciously served as our guest organist at Zion since the resignation of our organist on January 1, 2010. Our two choirs often practice and sing together at joint worship services throughout the year.

Pastor Sweitzer holds a M.Div. degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and a S.T.M. degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg. Our unique, full-communion relationship with Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Coraopolis has given us a clearer understanding of the mission possibilities in our communities and the shared resources of our two churches available for outreach and service to our Risen Lord. We have both also gained new members from the joint activities of our two churches.

As Deb Warren, Dan Corll and I shared at the December Presbytery meeting, we have been working in an intentional partnership or team ministry that we call the Shepherd's Staff. The Second UP of Wilkinsburg, Mt. Pleasant UP and Calvert Memorial UP (when I was there) joined in several activities. When I went to Bakerstown there were opportunities for Bakerstown to join with Dan Corll and Deb Warren in mission and worship activities. Out of these experiences the First Presbyterian Church of Bakerstown and the Second United Presbyterian Church of Wilkinsburg have formed a covenant partnership with the approval of both Sessions. This is the text of the covenant. (Click [here](#) for the covenant.) The two churches have already shared in mission and worship. This covenant does not preclude partnerships with other churches being formed as well. It also does not depend on my staying at Bakerstown since I am there as an Interim.

The Second United Presbyterian Church, Mt. Pleasant United Presbyterian Church & Calvert Memorial United Presbyterian Church
Submitted by the Rev. Beverly James