Clergy Conversations:
Building Community Connections

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Connection (kə- 'nek-shən), noun: a relationship linking a church or ministry setting to another ecclesiastical, ecumenical, interfaith, civic, non-profit, or for-profit organization.

Connections can be:
personal or institutional
relational or utilitarian
reciprocal or one-sided
one-time or lasting
Introductions

1. **Name**
   “Hi, I’m Rev. Jane Doe …”

2. **Ministry Setting**
   “… and I serve Sesame Street United Methodist Church …”

3. **One connection between your ministry setting and another organization**
   “… which has a connection to the Elmo Shelter for Homeless Monsters.”
Our Plan for this Morning

1. Why connections?
   • In the Bible
   • In the Methodist tradition
   • In pursuit of your church’s mission

2. What connections do we have?
   • Exploring types of connections
   • Considering our own connections
   • Exploring connections with others

3. How do you make connections?
   • Ten Connection Commandments
   • Conversation & Questions
For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts.
• The body is diverse.
• Not every part of the body does the same thing.
• The different parts need each other.
• The weakest and strongest parts have particular roles.
• The parts are connected by both joy and sorrow.
The Body of Christ

- Renee
- Tom
- Heather
- Aidan
- Florence
The Body of Christ: Zoomed Out

- Trinity UMC
- Calvary UMC
- First UMC
- Aldersgate UMC
- St. Paul’s UMC
The Body of Christ: Zoomed Out Even More

Methodist
Pentecostal

Roman Catholic

Orthodox

Presbyterian
The Body:
Can we extend the metaphor?

The Church
Interfaith partners
Businesses
Secular nonprofits
Government
Or maybe a related metaphor …

The Ecosystem

The Church

Businesses

Interfaith partners

Government

Secular nonprofits
Wesley on Connexion

“The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.”

“A man of a catholic spirit is one who … gives his hand to all whose hearts are right with his heart: one who knows how to value, and praise God for, all the advantages he enjoys, with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true scriptural manner of worshipping him, and, above all, his union with a congregation fearing God and working righteousness: one who, retaining these blessings with the strictest care, keeping them as the apple of his eye, at the same time loves— as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God, as joint partakers now of the present kingdom of God, and fellow heirs of his eternal kingdom—all, of whatever opinion or worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; who love God and man; who, rejoicing to please, and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works.”

“Connection: the principle, basic to The United Methodist Church, that all leaders and congregations are connected in a network of loyalties and commitments that support, yet supersede, local concerns.”

Connexion as spiritual formation … as polity … as way of being.
No matter how you define the mission of your church, effective community connections will help you pursue it.
To share the Good News of the Gospel
To make disciples
To serve people in need
To seek justice and peace
To love God and neighbor
What Connections Do We Have?
Interfaith

Non-Christian houses of worship in your community

Non-Christian institutions and organizations
Community (Non-Profit)

- Groups that meet in your church
- Groups your church supports
- Groups members of your church support
- Groups supported by the Conference
- Groups to which you refer people in need
- Groups in your neighborhood
For-Profit

- Businesses your church uses
- Businesses in your neighborhood
- Businesses where church members work
Time to fill in the map!
Reflecting on your map

- A realization that surprised you !
- A connection that makes you proud ❤
- A connection that troubles you 😞
- A connection that feels strong 🏋️
- A connection that’s weak or not really there ☁
- An area of your map that’s full of detail ⚪
- An area of your map that’s mostly blank 🛫
Ten Commandments of Building and Nurturing Community Connections
Know What You Bring to the Table
Do Your Homework
Be Bold in Reaching Out & Keeping Up
Find the Right Partner
Find the Right Project
Be Prepared to Work Cross-Culturally
Bring Your Whole Self
Be Cautious of Boundaries

DO NOT CROSS
Share the Partnership
Your Ideas, Experiences, Questions?