

A Respectful Conversation about Consolidating to One Location (Part 1)

How We Got Here

About ten years ago, St. Anthony Park UMC (SAPUMC) and Centennial UMC began prayerful conversations about joining together. SAPUMC, after more than 125 years of ministry, was facing significant demographic and financial challenges. Centennial had energy, resources, and a vision to reach new people through a contemporary worship experience.

After a year of discernment, both congregations voted in January 2016 to merge (*SAP UMC's vote was 85.7% in favor and CUMC's vote was 68.6% in favor*) and create one church with two campuses. This was an absorption merger—SAPUMC closed as a congregation, and Centennial launched a new campus and ministry in its place.

The Road to St. Anthony Park

Centennial's interest in a new site began with *The Well*, the contemporary service at the Roseville campus. Though thriving in spirit, it was limited by a Sunday evening time slot. In 2015, leadership explored how to move the service to Sunday mornings, considering both onsite and offsite options.

Through prayer, discernment, and consultation with the Minnesota Conference, SAPUMC emerged as a possible location within Centennial's vision of reaching every person in a five-mile radius. Both churches spent a year building relationships through joint worship, service projects, meals, and Bible studies before voting to merge.

Centennial raised funds for renovations and launched the St. Anthony Park Campus in December 2016. The building and property were transferred to Centennial at no cost, and significant changes were made to create a new kind of worship experience aimed at young families and un/de-churched individuals.

Since its launch, the SAP campus has grown from 60 to about 100 in weekly worship, developed strong neighborhood partnerships, and now generates over \$100,000 in annual rental income.

Where We Are Now

In recent years, we've faced new challenges—most notably the pandemic, major roof damage at both campuses, and a lengthy insurance dispute that has forced us into the high-risk insurance market. These realities, combined with the ongoing costs of maintaining two large facilities, have accelerated our need to talk about the future.

Moving Forward

This conversation is not simple or easy, and many of us hold deep feelings about each campus and its history. Yet we also share a common mission and faith. As we enter this next phase of discernment, let's pray for open hearts, open minds, and a spirit of grace as we imagine what faithful ministry looks like in the years ahead—together.