



## Frequently Asked Questions about the Merger of The Gathering and Tri-Lakes Chapel

### 1) How did this idea to merge come about?

Ed Rowell, lead pastor of *Tri-Lakes Chapel*, and Mike Worley, lead pastor of *The Gathering*, have been friends for years. From the very beginning of their friendship, they both shared the dream of a church that moved outward rather than inward, in order to impact our local community and beyond.

While having coffee at Serrano's in early December of 2012, Mike shared their evolving search for a permanent home, including consideration of a site not far from *Tri-Lakes Chapel*. Ed shared that his church was also facing some challenges with space needs.

This led to thinking about ways we could better work together to reach our collective goals, such as sharing the current *Tri-Lakes Chapel* facility. Quickly, the conversation moved from the pragmatic, to much more significant issues, culminating in the possibility of a merger.

Next, Mike and Ed brought the concept to the respective elders of both congregations and asked four significant questions:

1. Could we accomplish more together than separately?
2. Would our individual congregations be better served if we came together?
3. Would our community be better served?
4. Could our merger further extend the Kingdom of God?

The elders and pastors from both churches committed to a season of prayer, intentionally seeking to discern God's will while they explored all potential benefits and roadblocks and also looked into the legal issues involved.

They commissioned the **Better Together** transition team—comprised of leaders from both congregations.<sup>i</sup> After investing a significant amount of time and research examining all the possibilities of a merger, this team brought back a strong recommendation that both elder boards proceed.

With a strong sense of God's leading and confirmation from the transition team, the elders and pastors of *Tri-Lakes Chapel* and *The Gathering* whole-heartedly and without reservation, believe this merger is God's preferable future for our congregations.

## **2) Why should we consider a merger?**

Above all, we believe God is orchestrating this merger because we can fulfill our respective purposes better together than we can apart. There are practical reasons as well, but they are all less significant than one.

- There is significant geographical overlap of where our congregations live.
- Our worship styles and theology are compatible.
- Mission statements of both churches are similar.
- *The Gathering's* leaders were compelled by and agree with the *Tri-Lakes Chapel* vision of establishing biblical community on every street in our area.
- This is an answer to prayer, since both congregations can meet their needs for space more economically and effectively by coming together.

In light of these factors, the leaders of both churches are now asking, "How could we not do this?"

## **3) Tell me about *Tri-Lakes Chapel*.**

*Tri-Lakes Chapel* was formed as a non-denominational church in July of 1987. Ed Rowell has been the lead pastor since 2003. Our local ministry field has been primarily the Tri-Lakes region (roughly defined by school District #38) with about 40,000 residents in the adjoining communities of Monument, Palmer Lake, Woodmoor, Jackson Creek, and Gleneagle.

Typical Sunday morning worship attendance fluctuates between 850-950. We have approximately 1700 active attenders (adults and children), with about 400 members. We have experienced consistent growth in both attendance and in giving over the past 7 years, even during the economic recession. Our 2012-2013 budget is \$1.7 million and includes over 10% to local and global missions.

We own a debt-free facility at 1750 Deer Creek Road in the Woodmoor area. We currently maximize our building with three services on Sunday mornings. We have ruled out building additional space on this property for multiple reasons, including lack of buildable land, parking issues, and entrance/egress congestion.

## **4) Tell me about *The Gathering*.**

*The Gathering* was founded in 2004 by lead pastor, Mike Worley. We are a non-denominational community of believers who meet on the campus of *The Classical Academy* (TCA), near the intersection of Voyager Drive and Northgate. Attenders come from as far as Palmer Lake in the north and Rockrimmon to the south, with the majority living between Interquest and Baptist Road.

Sunday morning attendance ranges from 350-500. The Gathering currently has a \$1

million budget with 11.5% directed to missions and other outreach.

### 5) What is unique about the Tri-Lakes Chapel philosophy of ministry?

For starters, it's important to note that we do not have, nor do we desire a "church growth philosophy." The size of our church is largely irrelevant. Ours is a philosophy of disciple-making. The key metric is mature disciples. Maturity, by any definition, means the ability to reproduce. "Disciples who make disciples" is our desired outcome.

That means we believe the followers of Jesus are commissioned to do more than attend services. God has called His Church to be about His mission, (the *missio dei*). That means we partner with Him on what He's doing in this place, at this time. For us, the phrase in the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"<sup>ii</sup> makes clear our Great Commission mandate.

What's happening here in far northern El Paso County is both a yet-to-be-fulfilled vision and an ever-increasing reality. We are seeking to fulfill our God-given vision—to *establish biblical community on every street in the Tri-Lakes region* (and now, beyond). We aren't there yet, but street by street, year by year, this dream is turning into reality. Disciples are growing, people are coming to faith, people are finding support and comfort in times of trouble, and our community is being impacted one family at a time.

We really resonate with whoever first said, **"We don't want to be the best church in our community. We want to be the best church for our community."**

We reject a long history of the notion that "Church" is primarily about what goes on at a building—attending services, going to Bible studies, having my social needs met through church functions and activities. Rejecting consumerism is the first step in regaining a sense of the true priorities of the Church.

We are deliberately and methodically *decentralizing* the concept of Church. Instead of continually encouraging Christ-followers to gather at one central campus, we are trying to deploy missionaries to every neighborhood in our community through a unique, missional type of small group called a Base Camp (more about Base Camps later).

Our highest hope is that the folks who are part of this fellowship will actually come to believe and live as if their neighborhood is their mission field.

There are some things that can be learned best in a classroom—physics, maybe, or diagramming sentences. But disciple-making is best taught in a context that allows for experiential, interactive learning. Just as Jesus' disciples learned by watching and doing as they walked and talked each day with Jesus, we think people grow best when they get out of a classroom and engage with one another and their neighbors in the events of ordinary, real life.

So increasingly, we're moved away from the classroom to the streets in our desire to see people grow to the point where they can disciple their own families, as well as be the hands and feet of Christ among their neighbors. We acknowledge there is a place for classroom experiences but it is secondary, not primary in our model of ministry.

Some call this a missional approach—applying the same research, philosophy and strategies to our culture that a missionary to say, Mozambique, would apply to that culture.

We believe it's simply a return to the biblical model of church structure.

#### **6) What will happen to each church's facilities?**

This is an important question that introduces a much larger topic—adopting a multi-site strategy. The Tri-Lakes Chapel leadership team has spent many hours in prayer and completed considerable research over several years regarding this approach to effective ministry. Because we have been unable to locate a suitable location, the strategy has not been widely circulated at *Tri-Lakes Chapel*. God has now answered those prayers by opening the door to do ministry together with our friends from *The Gathering*.

We will continue to utilize the *Tri-Lakes Chapel* facility in Woodmoor much as we do now. *The Gathering* currently meets at *The Classical Academy* campus off Voyager Road, and for the time being we will continue to utilize that site. As noted earlier, *The Gathering* leadership has been praying and seeking a permanent site to call home for almost a year now and have saved funds designated for that purpose.

The combining of *The Gathering's* search for a permanent facility and the vision of a multi-site strategy of growth for *Tri-Lakes Chapel* necessitates the need to secure a permanent location for a southern site as soon as possible. Meeting in a temporary facility is incredibly hard on both people and equipment and can't be continued indefinitely. Following the merger, we will appoint a Facility/Property search team, represented by people from both campuses to explore every option for a second location that we can utilize 24/7.

#### **7) I've never heard of a church with multiple locations. How would that work?**

The multisite approach is now common practice for growing churches that want to maximize their impact. Many churches around the country, including successful local congregations, have used multi-site strategies to reach more people. When people worship closer to their homes, the opportunities for ministry and outreach increase significantly. Currently, around 7 million people in the United States worship at a multi-site church. And nearly a third of all multisite churches have occurred through a merger. This approach fits hand in glove with the *Tri-Lakes Chapel* and *Gathering* ministry strategy.

Worship services in multisite churches include live music and other creative elements, and each location typically has a campus pastor. All sites and services would hear the same message each week, delivered either live or by video by the lead pastor or other teaching pastors. Both sites will have familiar staff and volunteers leading other Sunday morning ministries for children, students, all working together to create an environment where people can experience God in a personal way. Activities for children and students will be philosophically similar in both locations, taking into account the limitations of space.

The desire is this—to be one church, united by a common mission and vision, meeting in multiple locations, as close as possible to where people live, in order to support our Base Camps in developing genuine biblical community on every street in our communities.

While this merger will result in a multisite church, it is likely that over the coming years we will see even more campuses emerge as God extends our influence beyond what we initially dreamed through the multisite model.

#### **8) What will the worship services be like?**

One of the things we share in common is a similar worship style, so in one sense, not much will change. Initially, worship leaders and bands may rotate between the two sites so everyone sees familiar faces. Worship leaders for both sites will plan worship together, and while the services may be similar they need not be identical. Communion will be served at every service, during a time for individual response to what God has been doing. The teaching will be consistent at both sites, with some combination of live and video teaching each week at each site.

#### **9) What will happen to each church's staff?**

Currently, staff needs for both sites are being evaluated. We believe that most of the current staff of both congregations will continue to serve in either a site-specific or centralized way, all working in the area of their giftedness. Ed Rowell will serve as Lead Pastor of the merged congregation. Mike Worley will serve in the area of his greatest gifts and passions as our Missions/Local Ministries Pastor. Tom Anthony will serve as Executive Pastor of the new church. Rowland Smith and Casey Cherry will continue to give leadership in worship arts.

Jeff Holck will serve as the campus pastor at TCA, and continue to oversee Base Camps for those living in the southern ministry areas. Scott Campbell will serve the northern ministry areas and be campus pastor of the current Tri-Lakes Chapel facility.

#### **10) What about our Elders?**

As the joining church, the board of *The Gathering* will be released of their responsibilities effective July 1 which is the official, legal merger date.. As the lead church, the current pastoral elders and lay elders of *Tri-Lakes Chapel*, joined by the

pastoral elders formerly from *The Gathering*<sup>iii</sup> will give oversight to the newly merged congregation.

This allows time for the current leaders of *The Gathering* to receive fast-track training as Base Camp leaders, the most strategic leadership role in our model, and a prerequisite for eldership. We anticipate adding elders before the end of 2013 and we will give first consideration to those who've served in that role at *The Gathering*.

Finally, the *Better Together* transition team, comprised of elders, staff and lay leaders from both congregations will continue to serve in an *ad hoc* role to guide the united congregation all the way through a merger process. Ken Sparks, an elder from *The Gathering* will chair this team and attend elders meetings to bring team reports and recommendations.

### **11) How will the budget and finances be managed?**

Upon merger, all assets come together under one budget, administered in accordance with the existing Tri-Lakes Chapel constitution and by-laws. A transition budget will finance the merged ministry from July 1 to August 30, the beginning of our new ministry year.

Staff and elders will develop the 2013-2014 budget for a fully operational multisite congregation this summer. Budget is initially determined by staff and elders, and then affirmed by the congregation. The financial practices of *Tri-Lakes Chapel* will continue to give us guidance, including an annual audit. Designated building funds from *The Gathering* will be maintained for that specific purpose.

### **12) What are the key dates in this process?**

3/14	Transition team began to explore feasibility
4/16	Both boards unanimously affirm the merger decision
<b>4/28</b>	<b>Idea presented to both congregations</b>
4/28-6/02	Meetings with various stakeholders in multiple venues
<b>6/02</b>	<b>Congregational affirmation/poll</b>
6/9	<b>Embrace Sunday</b> --one church, two locations, new name.
6/16	<i>The Gathering</i> celebrates their final service together
6/16-10/6	Church staff and leadership will plan and execute a successful transition over several months.
7/1	Official legal merger date
10/6	Inaugural Celebration of a new, fully integrated church

### **13) Will our church have a new name and if so, what will it be?**

A name is a very emotional thing. Both congregations have great memories attached to their respective names. However, we're coming together to create something new. In Scripture, God often gave people a new name when they had a significant encounter with him. As the joining church, *The Gathering* will no longer exist as a legal

entity. For the lead church, *Tri-Lakes Chapel*, our name will cease to be relevant, as we will have a congregation that extends far beyond the Tri-Lakes region, bringing together Christ-followers from as far south as Old Colorado City and the Powers Boulevard corridor.

It seems fitting that we take on a new name that reflects the new work that God is doing in our midst. People from both congregations are invited to suggest new names to the Transition Team, and our new name will be made public on June 9, the day we come together as one Body.

#### **14) How will membership be determined?**

Tri-Lakes Chapel has formal membership; The Gathering does not. Formal membership is not a requirement for active participation, but it is a prerequisite for some leadership positions and to vote on those few items that require a congregational vote. For that reason we invite all who call the newly merged and newly named congregation their church home to become members.

We intend to make this as easy as possible. In the fall of 2013, we will offer our membership class as a Sunday morning series in both locations, and make it easy for hundreds of people from both congregations to become members of this new entity.

#### **15) Who will decide if this merger happens?**

The elders of both congregations have a biblical mandate to lead in significant decisions such as this. At *Tri-Lakes Chapel*, the congregation has a role in affirming this decision. It is our hope that all will join us in affirming the obvious work of God in our midst.

#### **16) If the merger happens, what will change?**

Worship services will look and feel familiar at both sites, and multiple teaching pastors will bring biblical messages that impact our heads, hearts, and hands.

As a new entity, we will continue the *Tri-Lakes Chapel* practice of utilizing *The Compass*, a weekly tool for Bible study for individuals, families, and with our Base Camps. It will continue to be our primary instrument for discipleship.

While we acknowledge that small groups of all kinds have value, Base Camps will continue to be our primary tool for fulfilling our vision of establishing biblical community on every street. Base Camps are a very specific type of small group. They are “multi-generational communities living out the mission of God together, pursuing redemption and renewal on our street, in our neighborhoods, and in our community by declaring and demonstrating the Gospel in tangible ways.”

A more practical definition is “people who live close together doing life together.” A Base Camp is not simply a meeting. It is more like an extended family whose lives intertwine in significant ways throughout the week. Spiritual transformation happens as

we live in community, allowing Scripture to impact not just our minds, but our attitudes and our actions as well. By emphasizing proximity, we share the same neighbors, and can work together to see the presence of Christ made real in practical ways as we serve the people around us.

People who are involved in other types of small groups such as Life Groups will be given the time and help they need to move to the Base Camp model. While people will always have the freedom to worship at the campus of their choice, worshiping at the site closest to their home will greatly enhance our relational connectedness and missional effectiveness.

The biggest opportunity this merger presents is the opportunity for people from both congregations to join together to engage in God's mission with those who live near them.

### **What will the merger cost? Can we afford it?**

While there are some costs associated with this merger (legal and consulting fees, technology), it is much less expensive than beginning a second campus from scratch. The elders/pastors of *Tri-Lakes Chapel* have anticipated a second site for several years, and have been able to set aside monies in operating reserves to cover those expenses. In addition, *The Gathering* not only has adequate operating reserves, they also have been saving for a permanent home for some time. Specific costs for legal fees, and some audio/visual upgrades at the *Tri-Lakes Chapel* campus are still being determined but will be well within our means to pay for them.

We will not initiate any plans that involve a future commercial loan to fund a capital investment without a confirmation vote by the congregation.

### **Tell me one more time, what are the benefits of this proposed merger and a multi-site strategy?**

- 1) First and foremost would be the deep satisfaction of joining God where He is obviously at work.
- 2) It sends a powerful message to our community, when we demonstrate unity instead of the fractiousness that has too often been modeled by churches in the Evangelical context.
- 3) As one church in multiple locations with multiple services, we can avoid the "either-or" that traps so many churches. We can be large yet small, influential yet intimate. We can have the resource base of a larger church and also be a coalition of neighborhood-based congregations. In short, this merger opens up to us the amazing power of "both-and."
- 4) There are practical benefits as well, such as an economy of scale with centralized staff. But our greatest benefit comes from working together to see "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." –(Matt. 6:10)

**Finally...**

All the information you've read thus far was compiled by the pastors, elders, and transition team attempting to answer the original questions posed by Mike and Ed.

1. Could we accomplish more together than separately?
2. Would our individual congregations be better served if we came together?
3. Would our community be better served?
4. Could our merger further extend the Kingdom of God?

Based on what you have learned thus far, how would you answer those questions?

### What are my next steps?

- **Attend** informational meetings to find out more.
  - *The Gathering*, April 29 (6:30 PM and 8:00 PM) and May 1 (6:30 p.m.), all at The Gathering Community Center
  - *Tri-Lakes Chapel*, May 5 (4:30 PM and 6:00 PM) at Tri-Lakes Chapel Family Room
- **Celebrate**—in an age when congregations split over the most insignificant issues, the testimony of two churches coming together as one is an amazing affirmation of God's desire for unity among His people.
- **Pray** for the leadership and staff as they work out the details of this merger. Ask God about your role in this amazing new venture!
- **Serve** in the areas of your passion, skills, and gifts. Every member of our new, blended church family is important and needed now more than ever before. By joining together, we can accomplish God's vision for our church—to establish biblical community on every street in northern El Paso County.
- **Give** your tithes and offerings faithfully. Your gifts matter.
- **Go** to your church's website to send us additional questions.
  - **Email** a suggestion for our new name to [newname@thegatheringhome.org](mailto:newname@thegatheringhome.org) or [newname@trilakeschapel.org](mailto:newname@trilakeschapel.org)

*"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*

--Jesus' prayer for his Church, John 17:20-21 (ESV)

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<sup>i</sup> The *Better Together* Transition team is comprised of elders Ken Sparks and John Herd, Pastor Rowland Smith, and congregational representative Sharon Alexander from *The Gathering*; elders Bill Herebic, Ken Davis, Mark Hopkins, pastor Tom Anthony and Jeff Holck, and congregational representative Carol Bausch from *Tri-Lakes Chapel*. Pastors Mike Worley and Ed Rowell are ad hoc members of the team as well

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 6:10 (ESV)

<sup>iii</sup> Mike Worley and Rowland Smith