

Dear Emmanuel,

On Tuesday evening, November 30th, the leadership of Emmanuel met with members of the Northwest Intermountain Synod staff. The purpose was to start discerning ways forward with the given situations of the financial shortfall and the resignation of Pastor Arianna.

We first offered up to God ways that we may not be open to the Holy Spirit's leading. Next, we spent time in scripture listening and reflecting on Acts 16. Seven options for congregations facing an uncertain future were presented for our discernment and consideration.

The leadership narrowed the paths to four. None are mutually exclusive and all are faithful ways in ministry. Each has differing resource, financial, and spiritual effort levels.

- **Sell the Building / Property**
 - Emmanuel could rent back facility or another space. Funds would be reinvested in ministry.
 - **Positives:** Influx of money, New ministry opportunities, Can still gather as a congregation, More funds available for ministry with less funds tied in to maintaining building, Time to think through all options of how we proceed forward, Free up building for others, Stimulate willingness to change, More freedom in moving forward, It can work
 - **Negatives:** Possible loss of membership, emotionally challenging, Change is hard, Uncertainty for tenants of Emmanuel / parsonage, Finding a space that accommodates ministry, Loss of identity and creating presence, Traumatic, Possible marketability, little time to find buyer
- **Sharing the Building/ Property**
 - Emmanuel welcomes other congregation or partners to use the building and pay rent.
 - **Positives:** Might increase benefits to community, Familiar space, bring others into space, New identity, Opportunities for new types of ministry, Learning to share, New friendships, Might be a shorter timeline than some other options, Might be lower energy (depending on partner), Less demand to change, Expanding faith partnerships
 - **Negatives:** Sharing is hard, Legal and financial uncertainties, Timeline, building layout may influence who can use space, Compatibility with partner, Limits Emmanuel's use of space, we can be critical of who /how space used, challenging to please everyone, Advertising cost
- **Reinvention of Ministry**
 - Change ministry – this could be who we serve, how we worship, the ways we gather. (Ex: Bilingual, Dinner Church, Focus on Ministry to Elderly)
 - **Positives:** Familiar surroundings, Opportunity to experiment, Possibly new members and families, More involvement, New life, May be exciting/ energizing,

Something to look forward to, Might reach more people, Hope, Reimagining ministry and space, Possible funding available

- **Negatives:** Difficult to find new members, Energy, Need to be open-minded, Spiritual, challenge, Financial Challenge, Time, Previous conversations of change never went anywhere, Risk of alienating current members, Developing strategy, Leadership / who has vision? Shared Vision
- **Merger**
 - Two or more ELCA congregations, or full communion partner congregations dissolve their individual identities and merge into a new congregation. Ministry model and location would be negotiated.
 - **Positives:** Re-energize the church, Influx of money, Create new family, Grow in numbers, Sharing in the work, Building on others' ministries, Learn other ways under new leadership, Gain a new identity, Can possibly keep current programs, Others to share in mission, New resources
 - **Negatives:** Changing Identity, Energy, Finding the right partner, Need to be less critical, Considerable change, Traditions would blend, Time limitations, Finances, possible loss / change of worship and Liturgy, Legalities, Giving up control and facing compromises

The next steps for our community are to pray, talk about these issues with each other, reflect on Holy Spirit's guidance, explore options and further positives and negatives. Think over who might we partner with. How and if you are willing to change?

Those who met on November 30th will gather at the beginning of the next council meeting to see if any of the options have risen to the top or fallen away given further discernment. Synod staff will be again invited to accompany us in sharing and discerning at a congregational format in January.

Thank you all for your faithful prayers, conversations and intentions.

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"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2 NRSV