

Paragraph 213- Task Force Report on Discontinuation Key Memorial UMC 9/23/2014

Introduction:

Rev. Dr. Marvin Guier, the District Superintendent of the Northwest District of the North Texas Conference, with the support and encouragement of Bishop McKee and the cabinet, has directed this task force to assess the potential of Key Memorial United Methodist Church. Broadly speaking, we are called to determine how best to address the many needs of the East Sherman 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 Paragraphs 213 and 2549.2 of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012*.

Task Force Members:

- Clergy:
 - Rev. Chris Dowd, Chair – Senior Pastor, First UMC Sherman
 - Rev. Jim Welch – Former Pastor, Key Memorial UMC
 - Rev. Roy Spore – Senior Pastor, Waples UMC Denison
 - Rev. Cassie Wade – Associate Pastor, First UMC Sherman
- Laity
 - Mary Lois O’Neal – Lay Leader, Key Memorial UMC
 - Alberto Lupercio – Trustees Chair, Key Memorial UMC
 - Tom Busby – Lay Leader, Northwest District; member, Grace UMC Sherman
 - Dorothy McKee – Grand Central Station; member, First UMC Sherman

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:

Founded in 1880, Key Memorial United Methodist Church has a rich heritage and important history in Sherman. Located just east of downtown, the congregation was well located for ministry in the community growth decades of the 1940’s, 1950’s, and 1960’s, at one point numbering over 1,000 members. By 1970, membership had dropped below 1,000. By 1980, while membership had dropped to 800, there were 300 or so in worship, representing a high water mark in the congregation’s history. Since the early 1980’s, the congregation has been on a steady decline in membership, worship attendance, and ministries.

Recognizing the challenges of their aging congregation and the changing demographics of the neighborhood, in 2006 Key Memorial hired Church Development and Finance Associates to conduct a Vision and Values Workshop. The consultants were engaged to analyze Key Memorial's current ministries and future prospects, and to issue recommendations for how to reverse the trends of decline. The final report included the stark warning that if their recommendations were not accepted and implemented by the congregation: "...then the Consultants would suggest a completely different plan for the next three to five years. Briefly this plan would call for a new pastor, probably retired, that could serve as a chaplain to the current congregation ministering to them as they continue to age and at some point, when the financial burden becomes too great for the remaining members, disband the congregation and sell the wonderful property."

Several of the recommendations, most notably the recommendation to reach out to the Hispanic community, were attempted but were unsuccessful. Several of the recommendations, most notably the recommendation to incorporate more elements of contemporary worship in an attempt to reach younger families, were not implemented. Eight years later, the congregation has reached the stage predicted by the consultants.

Today, the building and grounds of Key Memorial are well located for ministry to a different population – lower income and Hispanic neighbors, who have replaced the more affluent Anglo neighbors who used to surround Key Memorial. However, the congregation is unable to carry out such ministry. There are less than 50 members remaining, of an average age in their early 70's. There are under 30 in worship each week. The congregation is only able to utilize and maintain 15-20% of the square footage of the building, and even that is used only on Sundays. Ministry possibilities are limited, and beginning January 1st, for reasons detailed below, it is unlikely that the congregation will be able to meet its financial obligations.

Disciplinary Tasks:

- Assessment of Current Ministries
 - Subcommittee: Rev. Chris Dowd (convener), Rev. Jim Welch, Mary Lois O'Neal, Tom Busby
 - Evaluative Tasks:
 - Present ministries of the congregation
 - Adult Religious Education
 - 2 Sunday School classes
 - Trinity Class with average attendance of 12
 - Second unnamed class with average attendance of 6-7
 - Sunday evening Bible study with average attendance of about 8
 - No midweek studies
 - Monthly potluck fellowship
 - Choir of 6
 - No mid-week programming other than choir rehearsal on Wednesdays
 - Key Care (a.k.a. "The Green House")
 - Enthusiastically supported ecumenical food bank and clothes closet, meeting an important need in the community
 - Clients receive up to three bags of food every 90 days

- Backpacks for Back to School
 - Community Thanksgiving meal
 - Open MWF from 1-4pm
 - 35 regular volunteers
 - More than half of volunteer hours are not from Key Memorial members
- Community activities hosted:
 - Spanish class for 6-7 people from the community
 - Spanish Baptist congregation (Liberty Baptist Church)
 - 40-50 people, worship and Sunday School on Sundays
 - They pay \$200/month rent; no long-term lease
- Number of leaders and style of leadership
 - As of July 2014, served by a quarter-time local pastor
 - Served by a half-time retired pastor previous two years
 - Leaders include:
 - Jack Bumpus, Church Council Chair; Sue Gudgel, PPR Chair; Cathy Ballau, Finance Chair; Mary Lois O'Neal, Lay Leader, and Alberto Lupercio, Trustees Chair
 - Leadership is deeply committed to their congregation and committed to the ministry of the United Methodist Church
 - To this point, leadership has not been receptive to the possibility of discontinuing the congregation and moving as a group to First UMC Sherman
- Fiscal and facilities needs/health
 - Currently able to use and maintain about 15-20% of the facility's square footage
 - The majority of the square footage being utilized is a sanctuary that is significantly larger than needed for the current community
 - In December 2012, an employee of the Learning Center (child care worker and bookkeeper) embezzled \$65,000
 - Learning Center closed with no prospect of reopening
 - Severe financial impact
 - Delinquent back taxes have been paid; IRS waived penalties and fines
 - Took until February 2014 to make up the deficit
 - Finances:
 - Indebtedness of \$160,000 is currently being repaid on 3% interest-only terms to Texas Methodist Foundation, \$400 per month
 - Effective January 2015, payments revert to the loan terms of \$1,200/month
 - In 2013, the church sold the parsonage and a parcel of land across the street from the church that had been a parking lot. They have been using the proceeds to cover budget shortfall
 - Per the direction of the District Superintendent, in accordance with the *Discipline*, these funds may no longer be used to fund the operating budget

- Income: 67% of all households earn \$50K and below. The average household income in this area is \$45K, but the median income for Hispanic households is only \$38K and for African American households is only \$29K.
 - There is a continuing need for assistance with basic needs: housing, food, and clothing in this very low-income neighborhood.
 - Family Unit: Single parent families comprise 47% of households.
 - Affordable, quality child-care is a growing need.
- Growth potential of the surrounding community
 - Demographics are expecting a 2% increase in single parent families in the next 10 years.
 - Due to the increase in Hispanic-based business (e.g., restaurants and food markets), we believe that there is a growing Hispanic population in spite of the demographics from MissionInsite. We also believe that this will continue to grow as these families move to communities outside of the Metroplex.
- Distance from and collaboration with other United Methodist Churches in the area, as well as other nonprofit agencies offering services in the community
 - There is a United Methodist Church (First Sherman), just to the west of the immediate neighborhood, which has offered ministry cooperation to support the congregation and the neighborhood. Members from First Sherman are committed to providing resources (human and financial) to social services in the area.
 - Southwest of downtown and east of 75, El Divino UMC is a member of the Rio Texas Conference. They are a small membership congregation, with a facility not well located for future potential. They are an English-speaking community comprised primarily of persons whose families immigrated several generations ago. They do not appear to have a vibrant ministry with recent immigrants to the area.
 - Government-regulated social services in the area are difficult to navigate. Benevolent services offered by churches and 501(c)3 agencies are more approachable, but resources are often limited.
 - Food
 - Daily – Grand Central Station
 - Food Pantry – Key Care; otherwise limited supplies in churches and Share Ministry with smaller amounts given out. Most significant and reliable food pantry is Key Care.
 - “Share - Taking It to the Streets” provides food assistance for the homeless.
 - Meals on Wheels for the elderly via application process.
 - Housing
 - Most of the low income housing requires application process through qualifying agencies (Texoma Council of Governments - TCOG).

- Typically have long waiting lists for both housing and utilities
 - Shelters and transitional housing are not located in the neighborhood and persons must travel as far as Denison for shelter.
 - Crisis and rehabilitation protection housing is available for those in need of such protection and specialized care.
- Medical Care and Other
 - Grayson County Health Department is located at the edge of the neighborhood offering some low costs services.
 - Women, children, immunizations.
 - Grayson County Health Clinic offers resident indigent care for minimal to no cost.
 - Outside of neighborhood, several miles away.
 - Prescription assistance available through TCOG, Medication Assistance Program, and on a limited basis through Grand Central Station and several churches nearby.
- Service Statistics from Grand Central Station, assumed to be representative of Share Ministries and Key Care.
 - Birth through 17 – 11%
 - 18 – 59 – 68%
 - Over 60 – 21%
- Transportation
 - TAPS has expanded its service to the Key Memorial neighborhood, to provide non-emergency medical transportation for Medicaid members.
- Legal
 - Grace UMC provides a free legal clinic weekly.
- Low-Cost Childcare
 - No ministry providing this specifically
 - Limited facilities that take the Texas Workforce Commission childcare subsidy
- Number and size of churches of other denominations in the community and (if possible) the ministries offered by those congregations
 - There are 16 identifiable churches in the neighborhood (1 Spanish speaking church, and at least 3 African American Churches). All these churches are small and most (10) have little or no web presence defining their ministries.
 - Six churches have some programming available to service the community in the following areas: children’s ministries; computer classes; fellowship and scouting; Habitat for Humanity; and food pantry and clothes closet.

Assessment and Recommendations:

- It is the assessment of this task force that Key Memorial United Methodist Church has reached the point where it can no longer function as an autonomous local church.
 - With the invitation to join another United Methodist Church nearby, the congregation's spiritual needs can be met without the expense of remaining an autonomous congregation.
- The task force therefore recommends that:
 - At the 2014 Charge Conference, the congregation vote to discontinue. Discontinuance would be finalized by the 2015 North Texas Annual Conference.
 - Current members transfer their membership to First United Methodist Church Sherman or another church of their choosing.
 - During the discernment process, the community at Key Memorial is invited to worship in Hopkins Chapel and conduct Sunday School on the First Sherman campus, giving them the opportunity to experience what this change could bring. Details to be worked out with Rev. Chris Dowd.
 - The property be sold to a local nonprofit that has expressed interest in repurposing it as a community center providing much-needed services, including (potentially) shelter and affordable childcare.
 - A critical ministry of this church and of this community is Key Care, which receives a large amount of food from the North Texas Food Bank for distribution to the community. We recommend that this ministry continue to operate under the umbrella of another local nonprofit, perhaps Grand Central Station, whether in its current or an alternative location.

Submitted, September 23, 2014:

Rev. Chris Dowd, Chair

Tom Busby

Alberto Lupercio

Dorothy McKee

Mary Lois O'Neal

Rev. Roy Spore

Rev. Cassie Wade

Rev. Jim Welch

Minutes, 9/23/14

At our initial gathering on June 24, 2014, Rev. Dr. Marvin Guier opened the meeting and detailed the scope of our task force's work, as well as the background history of Key Memorial UMC that had brought us to this task. The members of the Task Force were introduced. Tom Busby was unable to attend the initial meeting, but Rev. Dowd committed to bring Tom up to speed at a later date.

The task force was broken into two working groups, to do the work outlined in the *Book of Discipline*, paragraphs 2549.2 and 213. One subgroup, to be convened by Rev. Dowd, was tasked with assessing the current state of Key Memorial. The other subgroup, to be convened by Rev. Wade, was tasked with assessing the community surrounding Key Memorial. Each subgroup was asked to do its work in July and August, with a draft of their report and recommendations to be presented at the second meeting scheduled for August 26th.

The task force then toured the facilities before adjourning. The agenda for that first meeting is attached.

At the second gathering of our task force on August 26th, a draft of the committee's report was presented. Rev. Roy Spore was unable to attend, but reviewed a copy of the report ahead of time and provided feedback. Alberto Lupercio was also unable to attend, but Rev. Wade committed to review the report with him before the final meeting, and to get any feedback he might have.

The report was reviewed word-for-word and edited by the task force. The members then committed to a four week period of discernment and prayer before the final meeting. Dr. Guier was sent a copy of the draft, and provided input about a few details. The draft incorporating his comments was sent to the members of the committee to consider prior to the final meeting.

The final meeting on September 23rd is scheduled to produce the final version of the report, to be submitted to Dr. Guier.

At the final meeting on September 23rd, Rev. Spore opened the meeting with prayer.

Rev. Wade and Dorothy McKee were absent, but agreed with the details of the report that had been submitted. Rev. Dowd reviewed the work done to date, and the committee reviewed the final draft of the report, incorporating all the feedback received.

Mary Lois reported the results of a ballot she prepared to gauge interest in the congregation of Key Memorial in a possible move to First Sherman. She announced the ballot two weeks in advance and voting was on September 14th.

These are the responses:

- 16 – "I support the invitation to worship in Hopkins Chapel and conduct two (2) adult Sunday classes on a trial basis for one Sunday only."
- 5 – "I wish to know more about FUMC and support having a meeting to ask questions and express concerns."

- 14 – “I am not interested in either of these options.”
- Four responses offered alternatives:
 - Another building.
 - Wish we had another place to go if our church isn't here.
 - I want to keep the church as is. It means everything to me but I know the Methodist district is against this idea.
 - Could a small building be furnished and we establish a small church?

Rev. Jim Welch moved approval of the final draft of the report. Rev. Roy Spore seconded. Approval was unanimous, including prior approval of Rev. Wade and Mrs. McKee. Task Force Members signed the submission form. Rev. Dowd committed to obtain the signatures of Rev. Wade and Mrs. McKee, and to send an advance copy of this document to the task force prior to its presentation to Key Memorial.

Rev. Dowd closed the meeting with prayer.

Assessment Task Force
Key Memorial United Methodist Church
6/24/2014

Summary:

Bishop Mike McKee has directed this task force to assess the potential of Key Memorial United Methodist Church. Broadly speaking, we are called to determine how best to address the many needs of the East Sherman community. The question to answer is: how best can we be stewards of the United Methodist witness in this community?

Opening Prayer and Introduction of Task – Dr. Marvin Guier

Task Force Members:

- Clergy:
 - Rev. Chris Dowd, Chair – Senior Pastor, First UMC Sherman
 - Rev. Jim Welch – Former Pastor, Key Memorial UMC
 - Rev. Roy Spore – Senior Pastor, Waples UMC Denison
 - Rev. Cassie Wade – Associate Pastor, First UMC Sherman
- Laity
 - Mary Lois O’Neal – Lay Leader, Key Memorial
 - Alberto Lupercio – Trustees Chair, Key Memorial
 - Tom Busby – Lay Leader, Northwest District; member, Grace UMC Sherman
 - Dorothy McKee – Grand Central Station; member, First UMC Sherman

Assignment of Tasks:

- Assessment of Key
 - Subcommittee: Rev. Chris Dowd, Rev. Jim Welch, Mary Lois O’Neal, Tom Busby
 - Rev. Dowd to be the convener of the subcommittee and ensure timeliness of its work
 - Evaluative Tasks:
 - Present ministries of the congregation
 - Number of leaders and style of leadership
 - Fiscal and facilities needs/health
 - “Other items that may impact the church’s ability to fulfill the mission of the Church”
 - Statistical trends of the past five years, including new members, baptisms, professions of faith, and small group participation
- Assessment of Community
 - Subcommittee: Rev. Cassie Wade, Rev. Roy Spore, Alberto Lupercio, Dorothy McKee
 - Rev. Wade to be the convener of the subcommittee and ensure timeliness of its work
 - Evaluative Tasks:
 - Unique missional opportunities and needs of the community
 - Growth potential of the surrounding community
 - Distance from and collaboration with other United Methodist Churches in the area, as well as other nonprofit agencies offering services in the community
 - Number and size of churches of other denominations in the community and (if possible) the ministries offered by those congregations

Proposed Schedule:

- July-August
 - Subcommittees work independently to complete their evaluative tasks and prepare a report to be presented to the entire committee at the next meeting
 - Each subcommittee should prepare recommendations for next steps based on their independent work
- August 26th
 - 6pm – Full Task Force meeting
 - Subcommittees report their findings and initial recommendations
- Four weeks of discernment and prayer
- September 23rd
 - 6pm – Full Task Force Meeting at First UMC Sherman
 - Consider Final Report

Tour of the Building

Subcommittees Schedule Next Steps

Closing Prayer – Rev. Chris Dowd