



Open Hearts  
Open Minds  
Open Doors

Service at 10:00 a.m.

Wesley United Methodist Church  
9318 Main Street  
P.O. Box 431  
Whitmore Lake, MI 48189  
734-449-2121

March 22, 2018

Dear Members of Whitmore Lake Wesley United Methodist Church:

Greetings to you in the name of the Risen Christ. I look forward to celebrating the promise and hope of resurrection on Sunday, April 1 at our Easter worship service (10:00 am).

We have an opportunity to spread our reach as we make disciples for Jesus Christ by merging with the congregation of First United Methodist Church of Brighton. Church members will vote on this proposal on Sunday, April 15 at 11:15 am in our sanctuary. Passage requires a two-thirds vote. The partnership lead team, is in strong support of this merger. Team members include April Schauer, Al Weideman and me.

Please read through this information and prayerfully consider this resolution (You will find additional information at <http://whitmorelakeumc.org/>). If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Blessings,

Pastor Fred

Cell 734-476-8745

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*“Building a bridge between Christ & Community”*

## Proposed Merger

### Wesley United Methodist Church of Whitmore Lake and First United Methodist Church of Brighton

**Q: What is the purpose of this merger?**

A: The merger will create one church in two locations. The guiding questions of merger discussions have been: How will the reign of God be impacted by this merger? Can we accomplish more together than separately? Will our communities be better served? Will the partnership result in more opportunities to make disciples for Jesus Christ?

Both the communities of Brighton and Whitmore Lake offer the opportunity for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ to “unchurched” and “de-churched” people. There are numerous opportunities for local outreach and mission. Brighton First has clarity of mission, making disciples for Jesus Christ by helping people to know God, love God and serve God. Wesley has a long tradition of faithful worship and mission outreach. Together our churches can impact the communities of Brighton and Whitmore Lake with local ministry, relevant worship and a plan for making disciples for Jesus.

Some in the community may perceive that Wesley UMC is “giving up” or that Brighton First is bailing the church out. Wesley is being proactive in pursuing a merger, even though merger is not necessary at this time. Merger is an intentional choice to extend the reach of the church. We are stronger when we unite behind one purpose and combine our talents, skills, spiritual gifts and resources.

**Q: How does Brighton First’s mission benefit from this merger?**

A: Brighton First gains congregation members with a rich heritage of mission and ministry. After spending the last four years clarifying its mission and vision, Brighton First has the opportunity to broaden its reach to the Whitmore Lake area with relevant and transformational worship, intentional disciple formation and local outreach. The church gains a second facility from which to offer worship and outreach. The Whitmore Lake campus is situated at the center of a mission field with great potential for outreach to children, youth and young adults.

**Q: How does Wesley’s mission benefit from this merger?**

A: The congregation of Wesley UMC has faithfully cared for each other and their church building. They have continued to reach out to the community of Whitmore Lake. Coming together will bring new energy to the Whitmore Lake location, including a band led acoustic worship format and impactful outreach. Congregation members will become part of a larger faith community, with more opportunities for spiritual formation and service. They will also be in ministry with full-time clergy and support staff.

**Q: What are we voting for on April 15?**

A: Each congregation will separately vote on our PLAN OF MERGER (see below). The vote will be taken by written ballot from all professing members who are present (no absentee ballots) and requires 2/3 majority to pass. If both congregations pass the vote, we will officially merge on July 1, 2018.

**Q: What is the timeline if the merger resolution is passed by both congregations?**

A: The merger will be effective July 1, 2018. Teams with members from both churches will begin meeting in May to plan for moving toward merger. A timeline for financial, worship and Wesley campus changes will be in place by June 1.

**Q: What will be the name of the merged church?**

A: Legally the new church will be known as “First United Methodist Church of Brighton”. Initially, we will use the geographic location as the name for each campus; Whitmore Lake and Brighton. This is the simplest way to answer the question, “Where do you go to church?” A combined team of persons from the Brighton First and Wesley congregations will study whether or not to rename the merged church and bring a recommendation to our church conference in the fall.

**Q: Who will be our pastor?**

A: As of July 1, 2018, Rev. Dr. Sherry Parker-Lewis will serve a senior pastor for the church. Rev. Bob Fuchs will be the campus pastor for the Whitmore Lake Campus, as well as Director of Discipleship. Clergy will share Sunday morning preaching and worship leadership, with Pastor Sherry primarily at the Brighton First campus and Pastor Bob at the Whitmore Lake campus. Congregational care responsibilities will be shared by both clergy and a team of lay volunteers.

**Q: What will be the worship styles and times?**

A: As “one church in two locations”, Whitmore Lake and Brighton will have four worship opportunities every Sunday; one at the Whitmore Lake Campus (9:30 am) and three at the Brighton Campus (8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am). The Brighton Campus 8:00 am and 9:30 am worship will be traditional. The Brighton Campus 11:00 am worship will be band led and the 9:30 am worship at the Whitmore Lake Campus will use band led acoustic music.

A worship leader/musician will be hired for the Whitmore Lake Campus and will be under the direction of Mike Tooman, Brighton First’s worship band director.

**Q: How will church staff be deployed?**

A: Most church staffing will stay the same. Rev. Hatfield will retire from Wesley UMC on June 30. The custodian currently serving at Wesley UMC will continue to serve on the Whitmore Lake campus.

Current members of the Brighton First staff will support ministry on both campuses. This includes publications, financial recordkeeping, and support for Christian education and youth leaders. The Whitmore Lake phone will be forwarded to the Brighton Campus and building scheduling for both locations will go through the Brighton Campus office.

Rev. Bob Fuchs will have a ministry presence in Whitmore Lake, connecting with church members and the community. Pastor Bob will be less visible in Brighton. He will continue to facilitate Men with Tools devotions and attend clergy, worship staff and full staff meetings on the Brighton campus.

**Q: Who will make up our new church leadership?**

A: All church leaders serving on Brighton First's administrative boards and committees will continue as of July 1, 2018. In addition, at least one representative from each of the former Wesley UMC administrative boards and committees will hold membership on these committees: Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Board of Trustees, Lay Leadership Committee, Finance Committee, and Administrative Board. Wesley UMC leadership in the areas of missions, children's ministries, adult discipleship development and worship will serve on Brighton First teams.

**Q: What are the real property assets of the merged church?**

A: Brighton First's church campus is in the City of Brighton with street frontage on Grand River Ave. and Brighton Lake Rd. There are three buildings on campus; the church, a former parsonage used as a dental clinic and a youth building. Wesley UMC is located on the shore of Whitmore Lake at the corner of Main St. and East Shore Rd. in Northfield Township.

Note: The property deed of Wesley UMC has a restriction which calls for the property to be used for religious purposes. Brighton First's deed has no restrictions. Both properties are held in trust by the congregations for the Detroit Conference of The United Methodist Church, and this will not change.

**Q: What are the financial costs of merger and how will the additional costs be funded?**

A: The Partnership Lead Team has developed a three-year budget that factors in current giving and expenditures of both churches. The team has sought financial support from the Michigan Annual Conference and the Ann Arbor District for additional costs of staffing and refurbishing of the Whitmore Lake Campus. Additional operational expense projections (salaries, administration, supplies, IT, licenses, maintenance, etc.) are \$14,000 in 2018, \$37,000 in 2019 and \$36,000 in 2020. Capital expense projections (sanctuary technology upgrades, paint, carpeting, etc.) are \$93,000 over the next three years. Capital improvements will be determined by funding available with priorities set by trustees.

The Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church has granted \$30,000 and the Arbor District Board of Missions and Church Extension has granted \$30,000 for 2018. We are confident that we will receive grants for operating expenses in 2019 and 2020.

**Q: What will discipleship development look like on both campuses?**

A: Brighton First has a specific plan for discipleship development that includes growing spiritually in the areas of worship, hospitality, openness and obedience to Jesus, living in relationship with others, service and generosity. Small groups and classes that reflect the church's discipleship plan will be offered at both campuses. In addition, opportunities for serving in worship, hospitality, discipleship and outreach will be available at both campuses.

**Q: What will happen to our current mission outreach programs?**

A: The Mission team will review the mission and outreach programs of both churches and determine which to continue. Decisions are based on our mission, vision and values. There will be mission outreach programs in each community.

**Q: How will church finances work?**

A: The finances of the two churches will be combined. Brighton First's Finance Secretary, charged with keeping track of income, is a paid position and will continue in the role. The volunteer treasurer of Brighton First will continue as treasurer over both campuses. The Finance Committee will have representatives from both churches. Financial practices are outlined in Brighton First's financial policy which can be found at [www.brightonfumc.org](http://www.brightonfumc.org). Financial officers of both churches will work together through the coming months to ensure a smooth transfer of funds and accounting practices.

**Q: What is going to change on Whitmore Lake's campus?**

A: The Whitmore Lake campus will be "refreshed". Items of historical value and/or essential to ministry will be retained. Other items and furnishings may be removed. The technology in the sanctuary will be upgraded to include a new sound system, sound board and screens. As funds allow, the sanctuary, bathrooms and other rooms will be re-painted and re-carpeted. A new coffee station will be located near the sanctuary. The hope is to improve sanctuary chancel lighting and replace the pews with comfortable chairs as resources allow.

**Q: Is there a chance that the merger could be revisited if it is voted down?**

A: If the merger is voted down by the church conferences of both or either church, the churches will pursue ministry separately in the direction that God leads. Rev. Dr. Sherry Parker-Lewis and Rev. Robert Fuchs will continue as appointed clergy at Brighton First. District Superintendent Rev. Mark Spaw will work with the Wesley congregation concerning pastoral leadership after Rev. Fred Hatfield retires on June 30.

**Q: What should I do now?**

A: 1) Seek God's will for Brighton First and Wesley UMC. 2) Celebrate the opportunity God has presented to our congregations. 3) Pray for the leadership and staff as they work out the details of the possible merger. 4) Vote on April 15 (11:15 am Wesley and 12:15 pm Brighton First).

## Plan of Merger

### Wesley United Methodist Church of Whitmore Lake and First United Methodist Church of Brighton

Submitted for Church Conference Votes April 15, 2018

*Be it Resolved that* Wesley United Methodist Church of Whitmore Lake (“Wesley UMC”) and First United Methodist Church of Brighton (“Brighton First”) will become one congregation on July 1, 2018, legally known as **First United Methodist Church of Brighton** and publicly presented as: **Brighton First** and **Whitmore Lake**.

*And be it Further Resolved* that the combined congregation follows these stipulations:

1. The congregation will at all times faithfully abide by and support the current Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.
2. The merged church’s mission will be *Know God, Love God, Serve God*. The congregation will make ministry decisions based on its core values: *faithful spiritual practices, invitation and active service in the name of Jesus Christ*. The vision and strategic plan of Brighton First will be implemented on both campuses.
3. Members of Wesley UMC will become members of Brighton First at the time of merger, unless members offer specific requests for membership transfer or removal from the membership rolls. All members of both churches will constitute the membership of the merged church.
4. Brighton First will receive all the assets and be responsible for all liabilities of the two merging congregations. The financial assets of Wesley UMC at the time of merger (an operating fund and a parsonage fund) will be reserved for ministry, outreach and capital improvements at the Whitmore Lake location. Brighton First will receive the property of Wesley UMC acknowledging the existing deed restriction.
5. Sunday morning worship will be offered on both church campuses beginning July 1, 2018.
6. Through the end of 2019, membership of the following committees will include at least one individual who is a member of Wesley UMC at the time of the merger: The Church Administrative Board (leadership team), the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Trustees, the Finance Committee and the Lay Leadership Committee (or their equivalents). This stipulation may be waived for those committees if there are no former members of Wesley UMC willing to serve on these committees.
7. The merged church will operate using Brighton First’s organizational structures including its plan for discipleship, staffing structure, worship planning practices, and financial systems and policies.