

Paragraph 213- Study Task Force Report
Faith United Methodist Church, Farmington, MN
(Version 3: Updated 3/10/15)

Introduction:

Rev. Clay Oglesbee, the District Superintendent of the River Valley District of the Minnesota Annual Conference, with the consent of the Minnesota Cabinet, all the District Superintendents, and Bishop Bruce Ough (Dakotas and Minnesota Episcopal Area), has directed that a study task force be formed to examine and assess the past, present and potential ministry of Faith United Methodist Church, Farmington, Minnesota. Broadly speaking, we are called to determine how best to address the many needs of the Farmington community. The question to answer is: how best can we be stewards of the United Methodist witness in this community? The following report is submitted in accordance with Paragraph 213 of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012*.

Study Task Force Members:

- Process Consultant: Rev. Jim Ozier—North Texas Annual Conference, Congregational Development Staff
- Clergy:
 - Co-Chair: Rev. Dennis Tamke, Faribault: 4th Avenue UMC, Chair of District Board of Church Location and Building, decades of experience in business management/administration
 - Pastor Beth Perez, Byron UMC, business background, administration/personnel manager with HR focus, IBM
 - Rev. Paul Marzahn – Lead Pastor, Crossroads: Lakeville, Inver Grove Heights—Salem, Elko-New Market (new start), Path 1 coach, Congregational Development adjunct staff
- Laity
 - Co-Chair: Diane Owen – Healthy Church Initiative Coach; member, Pine Island UMC, organizational development training and business experience
 - Lisa Schultze, Council Chairperson, Farmington: Faith UMC
 - Dee Parker – Chair or Trustees’ representative, member, Farmington: Faith UMC
 - Katherine Schill, member of Burnsville: Grace UMC, Non-Partisan Fiscal Analyst, Minnesota House of Representatives, MA in City and Regional Planning

The Function of the Local Church:

According to Paragraph 202 of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012*, “The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God’s creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.”

Background:

Faith UMC's roots can be traced back 160 years ago. Even in the 1970's Faith's membership was 600. Many United Methodist Churches were claiming high membership numbers. But like most churches, United Methodist included the decline of church membership and attendance had already begun with few taking notice until about the turn of the 21st century. The notable difference is the growth of Farmington's population. While the church began a decline in membership and worship attendance, the community of Farmington began a steady growth.

From 1981 until the present, a consistent theme was reflected in the evaluation of the District Superintendents providing oversight to the Faith UMC church. A resistance to change and community outreach along with conflict among the congregation were noted. To deal with these issues, Faith UMC engaged in numerous efforts to thwart the decline and embrace its missional purpose including a five-year, Conference-supported turnaround initiative, participation in Natural Church Development assessment process, Circle Process coaching, partial participation in Missional Journey, and various coaches and consultants – all fully funded or subsidized by the Annual Conference. Regretfully, none of these attempts were successful in achieving the turnaround necessary to start a new cycle of growth and missional purpose.

The capacity – financial and people resources – to change the course of Faith United Methodist Church is not evident. There is a general reluctance to change combined with a lack of energy and resources to do so despite numerous efforts attempted by the congregation and supported by the Annual Conference. District leadership prepared an assessment of the church's mission field (the surrounding community), current ministries, and historical trends. This assessment was the catalyst that prompted the Cabinet of the Annual Conference to initiate to the process of Paragraph 213 of the Book of Discipline. The recommendation for discontinuance preceded a formal review of the assessment and thus has created a challenging and unfortunate dynamic between the congregation and the Annual Conference, one that had already been strained in previous years as noted by the reports of past District Superintendents. The study task force team believes that the congregation would have been more receptive to the Cabinet's recommendation had they participated in the gathering of data for the assessment of the community and ministries.

There has been and continues to be rapid population growth taking place in these communities, and missional opportunities are abundant. There are reportedly close to 200,000 unchurched persons in the southern metro. Hosanna Church, a megachurch in the area, recently wrote in one of their own internal, multisite studies: "The need for life-giving churches in the cities (in the southern metro area – ed.) is significant....About 72% of the populace is not attending church anywhere." *MissionInsite* data shows the Farmington population nearly doubling between 2000 and 2024.

Summary Observation: *The Faith congregation has declined for decades at triple or more the district and Conference rates, while the Farmington population has quadrupled and continues to increase. There are more United Methodist households from the Farmington community worshipping in the two nearest United Methodist churches in other communities than are present at Faith UMC. The Faith UMC in Farmington currently reaches only about one-quarter of one percent (0.024%) of their Farmington neighbors for worship. In many ways, the Faith congregation has simply been unable to offer Christ in their community as their healthiest leaders and members wish to do.*

Disciplinary Tasks:

Assessment of Community: Evaluative Tasks:

1. Unique missional opportunities and needs of the community

The immediate neighborhood around Faith UMC: According to the [United States Census Bureau](#), the city has a total area of 14.94 square miles (38.69 km²), of which 14.69 square miles (38.05 km²) is land and 0.25 square miles (0.65 km²) is water.¹ Farmington borders the City of Lakeville to the west, Empire Township to the east, and the Townships of Castle Rock and Eureka to the south. County Road 31/Pilot Knob, County Road 50, Minnesota Highway [50](#), and Minnesota Highway [3](#) are four of the main routes in Farmington.

US Census of 2010: As of the census ^[2] of 2010, there were 21,086 people, 7,066 households, and 5,426 families residing in the city. The population density was 1,435.4 inhabitants per square mile (554.2/km²). There were 7,412 housing units at an average density of 504.6 per square mile (194.8/km²). The racial makeup of the city was 89.8% White, 2.1% African American, 0.5% Native American, 3.6% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 1.1% from other races, and 2.8% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 3.6% of the population.

There were 7,066 households of which 51.4% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 63.4% were married couples living together, 8.7% had a female householder with no husband present, 4.7% had a male householder with no wife present, and 23.2% were non-families. 17.7% of all households were made up of individuals and 4.7% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.95 and the average family size was 3.38.

The median age in the city was 31.6 years. 33.3% of residents were under the age of 18; 6.3% were between the ages of 18 and 24; 35.7% were from 25 to 44; 19% were from 45 to 64; and 5.6% were 65 years of age or older. The gender makeup of the city was 50.1% male and 49.9% female.

Income: The median household income in Farmington is \$82,246 (2013). The state median income is significantly lower. Poverty is 2.4%.

2. Growth potential of the surrounding community

US Census Demographics: Population doubled since 2000, and expected to continue growth; there is a 20% to 33% growth rate projected in these and nearby communities out to 2040

Demographics from MissionInsite: (see attached executive summary)

Moderate growth expected to 2024: 14% increase or 5000 more persons and 7% more households, 40% increase in populace to 2040;

Nearby growth areas: in Rosemount projecting 13%, in northern Eagan (many single adult households) projecting 4%, in western Burnsville projecting 10% increase in population.

University of Minnesota plans for housing developments in the UM or area have recently been withdrawn. This affects the speed of development in the area.

Mosaic Life-style Types in 55024 (see three top Mosaic descriptions)

B08 Flourishing Families - Babies and Bliss 3,195

F22 Promising Families - Fast Track Couples 1,712

C14 Booming with Confidence - Boomers and Boomerangs 1,132

D17 Suburban Style - Cul de Sac Diversity 657

O51 Singles and Starters - Digital Dependents 639

F23 Promising Families - Families Matter Most 562

H28 Middle-class Melting Pot - Everyday Moderates 562

E21 Thriving Boomers - Unspoiled Splendor 437

O55 Singles and Starters - Family Troopers 376

D15 Suburban Style - Sports Utility Families 246

Hosanna Church Study on Multisite in Farmington:

Migratory patterns, population growth and development are to the northern part of Farmington; “we feel it would be a challenge to start a campus in the available spaces in southern Farmington” (where Faith UMC is located—ed)—Hosanna Study

3. Distance from and collaboration with other United Methodist Churches in the area, as well as other nonprofit agencies offering services in the community

- i. Three United Methodist Church churches within 5 to 8 miles of the Faith UMC have offered ministry cooperation to support the congregation and the neighborhood. Members from neighboring United Methodist churches are committed to providing resources (human and financial) to social services in the area.
- ii. Nearby alternative UMCs include: Crossroads: Lakeville (just over five miles), Rosemount (eight miles), Castle Rock (eight miles), Burnsville, Northfield and Eagan UMCs (13-15 miles). Farmington residents and former members of Faith UMC attend these and other nearby UM churches.
- iii. Government-regulated social services, benevolent services offered by churches and 501(c) 3 agencies are more approachable, but resources are often limited.
 - Food: CAC Faith United Food Shelf (ecumenical)
 - Housing
 - Medical Care and Other
 - Service Statistics
 - Transportation
 - Legal
 - Low-Cost Childcare

4. Number and size of churches of other denominations in the community and (if possible) the ministries offered by those congregations

- i. Number of churches: There are eleven or twelve identifiable churches in the immediate community, i.e. within a three-mile drive of the Faith UMC site. Several congregations are within a few blocks. Most are appropriate to the various members of the Faith congregation. About half of the churches are “new starts”. None of the new starts has more than 100 worshippers; most are at an estimated 30--75.
- ii. Combined Worship Outreach: The total estimated worship attendance in these churches, based on Sunday, January 4 survey (number of cars in parking lot x2--2.5 x number of principal services) is an 1100--1500 persons on a notably cold winter Sunday. The population of Farmington is 21,100. Therefore, these churches are collectively reaching an estimated roughly 15% to 17% of the populace during any given year, allowing for fair weather at other times of the year.
- iii. Size of Churches—in order of worship participants:
 1. St. Michael’s Catholic Church, estimated 400-500+ in worship
 2. Christian Life Assembly of God, est. 200-300 in worship
 3. Farmington Lutheran (ELCA), est. 200—300
 4. Light of the World Lutheran Church (ELCA), Reconciling and gay female pastor, new start in public schools, 2008, 100+
 5. Trinity Lutheran (Missouri Synod), est. 100+
 6. Bible Baptist (1976), est. 100
 7. Baptist Real Tree, new start, storefront, est. 60-75
 8. Faith UMC, est. 50-60 (78 prior to announced change in 2014)
 9. New Heights Christian Fellowship (Wesleyan), new start, storefront, est. 20-30
 10. Hope Lutheran (ELS. WELS) , new start, est. 20-30
 11. Episcopal Church of the Advent, est. 15-20
 12. Middle Creek Vineyard, new start, storefront, est. 12-15

Programing available to service the community in the following areas:

- St. Michael’s Catholic Church: battered women’s Christmas boxes, sharing and caring hands,
- Christian Life Assembly of God: Christian school
- Farmington Lutheran (ELCA): schools, coats, food shelf, international missions, etc.
- Light of the World Lutheran Church (ELCA), Reconciling with gay female pastor, new start in public schools, 2008, not noted on website, relational outreach
- Trinity Lutheran (Missouri Synod): Nothing of note on website
- Bible Baptist (1976): Food shelf
- Baptist Real Tree, new start, storefront: Nothing on website
- Faith UMC: school supplies and food, root beer stand
- New Heights Christian Fellowship (Wesleyan), new start, storefront: Low key community outreach
- Hope Lutheran (ELS, WELS) , new start: Nothing noted.
- Episcopal Church of the Advent: community garden, mittens

- Middle Creek Vineyard (Vineyard), new start, storefront: Nothing noted.

Assessment of Church's Current Ministries: Evaluative Tasks

1. Present ministries of the congregation

- a. Evangelistic/Relational/Missional outreach/community outreach: Limited to aid to schoolchildren, Root Beer Stand (fundraiser)
- b. Discipling Ministries: Limited at present
- c. Adult Religious Education: Limited at present
- d. Children or Teen Ministries: Dramatically diminished in the last five years
- e. Fellowship: Wednesday meals (60, almost entirely members)
- f. Music: Traditional organ and choir
- g. Community activities hosted: Root Beer Stand fundraiser, food or supplies for school children, contributions to food shelf

2. Number of leaders and style of leadership

- a. As of July 2014, served by a half-time interim pastor
 - i. Served by a full-time pastor previous years
- b. Leaders include: Eight to ten leaders, mostly long-tenured members
- c. Limited experience of leadership training in the church
- d. Leadership is deeply committed to their congregation's fellowship and ministries
 - i. Leadership has recently proposed exploratory conversations regarding an absorption or adoption merger. The Bishop and Cabinet have agreed to this, as have clergy leaders and Council chair of the potential merger partner.

3. Fiscal and facilities needs/health

- a. Currently use and need only a small portion of the facility's square footage; one entire wing and a second story are essentially no longer needed and not heated beyond requirements to protect the facilities.
- b. The majority of the square footage actually being utilized is a sanctuary and fellowship area that is significantly larger than needed for the current faith community. The sanctuary would seat roughly 300; in 2013, attendance had fallen to 78; today it is about 55. Historically, about 75% of our churches which fall beneath 75 in worship do not rise above that number again as annual worship attendance.
- c. The congregation is considering rental of the church to a new start Assembly of God congregation on a month to month basis this winter and spring.
- d. Finances:
 - i. No debt
 - ii. Meeting operating expenses with a half-time pastor
 - iii. Apportionments have been paid on an irregular basis for decades, averaging 60%. This congregation is among the bottom 5% of congregations in the Conference on apportionment support.
 - iv. Reserves of about \$250,000 (Mainstay Fund and others, largely from sale of a parsonage)
 - v. They have been using the proceeds to cover budget shortfalls from time to time for many years

1. Per the direction of the District Superintendent, in accordance with the *Discipline*, these funds may not currently be used to fund the operating budget
4. **“Other items that may impact the church’s ability to fulfill the mission of the Church” (Paragraph 213)**
- a. The church property is in an aging location of Farmington, where little redevelopment investment is occurring
 - b. Facilities have not been remodeled in decades (except a kitchen) and are not well suited to appeal to many in the community
 - c. The church’s reputation in the community is a mixed consideration; some believe the church is known and respected; others report it has a reputation for quarrelsomeness and conflict
 - d. There exists the opportunity for the property to have another life in service to the surrounding community if another buyer is found
 - e. Other UM churches in the area, are open to welcoming the individual members of Faith UMC through transfer of membership. The possibility exists either of joining one of the two existing worship services, or joining the new worship site. Additionally, the members joining other United Methodist churches could participate in existing Sunday School classes.
5. **Statistical trends, including new members, baptisms, professions of faith, and small group participation**
- a. Membership
 - i. 194 names were read at the 2013 charge conference
 - ii. After the 2014 charge conference, membership will be approximately 156, of whom several are in nursing homes or are homebound
 - b. Worship attendance
 - i. 55-60 currently, some 10-15 are reported to be former members of a Presbyterian church which recently closed in the community
 - c. Evangelism and Outreach
 - i. In 2012 and 2013, 1 person joined, by transfer of membership from another UMC
 1. Baptisms: One or two baptisms planned.
 2. Confirmation classes during that time: Nothing current due to uncertainty of church’s future
 - ii. No intentional programs to reach new members

Assessment and Recommendations:

It is the assessment of this task force that Faith United Methodist Church, Farmington, MN, has reached the point where it can no longer function as an autonomous local church while effectively reaching its mission field.

An Adoption Merger with another United Methodist Church can meet the spiritual needs of the congregation and reach the mission field without the expense of remaining an autonomous congregation.

The task force therefore recommends all of the following:

1. Faith United Methodist Church in Farmington, MN joins with the appropriate United Methodist Church in an Adoption Merger.

2. A Church/Charge Conference of Faith United Methodist Church is held prior to May 1, 2015 where the congregation votes in the affirmative to pursue an Adoption Merger with the appropriate United Methodist Church. If the congregation votes against the recommendation, a response must be prepared and submitted to the Annual Conference by May 1, 2015.

3. After a period of discernment and the identification of the appropriate United Methodist Church, both congregations agree to the Adoption Merger by completing a letter of intent, signed by both churches and submitted to the Annual Conference before July 1, 2015.

Should Faith United Methodist Church and an appropriate United Methodist Church be unable to finalize the letter of intent for an Adoption Merger by July 1, 2015 then Faith UMC shall consider the church voluntarily discontinued as of that date (July 1, 2015).

4. If a signed letter of intent is obtained by July 1, 2015, it is recommended that the current interim pastor be reappointed for 12 months to provide spiritual leadership in celebrating the legacy of Faith United Methodist Church as the congregation prepares to merge with the adopting United Methodist church. It is also recommended the Minnesota Annual Conference provide a coach to guide both churches in the process of the Adoption Merger.

5. Upon signing the letter of intent, the joining churches agree to develop and finalize the Adoption Merger Plan before October 31, 2015. If the Adoption Merger Plan is not completed by October 31, 2015, Faith United Methodist Church shall consider itself voluntarily discontinued as of that date (October 31, 2015).

Submitted, March, 2015:

Rev. Dennis Tamke, Co-Chair

Diane Owen, Co-Chair

Pastor Beth Perez

Rev. Paul Marzahn

Lisa Schultze

Dee Parker

Katherine Schill

Rev. Jim Ozier, Process Consultant

Minutes, 2/23-24/2015

At our initial gathering on February 23, 2015, Rev. Jim Ozier opened the meeting in prayer. He then detailed the scope of our task force's work, as well as the background history of Faith UMC that had brought us to this task. The members of the Task Force were introduced.

The task force spent the majority of the time reviewing the assessment of the community and church ministries. Finances were discussed during the first part of the day as Kathy Schill, expert in this area, had to leave at noon. The task force team adjourned at 3 pm charged to reflect on a recommendation that was under the discussion.

At the second gathering of our task force on February 24th, the group discussed the recommendation that was presented the previous day. Kathy Schill was unable to attend. A motion was made by Rev. Paul Marzahn and seconded by Rev. Dennis Tamke. All in the group voted in favor. The recommendation is noted in the body of the report.

Rev. Tamke and Diane Owen, co-chairs, were charged with the writing of the draft report to be review via email by the study task force. The report must be finalized with the approval of the study task force by April 1, 2015.

Rev. Paul Marzahn closed the meeting in prayer.