



Messiah Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

A Memorandum of Understanding

between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Messiah and the Schenectady Classis of the Reformed Church in America

Background

On October 6th, 2019, the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Messiah (hereafter Messiah) and Trinity Reformed Church (hereafter Trinity) joined together in Messiah's sanctuary for ecumenical worship and fellowship for the first time. Over subsequent months, a discernment process began regarding whether a common future together would align with the mission and cultures of both congregations. As the culmination of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, another common Service of Holy Communion was celebrated on January 26th, 2020 followed by a luncheon and a joint meeting of both congregations. Through this and subsequent conversations, both congregations discovered they had many common values including a sense of radical welcome, a focus on social justice and service to the local community. As Messiah was also beginning to discern major accessibility upgrades to its existing facilities, the COVID19 crisis began and of course, changed everything.

Over the last six months, the people of both Messiah and Trinity quickly discerned that they felt Christ's call to a common future together, that Trinity's existing facilities should be used for the good of the wider community as a Community Center while Messiah's existing facilities would be upgraded into a fully accessible Worship Center. On Pentecost, May 31st, 2020, the people of Messiah and Trinity conducted their first joint virtual Service of Holy Communion together and have continued worshiping together an increasing number of Sundays a month. On September 13th, God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, the two congregations launched a new joint Ecumenical Mass liturgy borrowing from both Lutheran and Reformed worship traditions. At this time and perhaps especially out of the tragedy of COVID19, the Holy Spirit continues to lead us as our new common life together continues to take shape.

Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (hereafter MOU) between Messiah and the Schenectady Classis of the Reformed Church in America (hereafter Schenectady Classis) serves as an initial blueprint for the people of Messiah and Trinity to formally become one common faith community. Nothing in this document should be considered a legally binding agreement. This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from Messiah and the Schenectady Classis. This MOU shall become effective upon

signature by the authorized officials from the Messiah and the Schenectady Classis and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any one of the partners, preferably by mutual consent.

Timeline

- *October 4th, 2020 – October 25th, 2020:* A joint Financial Mission Support Campaign will be conducted between the members of both Messiah and Trinity to discern the financial viability of a common life together.
- *November 16th, 2020:* Messiah's Congregation Council, along with representatives from Trinity Reformed with voice privileges, will meet to discuss the results of the joint Financial Mission Support Campaign and develop broad recommendations for further consideration by Messiah's Budget & Finance Committee.
- *December 21st, 2020:* Messiah's Congregation Council will vote to recommend a draft 2021 Budget for approval at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Congregation. Messiah's Congregation Council will vote to pass a job description and to amend the 2020 Budget to reflect the hiring of the Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck as Interim Associate Pastor effective January 1st, 2021.
- *January 1st, 2021:* The members of Trinity will be transferred as members to Messiah Lutheran Church with a formal welcome taking place on Sunday, January 3rd, 2021.
- *February 7th, 2021:* At the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Congregation, the congregation votes on the following items:
 - To formalize the contract of the Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck as Interim Associate Pastor until December 31st, 2021.
 - To approve a 2021 Budget.
 - To approve a bylaws amendment requiring a former member of Trinity to be a member of Messiah's Congregation Council.
 - To approve the transition of property, assets and liability of Trinity to Messiah effective March 1st, 2021.
 - To commission a new Accessibility Task Force to lead the effort to make Messiah's facilities fully accessible and launch a 2021 Capital Appeal Campaign.
- *May 23rd, 2021:* On Pentecost, Messiah holds a Commitment Sunday for the 2021 Capital Appeal Campaign.

Messiah Rep. Signature

Position

Date

Schenectady Classis Rep. Signature

Position

Date