

SCHOHARIE COOPERATIVE MINISTRY COVENANT

Name and Mission

The Schoharie Region Cooperative Ministry is a Multiple Charge Cooperative Parish (as outlined in the Book of Discipline, ¶206.3b.1) in the Oneonta District of the United Methodist Church. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by empowering and resourcing our covenanted churches to do more together than they can alone.

Our goals are simple

- To share resources as ministry opportunities arise, including our staff and facilities.
- To seek out opportunities for our churches to come together in worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism.
- To communicate effectively between our churches, laity and clergy through a newsletter, website and social media so that our local church's events, joys and concerns can be supported, celebrated and cared for as a larger community.
- To deepen our relationships with each other and Christ in order to continue building up the Kingdom of God.

Membership in the Cooperative

- Membership in the Schoharie Region Cooperative Ministry is open to all congregations in the following United Methodist Churches of the Oneonta District, Upper New York Conference: Barnerville, Central Bridge, Cobleskill, Delanson, Esperance/Sloansville, Grosvenors Corners, Gallupville, Huntersland, Middleburgh, Richmondville, Sharon Springs, and Warnerville.
- Covenant congregations shall be those congregations which accept this covenant through Church Conference action.
- Any UM congregation within the region may become a member of the Cooperative Ministry when it desires by showing a willingness to do its part in the work of the ministry, by accepting the Covenant and by electing representatives to the council.
- Any congregation may withdraw from the Cooperative Ministry at their annual Charge Conference with written notice provided to the Cooperative Council.
- All persons who are members of the Covenant Congregations also become members of the Cooperative Ministry.

Cooperative Ministry Council

- The Cooperative Ministry operates through the Cooperative Ministry Council. The Council shall be the vision setting and administrative body for the Cooperative Ministry.
- The Council shall be composed of one to two laypersons elected by each congregation, the pastor(s) of each charge, and any lay Cooperative Ministry staff.
- The Council shall set up a structure of meetings that makes sense to the body.
- The Council shall meet at least five times a year (usually bimonthly) and at the call of the Council Chairperson or the Cooperative Ministry coordinator. Meetings shall be hosted, on a rotating basis, by each of the participating congregations. The lay representatives shall be expected to give a report of these meetings to their local congregations.
- The first meeting of the Council will be July 8, 2019 at Esperance-Sloansville UMC from 6-8pm. It will be a potluck.

Financial Impact

- Each congregation shall continue to operate autonomously in regard to its local and denominational obligations.
- Any financial needs of the Cooperative Ministry will be funded through special fundraisers or outside funding mechanisms, not through mandated local church contributions.
- The Cooperative Ministry shall prepare an annual budget.
- The Cooperative Ministry shall be authorized to present to member churches proposals for special financial needs.

Ministries

The Schoharie Region Cooperative Ministry will be focused on empowering and equipping its member congregation for mission and ministry in the Schoharie Region. Subgroups including but not limited to collaborative mission outreach, discipleship, children and youth ministries, and witness may be formed to help with this primary focus.

That said, participation in the cooperative ministry does not prevent or restrict individual congregations from exploring ministry paths they deem appropriate in their context. The cooperative may choose to do some things together, while at other times only a handful of member churches will chose to participate. At other times, individual churches will work independently or in pairs on particular ministries. The goal of this cooperative ministry is to resource and equip churches for ministry without getting in the way.

Connectionalism

Connectionalism is a word used by United Methodists when we consider the many and complex

ways in which the faith, the people, and the work of the UMC are connected. One aspect of connectionalism that is particularly pertinent to our new Schoharie Regional Ministry is described in our Book of Discipline with these words:

Our connectionism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships.

In the spirit of connectionalism, we, the Covenanting members of the Schoharie Regional Ministry, covenant not only with each other, but with the larger United Methodist Church, to support our mission and ministry. We respectfully request that our Superintendent, Cabinet, and Bishop will

- continue to support our grass-roots efforts to work collaboratively. Your support and your faith that the Holy Spirit is indeed doing a new thing in this place and has been essential to our work, and may it continue to be so.
- see our good-faith efforts to organize ourselves for cooperative ministry not as an excuse to consolidate or reduce our ministries, but as an opportunity to build up and strengthen our local churches for a new chapter of vital and effective ministry.
- assign to our churches and support clergy who will be active partners in cooperative ministry and whose gifts are well-suited to leadership in the context of our Schoharie Region. Such clergy are essential to the growth and sustenance of the “vital web of interactive relationships” that are and do the work of the church.

Ratified by 11 participating churches on May 19, 2019 at the Spring Quarterly Gathering of the Schoharie Region held at the Sunshine Fairgrounds in Cobleskill, NY.