

## Second Chair Group



Pictured (L to R): Jabulani McCalister, Nikita McCalister, Liz Kumin-Severance, James Kumin-Severance, Jaden McCalister, Alex Pickens, III, and Cheryl Swaker-Coneal. Not pictured: Joy Challenger, Naudia Pickens, and Dion Traylor.

James Kumin-Severance  
Liz Kumin-Severance  
Joy Challenger  
Nikita McCalister  
Jabulani McCalister

Alex Pickens III, facilitator  
Naudia Pickens  
Cheryl Swaker-Coneal  
Dion Traylor

Who are we? A diverse group of peers in ministry: new pastorates, interim pastorates, assistant pastors, associate ministers, supporting spouses. We are bi-vocational, or employed in ministry occupations. We are African and Euro American; we are young adult and middle aged. We are laypersons, and/or licensed to preach, and some of us are ordained clergy. We are Presbyterian and Baptist: American, Progressive and National! We live in Ann Arbor, Okemos, Detroit, and Eastpointe, MI. We are single and married. We are empty-nesters, parenting young children, and looking forward to the birth of our first child! We are mosaic. We are the body of Christ.

The purpose of the Second Chair Group is to strengthen ministers by bringing them into a shared space of encouragement. The Second Chair in church life is filled by an Assistant or Associate Minister, in various titles. The challenges, frustrations, and triumphs associated with the Second Chair are unique.

Some members remember lay service in the life of the church. Some members anticipate the day they will become senior pastors. The Second Chair is the space between the lay membership and a senior pastorate. Blossoming in the Second Chair is a unique calling requiring specific gifts and graces.

At our beginning, our facilitator identified persons within his network who would value participation: both giving and receiving. We entered into covenant.

Our first meeting was held April 3, 2009. After several initial meetings to assess the natural flow and structure of our group, we considered specific lead roles: case study presentation, monthly book discussion, meeting destinations, capturing the group experience, meeting structure. Each member took on a role.

Rev. Jabulani McCalister facilitated our case study presentations. He scheduled each member to present a case study highlighting a scenario in the Second Chair. The presenter distributed the case study for the rest of the group to read and consider, then discuss it without input from the presenter, who was present and could listen to the discussion but could not contribute. Rev. McCalister guided the discussion with leading questions, encouraging honesty, and keeping the group focused on the scenario. After the group at large concluded its analysis, the presenter was invited back into the discussion for clarifications, insight, and final comments.

Rev. James Kumin-Severance organized the book discussions. We have been reading "Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams," by Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson (J-B Leadership Network Series, Wiley, 2005). Rev. Kumin-Severance is the literary veteran of the group, having previously read the book in a prior second chair leadership role. Now, in an interim pastor role, he is re-reading and has recommended this book for our group discussions. He prepared questions and book highlights in advance of our meeting for our consideration during our personal reading. As the group met, Rev. Kumin-Severance facilitated the discussions and kept us focused on the critical points he gleaned in his two readings of the book. During this time, group members shared personal stories that correlated with the dynamics described by the authors.

Mrs. Elizabeth Kumin-Severance and Min. Dion Traylor jointly determined meeting destinations. They are challenged with identifying alternate meeting locations, as well as occasional fun destinations to encourage community and fellowship. We have met at the homes of Rev. Pickens, Min. Traylor, and Rev. and Mrs. Kumin-Severance.

Rev. Cheryl Swaker-Coneal captured the group experience, by taking brief notes at each group meeting, taking a group photo, and writing a synopsis of our time of sharing and fellowship.

Rev. Nikita McCalister organized our meeting time together. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, she determined which components would be included in our sessions. She established our agendas and held us accountable to managing our time purposefully.

While our meetings are ongoing all of us at various points in our fellowship have expressed appreciation for this environment. We glean encouragement and affirmation from the case studies, we are inspired by the readings from the book, and we are strengthened by the loving bond we are building together.

Looking ahead, many of the group members have expressed interest in forming their own Ministry Leadership Groups and continuing the model of peer accountability while leading from the Second Chair.

By Cheryl Swaker-Coneal