

A breath of fresh dreaming

By [L. Gail Irwin](#)

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Recently, I was lucky to sit in on a meeting with a church's governing board, their interim pastor and a church consultant. The congregation had planned to seek a settled, full time pastor. But when they began their search process, they were forced to examine their dwindling financial resources. It appeared they were going to have to make some tough choices. They could either do some serious building repairs OR hire a full time pastor. Not both.

Well, you know the old saying:

*"When you have two choices, take the third."*

Instead of getting stuck between a rock and a hard place, they asked their Presbytery for help (this particular Presbytery offers 50/50 financial assistance to churches in discernment who work with a qualified consultant—what a great idea!!). They were wondering: *Should we search for a part time pastor? Should we seek another church to merge with? Is there another option to help us survive?*

The consultant helped them talk about their history of staffing, programming and membership changes. They were clearly proud of their ministry, their music program and their church's progressive theology. But their concerns were realistic. Attendance was down. Giving was down. They had experience working with part time pastors and were reticent about trying that again. These people were not desperate to keep the doors open. But they enjoyed their ministry and wanted to keep doing it.

After some conversation about their options and limits, it was pointed out that, whatever step they chose, they could do it for one of two reasons: they could choose a path that might help them survive for a longer time, or they could choose a path that might strengthen their mission and make carrying it out more fun. When they began to think about their choices in this way, a change came over the room. The mood lightened. They started talking about other churches they might partner with, and a non-profit organization that needed space.

They started to dream.

Can't you just feel the way that cool, spring breeze washes over your face when you allow yourself to dream? It feels so different than the winter of worrying!

That church has a long way to go; dreaming is only the first step. But it's probably the most important step.

Do you remember the last time your congregation dreamed together? What did you and God do to help make that happen? What are you dreaming of now?

[Here's a story](#) about three congregations that are beginning to feel the fresh breath of the Spirit since they started working together as one merged congregation.

*Originally posted at [From Death to Life](#)*