

## Frequently Asked Questions

Revision: 10-20-2022

The following is to provide overview highlights of what we as the Moving Forward Together Committee anticipate are the most common questions members might have. In the upcoming informational congregational meetings, please ask your additional questions and for clarification of anything below. We want your questions, and we hope that all are excited about the potential ministry we can achieve in the name of Christ together.

### 1. Why?

We have affirmed that the answer is “**Yes**” to all four of the following questions:

*Would our congregation be better by coming together than remaining separate?*

*Could we accomplish more together than we could separately?*

*Would our congregation be better served if we joined together?*

*Could the kingdom of God be further enlarged by joining together?*

### 2. Why this method of coming together?

The Pennsylvania Southeast Conference staff recommended this “folding-in” process, as found in the book *Better Together*. Our consistories and pastors explored the four methods found in that book, and also affirmed this process as the best for us in our particular situation.

From another book, we decided against Vital Church Merger without much exploration, as that requires both congregations selling their buildings.

We decided worshiping in the same building as separate congregations was not a good long-term strategy.

Just to name a few reasons: (a) it would be confusing to our community; (b) we would be competing for the same new members; (c) we would potentially be tripping over each other for events and building use; (d) if we were in separate rooms, we would miss out on the blessing of sharing together in worship; and (e) we can do a whole lot more being together.

No matter which method we would use, they all require a lawyer. Even when two congregations share a building together, if it is long-term it is recommended that a lawyer review the rental agreement. That being said, to the best of our ability, we are using the least expensive legal process we can, and as we are using our conference lawyer, we are receiving a discounted rate.

### 3. Where?

The new church will find its home in the building of the current St. Paul’s UCC.

### 4. What will be our name?

The name of the new church will be the “United Church of Christ of Robesonia,” as voted on by the membership of our two congregations on Sunday, October 16, 2022.

### 5. When?

Informational Congregational Meetings will be after worship on Sunday, October 23 and Sunday, November 6, as well as Tuesday, November 1 at 6:30pm.

The final vote will be on Sunday, November 13 after worship.

We will be officially one as of January 1, 2023.

We anticipate the legal and financial process of closing the two separate corporations will end sometime during the first quarter of 2023.

### 6. Upon what are we voting?

- a. Resolution to Form the New Church
- b. Resolution of Transition
- c. Constitution and ByLaws
- d. Endowment Fund ByLaws
- e. Behavioral Covenant

(All these documents are being provided in advance of the November 13 vote)

7. Mission

As found in the bylaws:

The avowed purpose and mission of this Church is to share God's word and love with all, worship God, preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, celebrate the Sacraments, provide a home for spiritual growth and nurture; to use our individual talents to build up the Body of Christ, rendering loving and joyful service toward our fellow humankind, especially to those in need, giving witness to God's grace in both word and deed; to realize Christian Fellowship and Unity within this Church and the Church Universal; and to strive for righteousness, justice, and peace.

8. Vision

*For All to be Connected in a Living Relationship with the Loving God.*

9. Discipleship Statement

*As a disciple of Christ, I am well grounded in faith when I am....*

*outwardly **serv**ing, upwardly **worship**ing, inwardly **grow**ing, together **connect**ing  
all to the Body of Christ.*



This distills the basic membership/discipleship responsibilities/expectations down to just four memorable words:

**serve, worship, grow, connect**

All members strive to participate in the following three areas of Christian discipleship in ways that connects themselves and others in a growing and living relationship with God through this church, "joined and knit together," "building up the Body of Christ in Christian love" (*adapt. Ephesians 4:11-16*):

- serv**ing - at least annually serving God through the church
- worship**ing - regularly participating in corporate worship through the church
- grow**ing - throughout the year growing in personal faith and discipleship beyond corporate worship (i.e. Bible study, Sunday school, prayer group, scripture discussion in Youth Group or Abide Groups, etc)
- connect**ing - we are engaging in ministry in ways that connect us to God, to the people in our community, and to one another as the church.

10. Philosophy of Ministry

a. Missional Approach

primary resource: *Reclaiming the Great Commission*, as St. Paul's UCC has been using

In Jan/Feb an annual workshop is offered to leadership, for which all members can participate to learn and grow more in understanding of this philosophy of ministry

b. Primary Focus - Evangelism

c. Secondary Focus - Discipleship

d. Abide Groups

a church of small groups

where everyone is a part of supporting one another, and everyone is feeling supported by others

primary resource: *The Big Book on Small Groups*

e. Visitation Care Team Ministry

primary resource: *Called to Care*, as both churches have used

f. The primary resource for vision/discipleship statements and goal setting is: *Church Unique*

11. Evangelism & Discipleship Strategy

a. We have a four page comprehensive Evangelism & Discipleship strategy. We would be happy to share a copy with those who would like more detail.

b. The highlights include:

- i. Primary goal of leadership is to continually connect and involve more people
- ii. Ongoing trainings to grow in carrying out various ministries
- iii. Members are a part of Abide Groups (small groups) to keep connected and supportive of one another
- iv. Approach to reaching non-members in our community
- v. Approach to leading visitors to become members, and new members to become active members
- vi. Approaches to helping current members grow and remain active members

## 12. Better Together

- a. We are striving for a 1+1=3 joining  
How do we get three from two  
1 = Current St. Paul's Members + 1 = Current Zion Members + 1 = Non-Members in our Community
- b. The question put forth in the *Better Together* book is what 2 or 3 new programs/ministry efforts will we be carrying out within the first year (starting shortly after the first day of being the new church), that we anticipate will lead us to begin growing right from the beginning of our coming together. In particular, what 2 or 3 things can we do together that we could not do apart (or that we could do better together).
- c. It is important to have at least two new ministries, because there is always risk in an idea not quite working, so a church should not put "all of its eggs in the one basket" of just one idea.  
It is important to not have more than three, because two or three programs should be big enough and challenging enough to make a noticeable difference, and it is important to therefore not stretch yourself too thin. With more than three, quality can begin to suffer.  
It is important to recognize that these two or three things are not just things that the leaders do, but are approaches to involve the majority of the congregation as a primary effort toward the 1+1=3.  
These 2 or 3 new things cannot just be a once and done type activity, but are to be more comprehensive, as they are to lead people into membership over the long term, but especially in the next year. A once and done activity rarely leads people to join a church.
- d. It is important to recognize that our leadership has been giving a lot of time and effort to this process over the past year, and will need everyone who was not directly involved in this coming together process to especially step up to help us now grow as a new church.
- e. Those two or three new ministry mission programs are planned to be finalized at our November 2 meeting.

## 13. Staff

Most of our staff are continuing to serve as they have been serving, with their current job descriptions.

- a. Pastors - both the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Motz and the Rev. Mary Etta Mest are continuing in their part-time positions - the reaffirmation of their call as our pastors is included in the attached resolution to form the new church  
Why two pastors? Both currently exceed their part-time hours (thank you to them), as two part-time pastors is not quite sufficient for the pastoral ministry our church seeks to engage. Based on the anticipated size of the new church, the anticipated pastoral need would be the equivalent of a 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 pastoral positions. We will be slightly under that with the equivalent of a 1 1/4 pastoral position (3/4 time + 1/2 time clergy persons). If serving an older congregation, the general guide is to increase the pastoral staff by an additional 1/4 time, as there tends to be more hospitalizations, homebound members, and funerals in older congregations, utilizing more pastoral time (within our area, in older congregations, it is becoming increasingly more common for churches to add an additional 1/4 part-time clergy for visitations). The planned "merging" of relative equals, includes continual pastoral leadership from the two parent congregations. There will be a lot of work to bring all together and to launch the new ministry programs. By having two pastors from two different demographics, our congregation is better served, as we will now have an additional choice to whom to bring pastoral concerns.
- b. Minister of Music - Rev. Robert Masenheimer will continue as he has been serving
- c. Office Secretary - there will be (and already has been) more office work to do than what our current staff can reasonably manage (our great thanks for our secretaries going above and beyond that for which we provide compensation).  
Geri Gammel will continue as a part-time 20 hr secretary, and become the Lead Office Secretary  
We will seek to hire a second part-time 10 hr secretary to begin in December  
Janice Connor will continue as a part-time secretary into January 2023 to finalize end of year records and help with the data merge, after which her position will come to an end
- d. Sexton - Michael Pastor (with Terry Pastor assisting) will continue as they have been serving
- e. Treasurer - Terry Pastor will continue as Treasurer
- f. Financial Secretary - we have yet to determine who the Financial Secretary will be
- g. Bell Choir Director - this will continue with Miriam Borkert as a non-staff/non-paid position

14. Division of Pastoral Duties
  - a. Pastor Ben will be preaching and planning about 3/5 of the worship services, and Pastor Mary Etta will be preaching and planning about 2/5 of the worship services.
  - b. If both are available, in most situations, members can choose which pastor they would like to have officiate for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. We have a plan in place if there is no preference.
  - c. We have a plan for which pastor will do which visitations.
  - d. We have a plan for which pastor will focus on which ministry tasks, which we expect to evolve as we as a church grow and evolve.
  - e. The experience to date has been that both pastors work very well together and are able to reach a healthy consensus to make decisions.
  
15. Office Space
  - a. Pastor Ben's office will remain as is
  - b. The current secretary's office will become Pastor Mary Etta's office
  - c. The choir room will become the office space for the two secretaries, treasurer, and financial secretary (Although, we may need to continue to use a portion of the Upper Room for the treasurer and financial secretary)
  - d. The Upper Room will continue to be a multiple purpose room, which will include being the choir room
  - e. Pastor Bob's office will remain as is
  
16. Legal Process
  - a. Our lawyer for this process is James Smith of Smith Bukowski, Wyomissing
  - b. He is also the PSEC's lawyer
  - c. The legal process can take an additional 6-9 months after the November vote
  - d. Until our attorney advises us that we can begin to use the new name, as of January 1, 2023, under the advisement of our attorney, our new congregation will be temporarily using the name "St. Paul's UCC" for legal and financial matters.
  
17. Constitution & ByLaws
  - a. The congregations will be voting upon these to put into effect. It requires a simple majority.
  - b. The new ByLaws will require a 2/3 majority to change, which will reassure if there is any apprehension of one parent congregation significantly changing the church in the future without the super-majority of church support.
  - c. The proposed ByLaws reflect and honor the history of our Reformed Protestant roots and of our parent congregations' journey to this new church.
  
18. Leadership
  - a. As noted in the Transition Resolution, over the next four years, we will be seeking to balance the leadership from our two parent congregations, while making room for new members to participate in leadership.
  - b. We will have a committee leadership structure, which is identical to the structure of the current St. Paul's.
  - c. A "Committee Booklet" is available for anyone who would like a copy to see the description and details of each committee.
  
19. Policies
  - a. Following the Folding-In process, the starting place for most of our policies are based on the policies that St. Paul's already has in place.
  - b. Changing of policies will require a 2/3 Consistory vote, so we can be more reassured that neither parent congregation on its own can make a significant change to the new church without wider support.
  - c. Those policies are available for those who are interested, and include: Child Safety, Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals, Snow Cancellation, etc.
  
20. Cemeteries
  - a. The new church will continue to have St. Paul's two board members on the Heidelberg Cemetery Board of Directors, along with St. Daniel's ELCA and Trinity ELCA.
  - b. The Womelsdorf Cemetery has been a separate entity from Zion UCC, and therefore there is no board membership for that cemetery.

21. Stewardship
  - a. We have a two page comprehensive stewardship plan as part of our church program and policies to help maintain and strengthen the finances of our new church. That is available for those who would like to see the details.
  - b. We have seven pages of financial guidelines to help with the appropriate and safe stewardship of our financial resources, which are available for anyone who would like to see those details.
  - c. Zion UCC had ended their electronic giving option; and so we will continue with St. Paul's electronic giving service, especially as member electronic giving has grown significantly over the past few years.
  
22. How do we become a member of the new church?
  - a. For current members, the short answer is by Letter of Transfer.
  - b. For new members, the short answer is by the ways that new members currently join.
  - c. Those who join between January 1 to April 30, 2023 will become charter (founding) members of the new church.
  - d. All of our current homebound members will automatically be received through Letter of Transfer.
  - e. Our current (non-homebound members) would enter by Letter of Transfer; Affirm Membership during a worship service; completely fill out information sheet (name, address, phone, etc); provided with "Membership Expectations" and "Discipleship Statement", to understand the expectations of being an active member within the church; submit Time & Talent Sheet, including at least one way in which they plan to serve in 2023; and become a part of an Abide Group, as we seek to be better connected with one another.
  - f. Rather than a Time & Talent Sheet, at-a-distance members would report how they plan to serve God in their present location, can participate in a virtual Abide Group, and can join during worship using Zoom.
  - g. Baptized youth members who are in the confirmation class, not old enough for the confirmation class, or who commit to join the upcoming confirmation class can all be listed as charter members.
  - h. For those who want to be associated with the new church, but not be an active member, additional categories include: Associate Member and Friend of the United Church of Christ of Robesonia.
  - i. We have a two page document that goes into greater detail, for those who would like more detail.
  
23. Affirmation by UCC
  - a. For the new United Church of Christ of Robesonia to be a local congregation of the UCC, the Committee On Ministry of the Covenant Association needs to give us standing as a UCC church. We have been in contact with them and the PSEC throughout this process. There are a half dozen or so documents which we will submit to them for their approval.
  - b. A representative from the Covenant Association will be present on Sunday, November 13 to oversee and certify the vote.
  
24. Social Media
  - a. We will be forming a new website, with a new domain name. For the next 1-2 years if someone ends up on our old parent congregations' websites they will be redirected to the new website.
  - b. We will need to update our YouTube Channel, Facebook, Instagram, Discord, Phone Stream, and email addresses.
  
25. Stationary
 

We create our own stationary in-house, so changing stationary will be fairly easy to do.
  
26. Signage
  - a. The new Consistory, Evangelism Committee, and Property Committee will need to work together to address the issue of signs in the upcoming year.
  
27. Celebration Sunday
  - a. We will formally close our two independent congregations in a worship service on Saturday, January 7 at 10:15am
  - b. We will formally begin our new congregation with celebration and affirmation of membership on Sunday, January 8 at 10:15am.

## **More Information**

There are a lot of documents that have been generated as a part of this coming together process. The above is to provide overview highlights of what we as the Moving Forward Together Committee anticipates are the most common questions members have. Members are also being given the motions, resolutions, bylaws, and other documents upon which we need to vote. We did not believe it to be a good use of stewardship of resources to print out 300+ copies of every document and policy that has been created; however, in the above we note some of the additional documents available. If you would like those additional documents, please contact the MFT Co-Chairs: Kirk Aulenbach or Cory Putt.