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A St. Paul-Emmaus Fostering Covenant

Purpose of the Covenant

Firmly established in the Old West side for over 100 years, St. Paul desires for God's mission to flourish in Ann Arbor, and for more people to hear of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Emmaus was established for precisely this goal of reaching more people with the Gospel of Christ.

To this end, St. Paul would provide administrative stability while Emmaus continues its ministry, participates in St. Paul's Welcoming Community vision, and together we discern the future toward which God is leading both congregations. The goal is not for St. Paul to absorb or erase Emmaus, but to provide the support and leadership that will allow Emmaus to continue its ministry and explore its future. Fostering is a helpful metaphor for the relationship we are proposing between Emmaus and St. Paul. In this fostering relationship, God may ultimately lead Emmaus toward greater independence or toward adoption into St. Paul. We do not need to determine that outcome now.

What follows is a proposed framework for a two-year fostering relationship. It is intended to make concrete what we believe this relationship could look like while giving both congregations room to shape the details together.

What Remains Emmaus

Emmaus will remain Emmaus. Its name, worship identity, local relationships, ministry personality, and mission will continue.

The purpose of this covenant is not to erase what makes Emmaus unique, but to provide the pastoral and administrative stability necessary for Emmaus to continue its ministry and discern its future.

In particular:

- Emmaus will retain its name and identity.
- Emmaus worship will remain essentially unchanged—St. Paul is asking for no changes to Emmaus worship; any worship or worship style changes would be decided by Emmaus leadership in conversation with pastoral staff.
- Emmaus will continue to worship at 10:30 a.m., unless Emmaus leadership chooses to make a change.
- Emmaus will continue to lean into the gifts of its members, including its contemporary music ministry.
- Emmaus will continue its local relationships and ministry.
- Emmaus Church Council and Board of Elders will continue to provide local leadership and counsel as prescribed in the Emmaus bylaws.
- Emmaus finances will remain separate from St. Paul's.
- Emmaus will continue to live out its own mission to see, hear, and love those that they connect with in their ministry.

Pastoral Leadership

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St. Paul proposes to call a seminarian from the seminary to serve as Emmaus site pastor and as an assistant/associate pastor of outreach and evangelism at St. Paul. St. Paul is not closed to calling a pastor from the field, but believes that supporting a pastor from the seminary is the main avenue for how St. Paul can support Emmaus.

The new pastor would serve 75% or more of his time with Emmaus while also serving as part of the St. Paul pastoral staff.

Pastoral call and selection

St. Paul would formally call the pastor. Emmaus leadership would have a significant voice in the interview and selection process, helping St. Paul discern the pastor who would best serve both Emmaus and St. Paul.

Ministry at Emmaus

- The new Emmaus site pastor would preach at Emmaus 75-80% of the time, with another pastor preaching approximately once per month.
- Worship and service planning would happen in coordination with St. Paul. The two congregations would generally follow the same sermon series, while allowing room for development or adaptation when that would best serve either congregation.
- The new Emmaus pastor would attend Emmaus Church Council and Board of Elder meetings.
- He would participate in St. Paul's weekly staff meeting and have a weekly check-in with the St. Paul Senior Pastor.
- He would attend at least 50% of St. Paul elders meetings, assuming Emmaus does not maintain a separate elders meeting.
- The St. Paul Senior Pastor would attend particularly important Emmaus Church Council meetings, and potentially more frequently as the relationship develops.
- The new Emmaus site pastor would live in the parish house on Liberty Street (the former youth house).

Pastoral accountability and local leadership

The Emmaus Church Council and Board of Elders will continue to provide local leadership and counsel regarding Emmaus ministry.

Because the Emmaus site pastor will be called and supervised through St. Paul, his formal accountability will be to the St. Paul Senior Pastor in accordance with St. Paul's policy-based governance. The Church Council and board of elders will remain an important source of counsel and accountability for the ministry of Emmaus and for the Emmaus site pastor.

The Emmaus Church Council, or at least one representative thereof, will be consulted as part of the new pastor's annual or semi-annual evaluation. The Church Council will also be invited to provide comments to the St. Paul Senior Pastor regarding his leadership of Emmaus.

Emmaus Worship and Discipleship

Emmaus worship will remain essentially unchanged.

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- Worship will remain at 10:30 a.m. unless Emmaus leadership initiates a change.
- Emmaus will continue to use the contemporary worship style that reflects the gifts of its congregation.
- Emmaus is encouraged to join St. Paul for discipleship hour/Sunday school/Bible class from 9:45–10:30 a.m.

The goal is not to make Emmaus worship identical to St. Paul worship, but to allow the two congregations to benefit from one another while retaining their distinct identities.

Shared Mission: Welcoming Community

Emmaus will participate in St. Paul's **Welcoming Community** vision for the next seven years, leading toward St. Paul's 125th anniversary in 2033.

The vision is to welcome 7,000 neighbors into deeper relationship with Jesus and His people. This is **not a membership quota or an expectation that Emmaus produce new members for St. Paul.** Rather, the vision is about developing a community of people who joyfully receive God's welcome, see their neighbors as people loved by Jesus, and learn to recognize the doors God opens to see, hear, love, and walk with the neighbors He has placed in their lives.

The 7,000-neighbor goal is an aspirational way of expressing the breadth of this vision. It represents the desire for thousands of meaningful connections over seven years among the people of St. Paul (and Emmaus), together with the people connected through St. Paul Lutheran School.

This vision fits naturally with Emmaus's mission of seeing, hearing, and loving neighbors.

Emmaus Staffing

Emmaus staffing will remain essentially the same. The staff and deacon will report to the Emmaus site pastor. Leah's position may benefit from becoming part of St. Paul's administrative structure while continuing to serve as executive administrator for Emmaus. This would be explored collaboratively based on how much St. Paul's administrative structure could assist her in her work. The Emmaus Church Council and site pastor will oversee the hiring and compensation of Emmaus staff in consultation with the St. Paul senior pastor.

Finances and Administration

Emmaus finances will remain separate from St. Paul.

Emmaus will retain:

- a separate budget;
- separate financial records (perhaps a separate bank account but perhaps not); and
- an Emmaus treasurer who provides congregational accountability and signs off on Emmaus checks and other appropriate financial matters.

Before St. Paul formally enters into the covenant, Emmaus will open its financial records to St. Paul's financial leadership so that St. Paul can verify that Emmaus's finances are stable and are not likely to create future problems for either congregation.

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Although Emmaus' financial accounting will remain distinct from St. Paul—with separate books—Emmaus will operate through St. Paul's financial administrative structure, including the Senior Pastor, Business Manager, Bookkeeper, and Controller. The purpose of this arrangement is to provide Emmaus with the administrative support and financial systems of St. Paul without merging the congregations' finances.

The Emmaus site pastor will be partially funded by St. Paul through the use of the parsonage (the old youth house) and the utilities. The rest of the salary and benefits for the Emmaus site pastor will be funded by Emmaus.

Additional preaching costs—monthly pastoral help—will also be funded by Emmaus.

Rental expenses and Utilities: Emmaus would continue to provide $1,000/month to St. Paul to cover rent and utilities. This rent may be increased by no more than $500/month every 12 months. St. Paul may choose to increase this rent, taking Emmaus' budget into consideration, only if Emmaus is using more of the St. Paul facilities, having more events, or hosting more people in worship on Sunday morning than Emmaus was in 2026. Rental increases must be formally communicated at least 45 days in advance to when they will go into effect (not more than once every 12 months).

Programming Expenses: The Emmaus site pastor is encouraged to work with the St. Paul senior pastor on ministry and outreach for the Old West Side, which may be supported financially by the St. Paul senior pastor through outreach and discretionary funds.

Length and Review of the Covenant

This covenant will be in force for **two years beginning on the start date of the new Emmaus site pastor.**

Every six months, the covenant will be formally reviewed by:

- the Emmaus Church Council and Board of Elders;
- the Emmaus site Pastor;
- the St. Paul Senior Pastor; and
- the St. Paul Board of Directors.

At each six-month review, the Emmaus Church Council and St. Paul Board of Directors will formally review how the covenant is working, and what may need to change. This is an important moment to reflect on the agreement and the relationship between the churches. Changes to the covenant may be made at this time. In addition, either governing body may choose to terminate the covenant so that both congregations go their separate ways at these intervals. Each body will vote for termination on their own, but they must meet and talk together before terminating this agreement. If no formal terminating vote occurs by either party, the covenant will continue for another six months.

If the covenant is dissolved, the arrangement will continue for at least three months or longer if agreeable to both parties. During this time, separation details must be put in order. St. Paul will peacefully release the Emmaus site pastor from his St. Paul call. St. Paul will make every

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reasonable effort to assist the Emmaus site pastor in continuing to serve Emmaus until the point that Emmaus is able to call him as their own formal pastor. In addition, St. Paul and Emmaus will work together in good faith to untangle financial, administrative, staffing, and other structures. Recognizing that these changes may take time, both congregations will seek to make the transition as orderly and mutually supportive as possible.

Discernment at the End of Two Years

At the end of the initial two-year covenant, beginning before the 21st month, St. Paul and Emmaus will conduct a thorough review of the relationship.

At that point, the two congregations must make a decision:

1. dissolve the covenant and go their separate ways;
2. extend the covenant for up to 12 months (with the same 6 month review structure and facing the same three options at the end of the extension); or
3. pursue adoption of Emmaus into St. Paul.

Either the St. Paul Board of Directors or the Emmaus Church Council may vote for dissolution, thus terminating this covenant. As mentioned above, the arrangement will continue for at least three months in order that separation details can be put in order.

To extend this covenant for 12 months, both boards must vote to do so.

The decision to pursue adoption must be approved by:

- the St. Paul Executive Team;
- the Emmaus Church Council;
- the St. Paul Board of Directors; and
- both individual congregations.

Adoption would mean that Emmaus becomes part of St. Paul as a ministry site/congregational community, with its assets, membership, governance, and ministry incorporated into St. Paul according to an agreement developed and approved by both congregations at that point.

Whatever the outcome, the purpose of the fostering period is to give both congregations the opportunity to serve faithfully, learn from one another, and discern together where God is leading in order to bring the Gospel to more people in the Ann Arbor community.

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Executive Summary of St. Paul–Emmaus Fostering Covenant

Purpose: St. Paul and Emmaus share a desire to reach more people in Ann Arbor with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The proposed two-year fostering covenant would provide Emmaus with pastoral and administrative stability while allowing both congregations to discern the future toward which God is leading them.

Key Elements of the Proposal

1. Emmaus Retains Its Identity and Local Leadership: Emmaus would retain its name, mission, contemporary worship style, 10:30 a.m. worship time, and separate finances. Its Church Council and Board of Elders would continue providing local leadership and counsel. Any changes to Emmaus's worship or ministry identity would be discussed with Emmaus leadership rather than imposed by St. Paul.

2. Pastoral Leadership: St. Paul proposes to call a pastor to serve as Emmaus site pastor. At least 75% of his time would be devoted to Emmaus. Emmaus leadership would have a significant voice in the selection process. The pastor would be formally supervised by St. Paul's Senior Pastor, while Emmaus leaders would continue to provide local counsel and participate in his evaluation. The pastor would coordinate ministry planning with St. Paul, working with ST. Paul's team, while allowing Emmaus to maintain its distinct character.

3. Shared Mission, Separate Finances: Emmaus would participate in St. Paul's *Welcoming Community* vision of connecting neighbors with Jesus and His people. This is a shared missional commitment, not a membership quota. Emmaus would maintain its own budget and financial records while receiving administrative and financial support through St. Paul's systems. Emmaus would fund the majority of its site pastor's salary and benefits, as well as additional preaching costs, and continue paying $1,000 per month in rent and utilities under the proposed limits on increases. St. Paul would contribute the use of the parish house and utilities.

4. Accountability and Review: The covenant would begin when the new site pastor starts and remain in effect for two years. The congregations' leadership bodies would formally review the arrangement every six months, allowing them to assess its effectiveness and make changes. Either governing body could initiate termination, with a minimum 3 month transition period.

Discernment at the End of Two Years

Before the 21st month, St. Paul and Emmaus would begin a thorough review and determine whether to: 1) End the covenant and go their separate ways. 2) Extend the covenant for up to 12 months. 3) Pursue Emmaus's incorporation into St. Paul as a ministry site or congregational community. Incorporation would require approval from the appropriate St. Paul leadership bodies, the Emmaus Church Council, and both congregations.

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