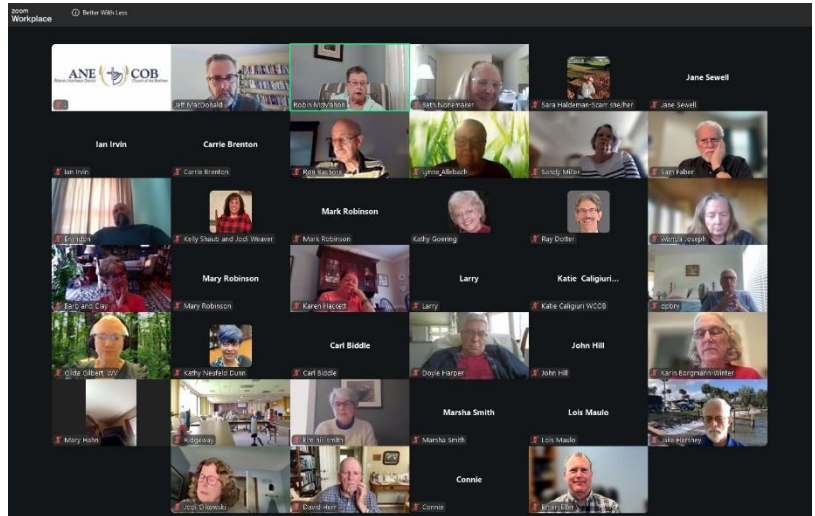


Better with Less Workshop Report

On Saturday, April 18, 2026, the Atlantic Northeast (ANE) District Ministry Commission hosted *Better with Less*, a three-hour online workshop designed to help congregations thrive without full-time clergy. Many thanks to Nancy Hess for her organizational role.

A total of 44 participants joined presenter G. Jeffrey MacDonald to explore how part-time ministry models can strengthen

congregational vitality, empower lay leadership, and reimagine ministry for today's realities.



Attendees represented five ANE congregations—Ambler COB, Hatfield COB, Living Faith (Wyomissing) COB, Ridgeway Community COB, and Wilmington COB—as well as congregations from six other Church of the Brethren districts: Atlantic Southeast, Michigan, Middle Pennsylvania, Northern Plains, Shenandoah, and Southern Pennsylvania. Additional participants joined from Mennonite Church USA and a faith community with Brethren heritage in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Below are some participant reflections:

Ambler COB included a report in their church newsletter: “The Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren provided an informative workshop on April 18 called Better with Less! This workshop provided a time for author G. Jeffrey MacDonald to reflect with us on his book, *Part-Time Is Plenty*. MacDonald shared his conviction that renewal of lay leadership in the church can energize congregations and take us back to our roots. While most congregations think a part-time pastor is a sign of a diminishing church, MacDonald reminds us that American churches' time of greatness was led by part-time pastors uncovering and developing the God-given talents of the laity! MacDonald invited us to consider several roles that part-time pastors could share that free them to follow their interests as well as empower laity to serve God in pastoral roles. We heard about pastors as ambassadors, pastors as equippers, and pastors as collaborators. Stay tuned to hear more on this topic.”

Kim Hill Smith from Common Spirit Fellowship in Northern Plains District shared, “The workshop was excellent!”

Hatfield COB's church secretary noted, “The three Hatfield participants found it helpful. Two were inspired to order MacDonald's book!”