

SHARED MINISTRY AND MISSION

Accept the call of discipleship

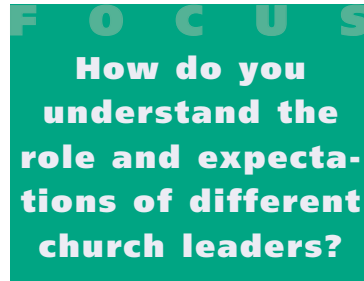
Disciple-making congregations are made up of people who first understand and accept the call of Jesus to be his disciples. If we are to make disciples, we must be disciples. Disciples are followers of Jesus who learn from Jesus how to live in this world. Here is just some of what Jesus said about his life—and therefore some of what our lives should be about:

- “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (*Luke 4:18-19*, quoting *Isaiah 61:1-2*)
- “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.” (*Luke 4:43*)
- “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.” (*Mark 2:17*)
- “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (*Mark 10:45*)
- “The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.” (*John 5:19*)
- “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (*John 10:10*)

Disciples know they are sent by God and empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. They go out into the world as servants seeking to help the poor, the prisoner, the sick, and the oppressed. They go to those who are most in need of help to offer the abundant, eternal life of God through Jesus Christ.

Understand the roles of leadership

No one person in a congregation can do it all. In many churches people have held this view: “the pastor is our minister; we pay him to do the work of the church.” But in recent years, Christians have been rediscovering what the Bible says and what the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers means for congregational life.



The clearest biblical statement on shared ministry and mission is in *Ephesians 4:11-13*, “The gifts (Christ) gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

The role of professional ministry is to prepare church members for ministry; to teach them, encourage them, pray for them, support them, train them, and work with them. Pastors prepare God’s people for the work of the ministry of the church, but they do not do it alone. In the earliest days of the church when, “a great persecution began against the church” (*Acts 8*), “all except the apostles were scattered,” and “those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word.” New churches were planted in other cities. Individuals were evangelized all over the world. Missionaries were sent out to places where the gospel had never been preached. And “lay people” did it—not the apostles, not what today we would call ordained ministers, but disciples of Jesus who were forced out by persecution into new places.

The principle of the priesthood of all believers, which Baptists have always emphasized, says that every believer has direct access to God through the Spirit and the Word. We can interpret the Scriptures with the help of the Spirit and believe and practice our faith in full freedom of conscience. There is another aspect, however, which has often been neglected. Priests also represent God in this world and seek to bring people into faith and relationship with God. This principle means that every believer in Christ, every disciple of Jesus, is called to do the work of ministry in this world.

Create a community of ministers

Disciple-making churches will create a community of people using their gifts to engage in ministry in the congregation and beyond. Ordained ministers and other ministerial

leaders will use their gifts, experience, and knowledge to prepare and support the ministry being done by the members of the church. There will be a spirit of joy and compassion, and great confidence, in this community of disciples.

At the same time, it is important to remember that we are all human. We cannot expect perfection, and there will be conflicts. Not everyone will do all that was expected. Someone will be upset by what someone else does. Not all will be in agreement about every decision. There may be a lack of funding or limitations of time and energy, and conflicts will result.

Ephesians 5:18-20 calls the church to “Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yet earlier in the letter are warnings against lying, stealing, bitterness, and slander, which suggests those things were present in the church and so the letter includes an appeal to honesty, generosity, forgiveness, and compassion. All of these factors will be part of creating a community of disciples actively engaged in ministry.

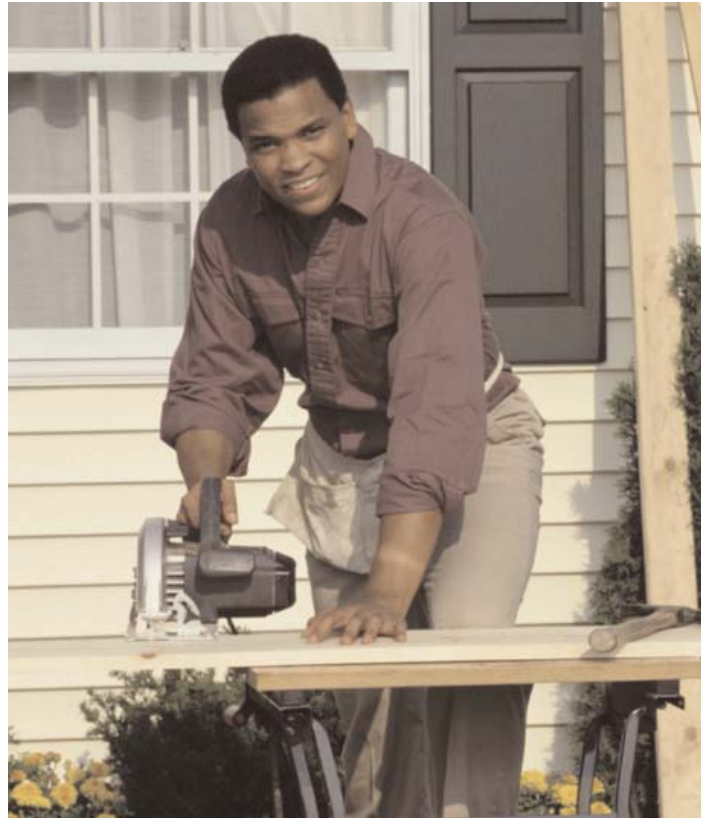
Build partnerships for effective ministry

The church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel and plant churches in other parts of the world (*Acts 13*). The churches in rural Macedonia generously gave to help Christians in Jerusalem who often lacked basic necessities (*2 Corinthians 8*). The early churches left this legacy for the Church in all ages: We need each other! Together we can accomplish more than we can do alone.

F O C U S
What partnerships in ministry can you envision for your congregation?

Partnerships for ministry can be formed in many ways. The most common is through an association of like-minded churches, what we have come to call denominations. For American Baptists, the American Baptist Churches USA and its covenanting partners provide a structure for sharing resources and cooperative ministry around the world. Through regions, our national boards (National Ministries, International Ministries, the Ministers and

Missionaries Benefit Board), and through the Office of the General Secretary, we provide a way to pool our funds and volunteers to accomplish what individual congregations could not do alone. We send out missionaries and provide national and international support for them as they are engaged in that extended ministry.



Many congregations form partnerships with other churches in their communities, often of other denominations, to support common ministries, such as food pantries, clothes closets, emergency assistance, refugee resettlement, and homeless shelters. Many congregations join with other churches to send money and volunteers for disaster relief, to help build homes with Habitat for Humanity, to engage in hands-on mission work in rural areas, cities, and other countries. And some churches form partnerships with non-church agencies in their communities to serve people in efforts they could not do alone. Grant funding is often available for projects in which a church and a nonprofit community organization work together to put people to work, to provide decent housing, to work toward a sustainable environment, to do peace and justice work, and to otherwise improve the lives of people.

Many churches feel isolated and powerless to do anything more than they are currently doing. Partnerships for ministry can create a larger vision, especially for smaller congregations, and help them to see how they can be part of transforming the world.

LA MISIÓN Y EL MINISTERIO COMPARTIDOS

Los modelos antiguos de liderazgo no funcionan en la iglesia discipuladora. Los(as) discípulos(as), por naturaleza, son ministros(as). En la iglesia discipuladora tanto el cuerpo pastoral como el laicado comparten el ministerio.

En los patrones tradicionales en el ministerio, es el pastor(a) ordenado(a), el que está encargado de ministrar en nombre de la congregación. Es responsable del cuidado representativo de la congregación así como de planificar y dirigir el culto como empleado(a) de la congregación. El laicado, elegido o establecido, administra la organización y sus empleados sirviendo en comités o juntas, enseñando y ayudando en el culto. Cuando ampliamos la noción del ministerio para incluir a todos(as) los(as) discípulos(as), la distinción entre el papel del cuerpo pastoral y el laicado se derrumba. Todas las responsabilidades del ministerio se pueden compartir.

ENFOCAR
¿Cómo entiende usted el papel y expectativas de diferentes líderes de iglesias?

El ministerio compartido es una consecuencia del principio bautista del sacerdocio de todos(as) los(as) creyentes. Esta creencia vital afirma que todo(a) creyente se relaciona directamente con Dios sin necesidad de un intermediario y que Dios llama a todos(as) sus discípulos(as). Los bautistas son los que menos han hecho esta distinción, entre el cuerpo pastoral y el laicado, que otras denominaciones; pero las nuevas realidades de la iglesia discipuladora nos lleva a un mejor entendimiento del ministerio compartido. Nuestra teología nos obliga y la practicidad también. Necesitamos ampliar nuestra efectividad al satisfacer los desafíos que surgen al usar a plenitud los dones de cada persona donde tengan el mayor impacto. Esto debe de ser más importante que el entendimiento tradicional de la función basada en una posición.

Esta visión del ministerio compartido requiere nuevas perspectivas tanto para el cuerpo pastoral como para el laicado. El cuerpo pastoral deberá de alejarse de la idea de la autoridad basada en la posición y moverse hacia el uso fiel y efectivo de los dones. El laicado deberá de desarrollar nuevas expectativas de las responsabilidades del pastor(a),

así como de tener un nuevo entendimiento de su ministerio dentro y fuera de la iglesia.

ENFOCAR
¿Qué asociaciones en el ministerio puede usted imaginar para su congregación?

Este ministerio compartido llevará a pastores y pastoras a recobrar la función como líderes espirituales en la congregación. En esta función, trabajarán con el liderato para asegurarse de que todos los discípulos y discípulas están creciendo en su relación con Jesús, que están siendo equipados(as) para el ministerio al cual Dios les ha llamado y que están incluyendo al mundo en ese ministerio. El laicado deberá estar más a tono con la presencia de Dios en sus vidas, para que puedan discernir el llamado de Dios y responder a este llamado en sus vidas.

Únicamente cuando todos los discípulos y discípulas comparten el ministerio, la iglesia descubrirá los recursos que necesita para responder fielmente al llamado de Dios.

