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Yoked congregations are bound by shared staff and shared programming. Each congregation retains their own budget, bylaws and church board.  By joining forces to create a larger staff team or to achieve a full-time ministry, the mission of each congregation is enhanced.

There are a number of UU congregations who share ministers and other staff in a yoked model or a variation of a yoked model. While they may share a minister and/or a faith development professional,  their yoked partnership is not always noted on their websites.

**A Yoked Partnership is...**

* made up of two or more *independent* congregations (each retains its board, bylaws, and budgets)
* bound by shared (lead) staff & shared (major) programming
* motivated by a "spirit of sharing”
* hoping to combine resources to strengthen ministry, create a more powerful ministerial team and be more impactful than either could be alone.

Yoked congregations tend to begin their relationship out of the desire to create a stronger or more stable ministerial team.  We all know that smaller congregations that can only support part-time ministry end up having a high turn-over rate.  Joining forces with sibling congregations allows you to offer a full-time position and stabilize your ministerial services.  Larger congregations with full-time ministers also find this model attractive.  Serving as an isolated minister is tough.  Asking one minister to be all things to all people is unrealistic.  Yoked congregations that combine resources to share two or more staff members get the gift of a richer and stronger staff team and also enable their staff to play to their strengths—not to mention relieving the isolation that many ministers hate, and giving them a team of colleagues!

Unlike joined/merged, yoked congregations are willing to share staff, but they are not willing at this point to give up their independent boards, bylaws and budgets.  At the same time, they know they can't make it on their own. So they gladly reach out to sibling congregations to combine resources.

While yoked congregations may *begin* by sharing staffing, many soon find themselves hungering for deeper relationship, which leads to shared programming, and in turn may lead to shared mission and then deeper partnership forms.

**You Might Be Ready to Yoke If...**

* You are struggling to keep ministers because you can only offer part-time positions.
* Your youth program or adult faith development program or social justice ministry may be strengthened if you joined with a neighbor Unitarian Universalist (UU) church.
* You are open to sharing staff, but still want to retain your own board, bylaws and budgets.
* You are willing to share your staff with a sibling congregation to create a more vibrant ministerial team.
* You believe that combining resources can make you stronger together.

*If these ring true, you might be ready to enter into a Yoked partnership!*

**Examples of Yoked Staff**

Some UU congregations that currently have yoked staff include:

* [East Suburban UU Church of Murrysville, PA](http://esuuc.org/) and [UU Fellowship of the Ligonier Valley, Ligonier, PA](https://uuflv.freeyellow.com/index.html)
* [First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY](http://rochesterunitarian.org/)  and [UU Church of Canandaigua, NY](http://rochesterunitarian.org/)
* [Olmsted UU Congregation, Olmsted, OH](http://olmsteduu.org/) and [Oberlin UU Fellowship, Oberlin, OH](http://www.ouuf.org/)