



RETURNING HOME

The Campaign To Rebuild Fargo Elim

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.
When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep
over you. When you walk through fire you will not
be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

Isaiah 43:2



January 23, 2020 started out as a normal day for John “JC” Cunningham. His wife Karen picked him up at Fargo Elim for a doctor’s appointment, and they decided to go to the Fargo Air Museum before returning home.

During their museum visit, Karen got a call from Fargo Elim: there was a fire. At that point, JC and Karen assumed it was a small fire, with nothing much to concern them. Later that evening, they drove back toward Fargo Elim, and quickly realized it was much worse than they could have imagined. They parked across the street, and watched flames pierce the roof as fire crews battled the four-alarm blaze. JC watched as his home for the past twelve years burned. He tried to stay calm, even as he worried about the wellbeing of his beloved staff and neighbors.

JC would later learn that every single person was safely evacuated—111 elders, 34 preschoolers, and 37 staff members. By God’s grace, the evacuation was executed flawlessly, and no one was hurt.

Yet, the losses were immense. JC and his neighbors lost their home that day. Kids lost their beloved preschool and their daily interaction with their “grand friends.” Staff lost the joy of serving the residents they had come to know and love.

The broader community of Fargo-Moorhead lost a nursing home they had trusted to care for their loved ones since 1968. In the weeks after the fire, Fargo Elim’s leadership team and chaplain consistently checked in with residents, children, families and staff to ensure that everyone was doing okay and settling in to their new environments. They were humbled to hear this statement over and over:

“I want to come back. Fargo Elim is my home.”

Fargo Elim isn’t the only nursing home the community depends on, but it is an integral pillar. **In order to continue serving the elders of Fargo-Moorhead in the spirit of Christ’s love, Fargo Elim must be rebuilt. In order to bring past and future residents home, we need a new Fargo Elim care center.**

A Foundation of Faith: Then, Now and Always

If you were to sit down and visit with someone we've served, you're likely to hear a story that will stick with you—one of transformative care and family connection. This unique culture is captured in countless stories of those we've served over more than fifty years. It's also captured in our five star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Our distinct culture and reputation didn't happen by chance. We are who we are today because of our foundation of faith.

In 1964, the North Central District of the Evangelical Free Church (NCD) purchased ten acres of land south of Fargo. It was just a grain field, but leadership from area churches and Elim Care saw an opportunity: that empty field would one day hold a community serving older adults in the spirit of Christ's love. In 1968, Fargo Elim (then known as Elim Nursing Home) opened its doors and welcomed 73 residents. It was one of the original five nursing homes in the Elim family.

Fargo Elim in the 1970's



In the decades since, much has changed. Wings were added to accommodate more residents, and spaces were remodeled for physical therapy and a beauty shop. In 1989, a new dining room was completed thanks to the incredible generosity of Emil Mickelson, a former resident. In 2000, the children's center and assisted living opened, allowing us to create opportunities for intergenerational relationships and meet the needs of more older adults.

Since the very beginning, faith has been our foundation and the driving force of everything we do.

Growing in Faith: The Cassia Story

In 2018, Fargo Elim's parent organization, Elim Care, began to explore an affiliation with Augustana Care. Together, Elim and Augustana had 200 years of experience serving older adults, and missions deeply rooted in a Christian standard of care. An affiliation offered many opportunities for growth and strength, adding programs, services and resources for residents and employees across all communities. In order to honor the spiritual convictions of both organizations, leaders agreed to take a "dual track" approach to spiritual care: Legacy Elim communities would always have a chaplain from the EFCA, while Legacy Augustana communities would always have a chaplain associated with the ELCA.

The Cassia Story Cont'd

In 2020, the two organizations officially came together as Cassia. The name is derived from a biblical anointing oil made from the bark of the cassia tree. Traditionally, cassia symbolizes the heart of a servant. As a larger, stronger parent organization, Cassia has been able to continue and even grow its dedication to each of the local communities in the Cassia family. Fargo Elim and all other communities are recognized as having individual legacies, histories and cultures. Cassia supports and cultivates their unique strengths, believing this to be the best way to meet the needs of the residents and families they serve. If you would like to learn more about the journey from Elim Care to Cassia, please see the appendix on page 17.

“Through Cassia, I have access to resources and support that help me fulfill my role as Chaplain, as I care for the Fargo Elim families in the spirit of Christ’s love. The Fargo Elim community is not just a place to find help in the aging seasons of life—it is a thriving, dynamic community built on a foundation of faith.”

– David Juve, Chaplain



It Wasn't Perfect, But It Was Home

Thanks to this long legacy of faith, we were able to create a distinct experience at Fargo Elim. Both residents and staff felt that they were part of a family, and that Fargo Elim was “home.” But the physical building we called home was far from perfect. It was the nursing home of the 1960s.

In the 60s, nursing home designs were modeled after hospital design: sterile, practical, efficient. Much of the practical equipment, such as boilers and kitchen appliances, were nearly due for replacement. The old building was made up of 52 private, individual rooms and 34 rooms shared by two residents.

The building was designed in an age before community and activities were a top priority, so there was limited common space. As time passed and care models changed, eldercare communities began to implement a “neighborhood model”—intentionally designed spaces and programs that fostered community, connection and a feeling of home. Fargo Elim worked to achieve this neighborhood model through our programs and staffing for many years, but the 1960s building design held us back from fully achieving it.



The areas of the building indicated in red experienced significant damage from the fire and will be rebuilt.



The fire was an immense tragedy that disrupted many lives.

Yet, we know that God is always working for good, even in difficulty. We know that God trades beauty for ashes.

What has emerged from this loss is a unique opportunity to design the best home possible for our Fargo Elim family.

Walking in Faith: Rebuilding Fargo Elim

What will this new home look like?

Our new home will be a skilled nursing care center of the 21st century, complete with private rooms and the warmth, homey-ness and amenities our elders and future generations of elders need to thrive.



Since the 1960s, eldercare communities have come to understand the importance of privacy for residents to retain more autonomy and comfort. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how imperative privacy can be in containing the spread of illness. The new building will be composed of 62 individual, private rooms, and three private suites.

The layout of the new building is designed with a stronger neighborhood model, with each section of the building having its own activity and community spaces and access to courtyards. Finally, our building and amenities will reflect the heart and culture of home that staff have worked hard to create for so many years.

Private Rooms and Suites

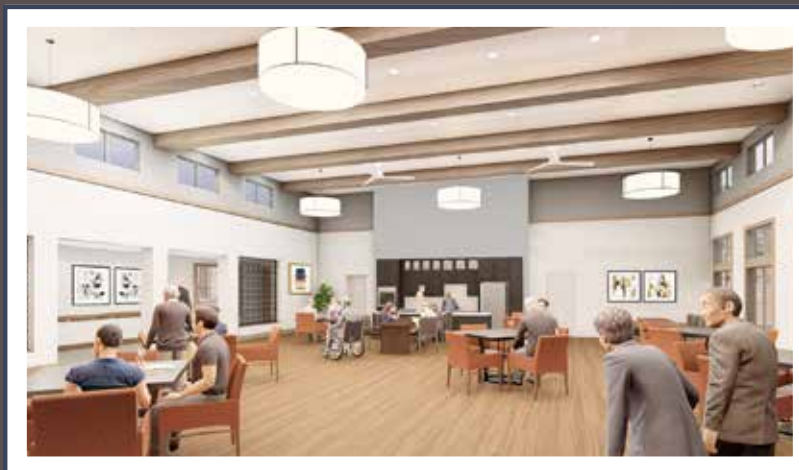
The new building will feature 62 private rooms and three private suites. Residents will enjoy their own 3/4 bathroom and kitchenette, which includes a sink, mini fridge, cupboards and counter space. Each room will have an accessible countertop dedicated for immediate charting and a locked cabinet for storage of medications specific to each resident.

The suites are composed of two private bedrooms with a shared bath. This layout is helpful in a variety of situations, especially with couples who want to be close to each other as they require additional care. This layout also provides privacy for residents, while creating a more accessible price point.



Two Dining Rooms

Two dining rooms will serve four neighborhoods, creating a more peaceful, intimate dining environment. The dining rooms will sit on either side of the kitchen, which allows food to be served directly to tables and ensures piping hot meals and cold crisp salads fresh from the talented culinary staff.



Activity Spaces and Common Areas

Each neighborhood will have its own activity space, for a total of four across the care center. These multifunctional spaces are large enough to accommodate all sorts of creative activities and programs, while being small enough to provide opportunities for residents to experience true community with their neighbors. These spaces, with the lobby, a lounge, and courtyards during the warmer months, will be available for residents to spend time with friends and loved ones.



Courtyard

The new design features two small and one large courtyard. All will have circular walking paths, seating options, and landscaping. The larger courtyard will feature a pergola and patio, as well as raised-bed gardens for residents with green thumbs.

With North Dakota's long winters, access to outdoor spaces becomes a priority. Fresh air, sunshine and gardens—these are crucial to our wellbeing. These spaces allow residents to make the most of the long summer days and continue to thrive through the winters.





“The proposed new facility would be a welcome addition to continue to address the needs of older adults in our community. We are excited about Elim’s commitment to the community and the proposed vision. Fargo is a generous, caring community. I am confident that Fargo will step up and support this opportunity.”

– Mayor Mahoney, Mayor of Fargo



This is what our new home will look like. We cannot wait to reopen our doors to our Fargo Elim family, old and new, and say,

“Welcome home.”



“All of our staffers are united by the same vision—to do whatever it takes to enhance residents’ lives. And that can be challenging when you have residents who come from different walks of life and experiences and faith backgrounds. How do you help them all come together and live as a family? To feel like part of the family, you need to be seen and understood as an individual. Your specific needs—everything from medical to spiritual to emotional or even recreational—must be met. Once people feel understood as an individual, they feel part of the family. This is hard work, but it’s the most rewarding work.”

– Renee Muhonen, Administrator



Fargo Elim first became home for JC and Karen in February of 2008. JC was paralyzed on the right side and unable to speak due to a stroke, and they weren't sure he'd ever recover. As the long days in the hospital turned into months, it became clear that he was going to need more care than Karen would be able to give him at home. Karen started the process of looking for a care center. She didn't choose Fargo Elim intentionally. It was just the first place with an opening—a coincidence.

JC and Karen look back on this coincidence as a blessing from God.

Within six months, JC was talking again. Thanks to excellent care and therapy, he made significant progress with both speech and movement. Thirteen years later, he's able to get around with a little help from his motorized wheelchair. Karen and JC can tell you at length about the quality of care at Fargo Elim and the difference it has made for JC. They also miss the tight-knit community. Although Fargo Elim might be smaller than some neighboring communities, JC and Karen appreciate the closeness and family dynamic that created. They knew everyone and everyone knew them.

JC is counting down the days until the grand reopening...until he can go home.

"I can't wait to get back to Fargo Elim. Every day is one day closer."

To bring past and future residents home,
we need a new care center.

But we can't do it without you.

The cost to create this beautiful, state-of-the-art home for our elders will be approximately \$19.5 million.

Proceeds from insurance that can be applied to construction after expenses from the fire and previous care center is approximately \$10 million. Because insurance payout is calculated based on what was lost and must cover previous expenses related to the fire, we are facing a gap in funding totaling \$9.5 million.

We will pursue \$8.5 million through grants and financing.

That leaves a gap of \$1 million.

A number of elders and staff who were relocated due to the fire want to return “home” to their Fargo Elim family. Other elders and their families, they are looking for a place just like Fargo Elim—a place that feels like home with people that feel like family.

To welcome these elders home, we need to fill a
gap of \$1 million. Will you help?

Naming Opportunities

To commemorate your generosity, we are pleased to offer a variety of naming opportunities. You are welcome to select an area from the list below that is meaningful to you and corresponds with the amount of your donation. Recognition is typically indicated by a plaque inside or outside of a certain area or room. Most commonly, plaques may include the name of the honoree or a message in honor or memory of a loved one.

Naming Opportunities	Gift Amount	No. Naming Opportunities
Main Lobby	\$200,000	1
Dining Room	\$100,000	2
Family Room, Drop Off Canopy	\$75,000	2
Neighborhood	\$50,000	3
Activity/Living Room (3), Activity Kitchen, Fireplace	\$30,000	5
Courtyard (3), Pergola (3)	\$20,000	6
Walking Path (3), Spa Room (3), Salon	\$10,000	7
Private Suite	\$5,000	7
Resident Room	\$2,000	20

While these opportunities for recognition are intended to be long-standing, they are not guaranteed as permanent. Fargo Elim and Cassia reserve the right to remove recognition opportunities if needed (e.g. the discovery of unethical behavior on the part of the donor). Fargo Elim and Cassia also may choose not to replace or reinstate plaques or physical markers of recognition in cases of building or property damage.

To start a conversation about helping the Fargo Elim family return home, please reach out via phone or email.

Megan Tucker: (701) 451-3518, Megan.Tucker@cassialife.org

Pastor David Juve: (614) 562-5883, David.Juve@cassialife.org

Matt Crawford: (952) 855-5181, Matthew.Crawford@cassialife.org



Appendix: Cassia Story

In 2017, Elim Care CEO Bob Dahl was invited to lunch by Augustana Care CEO Tim Tucker. Tim had a rather unusual proposition for Bob. Tim and the Augustana board of directors had spent much time considering the future of Augustana Care. Several members of the Augustana leadership team, including Tim, were nearing retirement. The obvious next step would have been to embark on a search process for the next generation of leaders, and to take great care in handing off their heritage of faith and mission of fullness of life. This would have been a daunting process, and during such transitions, there can be uncertainty. A different vision had begun to develop: joining together with Elim Care and their trusted leadership team. While Augustana Care and Elim Care were sponsored by different denominations, they had much in common. Together, they had over 200 years of experience serving older adults and those in need. Both organizations were started by followers of Jesus, and had maintained their legacy of faith for generations. Tim had confidence that Augustana Care's legacy of faith and excellence would continue well into the future in an affiliation with Elim Care.

Beyond the shared foundation of faith, an affiliation would provide numerous opportunities for growth and strength, bringing additional programs, services, and resources that would benefit residents and employees across all communities. There were many compelling reasons to consider the affiliation, but one major question had to be answered: could two organizations committed to two distinct denominations truly unify without sacrificing important tenets of belief?

This question was carefully considered through counsel and prayer with the chaplains and boards from both organizations. The answer became clear. To honor the spiritual convictions of both organizations, they would create a "dual track" approach in spiritual care. Legacy Elim communities would always have a chaplain from the EFCA, while Legacy Augustana communities would always have a chaplain associated with the ELCA. For any communities built or added in the future, a decision would be made based on the needs of the surrounding community and presence of local churches. This approach would achieve unity, rather than uniformity, honoring the commitments and convictions of both organizations. Whether EFCA or ELCA, chaplains are unified in their commitment to serve all by following One.

With this unified vision, the possibility of coming together was brought before the North Central District of the Evangelical Free Church (NCD), which owned Elim Care. After a year of discussion and prayer, it was decided by the NCD pastors at the annual conference that the NCD would no longer own Elim Care, allowing the formation of Cassia to take place.

To ensure that the EFCA heritage would continue, it was determined that half of the Cassia board of directors would be made up of Elim Care board members. Further, the NCD would retain the responsibility of approving the Elim Care board members of Cassia in the future.

In order to start the next chapter with equality and unity, a new name was selected: Cassia.

The name was inspired by anointing oil made from the bark of the cassia tree and referenced in the Bible several times. It evokes both Elim Care and Augustana Care's commitment to healing and wholeness, and our commitment to innovating solutions that help those we serve to live well. Traditionally, cassia is said to symbolize the heart of a servant. The mission statements of both Elim and Augustana came together seamlessly as the new Cassia mission: to foster fullness of life for older adults in the spirit of Christ's love.

Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why will the new building accommodate fewer residents?

A: After conducting a market study of the community to understand age demographics and needs, the new layout was designed to serve 88 residents in both skilled nursing and rehab instead of 115. This is precisely the size we need to be to best serve the older adults of Fargo-Moorhead. This downsize also allows us to make the move to all private rooms. The footprint of the land would not have accommodated private rooms for 115 residents.

Q: Will the Transitional Care Unit (5th Avenue) and the chapel be demolished and rebuilt?

A: Fifth Avenue and the chapel were spared from significant damage and will remain intact. Fifth Avenue will receive cosmetic improvements to ensure that it matches the new sections of the building.

Q: Will Elim Children's Center be reopening?

A: Elim Children's Center will not reopen at this time. Because the new building will feature all private rooms and more activity and community spaces, the footprint does not allow enough space to include a children's center. Although the interactions with our young friends will be sorely missed by both residents and staff, there are plans to partner with Eagles Elementary School right next door to continue offering opportunities for intergenerational relationships.



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