



Mission Fargo inviting people to Jesus at barbecue with baptisms



Barbecue, served with a side of 17 baptisms, touched the lives of 87 people at a Mission Fargo event. Mission Fargo is a new faith community in Fargo, North Dakota.

Jesus. Life. Mission

Pastor Jason Mehring, who is the leader of the new church plant, says it is all about Jesus, life, and mission. “You have got to know Jesus. Once you do, it is life giving. Each day you need to decide to do something with that life, be in mission, not just go to church.”

Mission Fargo currently engages in small groups, mission or service projects, and outreach events throughout the community. Some outreach activities include: a barbeque with baptisms, ax throwing, go-cart racing, escape room party, and a flower planting party. An event is held each month.

“God is constantly popping up.”

Mehring, who moved to Fargo in January with his wife and three children, says, “God is constantly popping up.” As part of moving into a new house, Mehring went to purchase a new sofa. Getting the sofa from the store to the house was challenging. “I was standing outside, in Fargo, in January, in the Costco parking lot. There was no way that I was going to be able to load that couch into my vehicle and get it to my house,” says Mehring.

A woman in the parking lot was observing Jason’s struggle. She stepped forward and so did another person with a truck. “They loaded the couch and delivered it to my house. Two strangers, we had no connection,” says Mehring. The woman, who works for the Cass County Sheriff’s Department in Horace, North Dakota, is now connected to Mission Fargo through that delivery.

The first mission event for Mission Fargo, and Pastor Jason’s payback for the sofa delivery, was making blankets for children, who for various reasons end-up at the Sheriff’s office. A blanket provides warmth and comfort in an anxious situation for the child. “We made 32 blankets. All because God brought us together randomly,” said Pastor Jason.

Mission Fargo is planning a baby making mission project. The goal is to make 30-40 dolls that will assist people in memory care units. The doll is a unique tool that allows an individual with memory problems to talk about and take care of something they feel comfortable and safe around.

“A deep desire to be connected.”

“We try to be attentive to people’s needs and what the Spirit is calling us to do,” says Pastor Jason. “People like to be involved in the mission projects. They have a deep desire to be connected with each other and be part of something that is not necessarily going to church.”

Once people show up, Mission Fargo tries to connect them deeper through a small group experience. Three small groups are currently going strong—a men’s group, a women’s group, and a couples group. The groups meet in various homes or locations such as a park or coffee shop.

“We are developing our identity, core leadership, and making deep connections through our small groups. The more people we know, the easier the connection to God,” says Mehring.

The efforts to launch Mission Fargo have been supported by the Dakotas Conference and a team of key stakeholders. Rev. Ben Ingebretson, director of new church development for the Dakotas-Minnesota Area,

has been a tremendous support. Other key support people are: Rev. Randy Cross, district superintendent for the Northeast District of the Dakotas Conference, and coach Rev. Josh Meyers, pastor of North Summit UMC in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

“God just keeps showing up.”

God just keeps showing up. In the next few months, Mission Fargo would like to find a spot where weekly worship can take place. Already there have been offers of potential spaces. Mehring learned about some resources and supplies for a worship center that were available in Rapid City, South Dakota, an eight-hour journey, 600 miles from Fargo. One of the members of a small group, who trains people to drive semi-trucks, offered to drive a semi and pick up the supplies. The only charge to Mission Fargo was the gas.

“It is so good to see God at work.”

The DNA of Mission Fargo is to act, engage, and model the organization like a nonprofit agency for God. “It is not about finding a church building, or building a physical building. In fact, we purposely avoid use of the term church,” says Mehring. “It is about connecting people to Jesus and the mission. People keep connecting and investing their resources in our mission. It is so good to see God at work.”



Seventeen people were baptized at the barbecue held by Mission Fargo.

United in Faith UMC alive with vitality



United in Faith parish is the joint partnership and ministry of Burke United Methodist Church and Herrick United Methodist Church in south-central South Dakota. Burke and Herrick together worship just under 80 people. The congregation is forging new pathways in ministry thanks to the Journey Renewal Partnership (JRP).

The Journey Renewal Partnership process provides a coaching and resourcing consultation that assists churches in moving beyond plateau or decline and entering a new season of fruitfulness and growth.

Through the JRP consultation process, United in Faith UMC identified four prescriptions to vitality: create a united identity that reflects a new community, build bridges of invitation by designing events that invite the community, expand worship opportunities, and overcome financial fears.

“We came together to be united.”

“Journey Renewal has been positive for us,” says Rev. Clay Lundberg, who serves United in Faith UMC. “We have come

together to be a united community that is making disciples and reaching new people. The ‘we—united identity’ is happening. We have started new parish ministries with Wednesday worship, community events, such as a community tailgate, Trunk or Treat, and summer kick-off. There has been a lot of momentum.”

In September of 2018, a Wednesday evening contemporary service was launched. The atmosphere is a casual, come as you are, setting. The new worship opportunity, a first of its kind for the communities of Burke and Herrick, was fueled by one of the JRP prescriptions.

“One of our Journey Renewal Partnership coaches, Rev. Kevin Kloster, suggested we take a look at a different style of worship at a time that would work for people,” says Lundberg. “We found that there was not a contemporary style of worship in all of Gregory County. We also wanted to give people a different time, besides Sundays, to worship.”

“This is for us. We are all in.”

United in Faith parish is seeing new families come to worship. Some families that only come part-time on Sunday are showing up every Wednesday. They are making it their service. One family came the very first Wednesday night and is still coming. The work hours and family activities kept them from worshipping on Sunday. “We work on weekends. We love the style of worship on Wednesday. This is for us. We are all in,” says the family.

The music highlights the contemporary style of worship. United in Faith UMC

has a praise team led by the new music teacher in Burke, Rochelle Stevens. “Rochelle makes the worship come alive,” says Pastor Clay. “She rolls with the punches.”

United in Faith UMC continues to forge through the JRP prescriptions. Lundberg says, “The prescriptions are big but manageable. There are some things that we are still working on. People lead busy lives. Facing our financial fears is one area we need to keep working on.”

The journey for the congregation is fueled by excellent lay leadership. Lundberg reports that there is a flow of innovation and change that happens around people’s leadership and resources. “Tim Hakin from Herrick is a great supporter and lay leader. He has been a motivator and kept the Wednesday night ministry in front of us. He is always willing to help and be there,” says Pastor Clay. Lundberg emphasizes that it takes lay leaders like Hakin to make things happen.

Leadership, vitality, and growth are hallmarks of what is happening for United in Faith UMC.

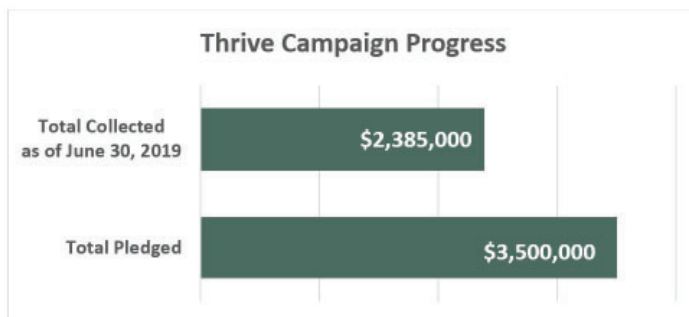
“Just give it to God.”

“Journey Renewal Partnership gave me permission and confidence as a leader to do things like: ask tough questions during the self-study, openly listen to ideas and struggles, and rely on others. The Journey Renewal Partnership process has given me a stronger resolve to rely on God. Just give it to God,” says Rev. Lundberg.

Residency Program:	\$10,000
New Church Development:	\$892,500
MCCI:	\$111,000
Leadership Development:	\$121,000

Total Thrive funds turned into **ministry**: \$1,134,500

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