

UPG -Transition Team Task Force Sub-Committee Report

Merger/Unification Committee

Meeting Dates: Tuesday, September 28th, 2021 and Tuesday, November 9th, 2021

Sub-committee Members: Richard Mathisen, Catherine Ziel, Nancy Kostas, Mary Mann, Gina Brockway, Ken Remaly, Edward Little, Michel Lloyd, Carol Henn, Tony Villani, Pastor Suzanne and Pastor Mike

Committee Charge:

1. To develop definitions of the terms consolidation and merger, so that the congregations can understand the different ways our three churches may come together.
2. Make a recommendation to the three congregations as to which method is most feasible and cost effective to come together.

Committee Recommendations to the Transition Team and Joint Councils:

- The committee spent our time reviewing and finalizing “easy-to-understand” definitions to present to the joint congregations. Many thanks to Catherine Ziel for “word-smithing” the attached definitions that we will share with the congregations. It was decided by the sub-committee that since the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not recognize the term “consolidation” we would change the word to “blending” for the purposes of clarity and in keeping with the recommendation. The two terms, “merger” and “blending,” will be reviewed with the joint congregations and the upcoming town hall meetings in January. Catherine also prepared a chart, which we will also include, which outlines the work that needs to be done when these two terms are being considered and these would be shared with the congregations as well.
- The committee recommends to the congregations the **Blending model**. It is with the understanding, however that this recommendation could entail more work and could be most costly than a merger. The reason we are making this recommendation is as follows:
 - Carol Henn has been in contact with several lawyers and a law firm who may be willing to take on this work “pro bono” or for a reduced cost from the previous blending of St. Matthew’s and Messiah. This is being investigated further and would need to be taken up by the transition team once the decision is made to come together.
 - The committee has also discussed the importance of recognizing that the “human consideration” will play a strong role in people’s minds as to how they will vote. Having one church “win out” so to speak is not where we want to go. The blending model allows for that to happen, a merger does not.
 - This sub-committee also reached out to the Property and Financial Assets sub-committees chairperson, Mike Horwath, to discuss the importance of providing information at the upcoming town hall meetings about some possible options for

the selling/divesting of the church properties in moving forward and to de-emphasize the building a new church, since that may not be feasible financially. This would mean we may be looking at a renovation to another space or purchasing another church building. It was noted that there are several churches in the Bethlehem area that may be coming up for sale in the near future and this might be a more reasonable move rather than undertaking the building of a new structure!

- This sub- committee also recommends that the statistical numbers from the Congregational Trends reports for the three churches be presented and this had been discussed at previous transition team meetings.
- This sub-committee also felt it was important that the three churches be a part of naming the new church and that may be done early in the process to develop buy-in from the three congregations.
- Finally, it was mentioned that we may wish to move the vote date up rather than waiting until late Spring for that to occur. Some feel that we are losing momentum and that it may be better to take the vote at the three churches shortly after the January Town Hall meetings! It was also suggested that we may wish to have short blurbs in the weekly newsletters about the work of the Transition team. This will be taken up with them at the meeting on November 18th.

This report is respectfully submitted for the Transition Team and for the Joint Council's review.

Tony Villani
Chairperson