

March 26th, 2025 TC Merge for Mission Proposal Presentation Comments, Questions and Answers

Following the Joint Service and M4M presentation on March 26, approximately 30 survey responses were received. The survey had asked two questions: (1) what excites you about the proposal, and (2) what is your biggest question about the proposal.

What are people excited about?

- A larger congregation with more energy for fellowship
- A larger (or existence of) a choir
- Increased ministry and outreach
- More volunteers
- Tackling a new challenge with fellow Christians
- Potential for growth and having a larger impact on the cities
- Small group activities
- Meeting new brothers and sisters in Christ
- Fuller sanctuaries
- Having a team of pastors and more robust worship
- Less burnout amongst leaders and volunteers

The questions and concerns noted in the survey responses have been summarized below. You will also find responses to each area of concern below.

- ***What will happen to the St. John's-Minneapolis and St. John-St. Paul sites?***

These sites would be listed for sale and proceeds used to fund more ministry.

The projected proceeds of these sales have not been added into the 7 year finance projections made by the M4M finance committee but would add to it.

- ***What happens if the buildings do not sell?***

The new congregation would have to decide how to proceed should this occur.

The buildings will likely sell but to whom and for what end price would be the large variables.

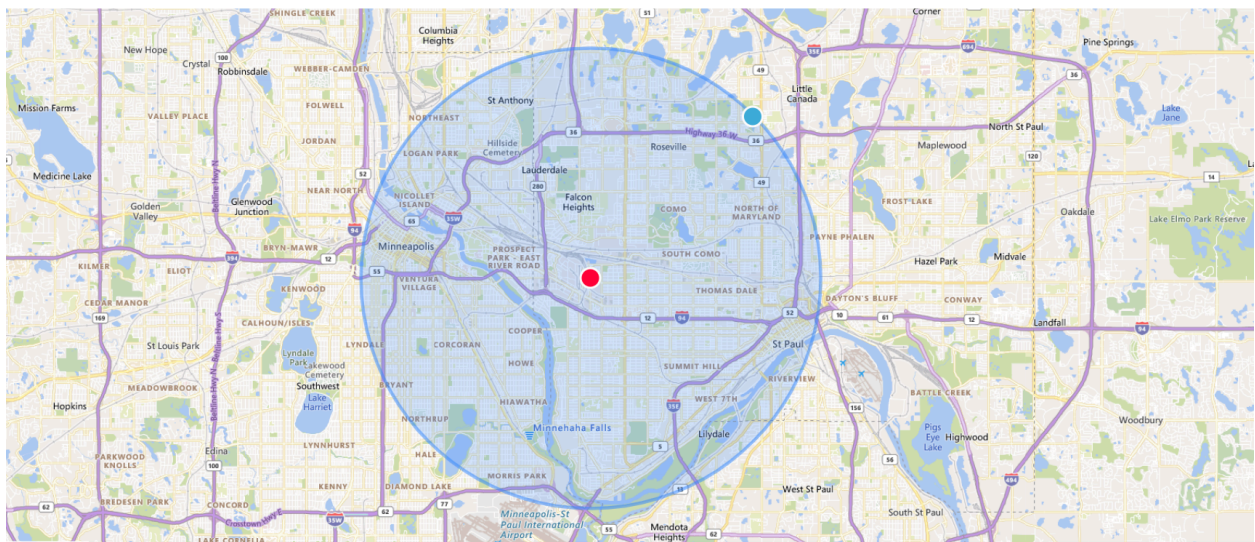
The M4M finance committee has included 3 years of basic building operating costs to make a long runway for the sales to occur.

- ***Will Mt. Olive and Pilgrim be the permanent site(s) of the new church?***

Not necessarily. The intention is that we rally our people and resources together and from a position of strength, together figure out where and how our ministries best reach the souls of the city.

- ***How many churches are in a five-mile radius of each of the churches involved?***

This was not explicitly researched, but the entire Twin Cities has perhaps hundreds of neighborhood churches. This is a 5-mile radius from the approximate center of the TC metro:



You'll note that it encompasses both Minneapolis and St. Paul downtowns so you can start to imagine all the churches you see in the neighborhoods.

The M4M Committees used a 15-20 minute commute time instead to determine mission field. This is what WELS and many other denominations are using. People will drive to what they find valuable. If we want to see a Vikings, Timberwolves or Lynx game, you drive downtown Minneapolis. If you want to see the Wild play, you drive downtown St. Paul. If you want to go to Costco, you might drive to Eagan or Woodbury.

This sentiment came out in the congregational survey that was done in the Fall of 2024: *“My [church commute is] ~15 minutes. Living in the city, with friends all over the city and my feet in multiple different communities/worlds/efforts, I always assume that when I get in the car I'm driving at least 15, probably 20-30 minutes no matter where I'm headed.”*

The committees viewed this is part of city living and what many city churches are viewing as baked-in to the habits of the people they're trying to reach.

- ***What are key demographics in the neighborhoods of Mt. Olive and Pilgrim?***

Pilgrim:

Pilgrim Lutheran

Prepared by Colliers

Latitude: 44.932050

Longitude: -93.276595

	1 mile radius	3 mile radius	5 mile radius
Current Year Summary			
Total Population	32,687	236,723	494,835
Total Households	13,914	109,249	223,449
Total Family Households	6,524	45,789	95,584
Average Household Size	2.30	2.10	2.11
Median Age	35.1	34.9	34.1
Population Age 25+	23,352	170,851	341,877
2010-2020 Total Population: Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)	0.01%	0.76%	1.16%
2020-2023 Total Population: Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)	-0.21%	0.09%	0.32%

Note: Pilgrim has been identified as being in close proximity to one of the most significant Hispanic population concentrations in the city.

Current Year Race and Ethnicity			
Total	32,687	236,723	494,835
White Alone	57.9%	61.2%	64.4%
Black Alone	15.8%	17.6%	15.0%
American Indian Alone	1.8%	2.0%	1.5%
Asian Alone	2.8%	3.4%	5.6%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	11.8%	7.3%	5.7%
Two or More Races	9.8%	8.5%	7.9%
Hispanic Origin	18.7%	12.4%	10.0%
Diversity Index	73.2	67.1	63.1

This fact was not lost on the Board for Home Missions, it was verified by Pastor Timothy Flunker in [a separate report which you can read here](#) (also printed in the Ministry Report in the report binders).

Mount Olive:

Mount Olive Lutheran

Prepared by Colliers

Latitude: 44.979130

Longitude: -93.162085

	1 mile radius	3 mile radius	5 mile radius
Current Year Summary			
Total Population	11,290	145,475	427,379
Total Households	4,892	58,334	177,609
Total Family Households	2,420	29,323	83,521
Average Household Size	2.17	2.38	2.28
Median Age	35.1	32.5	33.6
Population Age 25+	8,044	94,309	281,176
2010-2020 Total Population: Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)	0.09%	0.83%	1.02%
2020-2023 Total Population: Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)	0.26%	0.41%	0.27%

You can read the full demographics report on all churches in the [Colliers Real Estate Report here](#) (also Appendix D in the printed binders).

- ***Financially, it does not seem ideal that the new church would only be breaking even after 7 years.***

7 Years to break even may seem like a long time. But it's important to remember that 2 of the 4 churches are operating with **significant deficit budgets**. If the other 2 congregations were paying full-time pastors (i.e. full salary and benefits), **all churches would be operating deficit budgets**.

Unifying and breaking even after 7 years is a projection based on several key assumptions. The most confident assumptions and well known are the current operating costs of all the churches and our current cash reserves. **If nothing changes** - this means if nothing *dramatically* improves and assuming that nothing gets worse and no one spends cash on building improvement projects (please keep in mind the 40-year trend charts of all key metrics), **St. John's Minneapolis and St. John St. Paul will be out of cash in an estimated 5-7 years**. The other congregations will be treading water and one building improvement project away from closing themselves.

40 Year Trends on key metrics for all 4 congregations:

“Why are we doing this?”



Financial Assessment



Other 7 year projection assumptions that are being made that are less known are:

- Member attrition rates from current congregations to the new unified congregations. This is why if **more people can see themselves contributing their Time, Talent, and Treasure to a new unified**

congregation to support an important set of ministries, the faster this will become sustainable.

- How long it takes to sell property. The longer it takes to sell property, the longer we need to pay for upkeep. This is a significant drain on our cash reserves. Once sold, we save that upkeep cost and in addition, we can put those resources to more ministry or a new location - whatever the new congregation decides is best for the ministry in the city.
- [Read the full Finance report for more about the projections and what went into them here](#) (also printed in the report binders).

- ***Wouldn't the size of a unified church be cost prohibitive?***

See the previous answer for the robust operating budget analysis that drove much of the process. In short, current congregation budgets are unsustainable. **Unifying is the only way we can maintain any ministry or property, we cannot continue supporting 4 separate, independent sites.**

- ***How will each congregation's history (including physical items) be brought along to the new church?***

The Historical Committee would be in charge of preserving stories, memories, histories, and objects. Their work would really *begin* once the unification is approved. Once a unification is voted on and agreed to, a new *Transition Committee* is formed from members of each current congregation to figure out how to make this happen. **These teams would work together and figure out how to gather and honor current congregations' histories.**

- ***What will Sunday worship look like at each location?***

The current vision would consider the following:

- The new unified church calls a Lead Pastor who would become the primary preacher for both sites.
- 9am at one site and 10:30 at the other
- Pastors Sam Lor, Paul Wendland, and Dave Huebner would be in a rotation as well for both sites.

- **Pastor Lor** would be provided more time and space to build the **Campus Ministry** (which would be headquartered at the current Mount Olive site which is in close proximity to UMN St. Paul campus, and the [Campus Connector bus lines](#) which run all year and are free to all, as well as Hamline University, Concordia University, and more.
 - **Pastor Tim Otto** will preach English services occasionally as needed, but would be provided significantly more time and space to focus on his calling to **reach the Spanish-speakers of the Twin Cities**. The current Pilgrim location is located in close proximity to a [very significant Hispanic population](#).
- Music at each location would be coordinated by the new Worship Coordinator for both sites. Current vision for this is that it would depend on the musical talent that exists at each site.
 - Current Pilgrim site music would be more piano / organ / vocalist driven
 - Current Mount Olive site music would be more ensemble (piano, guitar, bass, vocalists).
 - Hispanic worship would include piano, guitar, cajon
 - Both sites would use a variety of traditional and new music.
- You can read more about this in the [Ministry](#) report and the [Human Resources](#) report “Worship Coordinator” position section. These are also found in the printed report binders.
- ***How would one office administrator be able to handle the workload of serving two sites?***

The Human Resources (HR) committee looked at the current job tasks of all administrators as well as spoke with several model churches around the country for examples for how to approach this position. [You can read more about this work here.](#) We believe one person will be able to serve both sites without many issues.

Please note that the HR committee is also recommending a **Volunteer Coordinator or “Spiritual Gifts” Coordinator** as a paid position. This position is key at all the model churches we spoke to and researched. This person would be tasked with amplifying volunteerism and the “three T’s” in general (Time, Talents, Treasure). The main point of this person is to create more people

sharing the workload of our unified church - **in short: Make sure the same 20% of the people aren't doing 80% of the work.**

- ***What happens to current called-workers?***

All current ministries will continue and in fact be strengthened.

All current called workers will continue and be allowed the chance to thrive rather than simply survive.

Ministry and Human Resources Subcommittees are recommending:

- **Lead Pastor - To Be Called** as soon as the vote to unify passes
- Pastor Sam Lor - Associate Pastor with a focus on Campus ministry
- Pastor Tim Otto - Hispanic Missions Pastor, preaching English occasionally as needed
- Pastor Paul Wendland - Teaching Pastor, Preaching ~1/mo
- Pastor Dave Huebner - Teaching Pastor, Preaching ~1/mo

Read all about this plan in the [Ministry](#) and [Human Resources](#) reports (also printed in the full report binders).

- ***What resources are available to elderly congregants who may not be able to commute to other locations?***

A unified congregation means more people coming from multiple directions. Ride shares could potentially be arranged through the Spiritual Gifts Coordinator. Any congregants who are concerned about transportation should reach out to their pastor or lay leaders so that the needs can be understood and planning could begin.

- ***What will campus ministry look like?***

Campus ministry will have more of a chance to thrive as Pastor Lor will be given more time and space to work on it specifically. Current plans for Campus Ministry is to hold the majority of activities on campus in temporary (and free) spaces but either of the proposed unified church locations could be leveraged as Pastor Lor sees fit.

The current Mount Olive site should allow for good reach of college campuses including UMN due to close proximity to the St. Paul campus and the UMN's free year-round Campus Connector bus systems that link the campuses. Hamline, Concordia, St. Thomas, St. Kate's, and more are also fairly close to the current

Midway location of the current Mount Olive site. The current Pilgrim site could also prove a good meeting space due to proximity to UMN West Bank, Augsburg, St. Thomas Downtown campus, and Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

- ***The joint events have not included a very diverse crowd.***

The joint events have been a blessing to many involved and have allowed for many connections to be made and relationships to be built. Each event that has taken place throughout this Envisioning phase of the merger discussions brought many people together and showed how **we can all benefit from creating critical mass.**

1. **Joint Worship** at St. John's Minneapolis on September 22nd, 2024 had about **140 in attendance.**



2. A September 24th, 2024 **a joint bonfire** at Como Park in St. Paul had an estimated **75 people in attendance.**
3. November 24th, 2024 there was **a joint Resource Kit packing event** organized and made possible by all the congregations and hosted at St. John's Minneapolis. About **30 people helped pack and many more donated showing how we can better impact our community together.**



4. On December 11th, 2024 a joint **Advent Song service** was held at Mount Olive where **about 80 people came** to share their musical talents and join voices, and then connect in fellowship time together afterward.
5. On March 2nd, 2025, St. John St. Paul hosted a **joint worship service** where **about 135 people praised God together**.



6. Throughout Lent, there have been several opportunities to share in the message of Jesus' road to the cross and share in meals together.

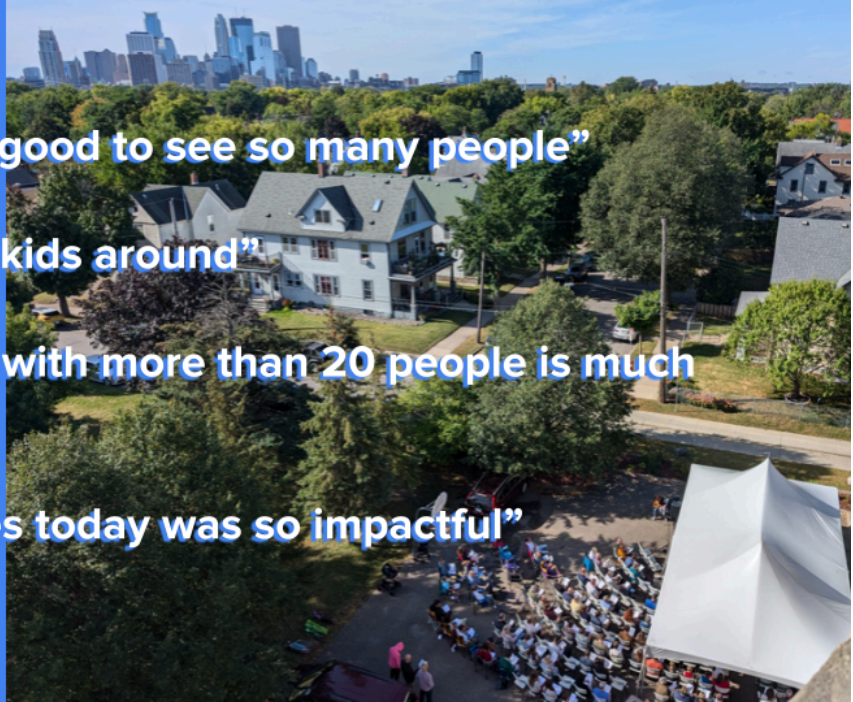
Throughout this process, many people expressed how good it was for us to be together in many ways.

“Wow, it feels so good to see so many people”

“It’s nice to have kids around”

“Fellowship time with more than 20 people is much better”

“The mix of voices today was so impactful”



- ***What happens if one or more of the four churches choose not to merge?***

The proposal would not go through. Any willing congregations would then reassess together and discuss what may make the most sense for their ministries.

- ***How will the new church maximize the talents of women in the congregation?***

Any new congregation would work to maximize the gifts and talents of any willing person for the glory of God. The governance committee is working closely with District President Klatt to understand the new governance models the synod is putting out this year and how these guiding documents can help the new church do exactly this - ensuring all voices are heard and all talents are used to the fullest while ensuring that biblical headship principles are observed.

- ***What is being done to ensure the new church is more effective at reaching its community with the Gospel message?***

The Executive Committee has concluded that **unifying is in fact the most effective way we can reach our community with the Gospel**. It is essentially a move to be the best stewards we can be with the gifts that God has entrusted to us (people, pastors, money, buildings and so much more). Unifying positions us to be stronger and more sustainable - **helping to solidify our place here in the city center to do ministry for generations to come**.

- ***How soon will we begin worshipping together?***

This would be taken up by the Transition Committee (each congregation would appoint 2 members to this committee). [See the Unification proposal draft for more about this](#). This is also in the report binders.

- ***What will be the name of the new church?***

The task of naming the new church would be taken up by the unified congregation as it is formed.

- ***Where can more information on the merge be found?***

There is a wealth of information that has been published for everyone to read.

1. [Assessment Report](#) (published February 27th, 2025)
2. [Unification Proposal and Final Report](#) (published March 16th, 2025)

[Video of the overview presentation here](#) if you wish to share it.

These reports and all supporting documentation was printed and bound in limited quantities and should be available at all congregation locations to share. Please ask your congregational leaders for a copy if needed.

Additionally, presentations were given throughout the project. You can view a sort of timeline and lots of information about the effort here:

gatherwelstc.org/m4m