

PARTNERSHIPS IN MINISTRY: MIKE HADDOX AND STEVE FRANKLIN

When the Rev. Steve Franklin '09 accepted a call to Meridian United Presbyterian Church not long after getting his M.Div., little did he know what a big job would develop there. The church had gone through a long period of decline. With eight other Presbyterian churches in a three-mile radius of Meridian UPC, it was no wonder that the Sunday morning worship crowd had dwindled to 70 or so—on a good day.

But 70 seemed a manageable group for a first-time, solo pastor. Never mind that by the end of his first year at Meridian Steve had preached 50 out of 52 Sundays. During that first year, Steve decided to take another momentous step: getting married. The heavy work load, however, was making him realize that his job as a pastor would leave too little time for a healthy family life.



Under Steve's leadership, MUPC started growing, and quickly. Today services are packed with 160 worshippers—more than double the congregation since Steve took the call three short years ago. He remembers, "With all that growth, the job became overwhelming for just one pastor."

Since starting at Meridan, Steve has added a children's Sunday School program and developed a new vision and strategic plan for MUPC. He has also started developing a youth group program. Piling on these new responsibilities, Steve knew he'd have to get help—and that's what he told his session. Steve needed to hire an associate who would handle not only the youth programs but also discipleship for all age groups at Meridian. Enter the Rev. Mike Haddox '12.

For the past year, Mike has served as director of family ministries and discipleship. He directs the MUPC youth group and Sunday School programs for all ages, preaches 10 times per year, and recently completed the church's first confirmation class in four years. This summer, he partnered with three other churches to sponsor Summer's Best Two Weeks at each church. Steve says, "Our respective areas of strength complement each other, and Mike's work here allows me to do more home visitation, serve the congregation better, and have a family life."

According to Mike, the pastoral partnership works because of Steve's willingness to share authority. "He's not threatened by releasing his staff to use their ministry gifts to the fullest. He sees staff members as not as his employees but as his partners," Mike continues. "In fact, he set partnership as the groundwork for this job even before he talked to me about taking it."

"Mike doesn't work for me," Steve insists. "He works with me. Mike is free to envision his own role at MUPC. We coordinate our visions, but we each have the freedom to use our strengths. Mike is great at relating, at connecting with people. He's always moving. I'm drawn to preaching and good at administration. While each of us can do all these things, as partners in ministry we can serve our congregation best."

Steve and Mike are "in it together"—for the kingdom of God, not for themselves personally. "There are so many roles expected of a pastor," says Steve. "You just have to have help."

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



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