

United in Faith

The Journey Continues: Years 16 - 20
2013 - 2018

TRANSITION



United in Faith Lutheran Church

A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America · Metropolitan Chicago Synod
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So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!
2 Corinthians 5:17

The period of years 16 through 20 was one of transition. Our pastor of 12 years left for another call at the end of our 15th year. Those 12 years were part of our formative years and the pastor's leadership was a key component in implementing the reasons the congregation came into being with the consolidation. United in Faith entered into an **Intentional Transition** period as it prepared to call a new pastor. A Transition Team was appointed to take the congregation through the following steps:

- > Coming to terms with our history
- > Discovering a new identity
- > Enabling needed leadership change
- > Renewing denominational linkages
- > Committing to a new direction in ministry

This transition period allowed the congregation to consider new structures and new worship traditions.

A **Call Committee** was formed in 2014 and a call was given and accepted in 2015.

STAFFING

Pastor Greg Moser served our congregation from November 2000 until resigning in February 2013 to accept another call. Pastor Lester White was then hired as our Intentional Interim Pastor. With his departure in 2014 the Reverend Dr. Eric Bodestab stepped in as Interim Pastor, serving until 2015 when Pastor Carla Thompson Powell accepted a call.

With great sadness the congregation learned of the death of Pastor Greg on Christmas day 2016. He will always be remembered for his work in the formation of United in Faith and his leadership in our faith journeys. In honor of Pastor Greg,

donations were made to ELIM for the creation of military kits.

In fall 2017 the congregation was assigned 3 Ministry in Context students from the seminary for a 1 year term: Elizabeth Koerner, Ruby Lee, and Aaron Silco; providing new ideas and energy within our community.

Worship music direction for our traditional service was led by an organist who also served as choir director. The Praise service was led by a band consisting of volunteer and paid musicians and song directors.

The Administrative Assistant position was turned over three times.

THE CONGREGATION

Official membership statistics indicate that the number of confirmed and baptized members at the end of 2017 was 165 and 175 respectively (losses of 21% and 28% over 5 years). As a congregation that stresses discipleship over membership, several in the congregation are not included in the official counts.

Purpose and Guiding Principles

Throughout this transitional period, our Purpose and Guiding Principles remained the same and continued to direct our ministries.

Our Purpose

We are to be God's hands, feet and voice in the world.

Our Guiding Principles

Jesus is Lord and Savior
Reflect God's love
Pray and Listen for God's guidance
Continue to strengthen faith
Include all in God's work
Meet people where they are

STRUCTURED FOR OUR PURPOSE

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| <p>Governance and Committees Church Council Executive Committee</p> <p>Audit Call (<i>inactive</i>) Education Endowment and Scholarship Finance Intern (<i>inactive</i>) Mission in Context Lay (<i>new</i>) Mission Endowment Fund Mutual Ministry Nominating Property Management</p> <p>(Communication - moved to Ministries as various Public Relations ministries) Computer Administrators Future Building Use (<i>inactive</i>) Landscape (Renewal Team - moved to Ministries as Church Health Team) Thrivent Coordinators (Website - moved to Ministries)</p> |
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To supplement the overseeing of the operation of the congregation, several policies were adopted by the **council** including those regarding animals, firearms, and purchasing supplies.

Constitutional amendments were approved in 2018.

Ministries were reorganized into 3 **Areas of Commitment**, each with 2 **Areas of Focus**. Each Area of Focus has a Ministry Coordinator while each ministry maintains a Ministry Director. New ministries were added while some committees and ministries were dropped or split into multiple ministries.

Shepherd's Staff was added to assist with administrative operations and includes staying in touch with members, guests and visitors.

Volunteer Coordination deals with the assignment of volunteers to the many positions available.

Service Projects are those that do not fall within a specific ministry, but are rather congregation-wide.

The Ministries of United in Faith

Christian Formation

Christian Education

Confirmation (*inactive*)
Sunday School
Vacation Bible School
Youth (*inactive*)

Spiritual Growth

Bible Study
Faith Development (*inactive*)
Prayer
Men in Mission (*inactive*)
WELCA (*inactive*)
Worship & Music

Outreach

Public Relations

Marketing (*new*)
Social Media (*new*)
Website

Community

Gay & Straight Together
Justice (*reactivated*)
(Outside Groups)*
(St Cyprian's Food Pantry)*
Service Projects (*new*)

InReach

Member Care

Volunteer Coordination (*new*)
Communion Visitation
Shepherds Staff (*new*)
Stewardship

Congregational Care

Altar Guild
Church Health Team

* outside organizations hosted and supported by United in Faith

Funding

The Education Endowment and Scholarship Fund continued to provide annual scholarships and tuition to students. Luther High School North closed in 2017.

The Family Crisis Fund, administered by the Pastor and Executive Committee, is supported by the congregation and provides funds to meet critical financial needs.

Special appeals were made for the new HVAC system in the West building. Committees and ministries held various fundraising events. Almost all of the cost was covered through donations and fundraisers as we recognized the importance of the West building for neighborhood group activities.

The new organ was also almost completely paid for by donations.

Cash income continued to be less than cash expenditures with investment income and occasional bequests offsetting the cash deficits. The Pastor position was decreased from full time to 3/4 time to assist in addressing the deficit as we go forward.

AmazonSmile was promoted as a way to provide additional funding. An auction of donated items was held in 2016 as another way to raise funds.

A grant from the Synod Fund for Mission was applied for and received (\$2500). It is used for marketing purposes - outside banners, invitation cards, flyers, local newspaper advertising for holiday services.

Communication

A professionally produced pictorial directory was distributed in 2014. An internally produced pictorial directory was distributed in 2017 and updated early in 2018.

Congregational forums continued to be held on the fifth Sundays of a month, sponsored by council, to open the lines of communication and update the congregation on current and upcoming activities.

An educational event was held to introduce people to the usage of Facebook, Twitter and our website.

Facebook, our website and neighborhood social media (e.g. Nextdoor) were used to establish a presence and publicize events. People were also encouraged to use Twitter for these purposes, even live Tweeting during services.

Outdoor banners (2' x 6') were utilized more intentionally to publicize events that could be of interest to the community. An easily changeable banner stand/holder was installed in the front of the building and a set of grommets to hang a banner was installed on the brick wall by the back parking lot.

Property

Major projects included: a new HVAC system in the West building (2017), a new roof on the East building (2013), a new organ (2016), LED lighting fixtures (2017), renovation of the Sunday School room (2017).

The folding chairs in Fellowship Hall were replaced by an anonymous donor (2017).

'Stained glass' panels were installed on the glass above the folding doors separating the sanctuary from fellowship hall (2016).

Worship and Music

Our worship schedule remained the same. During the year, this included a Traditional service and a Praise and Worship service each Sunday morning except when there was a fifth Sunday in a month. Then one service was held followed by the congregational forum. During the summer months, one service was held. The one service Sundays used a blended format combining elements from both the Traditional and Praise services.

Sunday school was held during the year except during the summer months.

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The music and liturgy continued to be highly regarded - varied, spirit-filled, and celebratory. The choir sings occasionally at the traditional service. Our Praise band, The Voice of the Turtle, continues to lead music at the Praise and Worship service. The bell choir performs occasionally.

Multi-week themed preaching series were used periodically on Sundays and during Lent and Advent to explore topics in depth. God Sightings returned for Lent 2016. An Advent Blessing bucket was utilized in 2015. Pentecost 2017 brought a fire dancer and various languages to the service. The Reformation 500 service featured a variety of special music from many different global Lutheran traditions.

Metropolitan Chicago Synod Bishop Wayne Miller preached at our 20th anniversary celebration service on Easter, April 2018.

Average Sunday worship attendance in 2017 was 63, down 62% from 5 years ago.

LIVING OUR PURPOSE

Continuing Traditions

Some of our traditions, created over our 20 years continued, while some fell away as needs and passions changed and new events were held to supplement traditions.

- * Blessing of the Animals in October
- * Seasonal, holiday and special event Fellowship and Outreach dinners and pot lucks
- * Annual Spring Cleaning
- * Men's Monthly breakfast meetings
- * Easter and Mother's Day breakfasts
- * Stewardship Temple Talks
- * Confirmation retreats
- * Fall Rally Day for the congregation, neighbors, and friends with worship, food, music, games, service events and fellowship
- * Explore Belonging classes for people interested in learning more about United in Faith
- * Thanksgiving Eve worship services and pie sharing
- * Cookie Baking and Walk in December

- * Collection of Back to School Supplies for St. Cyprian's Food Pantry
- * Special St. Cyprian's Food Pantry collections of food and funds for Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas as well as quarterly Brown Bag Sundays
- * Donations for the children of St. Cyprian's Food Pantry of Christmas gifts and Easter baskets
- * New chrismos for the Christmas tree
- * Hosting the LOMC Swing Choir
- * Devotions written by members published in the monthly newsletter
- * Children burying an 'Alleluia' banner for Lent
- * Children assisting in collecting the offering at services
- * Recognizing birthdays and anniversaries the first Sunday of each month

Serving

Outreach events by the Gay and Straight Together ministry included marching in the Gay Pride parade, promoting marriage equality, workshops on bullying, self esteem and being transgender, and celebrating Reconciling in Christ Sundays.

Justice ministry hosted: a Fair Trade product sale; an offering of letters regarding Illinois state budget issues and Bread for the World; a 'Food for a Week' simulation event about food insecurity; an opportunity to decorate cards for Phil's Friends (cancer patients); a study of the draft ELCA document Faith, Sexism and Justice followed by a viewing of *Miss Representation*, a documentary exploring how mainstream media and culture contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power and influence in America.

As we approached our 20th anniversary we also celebrated the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation by the nailing of the 95 theses on the church door by Martin Luther. To mark this occasion a door representing the Wittenburg Castle Church door was installed in the fellowship hall. Members of our community were asked to perform **500 Acts of Kindness** and to post them on the door.

In celebration and thanksgiving for our 20th anniversary, our vision is to offer 20 service

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projects to the community, turning our celebration outward, as our gift and a new way of engaging in the community, enabling us to be good stewards of the money and energy God has given us over the years. **Twenty For Twenty** is to bless local organizations and to be a visible sign of God's grace to those around us. These activities take place over the year from fall 2017 to fall 2018, to bridge from our 20th year into our 21st year. A final anniversary celebration in fall 2018 will highlight these projects as well as the organizations and people we have partnered with. Events have included: a blood drive, a Reformation 500 book fair with book donations to a senior care facility, a Veterans Salute, supporting a housing center fundraiser. An indoor winter farmers market is scheduled for February 2018.

Other ministries continued their dedicated work:

- * Sunday Church School
- * Weekly Bible/book studies including online Bible studies
- * Vacation Bible School and an incorporated service project (with participation growing each year)
- * Monthly communion visitation to those unable to attend church
- * Intercessory prayers as requested, a monthly community prayer session and maintenance of the prayer weaving where prayers petitions are posted in the sanctuary
- * The Family Crisis Fund collection and disbursement
- * Building and landscape maintenance and upkeep including computer infrastructure
- * *The Lutheran* magazine subscriptions to all families
- * Daily devotional booklets available to all
- * Preparation of the altar for each service and maintenance of the paraments, vestments, and linens; seasonal decorations
- * Gift Assessment seminars
- * Greeters for Sunday worship services and 'coffee and' supplied for Sunday morning fellowship, plus special desserts for celebrations
- * Preparation of youth for confirmation
- * Raising up stewardship topics
- * Operation Christmas Child - shoe boxes for children

- * Installing a Little Free Library box on site (constructed by Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts)
- * Volunteering at the Chicago Greater Food Depository and at Feed My Starving Children
- * Various craft projects (e.g. quilts, fidget pillows) donated to those in need

United in Faith continued to host these organizations:

- Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts
- Girl Scouts and Brownies
- Golden Diners (*closed in 2017*)
- Golden Rebels (*started in 2018*)
- St. Cyprian's Food Pantry
- New Life for Old Bags (*8th anniversary February 2018*)
- Senior Club (*now meets at Bakers Square*)
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Al Anon
- Survivors of Incest Anonymous

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Since the start of **Renewal** efforts in 2008, the Renewal team (now the Church Health Team) used the Natural Church Development methodology. Included were periodic assessments of our ministry to identify our strongest and weakest areas with subsequent activities to address deficiencies, and Gifts Assessment seminars. Starting in 2018 the team switched over to REVEAL methodology which measures and addresses the spiritual growth of our church. Every member was invited to take a survey to know if we are growing in our relationship with Christ and our love of God and others. The survey results serve as a baseline for a journey of spiritual transformation as we enter our 21st year as United in Faith. Periodic Gift Assessments seminars will continue to be held as needed.

In the summer of 2017 the council began a process of **mission planning** around three circles of endeavors - Proclamation, Service and Justice. The first step was an inventory of the important work United in Faith is doing. We expect the work with the REVEAL tool will impact mission

planning of what we hope for in these 3 circles and what is necessary to support our hopes.

With the completion of the **Twenty for Twenty** projects in fall 2018 we will conclude our anniversary celebration looking back on the blessings we provided and the community partnerships formed. An addendum to this document will be issued at that time.

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrod, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

LBW Evening Prayer

United in Faith openly **welcomes** and values every person who walks through our doors, regardless of race, nationality and ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, marital status, social and economic situation, ability, cultural reality and need. Further, United in Faith supports efforts to share with all: God's gifts of love, acceptance and grace; invites all people, uniquely created by God, to experience the word of God, communion and promise of the risen Christ; and, encourages all people to participate fully in the ministries of this congregation, which are based on its core values.