

### ***Better Together: Covenant Methodist and The Woodlands Methodist***

The Woodlands Methodist Church has a vision for campus and church multiplication. We are working alongside the Global Methodist Church to contribute to laying a foundation for church planting in our new denomination. We have also been encouraged by the fruitfulness of our first multi-site campus, The Church at Woodforest, and are working to expand up to 5 locations of TWMC in strategic missional locations. Currently, we have three locations—The Woodlands, Woodforest, and Montgomery. We believe we have been called to invest in two additional locations that would be part of The Woodlands Methodist Church family of campuses.

Multisite researcher Jim Tomberlin writes that 40% of multisite campuses today are happening through mergers and this percentage is increasing post-covid. Here are four questions guiding our discernment:

- Would it make our church better?
- Could we accomplish more together than separately?
- Would our community be better served?
- Could the kingdom of God be further extended by this?

Although each congregation will need to discern through prayer and mutual conversation, here are some reasons why we believe this merger could be strategic for both our congregations:

#### ***Merger brings better Kingdom results.***

We believe that together we would experience greater kingdom impact than we would individually.

#### ***We share a missional heart for similar geography.***

We are both reaching areas in the Woodlands with a missional heart for our community. This would, however, give The Woodlands family of campuses a better opportunity to reach new mission fields like Klein and Tomball.

#### ***More Christian leaders are developed.***

Congregations that stay fruitful and growing are developing emerging leaders and leadership teams so that the church isn't dependent on one personality. Multiple church locations allow younger internal staff members to lead. Studies show that 87% of campus pastors are trained and promoted from within the existing church's staff.

#### ***Resources are shared.***

An advantage of multiple connected campuses is the ability to share and grow resources. This doesn't just mean financial resources—this applies to talent, technology, staff, and knowledge. Each location better supports each other with a larger pool of shared assets.

***Active volunteer participation is increased.***

Multisite researcher Warren Bird found that nearly all (88%) of multi-site churches saw increased volunteerism and lay participation after multisite mergers. This leaves openings for new volunteer leaders to step into roles and find a greater purpose within the ministry through outreach and service.

***We are not competitors.***

We are two deeply Wesleyan congregations who share a common spirit. The best mergers are between two healthy churches, deciding their highest use of Kingdom resources can be found through partnership. Partnerships like this allow us both to increase Kingdom effectiveness across all lines of ministry.

***We believe in your staff.***

The Woodlands Methodist Church knows and has confidence in your leadership. We also believe we can provide resources and staffing to help in areas where they may be spread thin. Campus pastors and staff will have more time and leeway to focus on ministering to their congregation rather than the myriad of administrative details.

***We value your culture.***

We have witnessed the missional heart and care for the community shown by Covenant from your formation. We value your calling to create real community with real connections.

***Central support services are shared.***

Shared services like Finance, Children's ministry, Missions, Creative and Tech, NextGen, Worship, HR, Adults 55+, Prayer, Caring Ministry, Marriage, Men, Women, Discipleship, and Operations help all campuses scale up without duplicating services and time.

***Improved stewardship of resources.***

Combining forces and budgets allows us both to make a bigger impact. The multisite strategy of sharing costs is a more financially responsible way to reach more people with the gospel.

***Multi-ethnic and Hispanic ministry outreach increases.***

Both congregations are living into a call to serve and be in ministry with all our neighbors. Collaborating would exponentially grow our impact in this area.

***Together we can foster an effective evangelistic strategy.***

Did you know that the biggest reason for churches to merge is evangelistic outreach? According to Leadership Network, no other approach to evangelism has witnessed such a high percentage of growth as the multisite church.

## ***Covenant Methodist and TWMC Merger FAQ's***

### ***Why is this conversation happening now?***

There are new opportunities within our shared GMC denomination. Previously, these types of conversations between two healthy churches could not have taken place. Now that Covenant and TWMC are both part of the GMC this strategic and missional conversation is possible. With more local autonomy comes more kingdom opportunity.

### ***What would happen to the pastors and staff?***

The Covenant pastoral team and staff would become part of the staff with The Woodlands Methodist Church. TWMC would work with the current program and administrative staff to attempt to keep them in their current role, create a new role, or seek another place on the team by interviewing for a new position.

### ***Who will be the main preacher and how will the sermons be delivered?***

The preaching rotation would continue as scheduled by lead pastor Jason Burnham. All preaching at TWMC is live. There would also be opportunities and availability for rotation of other pastors on the TWMC staff to be present during worship or preach at Covenant.

### ***Will our church have a new name and what will it be?***

Covenant Methodist Church would become Covenant Church at Creekside. TWMC currently has two campuses outside of The Woodlands, and each campus goes by "The Church at"...The Church at Woodforest and The Church at Montgomery. We believe that Covenant Church at Creekside would honor Covenant's name and history but also tie it into the broader vision of TWMC campuses. The Covenant logo, however, would change to reflect the common logo shared by TWMC. This allows the community to see in a visual way we are one church in multiple locations.

### ***What will happen to the church board and committees?***

The current Covenant committees would dissolve and fall under the shared TWMC structure. Although TWMC does not offer campus quotas, all campuses have members actively involved in the shared committees representing the entire church. TWMC Committee members are chosen across campuses but are responsible for the vision and mission of all TWMC locations.

A "Campus Connection Team" of around six laity would be formed comprised of those serving on TWMC committees along with lay persons the campus pastor invites to serve on the team. This team would be a congregational voice with the campus pastor guiding the campus toward fulfilling the mission and developing campus priorities in support of TWMC's mission and vision. This team would meet quarterly with the TWMC pastor responsible for overseeing campuses to strengthen connections, solve any challenges, and help equip the team to fulfill the mission. This team would also help the campus pastor yearly nominate individuals to serve on TWMC committees.



***What happens to the mission of the church?***

The mission would be one with The Woodlands Methodist Church—"Reach people for Jesus, Disciple them in faith, and Help those in need." Each campus of TWMC has unique mantras that are authentic to its culture and mission field. Covenants mantras of "One Church in Two Languages" and "Community Connecting in Christ" would be maintained.

***What will happen to the church's facilities?***

The current facility is ideally located in Creekside Village and would be retained as the heart of ministry for the Creekside and surrounding communities. TWMC would immediately begin to identify capital needs and costs for any facility upgrades.

***What will the worship services be like?***

Each of the TWMC campuses has unique worship services that fit their own culture and context. The Covenant services would continue to remain intergenerational and led by the current worship team. TWMC would assist the campus pastors in areas where they need assistance strengthening worship, but overall, worship will look very similar to current services.

***What about the current debt of \$2.75 Million?***

The current debt would be eliminated or acquired by The Woodlands Methodist Church.

***What will happen to our existing contracts and agreements?***

As part of its due diligence, TWMC will review all of Covenant's existing contractual obligations. All existing contractual obligations will be honored, provided they don't directly conflict with any of TWMC's current obligations. TWMC may determine to cancel any obligations upon expiration.

***How will the budget and finances be managed?***

Each campus budget is created by the finance department of TWMC. It is made in consultation with ministry leads from each area--Worship, Facilities, Children, Youth, Discipleship, etc. The campus pastor would evaluate the budget to ensure financial resources are properly funding priorities for the upcoming year.

***Will our denomination change?***

No. Covenant and The Woodlands Methodist are part of the same Global Methodist Denomination. We share the same doctrine and church governance. Lay delegates to the Annual Conference's yearly gathering will be assigned proportionally based on assigned clergy to each campus—one delegate for each assigned campus clergy.

***What will happen to our supported missionaries and organizations?***

Missions support will continue to be fully funded and expanded. The heart of TWMC is in missions. There will be representatives from Covenant on the TMWC missions team, and each campus will shape local priorities. Missions are funded yearly through a missions campaign each fall.

***Who will decide if this merger happens?***

Covenant Church Council votes on February 25<sup>th</sup> to present the merger to the congregation for a vote. If it is approved, after a period of information sharing and discernment, Covenant's membership would vote on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

***If the merger happens, what will change?***

If the merger happens, much of the behind-the-scenes will change (responsibilities for facility maintenance, finance, HR, and reporting structure), but much of the weekly rhythm of what a member or guest sees will remain similar. We do anticipate growth, which will influence the feel of worship, children's, and youth ministry.

***How do we handle the Growth?***

TWMC will work with Covenant leadership to attempt to sequence growth, making it manageable and scalable.

***Is there any interest in the land next to Covenant?***

Yes, currently Howard Hughes owns 3.75 acres of land between Covenant and Timber Creek Elementary. In contemplating growth and ministry expansion, there have been early conversations with Howard Hughes regarding the property's availability. As part of those conversations, Howard Hughes has offered the opportunity to enter into a one-year feasibility contract at an agreed price. If the merger moves forward we will have continued conversations with Howard Hughes regarding the additional acreage and timing to support expanded ministry at the Covenant campus.

***What is the timeline for this proposed merger?***

If merger votes from both congregations are successful, then we would target an early fall date for an official merger.

***What will happen if the merger doesn't go through?***

Covenant will continue as an independent Global Methodist Church. Having done lots of fruitful relationship-building throughout the discernment process, Covenant and TWMC will continue as neighbors in the community with enhanced opportunities to partner for the Kingdom.