

# Sustainable Staffing Strategizers Cohort

## Selected Slides from All Sessions

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### Session 1

Congregational Staffing

Framestorming

Adaptive Leadership

# Why Do Congregations Hire Employees?

Capacity

Skills and expertise

Consistency

Accountability

Volunteers hard to get



# Staffing: Overly Simplified Historical Picture

Minister (usually male)

Minister's spouse (usually female):  
staff-like responsibilities

Church secretary

Sunday school run by a mom

Specialized roles: mainly volunteers  
(music, teens, welcoming, etc.)



# Staffing Levels: Upward Trend

## Focus on growth

- Staff as drivers of growth
- Need/desire for expertise
- Increased specialization



More staff positions  
More staff hours  
Higher expectations of staff

## Complexity of "doing church"

- Regulatory environment
- Technology
- Safety and security
- Coordination across ministries



More staff positions  
More staff hours  
Higher expectations of staff

# Staffing Levels: Upward Trend

## Shifts in volunteerism

- Cultural changes
  - Time famine
  - Workforce and family patterns
- May indicate...
  - Need for realistic assumptions about unpaid labor today
  - Revisit the why, what, and how of volunteer options
  - More staff → loss of sense of ownership among members

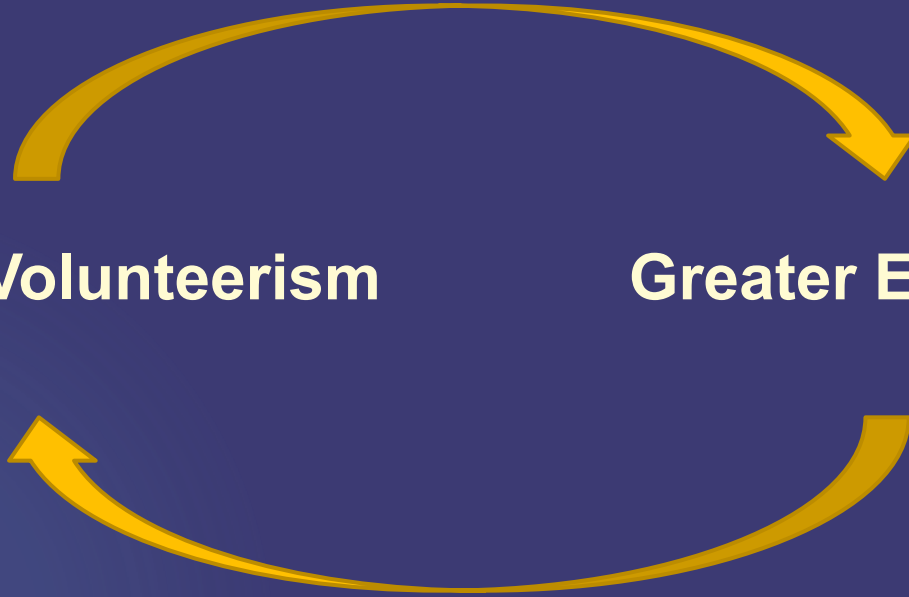


More staff positions  
More staff hours  
Higher expectations of staff

# Chicken and Egg?

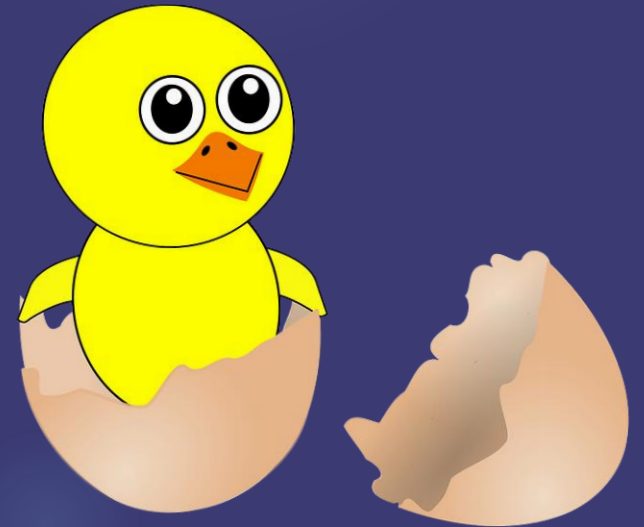
Reduced Volunteerism

Greater Expectations of Staff



**“As the percentage of the church’s staffing budget increases, the percentage of people volunteering decreases.”**

*- Research from Tony Morgan, The Unstuck Group*



# Staffing Levels: Current Challenges

Membership has leveled off

Budget has leveled off

Staff

- Greater need
- More career professionals
- Increased costs
  - Upward pressure on salaries
  - Continuing education and collegiality
  - Benefits



# Jan's Framestorming ABC

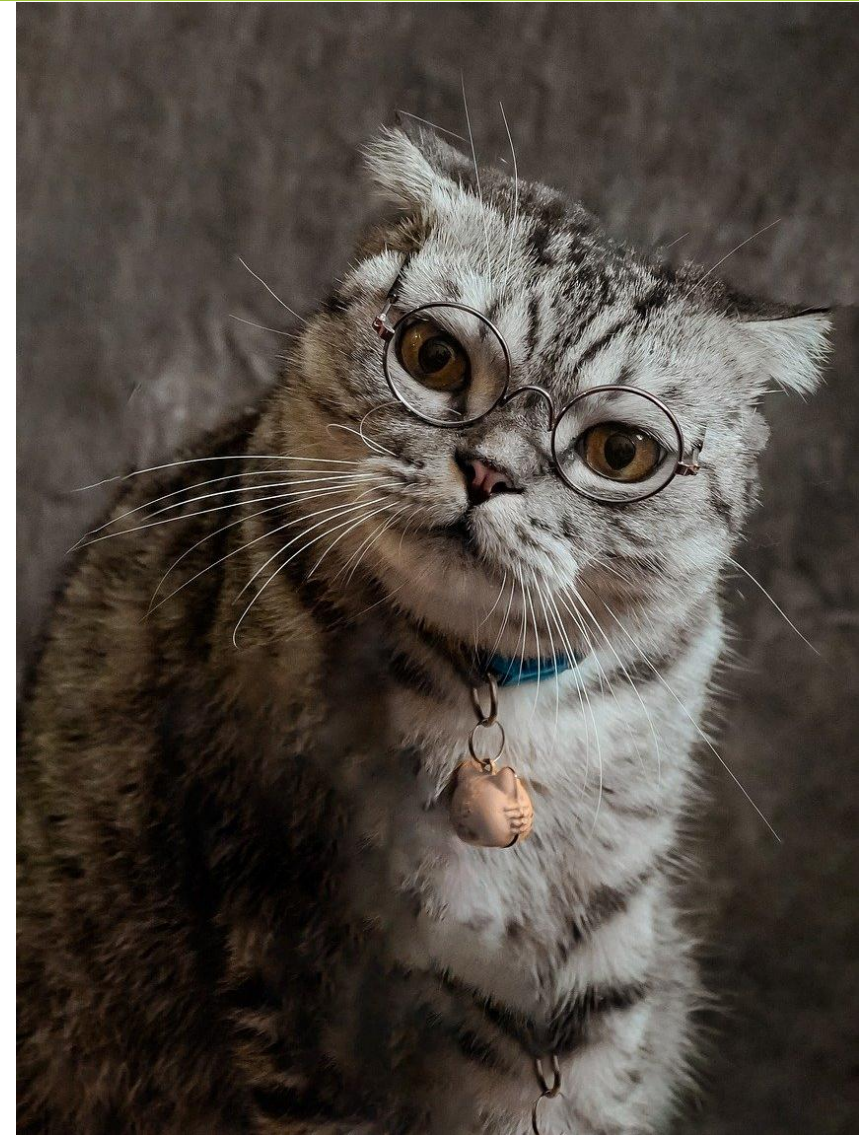
**A Ask Questions**

**B Broaden View**

**C Challenge Assumptions**

I like to ask these questions:

- Who benefits from the status quo?  
(And who is at a disadvantage?)
- What would we do if starting from scratch today?



# The Role of the Leadership

How can you be an adaptive leader?

## Technical Problems

Look at parts of the system

Define the problem and solution

Maintain/restore order

Maintain norms



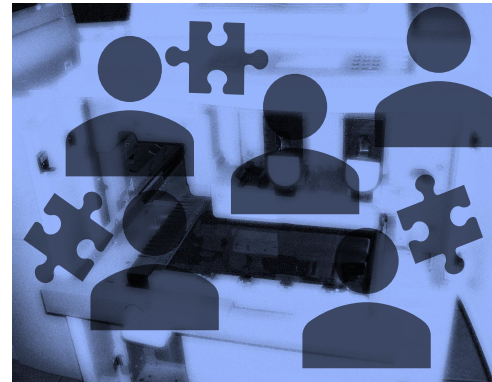
## Adaptive Challenges

Look at the whole system

Frame questions and issues

Allow (some) conflict and disorientation

Encourage challenging of norms

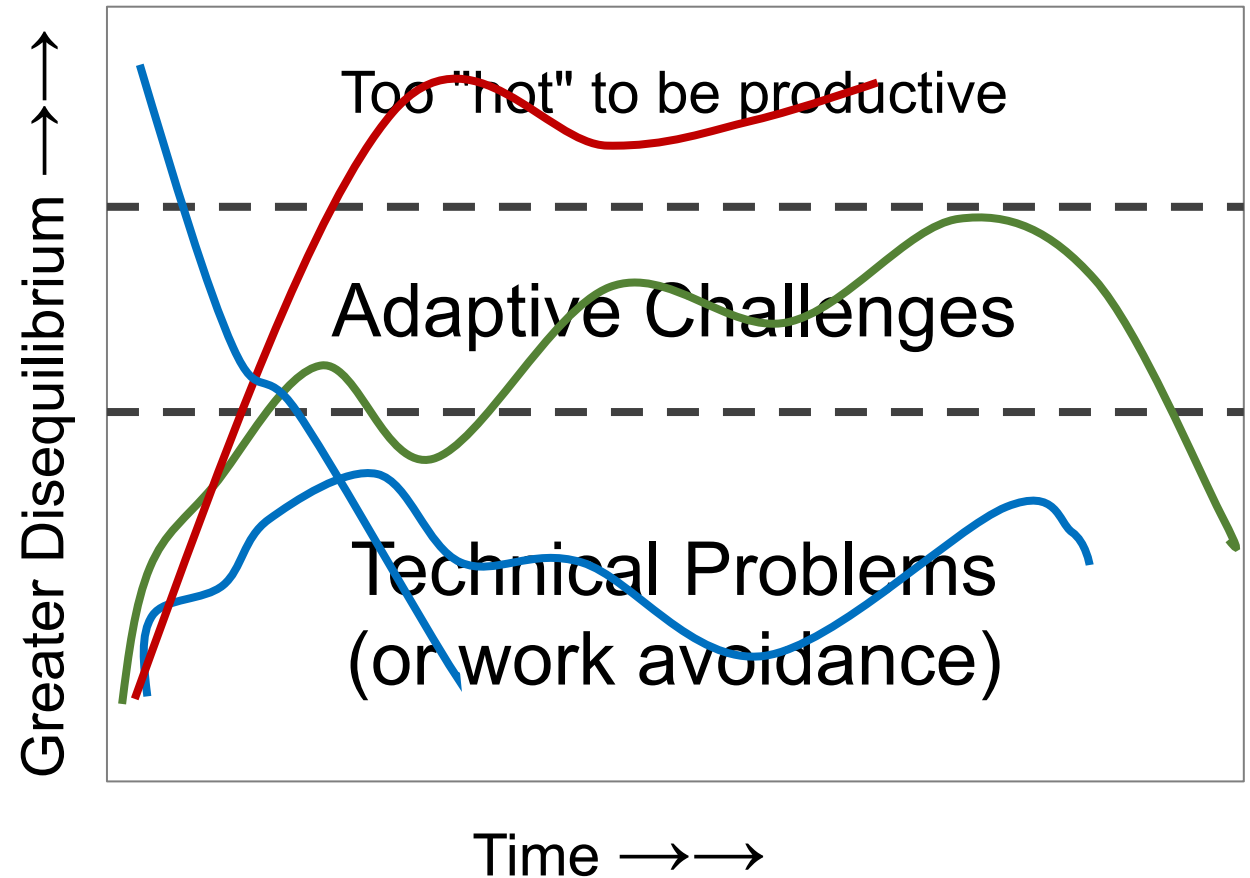


# Productive Zone of Disequilibrium

Technical problems =  
low disequilibrium

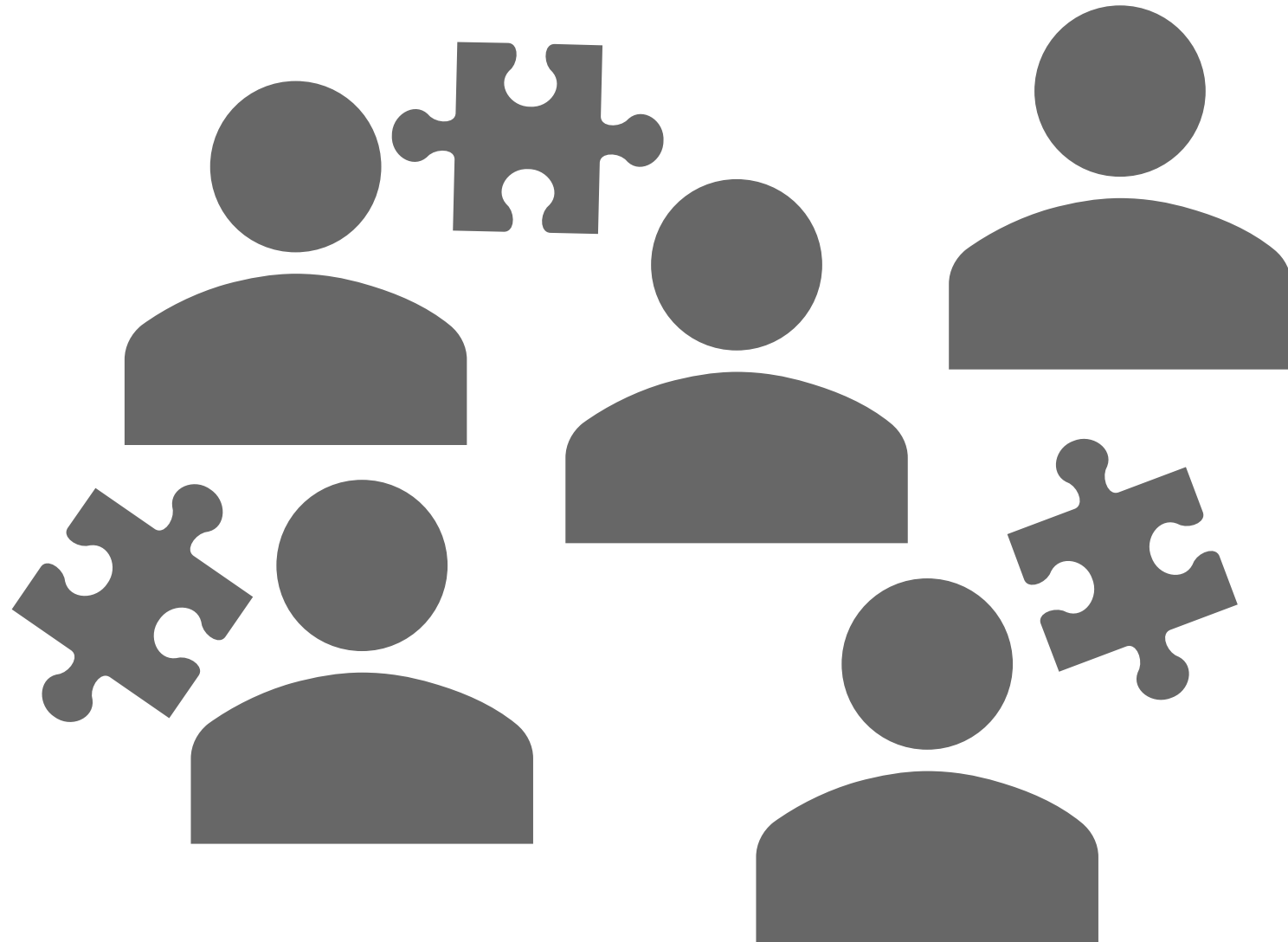
High conflict or chaos =  
unproductive

Adaptive Challenges in  
the "productive zone"



# Adaptive Challenges: Common Sticking Points

- Focusing on the technical
- Expecting the expert to fix it
- Work avoidance (distraction or displacement)
- Organizational silos
- Resistance to learning and change



# Sustainable Staffing Strategizers Cohort

## Session 2

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Key Concepts and Practices  
Polarity Thinking

# Take Good Care of Your Staff

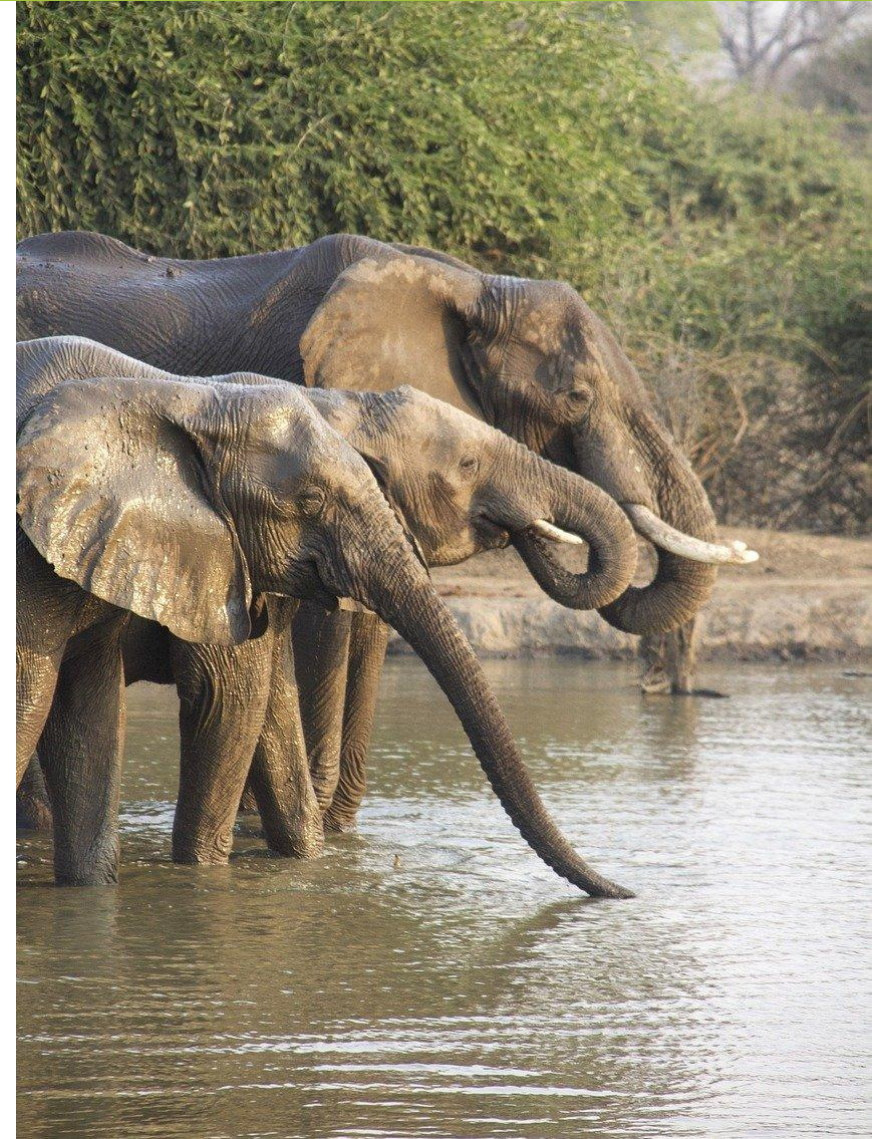
Welcoming and onboarding

Supportive supervision, feedback, team-building

Policies reflecting UU values

Clear expectations and realistic job scopes

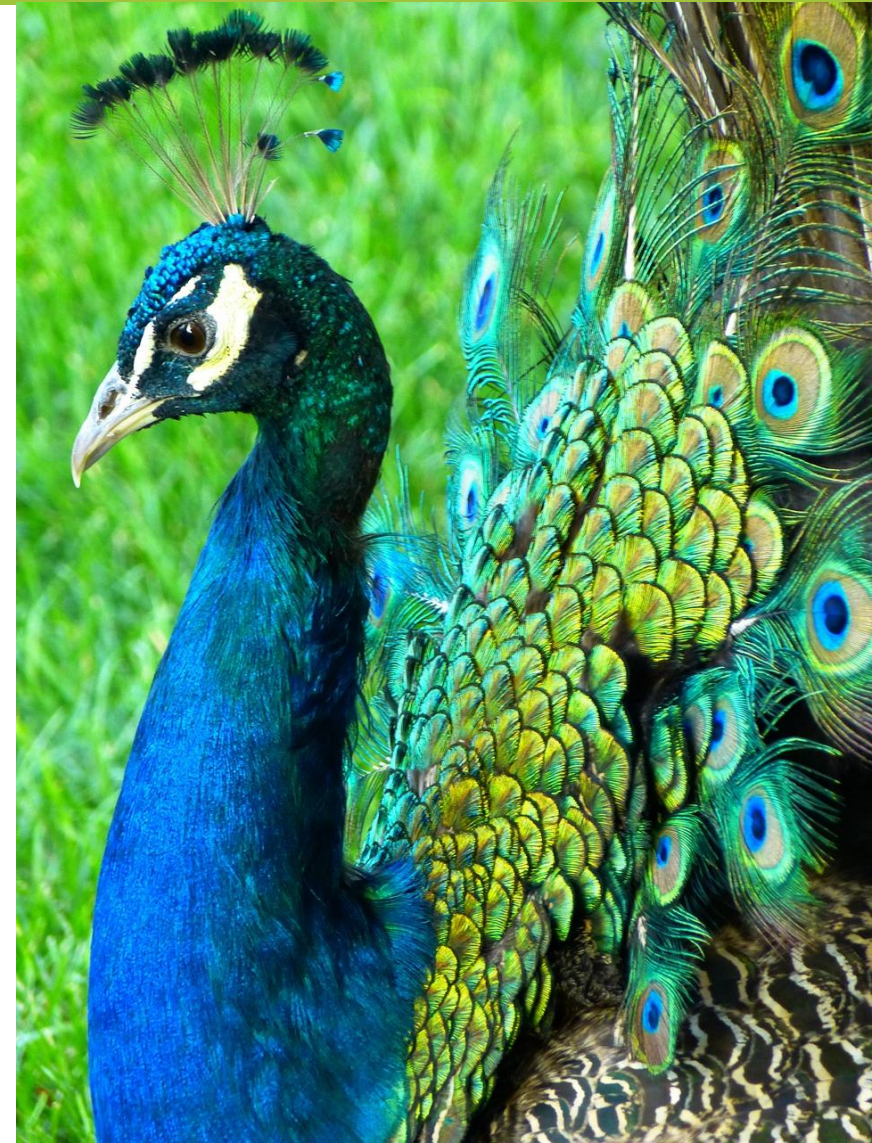
Technical and Adaptive  
**Transformational**



# Do What You Can Do Well...

With the resources you have.

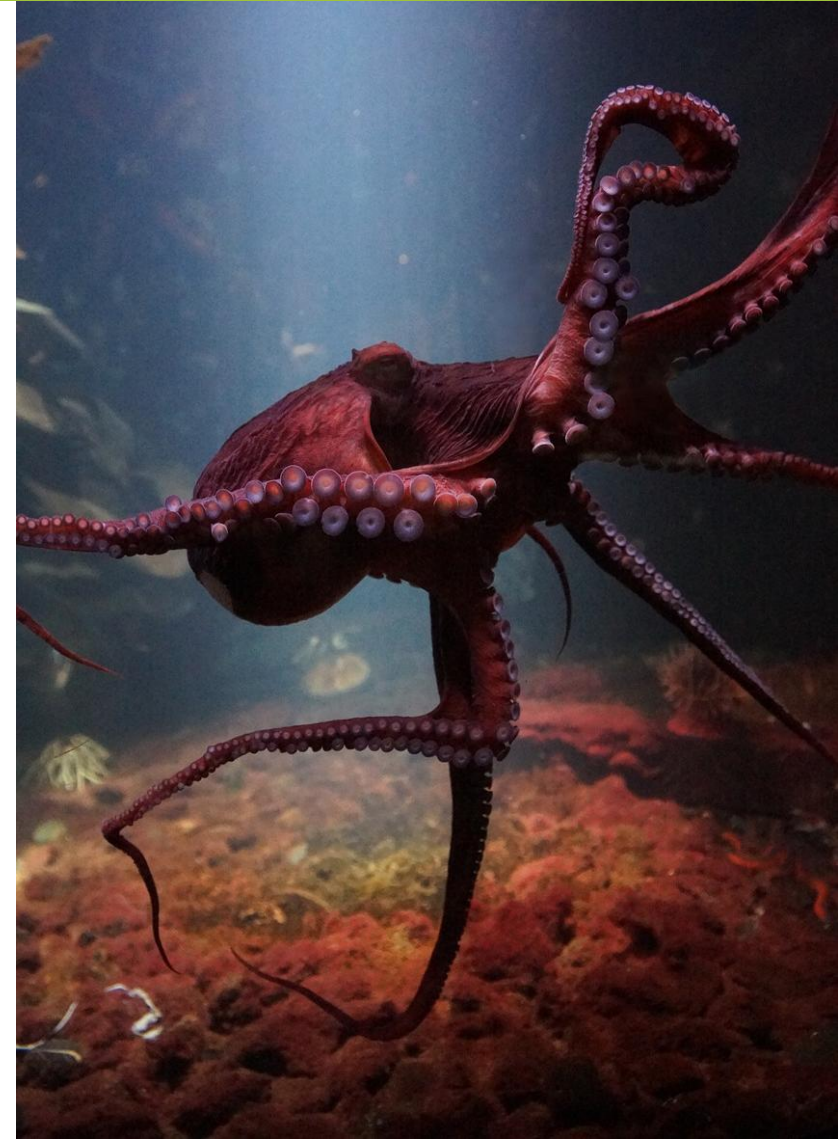
It's not up to the staff  
to "do all the things."



# Be Flexible...

As priorities (and people) change

Hire for adaptability  
and teamwork.

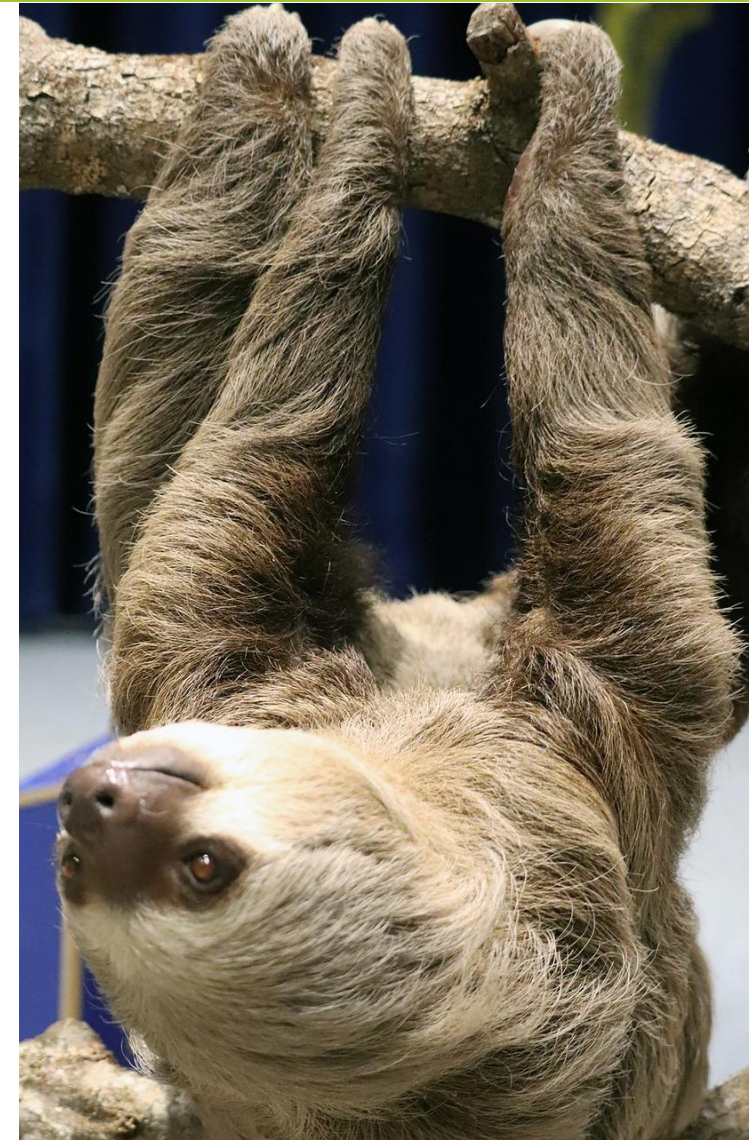


# There is no "one right way"

No perfect staffing structure or set of job descriptions

Today's configuration won't work indefinitely

Stay open to new and creative possibilities.



# Communicate with Staff

Keep staff informed about process and timeline

Explore possibilities together, staff as conversation partners

Be clear about decision-making authority.



# Staffing Sustainably and Faithfully

More on our LeaderLab page

Key Concepts and Practices

Context

Strategies

<https://www.uua.org/leaderlab/staffing-sustainably>

What are you  
sitting with?



# Polarities are Interdependent Pairs



Yay for  
activity!

## Activity *AND* Rest

Both needed

Mutually supporting

Dynamic tension between  
2 GOOD THINGS



Yay for  
rest!

# Polarities are Unending

## 1. Upside of left pole

Name good outcomes of focusing on activity.

Life is good!

Too much of a good thing

## 2. Downside of left pole

What happens with an *over-focus on activity*, to the neglect of rest?

START HERE



Greater Purpose:  
**Well-being**

Activity

and

Rest

## 3. Upside of right pole

Name good outcomes of focusing on rest.

Life is good!

Too much of a good thing

## 4. Downside of right pole

What happens with an *over-focus on rest*, to the neglect of activity?

# How Can You Make Use of Polarities?

## Using Polarities: Reframing Competing Needs as Complementary



Page includes  
slide set with  
examples

# **Sustainable Staffing Strategizers Cohort**

## **Session 3**

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### **Nonstandard Staffing**

# Most Congregations are Small

## Sizes Used in Congregational Salary Program

# of congregations in each size profile from '25 Congregational Certification Data

### Congregational Size Profiles

For UUA Recommended Salary Ranges

*Note overlap. Use membership, operating expenses, and staffing info to determine best size.*

Profiles	Size Profile A	Size Profile B	Size Profile C	Size Profile D
Membership	Up to 140	120-230	200-450	400-800
Number of congregations in each size profile	658	206	155	47

# How Do We Tend to Think About Staffing?

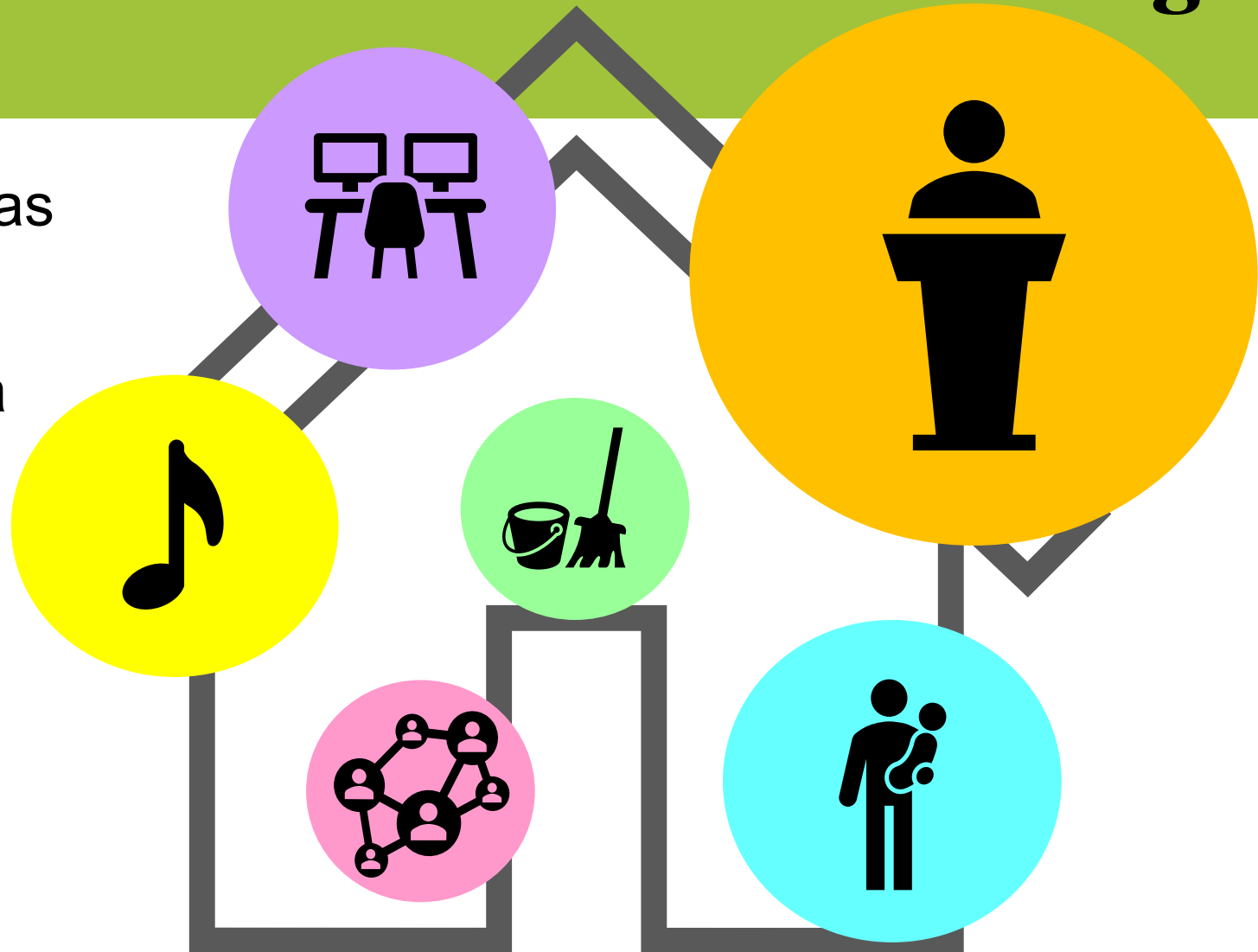
Each congregation has their own staff

Each employee fills a well-defined role

Job descriptions

- Accountability
- Boundaries

Full-time normative



# What is the Reality?

Small employers

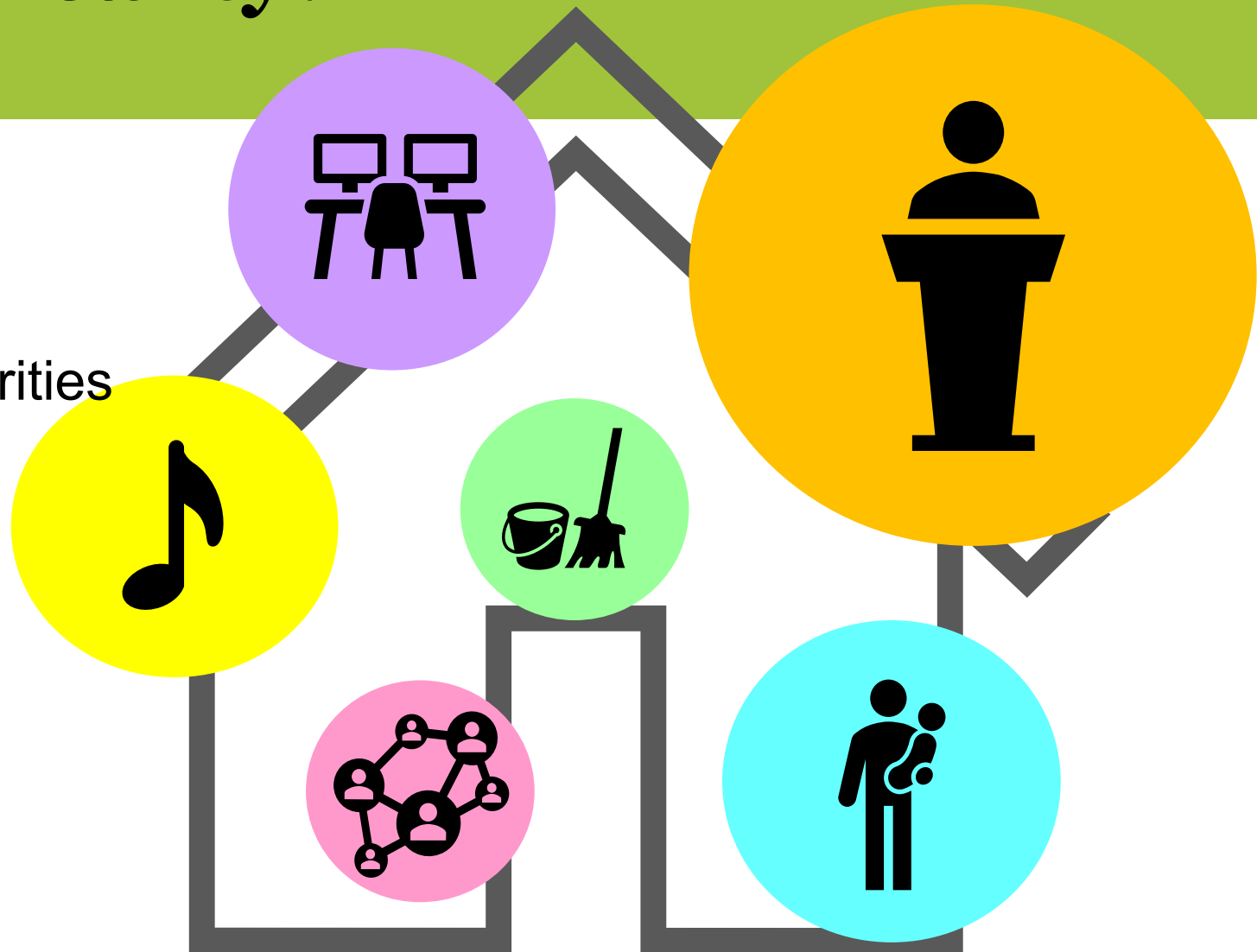
Mainly part-time

Goals, needs, and priorities change

Each employee and volunteer is unique

Turnover

Budget



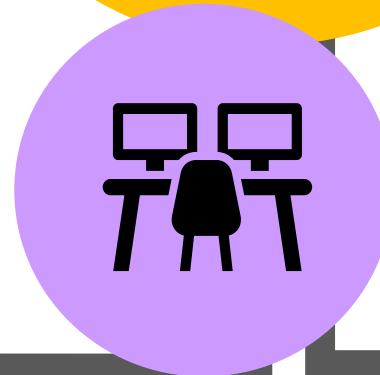
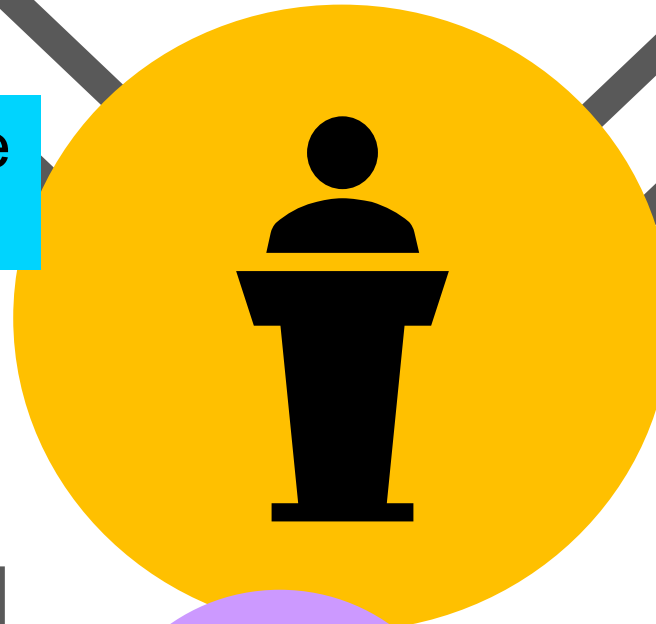
# Shared Staff

Live our theology of interdependence

Capitalize on existing knowledge of UU systems and norms

Enhance and streamline infrastructure, programs, and services

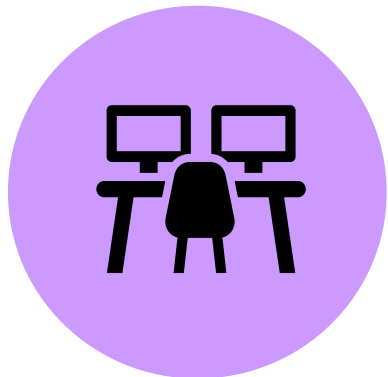
Expand work opportunities that help retain talented staff, increasing stability of the work



# Remote staff

Things currently done onsite:

- Reassign?
- Do another way?



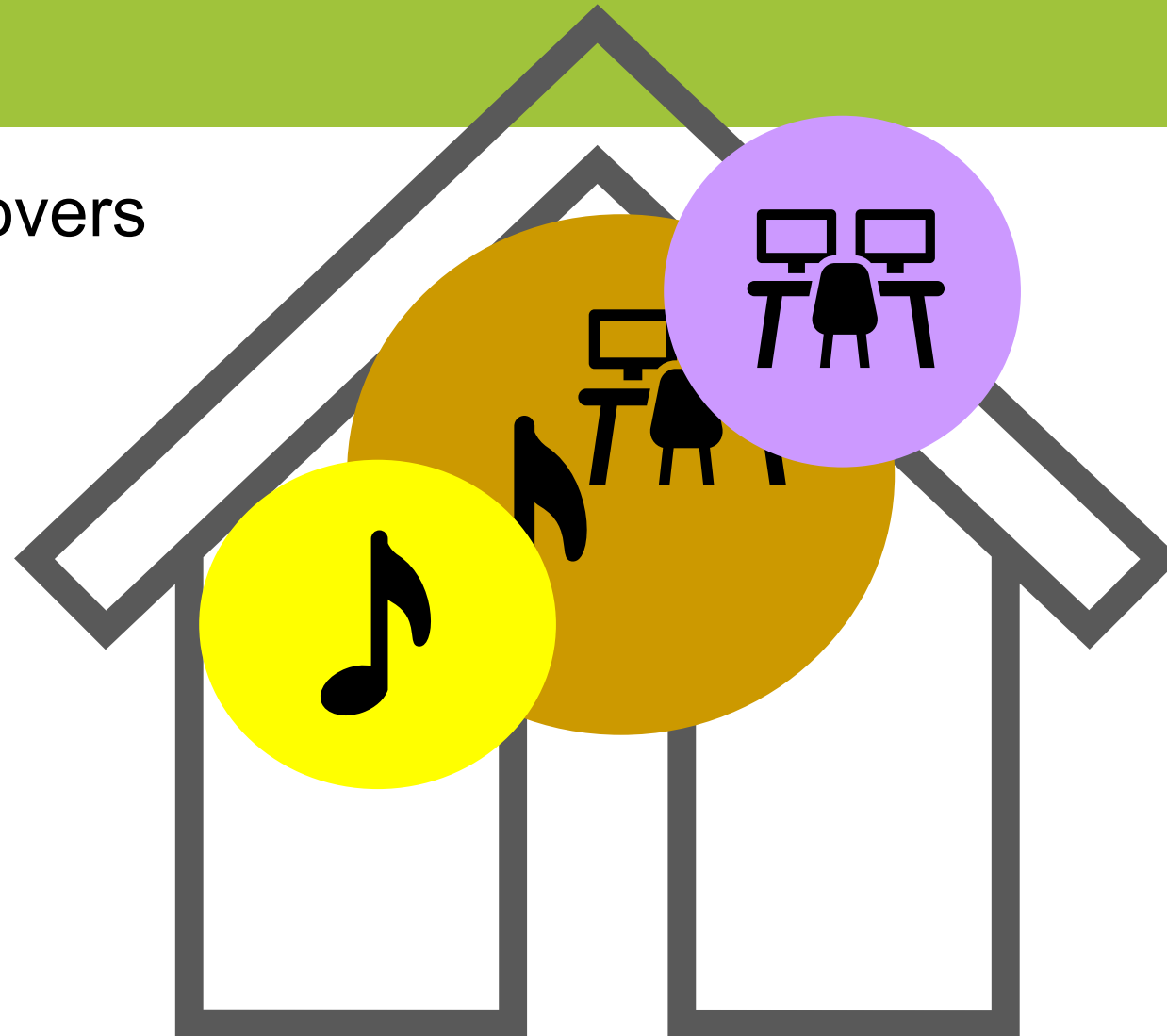
Challenges

- Practical
- Cultural



# Blended Roles

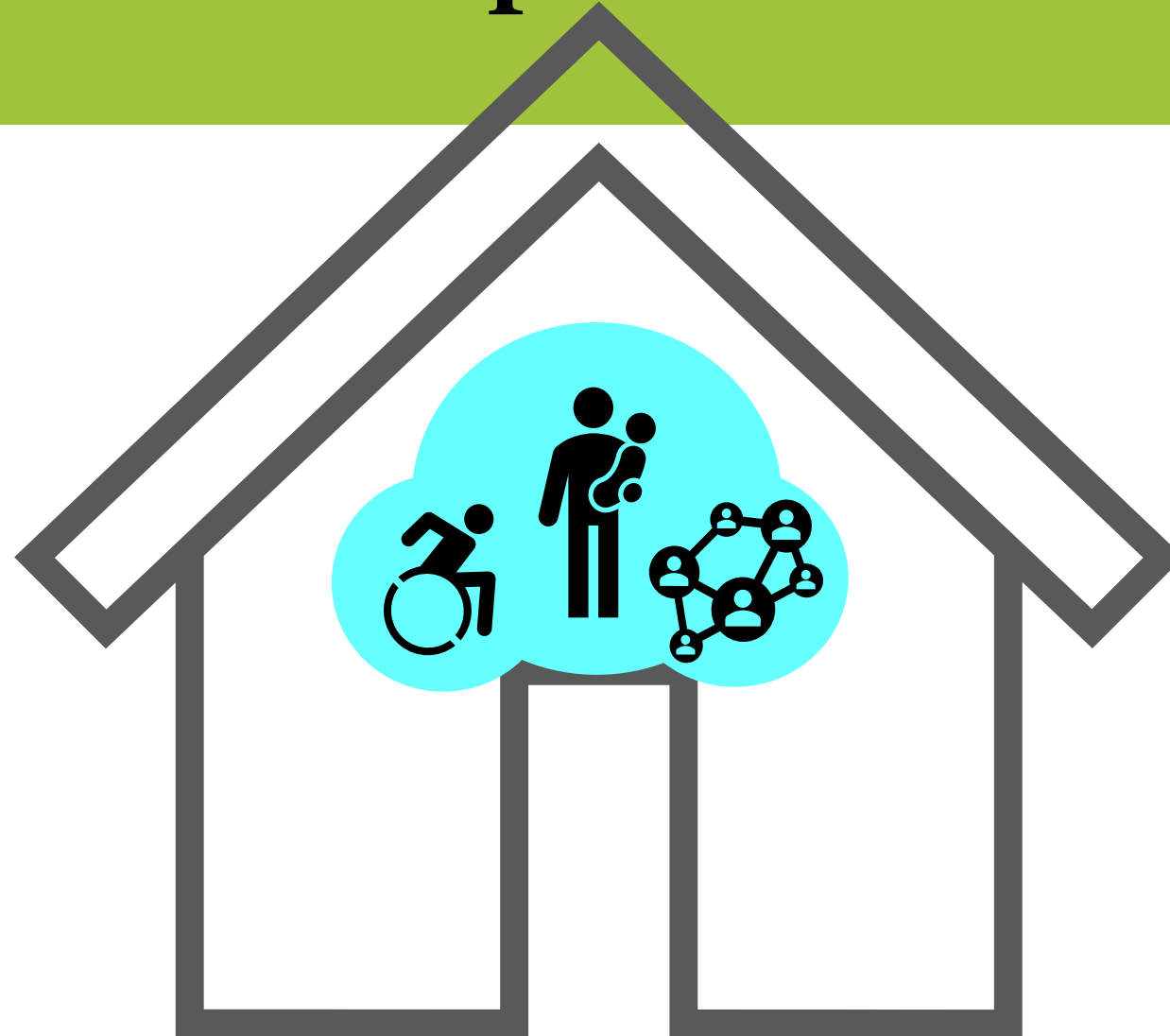
One staff member covers  
two jobs



# Expanded Roles or Responsibilities

Staff member has  
defined area of  
responsibility

Expand in a  
compatible way



# Redistributed Responsibilities

Staff member leaves.

Responsibilities given to other staff (or volunteers).



# Part-Timers: Additional Roles

Bivocational (another job or calling)

School

Parenting

Caretaking

Semi-retired

Contractors

How do you make things  
work well for these staff?



# Ministry is Shared

Staff supply core skills and knowledge, consistency.

Staff aren't supposed to "do it all."

How can staff be equippers and mobilizers?



# Nonstandard Staffing: Technical Pieces

Job description

Schedule

Payroll and benefits

Tech for remote work

Easy to describe

Distinct parts of the system

Solvable with known tools



# Nonstandard Staffing: Adaptive Pieces

Resetting expectations

Adjusting to less onsite time

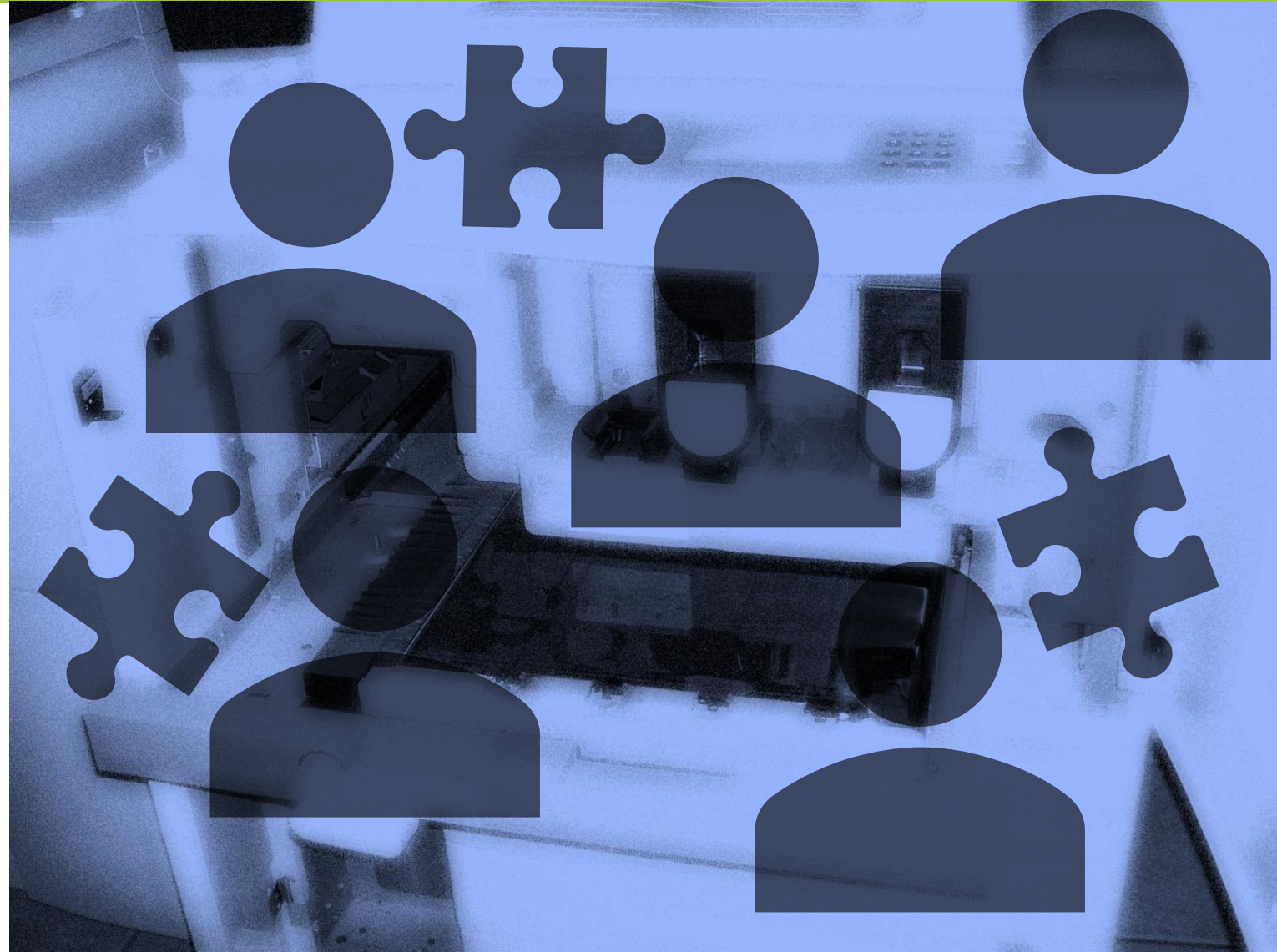
Supervision and teamwork

Deciding on tradeoffs

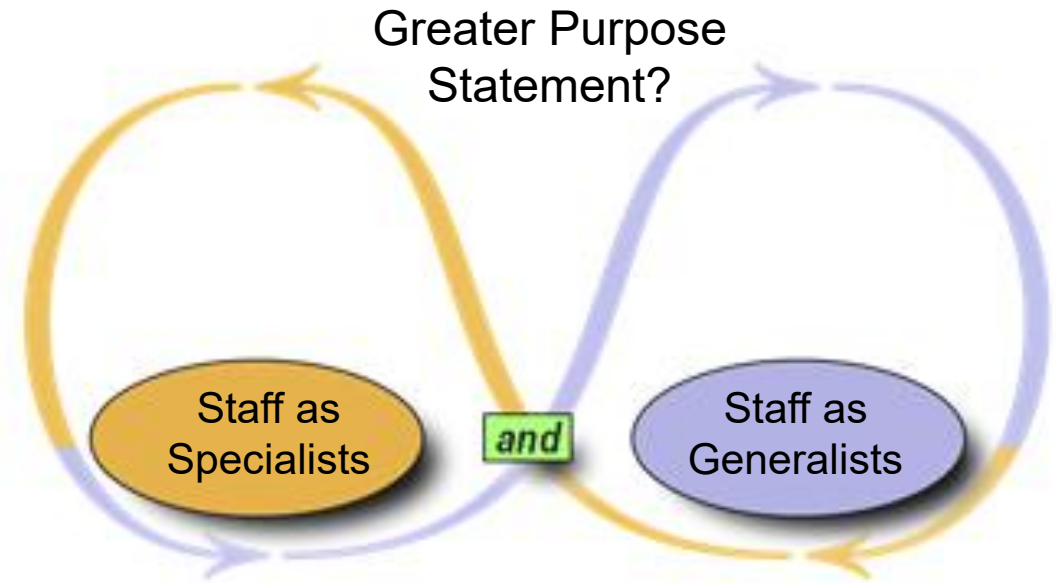
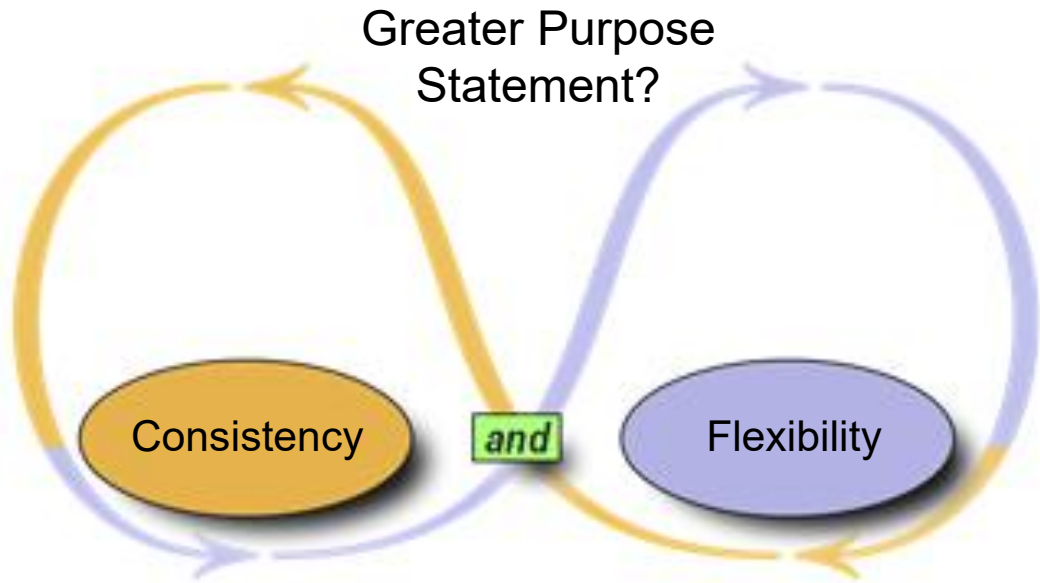
Harder to describe

About the whole system

Require learning and change



# Nonstandard Staffing: Polarities



# Sustainable Staffing Strategizers Cohort

## Session 4 References

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- [PTR \(Preferences, Traditions, Requirements\)](#) from The Management Center. I find it a useful way of getting clarity about what's important.
- From leadership consultant and prolific author Jim Collins (*Good to Great* and others): the [flywheel effect](#) and the [hedgehog concept](#)
- From Patrick Lencioni, leader in organizational health and founder of The Table Group: the [Working Genius](#) model. It's for looking at the working strengths and gaps across a team. Laurice mentioned that she's a "Galvanizing Enabler." Enabler here has a positive meaning. I'm a "Galvanizing Inventor."
- Cohort member Lydia is a [Stewardship for Us](#) consultant. From their website, "We help UU congregations and nonprofits grow and thrive through inspired stewardship."
- [Like It Was](#) (Stephen Sondheim, from Merrily We Roll Along), performed by Julie Andrews. [Lyrics here.](#)

# Sustainable Staffing Strategizers Cohort

## Session 5 Additional Reading

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- [The Power of Small Bets: How Low-Risk Moves Lead to Big Wins](#)
- [How to Make Budget Cuts in a Healthy Way](#) (from The Unstuck Group) – shared with caveats, still worth reading
- [8 Paradoxical Habits of Wildly Successful People - TalentSmartEQ - Emotional Intelligence Company](#)

# Nonstandard...or Normative?

Shared Staffing

Remote Staff

Blended Roles

Expanded Roles

Redistributed Responsibilities

Bivocational Staff

What else?

Staffing Possibilities?

What might be the new normative?



# Sustainable Staffing Strategizers Cohort

## Session 6

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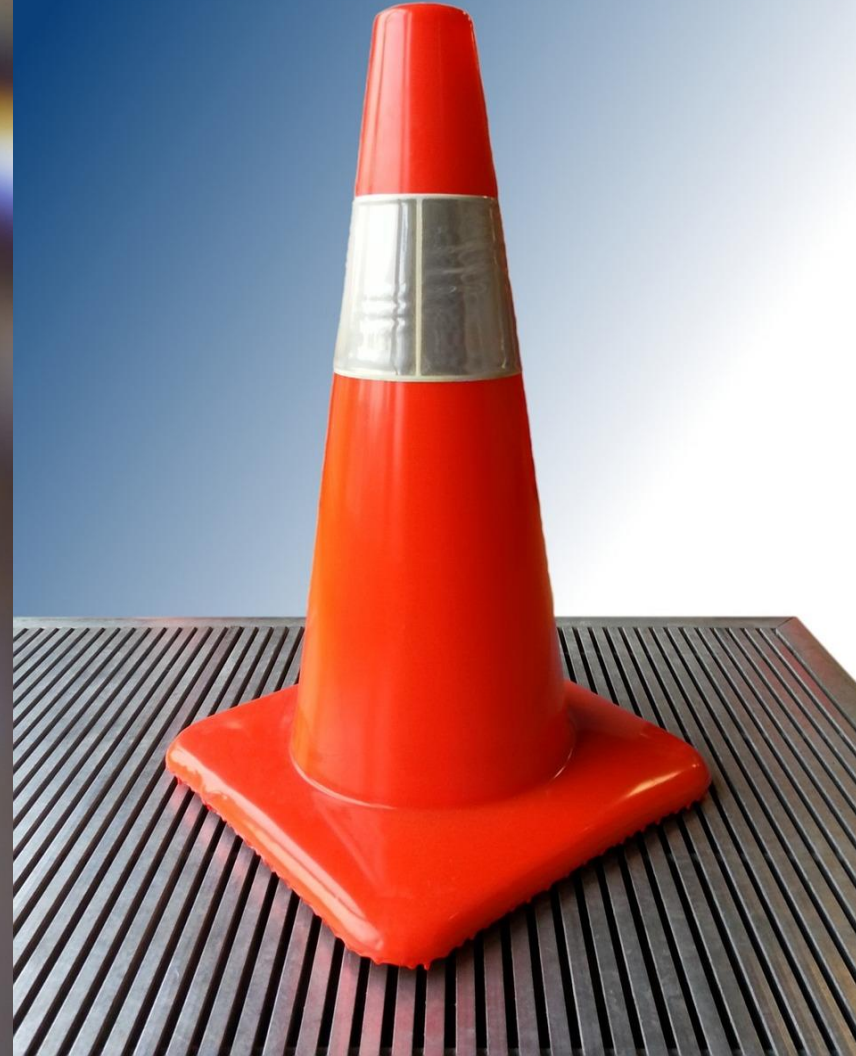
Obstacles and Openings  
with Jan Gartner

# Think about your commitments....

Ideas?



Obstacles?



Openings?



# Congregations as Employers

- Compensation, Benefit, and Payroll Resources
- Hiring Staff
- Staff Development and Support
- Structuring Your Staff Team

[Congregations as Employers main LeaderLab page](#)

## Congregations as Employers

< LEADERLAB

By [Congregational Life](#)

March 30, 2026

Congregations as Employers

- Compensation Resources
- Hiring Staff
- Staff Development
- Structuring Your Staff Team

**Faithful**  
to our shared values  
and to the law



Well-equipped staff provide consistent, skilled, accountable leadership, which in turn builds capacity and ownership among the laity. We provide guidance on supporting staff from recruiting through departure while helping you ensure legal compliance, as well.

Looking for details and enrollment information for UUA Insurance and Retirement Plans? Head over to our [UUA Benefit Plans and Services](#) page.

### Contents



#### [Compensation, Benefit, and Payroll Resources](#)

Whether you have one part-time person on payroll or a large team of specialized staff, you are an employer. Let us help you meet your legal and ethical commitments. (For details and enrollment information about UUA Retirement and Insurance Plans, see [UUA.org/benefitplans](#).)



#### [Hiring Staff](#)

Attract great staff and hire confidently with the assistance of these resources.



#### [Staff Development and Support](#)

A congregation's paid staff are leaders, modelers, and tone-setters. Well-equipped, spirit-filled staff provide consistent, skilled, accountable leadership, which in turn builds capacity and ownership among the laity and allows congregations to thrive.



#### [Structuring Your Staff Team](#)

This evolving collection of articles and resources can help you determine a staffing configuration that works for your congregation.

# Growing Administrative Capacity

(Wave cohort pages in LeaderLab)

## Groundwork (trowel)

Guiding principles (role clarity, risk assessment, etc.)

## Cultivation (watering can)

Strengthening administration within congregations

Staff Care & HR  
Finances

## Pollination (bee)

Strengthening administration across congregations

[Growing Administrative Capacity main LeaderLab page](#)

### Growing Administrative Capacity To Liberate Energy for Mission

< LEADERLAB

#### Administrative Capacity

- Groundwork for Administrative Capacity
- Cultivating Administrative Capacity
- Pollinating Administrative Capacity

By [Congregational Life](#)

April 21, 2026

#### Introduction

Administration isn't flashy. It's foundational! Handled well, capacity is liberated for the congregation's mission and ministries. May these pages be helpful to all who attend to administrative tasks themselves or who depend on that work – supervisors, staff, volunteers, and the entire membership.

These pages are the result of two *Growing Administrative Capacity Meet the Moment* wave cohorts and should be seen as be a work in progress.

We hope this is the beginning of an iterative exploration into how congregational administration can be managed more effectively and sustainably.

