

Present: Rev. Tom, Rev. Wendy, Terri Bracy, Christy Miller, Ben Jacques, Liz Douglas, Drew Hill, Branwen Cook, Tom Gerstenlauer, Ray Santiago, Gini Berthiaume, Fraelean Curtis, Carvina Williams, Becky Jacques

[Video Recording of this Zoom Meeting](#)

Agenda/Objective for tonight's meeting

1. Tom Hathaway will present recommended model for merger process, Hillside leadership's response to that recommended model and our proposal to merge, along with an initial understanding of the container in which Hillside is willing to proceed with Sanctuary's invitation to consider a dynamic merger.
2. Sanctuary leaders will reflect on (4) questions of the first phase (Exploration) at this meeting and determine/vote if they want to proceed to Negotiation using the *Feasibility Template: (25) Issues Every Merger Must Address*. ([PDF Scan of Church Merger Toolkit Pg 203-215](#))

Tom Hathaway presents from "Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work"

- **The Models** and the need for absolute clarity across the experience as to which model you are pursuing, no bait and switch
 - a. Rebirth mergers (absorption). A struggling or dying church gets a second life by being fully absorbed and restarted under a stronger, vibrant, and typically larger church
 - b. Adoption mergers (integration). A stable or stuck church is fully integrated under the vision of a stronger, vibrant, and typically larger church
 - c. Marriage mergers (realignment). Two churches, both strong or growing, realign with each other under a united vision and new leadership configuration
 - d. ICU (intensive care unit) mergers (survival). Two churches that know they're in trouble try to turn around their critical situation but are survival driven. Such mergers often fail.
- **The Stages:** Exploration, Negotiation, Declaration, Consolidation, Integration
 - a. Exploration is like dating as you assess the possibility of merging .
 - b. Negotiation is like a courtship as you determine the feasibility of a merger.
 - c. Declaration is like an engagement as you make a public announcement recommending a merger.
 - d. Consolidation is like a wedding as the union takes place and begins with a ceremony and a name change.
 - e. Integration is like a marriage as the two congregations begin the hard work of learning to live together as one church.
- **Stage One: Exploration** - What are your answers to these four questions if we merged?
 - **Would our congregation be better by merging rather than remaining separate? YES**
 - Branwen: We have already been better, the worship space, the art ministry; feeling of enthusiasm, openness, energized and energizing,
 - Liz and Terri: Yes, Hillside gives us children's programs.
 - Ben - the addition of larger congregation means more hands to engage in the mission and ministry; simplification of mission
 - Tom - the spirit of gathering and space was quite wonderful different than art circle, having spent most of life in more formal space - is comfortable and that is absent at storefront, but now to set aside the term better - it feels different, Don't want to give up either one, (2) Pastors, 2 congregations mixing it up! always some back and forth, opportunity for something to happen that is the Spirit.

- Christy: always hoping to feel God's love coe through me, when there is a sinlge person at the pulit, it is not a dialogue and exchange, feel love and community and shared joy between the psators - and thst radiates, the duality creates a cynamic and love bubble that I vibe on.
 - Terri - beyond that dialogue and interaction between the pastors in worship, it is evident that eah pastor hve different gifts and graces that they bring, strong ones and therefore expanded ministry possibilities, guessing that rings true in those who are a part of the leadershi, we connect better with some than others, and thus having both pastors there is that much more opportunity when someone new comes through the door, they will find their place snd connection ith someone and pastor.
 - Tom - Hillside added that they like us
 - Liz - the diversity of community makes us better, cimbininn of resources
 - Fraelean - to behonest, have not been to worship at Hillside, but been to pride and other events there - open to what is coming next, believe that more growth is possible with more
 - Wendy - from HR perspective; better because solo pastoring is really hard, support of each other
 - Drew - pragmatic to merge, having two pastors and more embers avoids beng stretch too thin.
- ***Could we accomplish more together than we could separately?*** YES
- Thanksgiving Food drive
 - Been doing it for years, 500 bags droopped off at interfaith, pandemic and Wendy came along - let;s do 1000 bags, girls scouts, and pop up pantry, and coule hundred people
 - Branwen - so impressed by the staff bringing complementary skills; instead of having to do everything, each stsfs can do what they are great at!
 - Makes so much more possible
- ***Would our community be better served if we joined together?*** YES
- Fraelean feels really wonderful - that we could do more service for Medford and beyond, encouraging and exhilarating
 - Ben - not sure we always know what the community knows
 - WMO - the community wanted us to continue our work, justice, art, ministry
 - Terri - Wendy was Sanctuary, and brought vision, dont want to lose what she brought.
 - Christy -from a consumer stand point where is the attraction and involvement? Momentum in attracting participation it is in the hillsides space and the entity together, return and investment, how much we are getting delivery if a spiritual connection and involvement - both of these groups go out into the world, the more we serve, the more interest in membershi - we should focus efforts.
 - Tom - trouble with city of Medford, in Cambrige there ispartnership with city that knows where homeless are. There are poor and hurting people in our community how can we serve them? Finding those partnerships with those on the ground.
- ***Could the kin-dom of God be further enlarged by joining together?*** YES
- Uniting the voices and amplify the message of love, A Response to Evangelical Weaponizing scripture, marginalize people rather than welcome the marginalized.
 - More voices, more ideas Inclusive language observation
 - Ben - whenever the community is strengthened the kin-domof God is strengthened.
 - Christy - could the kin-dom be experienced more readily, being here now, presence of God. Feeling, especially...
- **General Further Disussion**

- Liz - Pooling resources, healthy pastors, more resources to combine, no completing voices, one united front in Medford.
- Vina - yes, I am going to go back and listen to the recoding because I value all these voices, but yes.
- Fraelean - want to make a couple points, talking about 2 different churches, and also perhaps two cultures merging, two different communities, merging, it will be a process and as an example - we will want to work through things such as ie: Branwens example of language differences; Also have question about what Evangelical and Conservative Christians mean; Tom notes that he benefits from scripture radicalizing...

More from Tom about Hillside's Perspective:

- This book recommends a speedy approach - if you do not sense that God's fingerprints are all over the merger, you need to walk away. Three to Six months...
- Adoption/Integration Model - Hillside is the leading congregation, Sanctuary is the joining congregation. Before the pandemic we (HCC) were a small and happy church, after the pandemic, we look very different, still small and very happy with who we are. Want to merge because we see the benefits, but not urgent for us and would be fine with just maintaining the partnership.
- Concerned about the CCWM DNA which is steeped in a history of conflict - that has surpassed pastors and members - and followed from CCWM to Sanctuary. The congregation has been in conflict - and honestly do not want to take on the toxicity of that history.
- Tom: For my own, I want to integrate Sanctuary's ministry and leave behind the baggage.
- Some questions posed by Sanctuary Leaders: What does it mean to be the lead? If partners are not equivalent in marriage - there can be challenges. Will Sanctuary have seats on council?
 - HCC being the lead means to provide discipline, and have veto power... does not see a change in the church council membership until the next 'election' when 2 of 6 members rotate.
- In our spiritual model and membership liturgy - we acknowledge that we are forever changed by this person joining. We recognize that we are not the same and have been and will be changed by the partnership - but HCC wants to hold the reigns.

Sanctuary Vote: *Unanimously agree to proceed to negotiation with Hillside Leadership*

Next Steps:

- Create a Brief that would prepare the congregation to understand, know what the model means.
- Get an outside moderator to guide the discussion
- Sanctuary and HCC leaders will meet to compare and consider the Feasibility Template (25 questions) to initiate Negotiation phase.
- **Sanctuary cancels regular Nov 1 All Hands Meeting** - and will focus energy on next steps of merger process.
- Tom and Wendy will prepare and share more details about the process to get it into the hands of Sanctuary leaders; Christy may buy the book.
- Tom will organize the next step for joint discussion - **Potentially Sunday, Dec 3 after church** - this meeting would take place without pastors and hire a facilitator to lead the negotiation.