

# First English Lutheran Church

## North Site Task Force Final Report

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November 21, 2009

### ABSTRACT

After reviewing our history, researching other multiple site churches, and examining the information shared in the cottage meetings and survey responses, the North Site Task Force recommends that First English Lutheran Church should remain one congregation worshiping at multiple sites, the two sites of FELC should continue to share one vision, and one council should continue to oversee both locations, utilizing a single budget and annual meetings rotating between sites.

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## The Charge of the North Site Task Force

Following a special meeting of the congregation where there was a general request by the congregation to better understand the purpose of the North Site of First English Lutheran Church (FELC), the Congregational Council asked that a task force be convened and charged them with the following tasks:

- 1 Examine all available documents relating to the development of the North Site and summarize what those documents say about the initial mission and vision of the North Site, then examine the self-study documents and summarize what those documents say about the role of the North Site in the life and work of FELC. When these summaries are complete, compare and contrast them and produce a report of your findings to share with the Council.
- 2 Work with the Associate with the Bishop to determine how current members of FELC and other stakeholders in the community (i.e. residents of north Appleton, the ELCA, etc.) view the role of the North Site.
- 3 Develop a set of recommendations for the Council regarding
  - a the appropriate role of the North Site in the life and work of FELC
  - b steps toward shaping and promoting that role.

## Examining the History of the North Site

### *The Initial Report to the Council*

The first section of this report represents the initial report to the Congregational Council, which was presented on May 26, 2009. It covers step one of the charge. Jeff Picken and Pastor Bauer met with the Associate with the Bishop, Joy Mortensen-Wiebe on Tuesday, March 31 to get some guidance about how to proceed. The task force met on March 31 and then again on April 21. At the first meeting the group reviewed the significant events in the history of the North Site and brainstormed ways that input might be gathered from the congregation. An emphasis was placed on discernment rather than decision-making. At the April 21 meeting the group stepped back to ask, "What is the question we are addressing as a task force?"

### *The question*

1. What is the vision for the North Site?
2. How can we best realize that vision?

We then went over documentation of the initial mission and vision of the North Site.

### *Documentation Assessed*

- An 18 page representation of the temple talk given in 1997 to apprise the congregation of the North Site opportunity and the details surrounding the generous gift of Al Mulder. The final page of this was made available at the council meeting at which this initial report was presented.
- Invitation to and minutes from a special meeting of the congregation on Monday, December 15, 1997 where the agenda included 1) accepting the invitation of our synod to establish a worshipping presence on Appleton's Northeast side, 2) receiving the gifts of Al Mulder that have been designated for this purpose, and, 3) authorizing the establishment of a pastoral call committee for the purpose of recommending a person to be called as a third pastor of First English.
- A Facilities master plan temple talk given on February 6, 2000

- Council recommendations for a special congregational meeting on March 6, 2000 which included the following:
  - Resolution #1** - The Church Council of First English Lutheran Church recommends that we affirm our current approach of one congregation/multiple sites for the foreseeable future, aware of the fact that the congregation may change this approach at any time in the future.
  - Resolution #2** -The Church Council further recommends that the congregation give its approval to the general concepts as presented at the Annual Meeting regarding the Facilities Master Plan for First English Lutheran Church. The plan was to specifically address the building of a new worship facility in northeast Appleton and renovation and expansion of the current Drew St. site.
  - Resolution #5** - The Church Council recommends approval from the congregation for design completion and for the purpose of letting bids for the construction, including furnishings of the church building on the North Site property. Project costs for this North Site Building are not to exceed the amount available by way of the Mulder gift and/or any additional gifts designated for the north side site without further congregational authorization at a specially called meeting of the congregation.
- A 2000 Annual Meeting report of the North Site building committee.
- The 2001 Congregational President's annual report
- The Interim period objectives reported to the council in February of 2004
- The 2005 Self Study Report.
- Email and phone responses by members whose names appear in these documents as being involved in the initial mission of the North Site and who were willing to respond about how they remembered the mission.

### **Considerations**

While it is relatively easy to supply the documented results, there was not a consensus among the respondents to the email asking people to remember the initial vision and mission of the North Site. This report represents the position of those questioned.

### **Initial Vision & Mission of the North Site of FELC**

- Contemporary Worship and Worship space
  - Capture growth on north side of Appleton
  - Reach seekers and those not from Lutheran background
  - Multiple points of entry: gym, fire pit, YMCA involvement, round table discussions
  - Variety reflects abundance; multiple styles of worship, music and preaching preserve our Lutheran heritage while expressing it in diverse, inclusive, appropriate and engaging ways
- Facilities should be complementary to what is available downtown. (Not duplication)
  - Relieve space constraints downtown with a gym for large activities & parking space
  - Worship space and instruments
    - Piano and instrumentalists, North; organ and choir room, Downtown only
    - Moveable chairs, alter, etc., North; fixed pews and traditional space, Downtown
    - Ability to open space for concerts, plays, musical, etc.
  - Education areas
    - Master plan for North site includes a third wing for future growth beyond the LL
    - Intergenerational emphasis
    - Multimedia Focus
  - Fellowship / gathering spaces
    - Gym & catering kitchen, North; fellowship hall and full kitchen, Downtown
- Rotating pastoral presence

- This is the most conspicuous point of disagreement between the various documents. The degree of pastoral presence and direct supervision of each site seems to be the most ambiguous element between those documents.
- Disagreement seems centered around the perception that the rotation hindered growth.
- Global Focus
  - Encourage connections outside the United States
  - Use multiple forms of media to enhance those connections
  - Include social outreach
  - Make a global presence evident in worship

### ***2005 Self-Study Reflection of North Site***

- Rotating pastoral presence
  - This question carried over from the initial discussions in the early years. The change was made while Pastor Dave Lyle was here. Dave had oversight over much of the activity at the North Site and also was the staff liaison to the Worship and Music Ministry Sub Team for the North Site.
  - He typically preached 3 of 4 Sundays at the North Site and rotated to the Downtown Site on the other Sunday.
- Staffing North Site Office
  - The survey that was conducted as part of the study was split on this issue with 47% voting to staff the North Site, while 53% had no opinion or said no. The study recommended staffing with both clergy and non-clergy.
    - Dave spent parts of some of his workdays in the office at the North Site.
    - Jenell Barth began overseeing the North Site building soon after the study.
- Ministry Teams
  - The 2005 study suggested the WMMT split into two separate committees, not subgroups, as they were set up at the time.
  - The Council rejected the idea and kept them as subcommittees of the whole.
  - Per the study, a third 'arm' of the WMMT was to be created to oversee worship volunteering at both the DS and NS. Jean Monson has overseen all volunteer coordination for worship and non-worship needs.
  - The Life and Growth MT (now Congregational Life MT and Congregational Growth MT) was to provide a special focus on growth at the North Site.
    - Findings by the Self Study group, and reported by the Life and Growth MT felt hesitant to state they were fulfilling their responsibilities in this area.
- Office and Education Space
  - Completion of the office space and education space at the North Site was recommended to further grow programming.
  - Shortfalls in financial support in 2003 and 2004, and a large debt load prohibited this.
  - The two needs were to be rolled into a capital campaign, which occurred in 2007/8.

### ***Comparing and Contrasting***

- The only areas focused on in the 2005 Self-Study that were also in the initial vision for the North Site were the concept of a pastoral presence at the North Site, rotation of pastors on Sundays, and the need for growth.
  - From 2001 to 2005 there was no midweek pastoral presence at the North Site. A pastoral presence has been maintained at the North Site for the most part since the 2005 study.
  - Rotating of pastors was changed to have Pastor Lyle as the main pastor following the 2005 study, with Pastor Dimer rotating once per month and Pastor Detweiler splitting his time between the two sites once the two of them arrived.
  - The rotation was stopped a couple years later, as the pastors struggled to become familiar with families worshiping at both sites.

- Due to current staffing with the resignation of Pastor Detweiler, Pastor Bauer is now the primary pastor at the North Site and Pastor Dismer the primary pastor Downtown. They rotate once per month.
- The Congregational Growth Ministry Team was given a focus on growth for the North Site coming out of the 2005 study.

## **Studying How the North Site is Viewed by Members and Community**

Various paths of research were conducted to better understand how the North Site of FELC is viewed or could be leveraged by the community. While those findings are not directly included in this report, they are strongly reflected in the recommendations set forth by the Task Force.

### ***View of the Associate to the Bishop and the ELCA***

The Associate to the Bishop was involved from the start and at various points throughout these efforts. The general feedback of the Associate to the Bishop is that the East Central Synod of Wisconsin is available to assist either single- or multi-site congregations grow and reach out to God's family. The Associate was very helpful in assisting the Task Force in discerning plans of action.

### ***Cottage Meetings and Questionnaires***

During the month of June the Task Force conducted eight cottage meetings split between the North Site and Drew Street Site. The meetings were scheduled around regular church services throughout the week and across the month to encourage the largest number of attendees. Thirty-six members took advantage of the meetings to share their thoughts.

Along with the cottage meetings, an on-line version of the same questionnaire was made available on SurveyMonkeys.com with a link from the church web site, comment boxes with questionnaires were placed in the Gathering Areas at both sites, and an email address was published to gather input from anyone not able to attend the cottage meetings. All of these channels were published in weekly announcements throughout the month of June and in the June newsletter. Eleven members shared their thoughts via the on-line survey, eighteen people submitted comments and questionnaires through the comment boxes, and two others leveraged the email address to communicate with the Task Force.

High-level summary findings from the many avenues were shared with the congregation at a special meeting of the congregation called for September 14, 2009, partially for this purpose.

### ***Civic Groups***

To gain an understanding of how the local community views the North Site of FELC, the Task Force contacted approximately twenty-five area civic groups that were felt may have an interest in the North Site facilities and congregation in furthering their work. A letter was sent from the Task Force to these groups introducing FELC and the North Site and encouraging feedback on how the groups might find benefits in partnering with First English to leverage the facilities for meetings and events and how members of First English might assist with the missions of these groups.

About a third of the groups responded, with several expressing an immediate desire to use classroom or meeting space on a regular basis. Though the Task Force was looking for more long-term feedback, these groups were put in touch with Jenell Barth at the North Site to coordinate details for their short-term needs.

### ***Other Multi-Site Congregations***

To understand how other multi-site congregations were set up and working, research and interviewing of other sites was conducted. The Task Force interviewed local multi-site congregations, as well as multi-site congregations elsewhere in the upper Midwest. In particular, pastors at Christ the King of Combined Locks/

Sherwood and Hope Lutheran in Fargo, North Dakota were interviewed. Hope Lutheran was a very early adopter of the multi-site congregation and has been successfully leveraging two sites for nearly twenty years. Web sites from these and other multi-site congregations were researched for context and pertinent information. Articles on Lutheran and non-Lutheran multi-site congregations were read to further supplement this research.

## Developing Recommendations for the North Site

After reviewing our history, researching other multiple site churches, and examining the information shared in the cottage meetings and survey responses, the North Site Task Force would like to make the following recommendations.

### ***North Site Task Force Recommendations***

- First English Lutheran Church (FELC) should remain one congregation worshipping at multiple sites.
- The two sites of FELC should continue to share one vision.
- One council should continue to oversee both locations, utilizing a single budget and annual meetings rotating between sites.
- Ministry teams should strive to have representatives from both sites. Where appropriate, ministry teams may want to evaluate whether they would benefit from having site-specific subgroups.
- The North Site should be staffed with both clergy and non-clergy with both sites having a posted schedule of availability. (Does not necessarily mean 5 days/week)
- Administratively, FELC should have a “go to pastor” for each site.
- Pastors should continue to rotate between sites for worship services.
- Current activities that celebrate “one congregation” should continue and additional opportunities to come together as one in Christian fellowship should always be sought out.
- Each FELC service should differ from the others (style of worship & music) to offer varying choices to worshippers. The North Site should continue to provide a more casual, informal, contemporary, child-friendly atmosphere.
- FELC’s two sites are unique. FELC needs to be deliberate in better utilizing the assets of each site – both for worship and non-worship activities. This includes communicating that all facilities are available to everyone (e.g. downtown worshippers may still utilize the gym).
- Active participation by the congregation outside of worship should be encouraged to more fully utilize its assets.
- Learning opportunities, such as Sunday school and Bible studies, should be offered at both sites.
- To grow through multiple points of entry, the church should expand its outreach to the community by offering community groups the use of the North Site facilities (gym, classrooms, theater, outdoor gathering space), in addition to the downtown facilities, as well as having FELC sponsored community events.
- Because many FELC North Site worshippers are couples with young children, the church should allow and encourage their participation (e.g. having a reliably staffed nursery and tables available in the sanctuary at the North Site).
- The North Site should expand the use of technology to enhance the worship experience.
- The global vision of FELC should be emphasized at the North Site (e.g. international service projects, community service projects, video worship with overseas locations, multi-media usage to enhance global connections, social outreach).

FELC staff and members should use the following guidelines in implementing the above recommendations of the task force:

- FELC should focus on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God's kingdom, and the Bible, gathering to praise and thank God.
- FELC should have a warm, welcoming atmosphere providing a sense of community.
- FELC should have strong music, youth, and learning programs.

### ***Suggestions for Ministry Teams***

These suggestions are based on information gathered from the Cottage Meetings and the broader recommendations for the future of FELC, related to the specific purpose and vision for the North Site. We ask that you strongly consider implementing these suggestions, so that FELC can put the North Site resources to better use.

#### **Outreach and Social Ministries:**

- Outreach opportunities at the North Site, specifically hosting events and programs that can take advantage of the unique facilities (outdoor amphitheater and spacious lawn, gym, full kitchen, flexible sanctuary space, large outdoor fire pit, etc).
- Use of the North Site by community groups.
- Outreach options for the North Site that will draw both non-Lutherans and non-Christians to FELC.
- Programming at the North Site that highlights our global emphasis.

#### **Youth and Family Ministries:**

- Events and programs at the North Site that minister to the large (and growing) number of young children and their families (specifically under age 11).
- Confirmation program at each site, especially in the coming years as the large number of young children at the North Site reach confirmation age.
- Balanced number of youth events and activities through the year, at each site.

#### **Congregational Growth Ministry:**

- Non-worship events that take advantage of the unique facilities and features of the North Site (entry points), in order to draw non-Lutherans and non-Christians to FELC.
- Each new member is contacted within the first month, in order to have better engagement and involvement of new members in the growing community of FELC.

#### **Congregational Life Ministry:**

- Events and programs at the North Site that minister specifically to couples and young families.
- Building up of the small group ministry to bring unity to the large congregation of FELC, so that members feel better connected.
- Mid-week activities at the North Site (ex. play group, small group meetings, etc).
- Fellowship events that take advantage of unique facilities of North Site (gym, outdoor amphitheater, fire pit, etc).

#### **Learning Ministry:**

- Mid-week learning opportunities at the North Site to take advantage of the space available (ex. scheduled talks/workshops, bible studies, etc).
- Confirmation program at each site, especially in the coming years as the large number of young children at the North Site reach confirmation age.
- Sub-group to handle planning/ implementation of Confirmation program.

**Support Ministry:**

- Clear communication about the facility usage policy for the North Site, so that FELC members feel empowered to take advantage of the facilities available and create new ministry opportunities. This includes building security (ex. access to the building, including who gets keys and entry codes, and the office contact for scheduling).
- Staffing, and specifically pastoral presence, at the North Site during the week (not necessarily 5 days a week). Have posted schedule at each site.
- Allocation of specific resources (volunteers, staff, budget, etc.) to allow for mid-week programming (both day and evening).

**Worship Ministry:**

- Occasional off-site worship services in which all FELC members would be invited and encouraged to attend, strengthening the sense of “one church”.
- Options/formats for one of the services (or an additional service) at the North Site to draw non-Lutherans and non-Christians to FELC, while keeping a focus on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Lutheran message of God’s Grace.
- Clear communication and understanding of the chain of authority for music director(s) in musical choices and for the direction of music at the North Site.

**Nominating Committee:**

- Council ballots should have representation from both sites.

**Promoting Changes for the North Site**

The following communication plan shall be implemented to distribute the findings of the Task Force and to encourage and promote the recommendations, as approved by the Council.

1. Present this report to the Council at the regular November Council meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, November 24, 6:30pm.
2. Present a summary of this report to the Ministry Teams at the December Ministry Team large group meeting scheduled for Tuesday, December 1, 6:30pm.
3. Discuss the Suggestions for Ministry Teams section of the report with Ministry Teams at their respective December 1 meetings.
4. Publish a very high level article in the January issue of the newsletter directing people to copies of the report at each location and on the church web site.
5. Post the report on the church website in mid-December.
6. Make copies of the report available in the Gathering Area at each site in mid-December.
7. Deliver temple talks at each service at each site the first week of January to coincide with the publication of the newsletter.
8. Include report in 2009 Annual Report to be distributed in early 2010.

**North Site Task Force Members**

Respectfully Submitted:

Jeff Picken – Co-Chair

Pastor Mary Bauer – Co-Chair

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