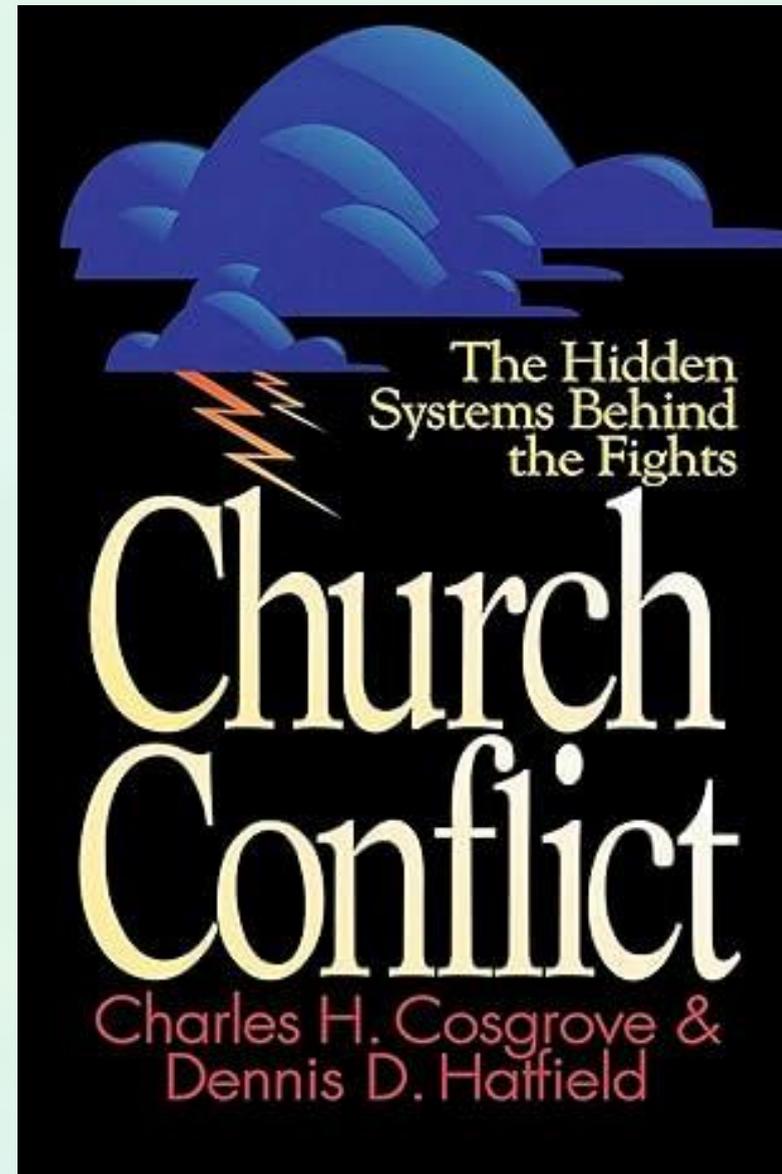
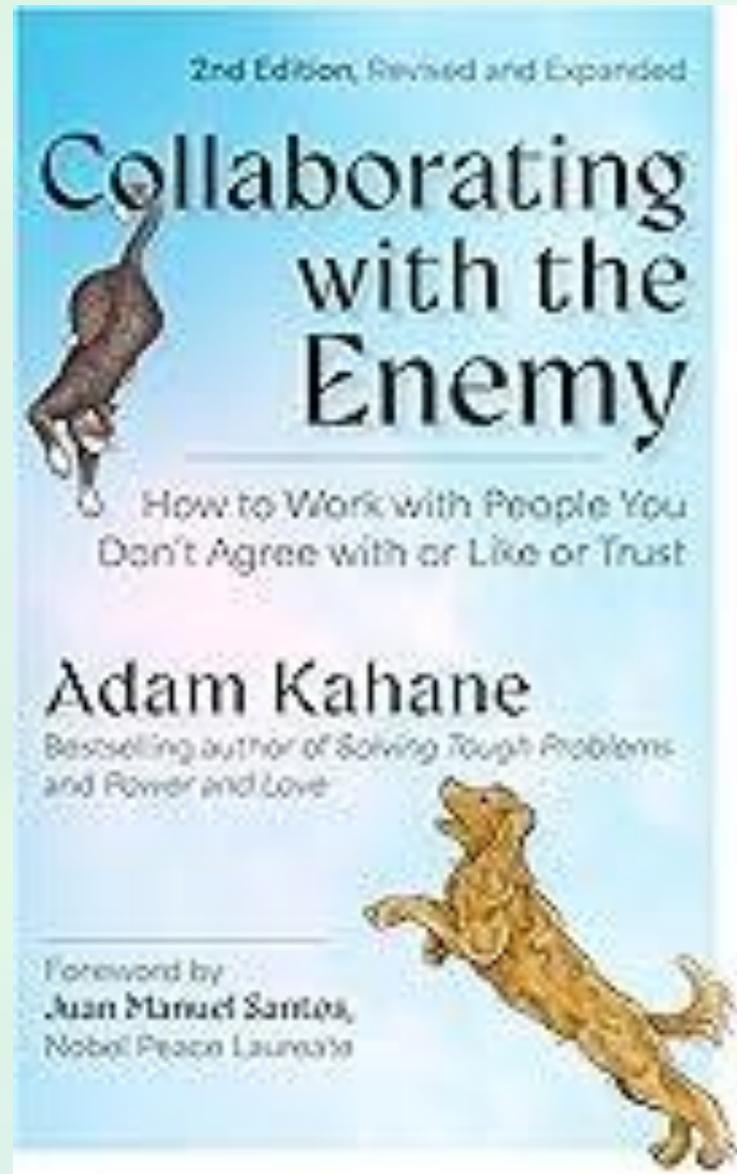


# Leading Together: The Power of Collaboration in Church Ministry

Exploring how collaborative leadership multiplies grace and strengthens the mission of the church.





# A Journey of Collaborative Leadership

01

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## Perspective of the Church

Ground collaboration in shared faith imagination

03

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## Faith-Filled Practices

Learn three transformative approaches to leading together

02

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## Understanding Challenges

Explore why collaboration matters and why it's difficult

04

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## Practical Insights

Discover how to apply collaboration in your ministry context



 CHAPTER 1

# From Streams to River

Individual leaders, perspectives, and ministries are **streams**. The church's mission is a **river**. Conflict often arises where streams meet.

Collaboration determines whether energy is blocked or multiplied, whether grace flows freely or becomes stagnant.

## Key Insight

Where streams meet, collaboration determines whether energy is blocked or multiplied—whether grace flows freely or becomes stagnant.

# Why Collaboration Matters

## **Complex Challenges**

Churches face adaptive challenges that require multiple perspectives and shared wisdom to navigate effectively.

## **Shared Power**

Leaders must work with people they don't fully agree with, trust, or necessarily like—creating anxiety and resistance.

## **No Longer Optional**

Collaboration is essential for church ministry today, though increasingly difficult to practice well.



# The Enemyfying Pattern

Leaders subtly begin to see others as obstacles, threats, or "the problem." This enemyfying narrows imagination and blocks the flow of grace.

Enemyfying shows up not in words, but in behaviors—avoidance, dismissal, and the quiet withdrawal of trust and goodwill.

# Four Leadership Responses to Conflict

When faced with conflict or difference, leaders tend to respond in one of four ways:

**1**

## **Force**

Push a solution through using authority or pressure

**2**

## **Adapt**

Live with what you dislike to maintain peace

**3**

## **Exit**

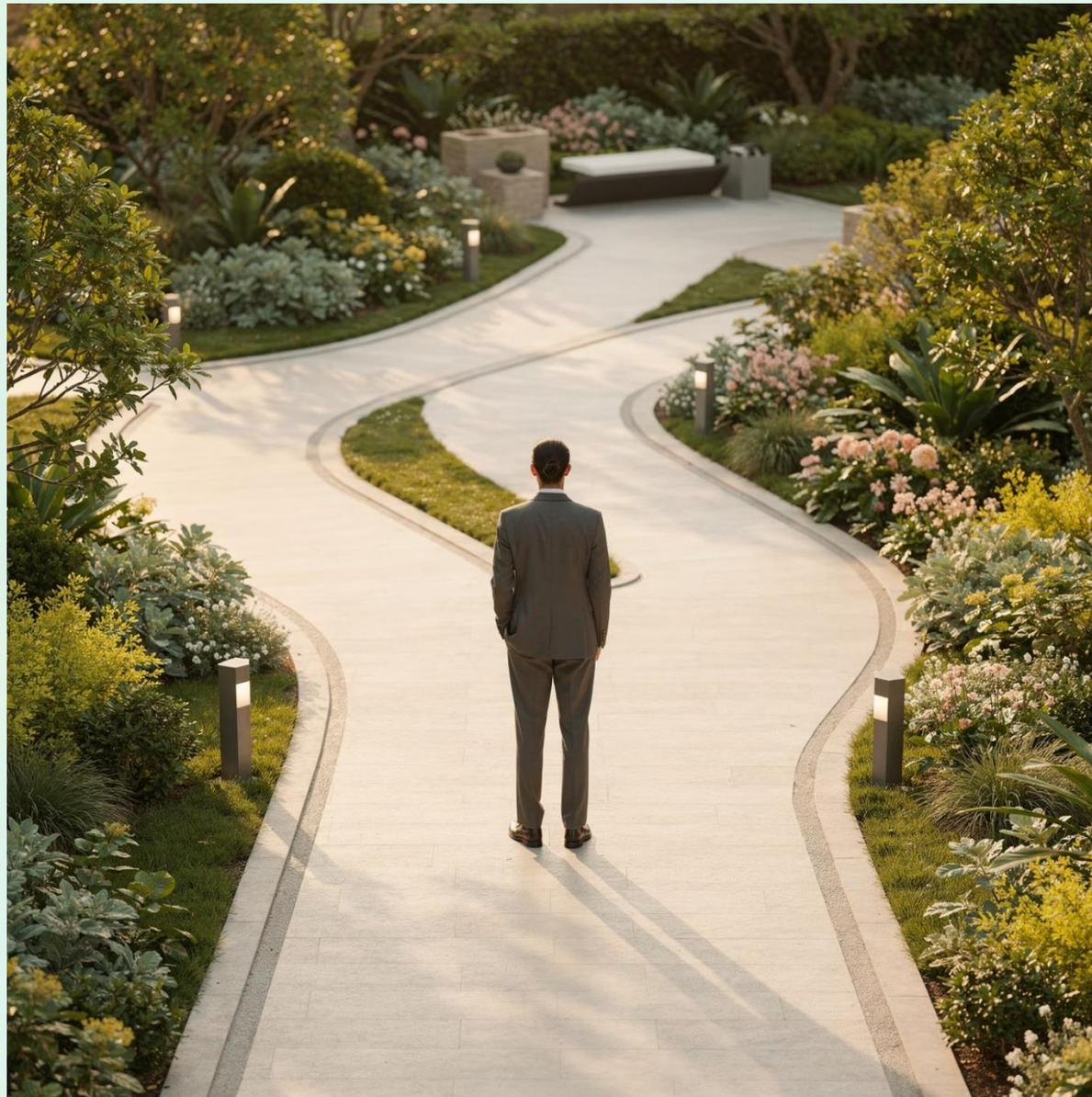
Disengage or withdraw from the situation

**4**

## **Collaborate**

Stay engaged together despite differences

# Collaboration Is a Choice



Collaboration is not a default response—it's a **deliberate choice** that becomes essential when:

- Power is shared or contested
- No one can "win"
- The future is unclear

## **Key Insight**

Choosing collaboration means staying present in uncertainty—without needing to control the outcome or force agreement.

# Introducing Stretch Collaboration

## Traditional Collaboration Assumes

- Agreement on the problem
- Agreement on the solution
- Agreement on the plan

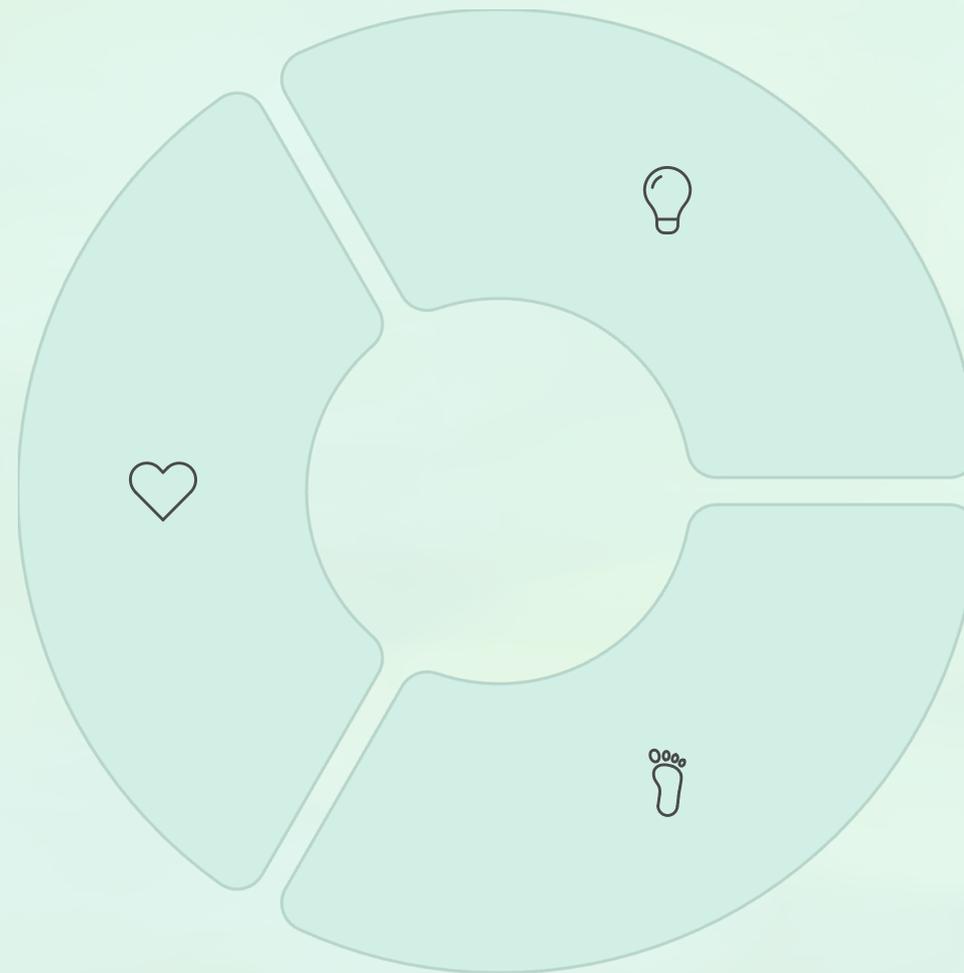
## Stretch Collaboration Abandons These Assumptions

Leading together without control, without certainty, and without forcing agreement, while remaining committed to shared movement and mission.

# Three Faith-Filled Practices

## Embracing Conflict and Connection

Balance power and love in leadership



## Experimenting a Way Forward

Move through faithful experimentation

## Stepping Into the Game

Take responsibility for your own formation

♡ PRACTICE 1

# Embracing Conflict and Connection

Healthy collaboration requires two complementary forces working together:



## Power

Asserting, naming differences, speaking truth boldly



## Love

Engaging, listening deeply, staying connected relationally

Churches often overemphasize one at the expense of the other, creating imbalance.

# The Tension Between Power and Love



When love flows without truth, it becomes mere accommodation—connection without transformation.

When truth flows without love, it becomes coercion—assertion without relationship.

Both are essential. Neither alone is sufficient for faithful collaboration.



# Engaging Without Correcting Correcting

01

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## Name Your Convictions

Effective collaboration begins with leaders who can clearly articulate their deeply held convictions.

02

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## Engage Without Correcting Correcting

Listening without immediately correcting creates space for genuine understanding and trust to develop.

03

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## Notice Power and Love

Healthy collaboration requires awareness of when power and love are in balance—and when they are not.

 PRACTICE 2

# Experimenting a Way Forward

Leaders cannot plan their way  
through complexity

Movement comes through  
faithful experimentation

Scripture and tradition show God working through unfolding processes



# Four Modes of Listening



## Downloading

Hearing what confirms what you already know



## Dialoguing

Listening with curiosity and openness



## Debating

Listening for what you disagree with



## Presencing

Listening for what might be emerging

# Listening for Possibility

The highest mode of listening—presencing—requires leaders to set aside their own agenda and attend to what is trying to emerge.

## 📄 Presencing in Practice

The most generative listening doesn't seek solutions—it attends to what might be emerging. Leaders who listen this way open space for the Spirit to move.



# Stepping Into the Game



## Self-Awareness

Collaboration fails when leaders try to change others without changing themselves



## Systemic Thinking

We are always part of the system we lead



## Personal Formation

Grace multiplies when leaders take responsibility for their own growth



# The Leader's Self-Examination Examination

Collaborative leaders honestly examine how their own behaviors contribute to tension—not just how others fall short.

Faithful collaboration begins with openness to God's invitation to lead differently, even when that means personal change.

# Integrating Collaboration Into Ministry

Moving from understanding to action requires intentional application in your specific context.

- **The most difficult practice is often the most needed—resistance reveals where growth is possible.**
- **Identifying where grace is blocked helps leaders focus their collaborative energy for for greatest impact.**

# Designing Faithful Experiments

Faithful collaboration moves forward through small, intentional experiments—not grand plans. Each experiment is an opportunity to learn, adjust, and trust God with the outcome.



## **Relational**

Focus on building connection and trust



## **Low-Risk**

Start small to learn and adjust



## **Time-Bound**

Set clear beginning and end points



## **Spirit-Led**

Ground in prayer and discernment

# Common Collaboration Challenges



# Signs of Healthy Collaboration

- Leaders remain present in tension rather than withdrawing
- Differences are named openly and explored with curiosity
- Experiments are tried, evaluated, and adjusted
- Leaders acknowledge their own contribution to challenges
- Grace flows more freely through the community

# The Multiplication Effect

When leaders choose collaboration over enemyfying, something powerful happens:

- Energy previously spent on conflict becomes available for mission
- Diverse perspectives create richer solutions
- Trust deepens across the community
- God's grace flows more freely



# Key Takeaways

## **Collaboration Is Essential**

Complex challenges require leading together without control or certainty

## **Experiment Faithfully**

Movement comes through trying, learning, and adjusting

## **Balance Power and Love**

Truth-telling and connection must work together

## **Change Yourself First**

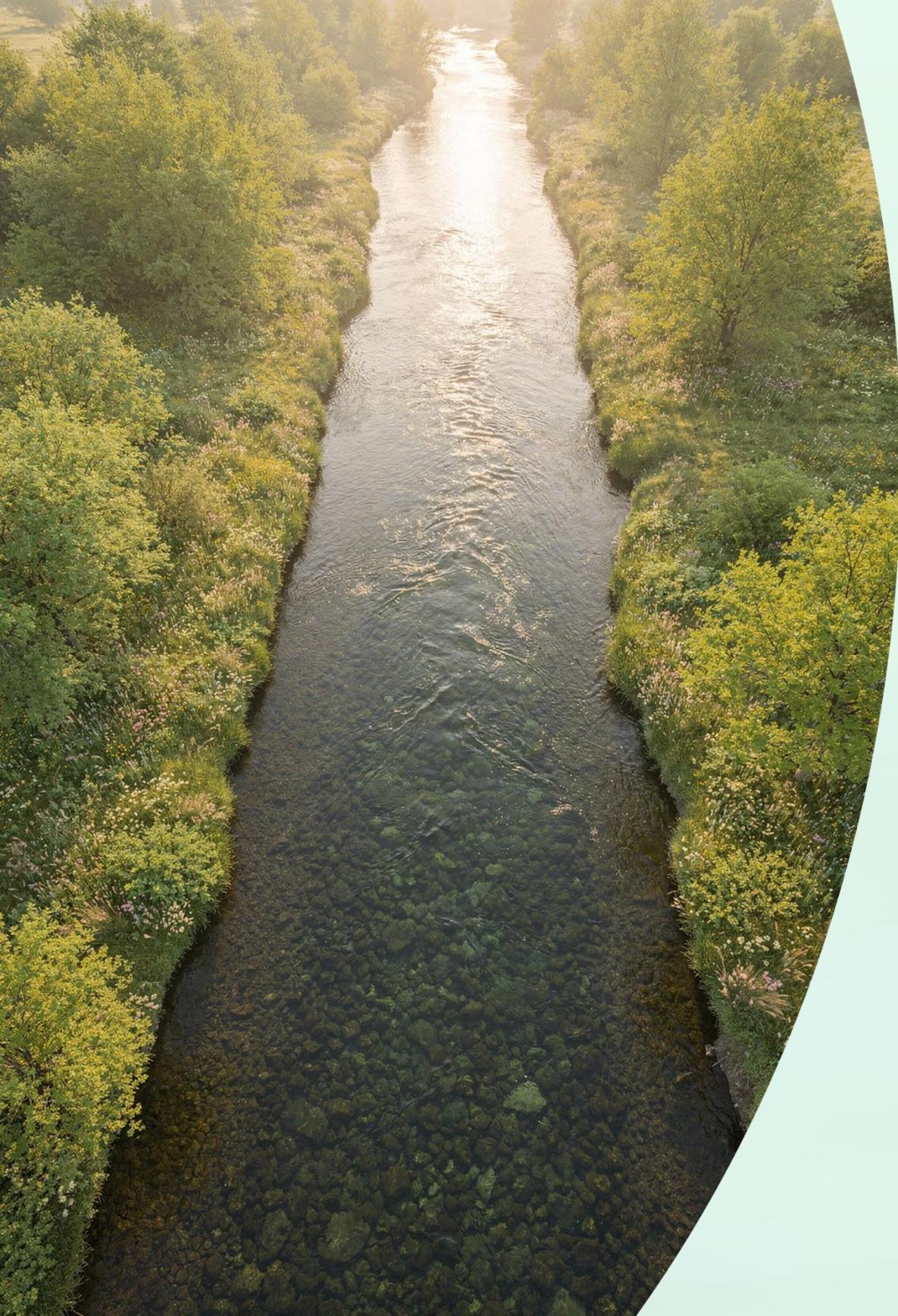
Take responsibility for your own formation and contribution



# Where Is God Calling You?

God calls leaders to remain present in conflict, to trust in uncertainty, and to allow themselves to be changed—so that grace can keep flowing.

Leading together requires staying connected in conflict, trusting God in uncertainty, and allowing ourselves to be changed.



# Thank you!

As streams join to form a mighty river, may your collaborative leadership strengthen the life of the church and multiply grace in your community.