

Additional Questions and Answers

Q: How did discussion of this merger come about?

A: In October 2017, Rev. Fred Hatfield announced that he would be retiring from Wesley UMC on July 1, 2018. When he met with District Superintendent Rev. Mark Spaw, he expressed his desire that the ministry of the congregation of Wesley continue strong in the coming years. Wesley congregation members are faithful, but vitality is flagging. A partnership with another church would mean an opportunity for revitalization. Rev. Spaw suggested a meeting with Rev. Hatfield, Rev. Dr. Sherry Parker-Lewis and Rev. Bob Fuchs, both serving at Brighton First. Rev. Dirk Elliott, the Conference Director of New Church Development joined them. The group determined that there was sufficient potential for a strong merger.

In late November elected officers of Brighton First and Wesley UMC met to hear more about what merger might look like. In mid-December both church's Administrative Board/Councils voted unanimously to continue merger discussions and to ask both congregations to vote on whether or not to become one congregation. The vote will take place for each congregation on Sunday, April 15.

Clergy and church officers began meeting in January to decide what a merged church might look like. The information and resolution you have before you is the result of their work.

Q: Does the leadership of the Detroit Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church support this merger?

A: Yes. Bishop David Bard of the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church, Rev. Mark Spaw of the Ann Arbor District and Conference leadership offer their support for the merger of Wesley UMC and Brighton First. They have affirmed the leadership of Rev. Bob Fuchs and Rev. Dr. Sherry Parker-Lewis. In addition, they are in prayer for our congregations as we move forward, discerning God's will for our churches and our communities.

Q: How will I have a voice in what happens after the merger?

A: As is the practice in United Methodist congregations, all are welcome to attend and share information with church committees. In addition, members of both Wesley and Brighton First are encouraged to serve in areas of ministry, strengthening the church's mission to make disciples.

Q: What will happen to the financial assets of Wesley UMC?

A: The assets of both churches will be combined; however, Wesley's current operating and parsonage funds would be used for building and ministry purposes on the Wesley campus.

Q: Any chance the merger could be revisited if it is voted down?

A: This opportunity may not be available in the future. Both congregations are viable and each brings people and resources to joined ministry. We are in a position to come together and work to bring people to Christ now.

Q: What are the financial assets and liabilities of the merged church?

A: Wesley UMC is debt free and currently has an operating fund and a parsonage fund. Brighton First has a current debt of \$460,000, as well as restricted and endowed funds.

Q: Will the Wesley United Methodist Women and Brighton First United Methodist Women groups merge?

A: Yes. The officers of both United Methodist Women's groups are in discussion and will form a plan for transition to one United Methodist Women's group as of July 1, 2018.

Q: How many church members are there and who will make up the membership of the merged church?

A: Brighton First membership - 726. Wesley membership - 86.

Members of each church will become members of the merged church, First United Methodist Church of Brighton. Current members of Wesley UMC may also request to have their membership transferred to another church or to be dropped from the membership rolls.

Q: How do the missions and values of both the churches align?

A: Wesley's current mission is to "Building Bridges between Christ and Community". Brighton First's mission is to "Know God, Love God and Serve God." Both missions reflect the value of serving in the name of Jesus Christ. Both congregations value growing in Christian faith and responding in service to the world.