

### **The Characteristics of a Vital Merger:**

- ❖ Sell all church buildings and relocate to a new location
- ❖ Worship in a neutral location from the day of the official merger
- ❖ Reset the new congregation's focus to be on the mission field and begin new ministries that will reach the new mission field. (What will this new church offer that none of the former churches could?)
- ❖ Receive a pastor that has been assessed and trained as a church planter
- ❖ Choose a name that is not a part of the name of any of the merging churches

### **Twelve Commitments for a successful Vital Merger**

1. To bathe the merger in prayer
2. To reaches more people for Christ
3. To views itself as a new church
4. To unify all ministry around mission through a new vision
5. To imbed new DNA quickly through new values
6. To eliminate turf issues
7. To remove majority ruling post-merger
8. To receive a new church-planting pastor
9. To worship at a neutral location
10. To organize the new structures with a team-based, mission-driven format
11. To make room for guests
12. To provides adequate staffing for growth

### **Steps for a Vital Merger Process**

1. Establish a prayer team with representatives from each church, supporting the merger process in prayer and seeking God's direction as everyone moves forward.
2. Contact a Judicatory Official (if applicable) stating the desire for a merger to take place.
3. Establish a date for an initial meeting with key leadership from all churches. The Judicatory staff person responsible for church planting should be invited to this initial meeting.
4. Each church's Council or Board votes to be involved in the merger talks.
5. Establish a Merger Team to discuss merger issues, with equal representation from each church. Divide the Merger Team into two sub-teams: an Administrative Team to focus on the logistics and legalities of the merger, and a Vision Team to focus on the mission, vision and programs of the future church.
6. Complete a demographic study for the existing church communities and for potential relocation sites.
7. Maintain regular communication from the Merger Team with all the churches involved in the merger talks. Communication is best through an agreed upon form from the Merger Team and a joint communiqué presented to each church by the representatives from their respective churches.
8. Create numerous opportunities for both congregations to get to know each other. Organize joint worship experiences, celebration events, and opportunities unrelated to the discussion of the proposed merger.
9. Alternate worshipping sites to become familiar with each other and gain an appreciation for the ministries and setting of each church.
10. Conduct periodic "straw polls" to assure that each church is still on-board with the merger.
11. Develop a "Merger Document" that outlines the details of the new church. The Merger Document should include:
  - a. Brief History and Future Intent

- b. New Mission Statement
  - c. Definition of the Mission Field
  - d. New name
  - e. Timeline and Process
  - f. Leadership Structure
  - g. Personnel/Staffing
  - h. Property, Buildings, Location, and Artifacts
  - i. Rationale for worshipping in a neutral location
  - j. Financial Assets
  - k. Resolution of acceptance and Intent
    - i. Outlining who may vote
    - ii. Outlining the percentage of vote required for passage
    - iii. Defining number of churches needed for merger to be approved
  - l. Certified Resolution
12. Set the bar for approval at two-thirds (66%) of those voting to insure that a larger percentage of the congregation is in support of the merger<sup>1</sup>.
  13. Send a copy of each draft to the Judicatory Official and staff person responsible for church planting.
  14. Hold “Town-Hall” style meetings to inform the congregations of the progress of the merger document and answer questions concerning the future of the church.
  15. Forward the completed Merger Document to Judicatory Officials, including (if applicable) the Bishop, the District Superintendent, and Conference staff person responsible for church planting.
  16. Present the completed copy of the Merger Document to members of each church for study and discussion.
  17. Set a date for a Congregational Meeting or a Church Conference. (In consultation with the District Superintendent, if applicable).
  18. Define who can vote. In a United Methodist Church/Charge Conference the following people have a vote:
    - a. Professing members (those who have taken membership as professions of faith or by transfer)
    - b. Retired Ministers and Diaconal Ministers who hold their charge conference membership at the church
    - c. Affiliate Members<sup>2</sup>

Once the Merger has been accepted:

19. Begin the process of incorporating, gaining new postal permits, selling buildings, and purchasing a new facility or site for construction of a new building.
20. Conduct a final service of celebration of the ministry of each church.
21. Receive a new church-planting pastor. (In the UM church the pastor is appointed. In other denominations the pulpit committee will need to begin the search process as soon as possible to call a planting pastor early after the merger is completed).
22. Worship at a neutral location.
23. Hold a celebration that includes people from each of the merged churches for the first service together. This is a great time to begin a new worship service, introducing a new style of worship.
24. Develop a marketing plan targeting the new mission field, highlighting the existence of the new church worshipping in a new location.

---

<sup>1</sup> (Although the UM Book of Discipline requires only a simple majority for the merger to take place, it is strongly recommended that a standard of 2/3 majority be required for passage).

<sup>2</sup> those who hold membership at another UM church, but have taken affiliate membership at any of the churches considering merger