



January 19, 2011

Mr. Dave Reynolds  
First United Methodist Church of Middlefield  
14999 South State Avenue  
Middlefield, OH 44062

**RE: FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT FACILITY AND OTHER SITES**

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

As per our agreement dated 10/27/10 we submit the following assessment report for your consideration.

**INTRODUCTION**

When a church contemplates a building program, it must make sure that it is building the right thing, for the right reason, at the right time. The decision to build is, in essence a spatial one and there are two spatial components that need to be examined before contemplating a new building or addition.

The first component to be considered is the **"Site"**. How adequate is the current space and facilities to fulfill the church's vision? Is the current space in balance, or will new space balance it out? Is the current structure functionally obsolete? Does it make sense to renovate? What are the larger kingdom stewardship issues involved? This report will attempt to analyze the "Site" in regard to 1) Ministry, 2) Capacity and 3) Functionality

The second component to be considered is the **"Situation"**. How adequate are the issues surrounding the location? This report will attempt to analyze the "Situation" in regard to 1) visibility, 2) accessibility, 3) compatibility, and 4) feasibility

Four possible combinations are possible regarding the "Site" and "Situation":

1. Good site and good situation
2. Good site and poor situation
3. Poor site and good situation
4. Poor site and poor situation

It should be apparent that churches that have the spatial combination described in item #1 above do not need to think about building or relocating. The only spatial combination of the above that a building on the existing site solves is item #3. Some churches having the spatial combinations described in items #2 & #4 think that a new building is a long

term solution; however churches with these combinations have another spatial issue to address which a new building will not solve, the "Situation".

There is a logical sequence of questions to be considered when choosing the place for building the church facilities:

### **The Site**

1. Ministry: What are your ministry goals?
2. Capacity: How large a church do we want to become?
3. Functionality: How well does the building and site function in regards to supporting ministry?

### **The Situation**

4. Visibility: Should prospects be able to see us?
5. Accessibility: Is the site readily accessible to our targeted constituency?
6. Compatibility: Does the site location meet the expectations of those we are endeavoring to reach?
7. Feasibility: Will the authorities grant permission with reasonable expectations to build a church facility on this site?

In addition to the above data, the sites in question have been evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:

## **THE SITE**

### **Ministry Criteria <sup>1</sup>:**

Because at this time, Midwest Church Design has limited knowledge of the ministry of First United Methodist Church of Middlefield, we can only make general recommendations regarding the appropriateness of the site in question.

The age distribution and preferences of a targeted area must be considered in choosing your church site. You need to be located where your targeted community lives. While large regional churches may draw people from a great distance (though often inefficiently functional), commuting churches always struggle to survive.

The regional church begins by reaching the immediate community around the church site, and then grows beyond the closer area through a satisfied constituency reaching into outlying communities by word of mouth while remaining strong in the immediate location.

Typically, the commuting church is located in a changing community where the neighborhood church saw its constituency move to the suburbs, with a few people returning because "I was married in this church." If you choose a site in a changing community, seek a location that is safe and rebounding. Determine strategies to reach people in that location. Avoid being a commuting church through effective ministry planning.

Ministry components should also be chosen before selecting a new church site. For example, if you plan to have a Christian day school on the church site you will need a much larger site. (The minimum recommended K–12 day school site is 15 acres.)

<b>MINSITRY EVALUATION</b>	
EXISTING SITE	The existing church site may fall into the category of “commuting church” rather than a “regional church” (see above for explanation). If this is the case, the long term prospects for ministry may be compromised due to the inconvenient location for commuters and limited potential to reach the surrounding neighborhoods.
PROPERTY NO. 1	To be determined
PROPERTY NO. 2	To be determined
PROPERTY NO. 3	To be determined
PROPERTY NO. 4	To be determined

**Capacity Criteria <sup>1</sup>:**

When master planning an existing site with existing buildings you have, in reality, already master planned the site. Adding additional facilities will likely have to conform to the placement of the existing buildings. Site capacity could be a limiting factor. Costly remodeling and parking renovation may add to the project cost.

Master planning of a new church site is wise stewardship that can assure efficient site development. Long range planning should include your goal of ultimate church size—unlimited or an established size for the congregation when you will plant a daughter church outside your effective ministry region.

The first phase of construction should accommodate doubling your present worship and education attendance. Phased expansion should reserve the focal point of the site for the main worship center. Will you plan to schedule multiple worship sessions? Or will it be your goal to always have only one morning worship service? This is a critical decision for planning worship, education and parking capacity.

The selected church site should provide at least one acre of land for each one hundred people. Increased setbacks, expansive landscaping, storm water retention, large recreation areas, day school, wetlands, topography and multiple services demanding additional parking are factors that will add to the land requirements. The average number of people per vehicle will probably not exceed 2 to 2.5—a more important factor than the off-street parking code in the zoning ordinance.

Ideally, the site depth should not be greater than double the width. Consider only the usable land when calculating the site capacity. It is best to select a level site with one hundred percent usable land. The level site and single-story construction is most

economical for smaller churches. The large church can justify the development of a rolling site and multistory construction with an elevator for barrier-free interior access.

<b>CAPACITY EVALUATION</b>	
EXISTING SITE	<p>The existing church building is approximately 17,400 SF for both levels. Using the ratio of 50 SF of total facility per person, a facility that size would normally accommodate approximately 350 persons which is approximately 150 persons more than the present sanctuary can accommodate. This is probably due to the larger than average social hall and offices. The church facility would require significant renovation to bring it into balance. The site that the existing church occupies is located in a downtown area surrounded by various occupancies including commercial, retail and residential. The property is 0.69 acres with approximately 37 parking spaces on the church property with additional spaces not on the church property which is available for limited church use. The “rule of thumb” for site size (assuming utilities are present) for proper church development is approximately 1 acre per 100 seats in the sanctuary. According to this rule, the existing site is sized to handle only between 50 – 100 persons in the sanctuary. According to the church’s data, the existing ratio of sanctuary seats per car is approximately 2 seats per car. Using this ratio, the church’s parking would only accommodate 74 seats in the worship space. According to the church’s statistics, the present sanctuary can seat approximately 190-210 persons with the sanctuary feeling full at about 80% capacity. With just these two constraints (site size and parking capacity); even though the church has been able to function, it is very likely that ministry effectiveness has been compromised and that substantial, sustained future growth is a virtual impossibility.</p>
PROPERTY NO. 1	<p>This site is located approximately 0.5 miles to the north of the existing church building. It is understood that approximately 5 acres may be available for church development with the possibility of expanding to purchase 15 extra acres in the future. No utilities are available unless the site is annexed into the village. As stated above, church development normally requires one acre of land per 100 seats in the sanctuary. However, because there are no utilities, if the church decides not to annex, then the 1 acre of land would only support approximately 85 sanctuary seats. This would put the building size at approximately 425 sanctuary seats with adequate parking. Even though the acreage may be sufficient the proportions are less than desirable being a “long / narrow” site. this would limit design options.</p>

PROPERTY NO. 2	This site is located approximately 1.3 miles to the west of the existing church site on Kinsman Rd. There seems to be a minimum of 10 acres of available land. How much the church would like to purchase may not be this much. If the church wished to purchase just 5 acres, then the capacity issues mentioned for property no. 1 would apply to this site as well.
PROPERTY NO. 3	This site is located approximately 0.70 miles to the west of the existing church site on Kinsman Rd. The acreage is approximately 4.59 acres which would support sanctuary seating of approximately 460 seats with adequate parking. There are three existing structures on the site which, if retained, may negatively impact the efficiency of the parking layout thus reducing the parking capacity and thus the seating capacity.
PROPERTY NO. 4	This site is located approximately 3.1 miles to the north of the existing site on Madison Road. The existing parcel is approximately 151 acres so there would be adequate land to accommodate church development depending on the church's budget. There are no utilities without annexation so the same constraints listed for site number 1 would apply here as well.
CAPACITY GRADES (on a 1 – 10 scale)	
EXISTING SITE	2
PROPERTY NO. 1	7
PROPERTY NO. 2	8
PROPERTY NO. 3	6
PROPERTY NO. 4	9

**Functionality Criteria <sup>1</sup>:**

The existing building was given a brief overview in regards to its soundness, its appropriateness (ease of use, function, *i.e., how churches are used today*), and circulation.

<b>FUNCTIONALITY EVALUATION</b>	
EXISTING SITE	We find the usual challenges regarding structural soundness; condition of building systems; circulation and handicap accessibility one would expect to find in a church this age. Normally most of these shortcomings could be addressed with some strategic renovation and space re-allocation. Some of the more difficult challenges to address have to do with the interrelationship of the church building and parking to its site, topography and location. The first phase of the church was probably built at a time when it may have been a neighborhood church with most folks walking or driving a short distance to church. Most people would enter the building from the South

PROPERTY NO. 1 PROPERTY NO. 2 PROPERTY NO. 3 PROPERTY NO. 4	State Street entrance. Now, because most of the parking is in the rear of the church, people normally take the shortest path to a doorway which may be the one that leads to the corridor on the lower level or the elevator tower to the north. This is not a very welcoming environment for visitors to enter during their first visit to the church. A much more inviting scenario would be to locate a large entry narthex on the same level as the parking and the sanctuary. That way people would feel welcomed, be easily oriented and more apt to "connect" with each other during fellowship. The entrance/narthex interrelationship is just one of the functional problems posed by the existing facility and location.  Not applicable Not applicable To be determined Not applicable
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**THE SITUATION**

**Visibility Criteria <sup>1</sup>:**

The greatest potential for church growth is in a new growth area of a healthy community. Demographers identify a growth band around a developed area as a green belt. If you choose a site in the community's inner core, or saturated area of growth perhaps 25 to 50 years ago, be certain the area is safe, stable and rebounding. Public school officials, community zoning officials, the Chamber of Commerce, utility companies, news media and demographers are good resources for locating growth trends of the community.

Visibility is very important. The church site should be located on a local arterial road that provides maximum visibility, preferably in a residential area. Site entry, parking and building entry should be obvious. The worship center should provide the primary curb appeal, establishing the purpose of the church as the worship of God. The site should not appear to be just a school or a commercial building.

<b>VISIBILITY EVALUATION</b>	
EXISTING SITE	The church may have had a high visibility factor when it was first built. Over time however, changes in travel and adjacent development have reduced visibility significantly. The amount of people that travel along South State Street may or may not be significant. This can be determined with a traffic study. However because of its scale, being located in an area of dense development and surrounded by other structures, the church becomes virtually invisible until you are "right on it".

PROPERTY NO. 1	This site is highly visible mainly due to its open location along a main artery as well as its adjacency to an Amish style restaurant immediately to the south. The traffic generated by these two issues may be very high, thus making this property very attractive from a visibility standpoint. If this site is selected it is important that the facility be strategically located for maximum visibility.
PROPERTY NO. 2	This site seems to be “tucked” behind some existing parcels on Kinsman road. Even though there may not be many structures on these parcels, they create a significant distance from the main road (Kinsman) to a developable part of the site thus lowering visibility somewhat. There is also a potential access from a residential neighborhood to the east; this may help visibility in regards to the occupants of those houses.
PROPERTY NO. 3	This site is located along a very visible section along West High Street. The site is long and narrow and in a developed area, somewhat mitigating its visibility from the road.
PROPERTY NO. 4	This site has the potential to be highly visible due to the frontage along Madison Rd. Any development should seek to locate the church property as close to the road as possible. The traffic along the right of way may be discovered through a traffic study, however, due to the remote location, this site may have the least amount of traffic than the other three sites.
VISIBILITY GRADES (on a 1 – 10 scale)	
EXISTING SITE	3
PROPERTY NO. 1	8
PROPERTY NO. 2	4
PROPERTY NO. 3	6
PROPERTY NO. 4	5

**Accessibility Criteria <sup>1</sup>:**

The church’s outreach goal is not to bring in those travelers who are passing through your city on the expressway. However, local people who drive on the expressway are targets for your church ministry. You can enlarge your growth potential as a regional church if your church is accessible from an expressway that has an exit onto an arterial road where your church is located.

In smaller communities without expressways, be certain you are readily accessible from arterial roads. The typical congregant will not drive more than 20 minutes to attend a church service. Avoid barriers that complicate access to your church. A site may be visible from the expressway but without a convenient access road to the church. Railroads, rivers, lakes, industrial parks and commercial developments can limit access.

<b>ACCESSIBILITY EVALUATION</b>	
EXISTING SITE	All of the sites are accessible to the Village of Middlefield. A demographic study would need to be done to evaluate the accessibility and drive time from the majority of the population in the area. The site that “seems” to be least accessible from a cursory evaluation may be Property no. 4
PROPERTY NO. 1	see above
PROPERTY NO. 2	see above
PROPERTY NO. 3	see above
PROPERTY NO. 4	see above
<b>ACCESSIBILITY GRADES (on a 1 – 10 scale)</b>	
EXISTING SITE	3
PROPERTY NO. 1	8
PROPERTY NO. 2	5
PROPERTY NO. 3	7
PROPERTY NO. 4	5

**Compatibility Criteria<sup>1</sup>:**

The location of the church must be compatible with the expectations of the community you are endeavoring to reach. Your church constituency should be a reflection of the community’s demographics. Upper income people expect a church setting compatible with their standard of living. They are not likely to come to a church in a low income, declining neighborhood. Locating in a quality single-family neighborhood means that people from all income levels will be attracted to the church site.

Avoid industrial areas, commercial development and declining neighborhoods. If your ministry is targeting an inner city area, look for a church site in an area that is on the rebound and safe.

The church site should be centrally located to the potential constituency you are endeavoring to reach. Travel time and convenience are factors of compatibility. If you are relocating an existing church, be sure (if at all possible) the relocation will not cause you to lose your present constituency—something most churches can’t afford to do if they are going to fund the relocation project. Example: The old inner city church of commuters should try to relocate in the area where the commuting members have relocated, then reach out into the new community.

<b>COMPATIBILITY EVALUATION</b>
First United Methodist Church of Middlefield would be best equipped to determine what is a compatible site for the church based upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community demographics,</li> <li>• The people you are trying to reach and the</li> </ul>

- “Flavor” of the ministry.

However assuming a majority “middle America” demographic, the sites are “graded” in regard to their compatibility on a scale of 1 to 10 with “1” being the least compatible and “10” being the most compatible.

COMPATIBILITY GRADES (on a 1 – 10 scale)

EXISTING SITE		3
PROPERTY NO. 1		7
PROPERTY NO. 2		7
PROPERTY NO. 3		5
PROPERTY NO. 4		7

**Feasibility Criteria <sup>1</sup>:**

There are many feasibility factors contributing to the place for building the church home. These factors may be summarized under costs and codes. Most communities no longer consider the church as a contributor of community services exempt from the development criteria applicable to the location. Church facilities are classified as public occupancy facilities for assembly and subject to rigid site and building codes. Consequently, the development costs are directly impacted by these requirements.

The church must carefully count the total project cost of the new church site and facility development. The project cost includes the cost of the land, site development, building construction and all fees (architecture, site and building engineering, construction and funding).

Areas zoned for single-family development (with public utilities) are typically the best choice for the church site. Commercial sites are usually too costly. Agricultural zones on the outskirts of progressing development are good if public sewer and water are available. Extending the sanitary sewer and water to the site are usually very costly. Alternative utility systems for the larger church are very expensive, especially if the building must have a fire sprinkler system (typically required in buildings with assembly capacity over 300).

Community zoning ordinances control site development. Churches are not necessarily permitted in every development zone. When in an acceptable zoning, permission is granted through site plan approval or a special use permit often subject to public scrutiny. It is common to see church sites subjected to strict building setbacks, parking setbacks, storm water control, perimeter screening, perimeter and interior landscaping (including the interior of parking lots) and other costly requirements.

Building codes govern the design features of the building including accessibility, life safety, structural integrity, electrical, mechanical and plumbing. Local applications of the International Building Code vary according to state and local modifications.

## FEASIBILITY EVALUATION

It appears that all of the sites would accommodate church development. The existing site would probably have the most challenges because of the small site and because the zoning codes have probably changed over time possibly requiring the church to be limited in their development or go through a variance process to get approval. The sites outside the village without utilities would also pose additional cost for septic and sewer, with the additional complication of possible EPA approval. The sites are “graded” in regard to their feasibility on a scale of 1 to 10 with “1” being the least feasible and “10” being the most feasible.

### FEASIBILITY GRADES (on a 1 – 10 scale)

EXISTING SITE	3
PROPERTY NO. 1	7
PROPERTY NO. 2	5
PROPERTY NO. 3	9
PROPERTY NO. 4	5

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, when taking all of the above factors into the evaluation, it seems clear that the existing building is a major constraint to ministry and to sustained growth. Can the church continue ministry at the existing location? The answer is “yes” but it seems clear that the effectiveness of the ministry and the future sustained growth will never reach its potential unless it relocates to a more suitable site. Ecclesiastes 10:10 says:

***“If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; but wisdom brings success.”***

Since the church site and building can be considered as a “tool” (think “ax”) for ministry, it has the potential of hindering or helping the ministry depending on how “sharp” it is.

Assuming the church decides to relocate, the sites that seem to “rise to the surface” would be Property No. 1 and Property No 3. for different reasons. Property No 1. probably has more long term potential for ministry due to its visibility, accessibility and compatibility. Property No 3 is more “feasible” because of the available utilities, the presence of an existing building which “may” be remodeled (code compatibility would need to be researched) for church occupancy. In other words, if money was not a major issue, Property No. 1 seems to be the most suitable for church development. If money was a major issue (which it most always is) then Property No. 3 seems like the appropriate choice.

Even if other sites become available, this document should assist the church in evaluation for its suitability for church development.

These are general guidelines for the selection of the church site. There are variations in each community. The complexity of the issue demands professional assistance to safeguard the church's ministry potential, integrity and finances.

Whichever site the church wants to pursue, it may be beneficial for the church to have a "Feasibility Study" performed on the site in question. Such a report would help to identify any additional developmental constraints to church facility development. It would also be prudent for the church to include contingencies on any offer made to the property seller that the site has no hindrances to church development in regards to soils, zoning issues, utility issues, etc.

This report has attempted to take a general approach to site assessment. There have been no attempts to investigate other issues that would be identified in a legal survey or feasibility report. These issues include but are not limited to such things as hazardous materials, easements, soil conditions, etc.

Sincerely,

MIDWEST CHURCH DESIGN LTD.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Berry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Jack Berry, AIA, CSI

JB: db  
Enclosure(s)

**APPENDIX**

**Data from the church**

Present Sanctuary  
 Existing Seating Capacity: 210 (80% = 168)

Parking (on church property): 37 spaces  
 Parking (contiguous): 38 spaces

Any addition parking requires crossing a right of way. Locations containing additional parking include, the Historical Society, Ace Hardware, Bank, on the street)

Parking ratio is 1.75 – 2.00 persons per vehicle

<b>EXISTING CHURCH PROPERTY</b>	
Address of Property	14999 S. State Ave. Middlefield, OH
Owner	FUMC Middlefield
Parcel Number	19-042300
Lot Size	.69 Acres
Distance from existing	not applicable
Building size (if applicable)	
Incorporation	Village of Middlefield
Water availability	Water is available
Sewer availability	Sewer is available
Electric availability	Synergy (800) 589-3101
Gas availability	Dominion (888) 589-3101 Orwell (800) 832-6164
Zoning District	GC – General Commercial
Permitted use	no - but prob allowed in 1153.07

<b>PROSPECTIVE PROPERTIES</b>				
	<b>PROPERTY 1</b>	<b>PROPERTY 2</b>	<b>PROPERTY 3</b>	<b>PROPERTY 4</b>
Address of Property	14681 Old State Rd. Middlefield, OH	15339 Kinsman Rd. Middlefield, OH	15651 W. High St. Middlefield, OH	Madison Rd. Middlefield, OH
Owner	Ralph Fritinger	R. E. Gibco Ltd.	Sun Life Insurance	Herbert Craig
Parcel No.	18-024200	18-025800 18-025900	19-016500	18-015700
Lot Size	74.05 Acres (5 acres available)	10.21 Acres 19.30 Acres	4.59 Ac	151 Acres
Distance from existing church	2,950 feet 0.56 miles	7,000 feet 1.33 miles	3,700 feet 0.70 miles	16,500 feet 3.13 miles
Building size (if applicable)	NA	NA	24,946 S.F.	NA
Incorporation	Middlefield twp. 440 632 5095	Middlefield twp. 440 632 5095	Village of Middlefield 440 286 1010 (11)	Middlefield twp. 440 632 5095
Water Availability	no (unless annexed)	no (unless annexed)	yes	no (unless annexed)
Sewer Availability	no (unless annexed)	no (unless annexed)	yes	no (unless annexed)
Electric Availability	Synergy (800) 589-3101	Synergy (800) 589-3101	Synergy (3 phase) (800) 589-3101	Synergy (800) 589-3101
Gas Availability	Dominion (888) 589-3101 Orwell (800) 832-6164	Dominion (888) 589-3101 Orwell (800) 832-6164	Dominion (888) 589-3101 Orwell (800) 832-6164	Dominion (888) 589-3101 Orwell (800) 832-6164
Zoning District	no zoning	no zoning	general commercial	no zoning
Permitted use	NA	NA	no - but prob allowed 1153.07	NA

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from "Setting our Sites on Sites" by H. Joseph Miller, Frontline Magazine, Sept/Oct 2009 issue