

Merger Agreement for Hinton Avenue UMC and First UMC

I. The Purpose of the Merger

The congregations of Hinton Avenue and First:Charlottesville United Methodist churches have a long connection. In the 1890s members of First Church founded a new church plant in the Belmont neighborhood that became Hinton Avenue Church. In recent years, the congregations have collaborated on a number of outreach, discipleship, and musical/dramatic productions, as well as Vacation Bible School, youth activities, and the Chocolate Festival. Since July 2022, the two congregations have been worshipping together as the Charlottesville City Cooperative Parish.

We recognize real challenges for the Hinton Avenue congregation in a declining and aging membership, finances, and a physical plant that makes it difficult to be self-sustaining. We also have seen that the spirit of both congregations has been strengthened through the joining of the two congregations in worship, including the growing joint choir.

We can see a new chapter in ministry to downtown Charlottesville and the Belmont neighborhood through the joining of our congregations and their resources in ministry. We also persist in prayer as we move forward with the vision.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6.

II. The Church Name

The name of the newly merged church will be First United Methodist Church, recognizing the connection of that name to the iconic downtown building that will be our base for ministry. In recognition of our location and mission focus we will continue the recent practice of referring to the congregation as **Charlottesville First United Methodist Church** in our publicity.

III. Vision, Mission, and Welcoming Statements

We draw on the current statements of both congregations to express our vision, mission, welcoming intent:

Vision Statement: “Love the Whole City, Love the City Whole, Starting Right Here”

Mission Statement: “Changing lives through seeking, serving, and sharing Christ in downtown Charlottesville, Belmont, and beyond.”

Welcoming Statement: We welcome and affirm people of every age, race, nationality, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and economic status. Join us in our faith journey toward greater love, understanding, and mutual respect.

IV. Programs and Ministries

The current programs of each congregation nurture the congregation, provide opportunities for outreach, and allow occasions where witness is embraced. The Ministry Council of the church (including representatives from each congregation) will evaluate all nurture, outreach, and witness programs of the churches that were in effect prior to the merger.

V. Structure

Throughout the remainder of 2023, the existing Leadership Group of Hinton Avenue will meet conjointly with the Church Council of First United Methodist Church to compose the governing body of the new congregation. Other committees, where appropriate, will seek representatives of both churches. At the next regularly scheduled Church Conference in the fall of 2023, single governance committees will be elected at that time along with all other positions deemed necessary for the congregation and in keeping with the requirements of the BOOK OF DISCIPLINE. (See BOD paragraph 244.2 and 247.2)

VI. Personnel

Staffing for the new church at the time of merger will be as follows:

Pastor — Alex Joyner

All other employees of Hinton Avenue & FUMC at the time of the merger shall be retained in those positions subject to the review of the merged Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee based on program and budget needs.

Current program/administrative staffing:

Hinton Avenue: Frances Marshall, Secretary

FUMC:

Joey Clark, Church Administrator

Kevin White, Music Director

Carolyn McGee, Spiritual Life

Dave Breslin, Youth

Kathleen Mueller, Communications/Tech

Lara Upton, Children

Kristen Breslin, Preschool Director

Contracted staff:

Brent Isaacs, Treasurer - HAUMC & FUMC

Tommy George, Custodian - HAUMC

VII. Property, Buildings, Location & Artifacts

With the approval of the merger, the site location for the place of worship will be 101 E. Jefferson St., Charlottesville, VA 22902.

The disposition of surplus church properties will be addressed as follows. Both parties to this agreement concur that the merged entity will only use one facility for worship and that the FUMC facility shall be the worship location going forward due to its size, location, and general state of upkeep.

Both parties also agree that there needs to be a timely disposition of the Hinton Avenue facility and have agreed to make that decision by no later than 6 months following the adoption of this document.

It has been determined that the Hinton Avenue facility is in need of repairs estimated at between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000. Hinton Avenue UMC (HAUMC) has diligently pursued the Rachel's Haven project with the Piedmont Housing Authority (PHA) which has stalled and become tenuous due to the limited size of the original project which retained a substantial part of the HAUMC facility – primarily, the Sanctuary. Both parties recognize the significant effort that has been expended by HAUMC and PHA and would prefer a solution that honors those efforts and the original spirit of Rachel's Haven.

PHA has indicated that they would accept a donation of the full Hinton UMC site and that such a donation would make a project on the Hinton site significantly more likely to be funded and completed. Other options for the site would be a

sale to another church, charitable organization, or ceding the property to the Virginia United Methodist Conference or Three-Notch'd District for seeding another church. However, the age of the facility and the high cost of potential repairs make these options appear unlikely.

The UMC Conference will have to approve any disposition regardless of which option is chosen. Thus, the Trustees of the merged entity or other designated leadership group shall explore the options and obtain necessary approvals so that a final disposition is decided by the above deadline. The merged entity shall be transparent in communication about the actual situation and options in an effort to limit negative perspectives of longtime members of HAUMC for whom the HAUMC facility holds long term positive memories and historical connections. In addition, the merged entity shall attempt to preserve and move as many artifacts of the HAUMC facility as practicable.

Following the approval of the Merger, the Trustees of the merged entity will conduct a thorough inventory of HAUMC's various properties and assets. In conducting this inventory, the Trustees will use the following definition of artifact when making their determinations of what is to be included on their inventory lists.

“Artifact - Any object made by human hands and synonymous with the associated terms of: relic, mementos, remembrance, souvenir, token and vestige.”

The Trustees will make a list of all items determined to be included in these categories. All such artifacts/memorials that have been given to HAUMC will be the property of the merged entity. They may be sold, given to the appropriate person/place, disposed of, or maintained at the discretion of the Trustees of the merged entity. Any funds raised through the sale of any such items will be placed into the operating funds of the merged entity. All reasonable efforts will be made to notify families which have made tangible memorials in order to determine their wishes for the disposition of such items that are not being retained by the merged entity. The manner of notification may include phone, mail, announcements from the pulpit, in newsletters and bulletins. The Trustees shall record how items are dispersed.

Membership and baptismal records from HAUMC will be maintained to ensure safekeeping and preservation and will be taken to the FUMC location for safekeeping.

Both parties agree that the HAUMC parsonage will not be used by the merged entity and thus will be sold at its estimated marketable value to be determined by the Trustees of the merged entity with a target date of July 31st 2023. Both parties agree that it can be offered to the former HAUMC pastor at market value before being put on the market.

VIII. Financial Assets and Liabilities

The assets, liabilities and debts of both churches will be combined into the single church. Those assets will include all checking, savings, money market, certificate of deposit or other financial assets currently held by either of the two churches along with all real and personal property. Both church finance chairs have already provided a detailed financial statement to the other church. Annual financial audits for each church shall be completed for 2022. Upon the effective date of the merger, the finance committee will ensure the transfer of any funds into the accounts of the single church.

IX. Timeline

The official beginning of the merged church will be _____, 2023 following the affirmative vote of both Hinton Avenue and First congregations.

Needed attestations with recorded votes:

- Hinton Avenue Leadership Group 5 yea, 0 no December 21, 2022
- FUMC Church Council 14 yea, 0 no January 16, 2023
- Church Conferences of HAUMC & FUMC Sunday, February 12, 2023
- District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Hyo Lee