

Church Council
Middletown UMC
Middletown, MD 21769

Dear Pastor Bishop and the Leadership Team of Middletown UMC:

As the Steering Committee of Faithpoint UMC, we are reaching out to see if you would be interested in exploring a merger between our two churches.

Like Middletown, Faithpoint has a history that is rooted in service to the community and in welcoming everyone into worship - regardless of who they are or where they are coming from. We are a diverse congregation that seeks to build community and grow disciples in Christ, and we know that many times, those connections take place outside of church walls.

As a mobile ministry, we have previously made it our goal to be able to take "church" to a variety of locations. During the pandemic, we worshiped in the parking lot of a shower-door business. Even before that, however, we did services in parking lots for other groups, we collaborated with local churches in the Greater Frederick area for special services, we took our music ministry to eastern MD for a UMC Youth Conference, and we met in parks and other locations where we could invite the community around us into worship. Prior to the pandemic, we regularly held joint special services with other churches in the Urbana area for Lent, Holy Week, and Thanksgiving. Our experience doing church in unusual ways would be a potential asset to a church seeking to expand its influence in the community.

As a mobile ministry, we do not have a traditional building. However, we do have an online campus - Common Table Online - that is separate from our in-person worship. Common Table is unique in that it has interactive components. Rather than passively watching a recorded sermon, the Common Table congregation can join in portions of the service with a chat, prayers, and joys & concerns in real-time with the pastor and other attendees. Designed for anyone and everyone, to engage anywhere, Common Table is named after the idea of creating a bigger table to make worship open and accessible to everyone. It has the potential for large growth in a church like Middletown.

Our small groups have always been a vital part of the way we connect with each other, and they provide additional opportunities to connect and serve. They are open to those who wish to participate, regardless of church affiliation. Life groups, as we call them, allow for personal growth and interest, as well as connection and communal support in times of strain. Some of our small groups have included Men's Group, Women's Group, Pottery, Science and Christianity, Celebrate Recovery, Lectio Divina with visual arts, various Bible studies (including Disciple Bible Study), and the Worship Team.

Faithpoint's most important asset, however, is its people. We work hard for each other and our community. We are passionate about supporting programs that raise awareness for and provide resources to fight hunger, homelessness, domestic abuse, infant/pregnancy loss, mental health, substance abuse, and youth development, among others. We also sponsored a chapter of Celebrate Recovery, which shuttered halfway through the pandemic. Faithpoint is passionate about serving God's people through all the messiness that real life brings with it. Many members of our congregation are experienced leaders, both in the church and in their careers, and they have an enormous capacity for creative thinking and problem solving.

Why, then, do we wish a merger? Faithpoint was a comparatively small congregation, and like all churches right now, is struggling with the after-effects of Covid, which drastically impacted our attendance and finances. Although we do not have debt, we currently are not bringing in enough resources to support both our missions and our expenses. We decided to seek a merger, rather than to close or to "get by," because merging with a church like Middletown would enable us both to expand the reach of the work we can do together and to continue supporting missions in our community and around the globe that benefit all people. Ultimately, that work is more important to us than remaining a separate church.

We hope that you will consider our proposal to explore a merger. We are happy to answer any questions you may have about Faithpoint and to meet to discuss this possibility at a time that is convenient for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration, and we hope to hear from you soon!

Grace and Peace,

Paul Varga
Chair, Faithpoint Steering Committee