

Engagement Timeline

First Covenant Church (FCCM) of Minneapolis, Minnesota

with

Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) and Northwest Conference Leadership (NWC)

February 2013 - ECC and NWC leaders meet with FCCM leaders and pastor over concerns about the apparent direction of FCCM relative to its position on human sexuality.

March 2013 - FCCM Lead Team votes to approve new internal statement on "Pastoral Ethics for Same Sex Attraction" which stands at opposition to the discerned position of the ECC.

June 2014 - As document begins to inform direction, Pastor Mauricio Dell'Arciprete resigns from FCCM staff and Latino congregants withdraw as a result of FCCM changing position on human sexuality.

June 2014 - Letter from FCCM leadership and pastor to congregation establishing the written sexual ethic from March 2013 document on "Pastoral Ethics for Same Sex Attraction." Letter circulates around the NWC and broader ECC creating confusion and concern.

The following are particular elements of the aforesaid document:

- the elimination of heterosexual as the standard for biblical marriage
- the endorsement for same-sex sexual activity in some instances
- the allowance of staff participation in a same-sex marriage ceremony
- the overstepping of dissent from a pastor's personal dissent to the pastor's position overshadowing the teaching and position of the ECC

July 2014 - Visit from ECC and NWC leaders to discuss further with FCCM Lead Team and pastor.

August 2014 - Letter from ECC and NWC leaders as follow-up to aforementioned meeting establishing a path toward harmonization.

September 2014 - ECC and NWC leaders meet with FCCM Lead Team and pastor to hear response and action plan to address the August 2014 letter.

October 2014 - FCCM congregational forum on human sexuality at which ECC Interim Executive Minister of Develop Leaders presents discerned position of ECC in the midst of other positions also being discussed as viable alternatives.

October 2014 - Second letter from ECC and NWC leaders with much the same content as the August 2014 letter as there was little movement toward alignment. A written response from FCCM leaders and a separate one from the pastor requested by November 2014.

November 2014 - ECC NAVIGATE Vitality Conference moved from FCCM to another venue due to the public nature of FCCM's out-of-harmony stance with the ECC's discerned position.

December 2014 - Written responses from FCCM Lead Team and pastor stating the intent to align; including assurance that FCCM would not have its pastors, whether credentialed by the ECC or not, officiate at same-sex ceremonies nor use the building for such.

February 2015 - ECC and NWC leaders conference call with FCCM leaders over a growing concern that there are still no clear signs of alignment.

May 2015 - ECC and NWC leaders meet with pastor to communicate concerns and expectations.

September 2015 - NWC Executive Board invites FCCM Lead Team to meet for face-to-face connection and conversation. Meeting raises questions and concerns as those from FCCM ask about their pastors who neither hold to nor can espouse the ECC discerned position.

March 2017 - Sermon presented by pastor that stands at opposition to ECC discerned position and declaring this dissenting position to be the position of the FCCM.

March 2017 - ECC leader meets with NWC Executive Board over aforesaid sermon and next steps.

March 2017 - ECC leaders meet with pastor to discuss content of sermon at odds with ECC position.

March 2017 - Over 70 pastors and staff from NWC churches meet as concerns grow over the trajectory of FCCM and expressing concern for the trajectory of the ECC.

March 2017 - Conference call with ECC leaders and FCCM pastor.

July 2017 - ECC and NWC leaders and board members meet with FCCM Lead Team to discuss both positions and actions of FCCM.

September 2017 - ECC and NWC leaders meet with FCCM Lead Team members. ECC and NWC leaders told that FCCM congregation was in a “discernment process” and unsure of whether or not the church could abide by the position as currently articulated in the ECC.

April 2018 - At the time of the NWC annual meeting, FCCM publishes new “Love All” statement/policy that permits its pastors to perform same sex wedding ceremonies, the holding of such ceremonies in the church building, and removes the boundary of heterosexuality from the marriage ethic, among other things.

April 2018 - On the floor of the NWC annual meeting a delegate points out the statement by FCCM on its website and asks the moderator if the NWC Executive Board is aware of this and if anything was being done to address the departure of FCCM from the discerned position of the ECC. The moderator stated that the board was aware and that ECC leaders were coming to address this recent policy statement.

May 2018 - Suspension letter sent to pastor by interim Executive Minister of Develop Leaders (as disclosed in FCCM open letter dated May 24, 2019). ECC leaders subsequently meet with FCCM leaders. In response, FCCM Lead Team rejects suspension and issues its own ministerial license to the pastor in defiance of suspension as determined by the ECC Board of Ordered Ministry. Pastor continues to serve even though suspended.

May 2018 - Out-of-harmony investigation begins with FCCM after 27 NWC pastors request investigation according to the process as delineated in the ECC Constitution and By-laws (Article 4.4). Notice is then given to both FCCM and ECC leadership per Article 4.4 requirements.

July 2018 - ECC leader makes one final effort to ask the pastor and FCCM to abide by the decision of the Board of Ordered Ministry regarding the suspension. Request denied.

Agenda Item 10.b.

August 2018 - As delineated in the ECC governing documents, NWC Executive Board meets with FCCM Lead Team to ask the church to come back into harmony with the ECC. Following meeting, the NWC board communicates with ECC Leaders per Article 4.4 requirements.

October 2018 - NWC superintendent and board chair meet with ECC Executive Board in Chicago to provide verbal report and recommendation for independent investigation by ECC Executive Board. Task Force formed out of ECC Ex Board to oversee process.

October 2018 - FCCM leaders recommend to its members significant changes to its Constitution and Bylaws which, among other things, removes the necessity of the pastor having to be in good standing with the ECC. Phrases like “in harmony with the ECC” are stricken from the proposed Constitution and Bylaws. It also removes the requirement that the church property automatically revert back to the ECC and NWC if the church ceases to exist, but that the assets could be distributed at the discretion of the church members to other entities. Subsequently, the revised governance documents are approved by the congregation. The Executive Board held that there was sufficient preliminary basis to conclude that FCCM was out of harmony and that the process should move forward to allow FCCM an opportunity to defend itself before the Board so that its members could draw an independent conclusion from that of the Northwest Conference. The ECC Executive Board creates a task force to conduct an independent investigation on behalf of the ECC Executive Board.

March 2019 - FCCM leaders meet with ECC Executive Board in Chicago to present the position of FCCM. No movement made toward harmonization on behalf of FCCM. The Executive Board finds FCCM out of harmony with the ECC as provided in Article 4.4 of the ECC Constitution and Bylaws.

April 2019 - ECC president and Executive Board leaders attend FCCM worship service and meet with Lead Team for one final attempt to encourage coming back into alignment with the discerned position of the ECC. Efforts to accomplish this are not productive.

May 2019 - FCCM notifies ECC Executive Board that the church is choosing the involuntary withdrawal pathway. Vote by ECC Executive Board to bring recommendation to the ECC annual meeting to dismiss FCCM involuntarily from the ECC roster of churches.

It can also be noted that former ECC leaders have in the course of the past 5 years, met personally with the pastor of FCCM for more than twenty times to seek common ground and harmonization. Further, it can be noted that over the course of 6 years, FCCM moved from a position of almost complete alignment with the ECC to one of almost complete opposition relative to human sexuality.