

Proposed Adoption Merger

WHUMC and LLUMC Integration Team Meetings Summary

The proposed **adoption merger** of Walnut Hill UMC (WHUMC) by Lovers Lane UMC (LLUMC) has been underway since the Fall of 2019 at the recommendation of the consultant Neil Moseley. Since January 2020, WHUMC Hill and LLUMC representatives have spent hours building relationships and developing a proposal for the adoption merger. We have kept you informed of where we are through “Road Shows” at WHUMC and weekly updates through the *Church Chatter*.

We believe God is calling us to take this next step to propel us into the next 70 years of ministry. This is largely due to the steady decline in membership and giving over the last decade. Several strategic options for addressing this situation were explored and the most promising one is **“partnering” with a stronger church in what is called an adoption merger**. This model connects our two congregations in which will strengthen our mission to make disciples, staff appropriate for growth, build stronger lay leadership, grow numerically in membership, increase utilization of current and future facilities and property, and combine assets and financial resources to provide long term financial health and growth.

During the first part of May 2020, WHUMC put together an Integration Team composed of John Ozmun (Lay Leader), Don Moulton (Chair Trustees), Jo Biggerstaff (retired pastor), Brent Houston (Chair SPRC), Russell Alexander (Chair Finance), Sheila McLaughlin (Treasurer of Foundation), Lyndel Duran (Creative School Director) and Judy Smith (Chair Creative School Board). This team interfaced with Lovers Lane’s Integration team under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Stan Copeland and Rev. Scott Luginbill to work through all the issues and questions involved in an adoption merger. Below you will find an outline of our discussions to help you understand how the adoption merger will work.

We have found three exciting themes that have emerged as we vision the adoption merger of WHUMC by LLUMC. We hope that these can paint a vision for the future for these two great churches becoming one.

1. **We believe God is calling WHUMC and LLUMC to be better together.** We can do more together, one entity, than either can do alone. Our mission will be more vibrant, resources will be shared, Christian Discipleship will be improved and expanded for all ages and stages of life.
2. **We believe God is calling WHUMC to become a vibrant and missional neighborhood church.** Opportunities for outreach to nearby communities and neighborhoods will be strengthened, which will reach more people with the Gospel of Christ.
3. **We believe God is calling WHUMC and LLUMC to join resources and leadership capital to become stronger financially in the near term as well as the long term.** Together, we can increase membership, grow generosity, and expand building usage from external groups renting along with partnerships that share the costs of the facility.

In this **adoption merger, WHUMC and LLUMC will become one church with various congregations, including Walnut Hill Church.** Our church will be driven by Mission, Vision and Dream statements that unify us as ministry is pursued together. This will allow us to reach more people with the gospel of Jesus Christ, to serve more people in our community and around the world, and ultimately *“Make more Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”*

The campus of WHUMC gives LLUMC and all of us a “mission outpost” more intentionally focused in ministry and outreach to our immediate neighbors. Together, the congregations will work to grow diversity, build community, and develop relationships with those in the neighborhood.

So, you’re probably thinking, “That sounds amazing!” and you’re probably asking, “How will this actually work?” We have outlined this extensively with our Integration Teams. Below you will find our summary.

- The name of Walnut Hill UMC would be changed to **Walnut Hill Church, A Ministry of Lovers Lane United Methodist Church.** This preserves the heritage of the church’s name and also conveys something new is present and happening. Lovers Lane UMC becomes the “Charge” of Walnut Hill Church in the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Everyone on both sides felt that history and legacy was important to keep.
- Walnut Hill Church (WHC) will become a **subsidiary** of Lovers Lane United Methodist Church as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, which LLUMC calls **“Super Impact Ministry.”** This means that LLUMC would technically be the Corporate owner of the subsidiary, but the operations of WHC would be directed by a **Board of Directors** that would work to make sure Walnut Hill is growing, funded, and engaged in ministry that is in keeping with LLUMC’s mission and vision.
- All **land, buildings, and physical assets** of WHUMC will be transferred to LLUMC.

LLUMC will:

- Maintain all of the WHC campus buildings, land, and physical assets.
- Record all gifts and contributions to the church, generate monthly giving statements, prepare all accounting and financial records, make all payments to vendors and salaries to staff and ministers, and conduct an annual audit.
- Define an operating budget and allocation of funds to the church’s various ministries, in conversation with the WHC Board of Directors.
- Staff at WHC. This will make Dr. Stan Copeland the Senior Pastor, Rev. Scott Luginbill the Executive Pastor, and to-be-announced Preaching Pastor, and an Associate Pastor who will be assigned to WHC. Their time will be apportioned to WHC so we are not absorbing the full salary and associated overhead of these positions. This added depth will allow for the development of more vibrant Christian Formation activities, including worship, groups/classes, and outreach.

- Incorporate WHC representatives to serve on various committees of the One Board Model at LLUMC. This, and the WHC Board of Directors will provide a voice to WHC in decision making.

WHC will:

- Continue to conduct a Traditional Worship service each Sunday and improve the sanctuary worship experience for all. As well knowing that space will need to be given for a new modern worship community to be fully embraced and supported by WHC.
- Work with LLUMC to transition children and youth ministries to the LLUMC model. The intent here is, with LLUMC guidance, to bring in younger families with children and youth to grow all age-level ministries.
- Grow is neighborhood identity through outreach, social media presence (enhanced by LLUMC's Communications staff), service in local schools, and partnerships with LLUMC on local and global mission projects.
- Work with a created WHC Board of Directors, made up of representatives from LLUMC and WHUMC current leadership.
- Transfer membership status of current members to Lovers Lane United Methodist Church who will be the sole "Charge" in the NTC of the United Methodist Church. Each member will receive a certificate marking their membership at WHC and noting this new designation in this 70th year. A plan to celebrate this monumental time will be historic for the next 70 years in the Walnut Hill neighborhood.

Creative School:

- The overall philosophy, management, and staffing of the Creative School will not change.
- Bylaws will be updated to reflect the Creative School's new ownership.
- Licensing of the Creative School will be needed to reflect the new ownership.
- LLUMC will have representation on the Creative School Board. This will help develop relationships and shared resources between the Creative School and LLUMC's school.
- Creative School and "Steering Committee" will work closely with the WHC Board of Directors in making sure the Creative school continues this great ministry and service for the community and look for new ways to be in partnership together.

Walnut Hill Foundation

- The WHUMC Foundation will transfer existing endowments to LLUMC Foundation and manage those funds. However there will be the same MOUs and intention for the corpus to not be used and dividends of investment to be used for grants and funding of ministry for ministry at WHC with the same parameters as of now.
- WHC will have members on the LLUMC Foundation Board.
- Note that both Foundations are currently working on those plans. And will have an update prior to a vote on the Adoption.

Pending Decisions:

Not all issues and tasks will be completed by May 31 or a vote on Adoption. Integration takes time. However, the Integration Teams have worked diligently and continue to do so. Here are a few of the items we are currently working on.

- Composition of Board of Directors at WHC and how the members are selected, their roles and responsibilities.
- Leadership of WHUMC will join the One Board Council at LLUMC, and how these individuals will be selected. Other leadership will be asked to join the Boards Committees as well.
- Staffing requirements and roles after July 1, 2020 will be assessed and if current positions or roles change. WHUMC staff persons can apply for those roles. Moving forward decisions are made with input from the WHC board of directors in concert with the Executive Staff, and LLUMC SPRC. (Note that WHC will have representation on SPRC when it comes to staffing).

NEXT STEPS:

- A **Town Hall** meeting will be live streamed on **whumc.com** on **May 20th at 7:00pm**. You will be able to ask questions online, by text, e-mail or even call them in. We believe transparency and openness is needed for this process to be transformative for our church.
- **Covenant posting and Ballot mailing** will be sent by May 22nd. Details on how to vote will be included in this mailing. We will want to provide clear, easy, and secure ways for every member in full-standing to vote on this decision. Which means we need your help in sharing the good news and great opportunity this is for WHUMC. And answering all questions for those that have them.
- A scheduled **Called Church Conference** on **May 31st** (time TBD) to finalize the vote. If over the next week if we deem that we need more time we will do so. However, the Ad-Council and integration team is confident that we as a church can come together and join LLUMC in becoming a community that Loves ALL people into relationship with Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

- The leadership of both WHUMC and LLUMC have worked hard to create a new opportunity that will make both churches stronger in the short term and for the next 70 years.
- Both leadership teams believe that we will be able to deliver on these primary themes that we can be “Better Together”, become a stronger Neighborhood Church, and provide financial stability for now and into the future.
- The leadership and Bishop of the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church is fully supportive of this relationship and Adoption/Merger.