

## **Ministers Council Adaptive Challenge: Pastoral Attrition**

### **Adaptive Challenge:**

Attrition is a natural process in any profession, and is not necessarily negative for young (and newly ordained) clergy. Unfortunately, some new clergy leave ministry not because of a clarification of God's purposes for their life, but because of their experiences in ministry. The Adaptive Challenge for the Ministers Council is to enter an intentional process for learning about the current challenges facing local congregations and young clergy, and to experiment with new ways of helping new clergy clarify their sense of call, and providing support to these young clergy. The Ministers Council will also need to find new ways of working with other ABC organizations to help congregations learn to work with and support young clergy.

### **Rationale:**

We live and minister in an age of great disequilibrium. Small churches are finding it ever more difficult to pay their ministers. Young clergy increasingly express doubts about their calling. Only 30% of seminary students see full-time congregational leadership as their calling. Many people outside of traditional congregations no longer see these traditional congregations as relevant to their lives.

Young clergy often have a better understanding of these changes, but they are also most susceptible to the forces that lead to pastoral attrition. They feel the financial strain of serving as pastors in small congregations, and experience the conflict of attempting to lead congregations to new models of ministry.

The Ministers Council will need to work with Regional and National agencies to provide support networks for clergy in their first five years of ministry. These "cohorts" would enable them to process their experiences with other clergy in similar situations. They will also need to work together to help congregations understand the tectonic shifts in culture that are affecting their ministry, and how young clergy understand their roles.

Finally, the Ministers Council will need to help young leaders understand their own sense of calling. This should begin in the local church, continue through seminary or other education, and into the early years of ministry. A key component of this process is establishing partnerships between seasoned pastors (mentoring), local congregations, and seminaries that help clergy navigate the changes necessary in local churches and minimize clergy attrition.