To Merge or Not to Merge
The Pros and Cons of Combining Congregations

Mergers are fairly common in the business world and in the political arena. The merger of two church congregations into a single entity is unknown in Scripture however. That does not mean that church mergers are unscriptural. They were simply unknown because churches were so new, so few, and so widely scattered.

Biblical support for the concept of church mergers is found in Ecclesiastes 4:12 where we are told:

And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him;
and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

There is strength in numbers. Two churches can combine their resources, people, and facilities, and thereby become a larger and more effective ministry than they were individually. It can and it does happen, but it is rare. While mergers look easy and sound good, they are difficult to achieve successfully. Merging two churches is similar to merging two single-parent units into a “blended” family. It can be done, but there will be some rough spots along the way.

What is a Church Merger?

Several names are used to describe the combining of two or more churches into a single entity. The newest term is reconfiguration. The more standard terms are consolidation and merger. Technically, there is a difference between these latter words. If one church absorbs a smaller or weaker congregation and continues functioning basically as it did before, that is known as a merger. On the other hand, if two congregations combine their resources and create an entirely new entity, then it is known as a consolidation.

For our purposes throughout this paper the term merger will be used to describe the combining of two or more church congregations, regardless of whether they are creating a new entity (merger) or being absorbed into the dominate church (consolidation).

Reasons for Church Mergers

Mergers usually occur only when there is the prospect of a positive benefit to the parties involved. Churches do not usually enter into merger negotiations with the idea that the outcome will hurt their church. Rather, they are willing to give up something (land, building, location, resources, identity, people) in order to gain something that is bigger and better – at least that is the idea, although it does not turn out that way in many cases.

There are many reasons why a church merger may become an attractive option for local congregations including:

- A severe economic downturn may have seriously impaired the church’s ability to meet its financial obligations.
- A lack of evangelism, outreach, and discipleship may have severely impacted attendance.
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- Disunity, theological disagreements, and internal controversy over standards, music or translations may have resulted in a church split.
- A lack of a compelling vision, the inability to articulate core values, or the absence of a cohesive ministry plan may have resulted in a prolonged decline.
- Failure to train the people to do the “work of the ministry” may have left the church weak and lethargic, and without effective leadership.
- Two struggling churches may decide to combine their forces to create a single stronger congregation.
- A growing church in need of larger facilities may merge with a struggling church that has property and a larger building.
- Two healthy churches may combine their ministries in order to become a mega church with greater resources, influence, and impact on the community.

The reasons and causes for church mergers are many and varied, but almost always at least one of the churches is in trouble and faces eventual closure if action is not taken to alter its circumstances. Churches have only three options when faced with ongoing decline: implement significant changes that result in a turnaround, close their doors or merge with another congregation.

Benefits of Church Mergers

There are some definite advantages to merging two congregations, especially when compared to the alternative. The most important of these is that a spiritual witness is maintained or introduced into the community where the newly reformatted church is located. God is not glorified when a church closes its doors and goes out of business. Neither is he honored if the church goes into receivership and is taken over by the bank and the keys are handed over to the bankruptcy trustee. A revitalized church in the community is a great testimony of God’s grace and provision. The ongoing ministry of the new church can have a significant impact on the community as the gospel is preached and as homes are visited throughout the area.

A second benefit can result when two struggling churches combine forces. Separately these churches are often weak and lack the resources, personnel, and energy to be effective. By joining together they have the potential for becoming a stronger, growing congregation that elicits the attention of the community. Everyone benefits any time two weak churches can be transformed into a healthy, growing body of believers.

A third benefit of merging occurs when a growing church without land is able to merge with an existing church that has land and facilities that are not being used. This may happen when a new church plant merges with an older, declining congregation. It may also happen when an established church outgrows its facilities and is unable to purchase additional land or expand its present facilities. The one church may not be able to maintain its buildings while the other needs additional space. A merger can solve both problems.

A fourth benefit of mergers accrues to the members of small, struggling churches when they are absorbed into a larger, healthier congregation. After years of struggle to survive they are able to turn over their building and land to their new ministry partners in good faith knowing that they were good stewards of that which the Lord had entrusted to them. They often will also benefit from having a full-time pastor, better preaching, and classes where they can find fellowship with other believers. After years of discouragement and trials they are able to enjoy the benefits of being in a healthy church.
Drawbacks of Church Mergers

There are always negatives in a church merger. Someone always loses. At least one of the churches will no longer exist. The gospel will no longer be preached in one or both of the communities where those churches previously existed. An empty building may sit empty for years or will be taken over by some non-religious group. The building itself will be a mute testimony of the death of the church. In some cases, cults will move in and take over the church building. False doctrine will be taught in the place where the truths of God’s Word were once proclaimed.

There are legal costs involved in mergers. Lawyers must be hired. State incorporation laws govern ring dissolution must be followed. Resources must be expended to dissolve one or both church corporations and to establish a new one. New facilities may have to be found and renovated. Money may need to be spent on refurbishing one of the church buildings if the newly combined church is to meet in one of its previous locations.

Missionaries often suffer when one of their supporting churches merges with another church. Sometimes they receive a lump sum final gift from the church before it merges. Other times their support is simply dropped, often with no forewarning, notice or explanation. It would be much better for the combining churches to commit themselves to maintaining all the missionaries from both congregations, but this does not always happen.

Reasons why Church Mergers Fail

There are many reason why mergers fail to be successful, even when people have the best intentions and work hard to achieve their goal. Here are nine of the main reasons for merger failure:

1) *The merger was driven by a survival mentality rather than by vision.* In spite of the rhetoric of the leaders, the real motivation for the merger was to solve an institutional problem that was beyond the power of the individual churches to resolve on their own.

2) *The merger did not deal with and eliminate the “sacred cows” that previously existed.* These include such things as property, buildings, programs, leadership structure and influential people.

3) *The merger negotiations did not include the people.* Rather, it was carried on by pastors, deacons, trustees, boards, and the existing power structure in each church. The people were asked to vote, but they had no real say in the discussions that preceded the vote. They may vote “yes” because that is what they think the majority want, but they themselves may oppose the move. Many of these people will eventually drop out.

4) *The “signature ministries” (ministry emphasis) are not maintained in the new churches.* Values drive ministry. Every church has certain ministries they value and emphasize. If these are not maintained in the new church people will often withdraw their support of the church and leave.

5) *The “hidden controllers” are unwilling to surrender their self-interest to the larger purpose of God and the new congregation.* These are people who want to shape the new church around their preferences and lifestyle rather than the other way around.

6) *Staff and core leaders fail to integrate as a new team.* Everything changes in the leadership structure when churches merge. It only takes one person to prioritize his program, power, plans or salary package to undermine the trust of members for the leaders and the leaders for each other.
7) **The new church fails to develop a truly streamlined organization structure that is team-based and vision oriented.** Instead, already bloated bureaucracies are combined into even larger boards and committees that undermine decision-making and innovation.

8) **The newly merged church is too timid.** They don’t want to offend anyone, so they move slowly in changing programs and implementing changes. They try to accommodate everyone and end up pleasing no one.

9) **The new church adopts the lowest common denominator of excellence rather than raising the standard of expectation.** Because they are afraid of losing people, standards and expectations are lowered rather than raised. This serves only to frustrate those who are willing to serve in various leadership capacities.

### Observations about Church Mergers

There are several observations that need to be considered before a church enters into merger talks with another congregation.

**Merging isn’t a growth strategy.** It is often assumed that the combining of two weak congregations will result in one larger, stronger congregation that will continue growing. That is sometimes true, but often is not. If you take two congregations of fifty people each (or whatever size you choose) and combine them, the result is seldom a church of one hundred. More often than not the new congregation will be only slightly larger at the end of the first year. When it comes to church mergers, combining fifty with fifty often results in sixty. People who liked the former pastor don’t like the new pastor. Individuals who exercised leadership (power) no longer do so in the new church. Congregants who were comfortable with the style of worship in the old church don’t like the style of worship in the new church. People who struggled to keep the old church going aren’t willing to struggle to make the new church a success, and so they move on and leave the new church to fend for itself. Two struggling churches that combine don’t necessarily make a strong church.

**Merging is a polite term that masks a hidden reality.** You can call it a merger, a reconfiguration, a consolidation or an adoption, but in reality the combining of two congregations involves the death of at least one of those churches. It no longer exists. It has run its course. It is no longer viable. Somewhere along the line decisions were made that contributed to the decline and eventual demise of that congregation. Economic factors and changing community dynamics may have contributed to the decline of the church, but the truth remains that there was a failure to biblically adjust to those changing factors to ensure the survival and continued health of the church.

**A church merger can be successful, but it is not automatic.** Church mergers are difficult. They take a lot of hard work, grace, and commitment. To merge two congregations (one or both of which are struggling) is like trying to cross two sick cats to make one healthy dog. The new church may look and feel larger than either of the previous churches, but you have not grown at all. In most cases, you will actually have fewer people than the two churches had before. Significant adjustments will need to be made in philosophies of ministry, core values, vision, leadership style, power structures, and ministry planning. This will take time and effort. There will be winners and losers. Some people will stay while others go. It will take three to five years to determine whether the merger was a success or not.

**A vote to merge is not the final word.** People vote in favor of merging their church with another one for a variety of reasons. They may think that merging with another congregation will solve their financial and attendance problems. They may see it as a way of alleviating their space restrictions. It may be viewed as a infusion of new blood, new resources, new personnel, and a new lease on life. The real merger vote
is not a show of hand or a secret ballot – it is what people do with their feet. It is not unusual for people to vote “yes” with their hands or their voice, and then walk away from the new church without looking back. The real vote for merger takes place AFTER the churches merger rather than before they join forces.

Closing isn’t always bad. Unless the Lord comes back, death is inevitable. That is true of people, and it is also true of churches as well. Churches have life spans. They are conceived, born, grow to maturity, reproduce, and then decline in health until they expire. That is the life principle built into the Second Law of Thermodynamics by God. Everything runs its course. Unless a church is constantly renewing itself, it will eventually die.

While sad, this is not necessarily bad. Just as human beings reproduce and then die, so churches should reproduce themselves by winning souls to Christ, and even planting churches elsewhere through their missions program. Their ministries continue on in the lives of those who have been won to Christ both at home and overseas through their missionary outreach. Not only that, but a church can become a “legacy church” by prearranging to give its property and/or proceeds to a church-planting organization to use in developing new churches elsewhere upon its death. Sometimes one, two or even three new churches can be established from the funds generated by the death of an older church.

Issues to be Considered in Church Mergers

There are nine major issues that need to be thoroughly investigated by churches that are considering merging with each other. There must be open and frank discussion of each issue and mutual agreement if they are to move forward. Otherwise they will sow the seeds of a future church split along the scar lines of disagreement.

- **The issue of Convictions.** Amos 3:3 asks the question, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” The answer is “no.” Theological and ecclesiastical agreement are absolutely essential for the merger to succeed. The leaders of both churches need to meet together on several occasions to go over each other’s Articles of Faith, philosophy of ministry, and theological orientation.

  They need to explore in detail their views of the church and how it is should be run. What are their views on pastoral and deacon leadership? Where do they stand on matters of separation, cooperation, and associations? What fellowship, if any, will they join? Is either pastor active in the town’s ministerial association? What are their views on dress standards, music preferences, worship styles, and Bible translations? Failure to explore and agree on these fundamental issues can result in two mutually suspicious groups bound together by an implicit contract that both sides will grow to regret.

- **The issue of Trust.** Assimilation is extremely important when churches merge. The people in each congregation must blend into a mutually trusting entity rather than remaining in isolated groups of “we” and “they.” Barriers that separate people must be broken down. Fellowship must be promoted. Cultural and ethnic preferences must be accommodated. The people must learn to trust each other, to become friends, and to enjoy each other’s company if the merger is to work.

  Encourage informal mixing of the two groups early in the merger discussion. This can be done by hosting a picnic or barbeque on neutral ground such as a park or attending a ballgame together. The two churches can join in an evening of shared worship from time to time. Differences in style and content should be noted and any tensions should be discussed.
• **The issue of Motivation.** There should be frank discussion of why merger is being considered. They may see cooperation as more effective than competition if they are in close proximity to each other. One may have fallen on hard times and cannot survive alone. Discuss what each group brings to the table. They both have assets that the other needs either in terms of money, people or facilities. Define whether this is a true merger of two establishes churches or whether one is simply shutting down and will be absorbed by the other. The most promising mergers are those where congregations have positive reasons for seeking to combine with each other, and where the new combined church takes on a new name and identity in the community.

• **The issue of Obligations.** Every church has certain commitments and obligations that it has made. These include missionary support, bank loans, and ministry commitments such as conducting a monthly service at the local nursing home. Any such obligations along with any financial obligations should be communicated to the other church early in the merger discussion. All financial obligations and commitments from both churches should be honored by the new church. This includes back salaries and missionary support amounts. Any objection to any of the missionary commitments should be thoroughly discussed. If the decision is made to discontinue the support of any missionary, that change should not be made until the missionary comes home on furlough. Mission agencies and sending churches should be notified of any change in the church’s name or in support levels. Changes in ministry commitments (such as monthly nursing home services) should be handled in a similar manner.

• **The issue of Leadership.** Who will lead the new church is of vital interest to all concerned in the merger talks. Some men have strong leadership abilities while others do not. If both churches have pastors, which one will become the leader? Co-pastorates seldom work. One of the men will need to either retire, resign or accept a support role (such as assistant pastor). This decision should probably be made by the two men themselves, although the deacons (leadership group) from both churches should be involved in discussing the options. In some cases, the man chosen to lead will serve as interim pastor for one year before the church votes to call him as the senior pastor. This allows for a change of leadership if things are not working out as expected.

A second leadership issue concerns who will be the deacons (trustees) in the new church. It is best not to simply combine the two groups of deacons since this makes for a large, bulky bureaucracy that will make decision making more difficult and could pit one group against the other. It is better to select some men from each church to serve as deacons in the new church. The biblical qualifications should be reviewed and met in any case. Terms of service also need to be clarified.

Other leadership positions including staff, ministry leaders, and church workers will also need to be discussed, evaluated, and filled. Some people will retain their old jobs while others will move into new areas of ministry as lay leaders in the newly formed church.

• **The issue of Governance and Recognition.** Unless one church is simply absorbing the other church, a new entity resulting from the merger will need to constitute (organize) itself as a local New Testament Baptist church. This will involve not only an organization service, but the writing of a church Constitution, Articles of Faith, and church Covenant. Its mission will need to be clarified, its values articulated, and its vision for the future communicated to the people. It will need to seek legal counsel to secure recognition as a tax-exempt religious charity per section 501 (c)(3) of the IRS Uniform Tax Code. It will also need to decide if it wants to identify with any particular fellowship or association of churches.
• **The issue of Identity.** A new name should be chosen whenever two churches merge. The church is not simply an expanded version of the old church. It is a new entity and it should have a new name that identifies who it now is. Care should be taken that the new church does not abandon its convictions nor its identity such as happens when a church drops the word “Baptist” from its name. Congregations need to be honest about who they are and where they stand. We want to build our ministries on integrity and honesty. A new name helps minimize the “we-they” tension between people and provides the church with the opportunity of creating a new history while drawing on their previous reputations.

• **The issue of Assets.** Each church in a merger brings certain assets to the table such as property, buildings, bank accounts, equipment, furnishings and credit standings. The value of these assets can run into the hundreds of thousands (or even millions) of dollars. They also bring liabilities such as mortgage debts, operating deficits, bond obligations, liens and possible negative perceptions in the community. Once a new corporation is established, the assets and liabilities of the two parent corporations are legally transferred to the new church.

Individual rights to anything owned by either church were surrendered at the time the gift was given. Corporate rights are surrendered at the time of merger. Nothing belongs to any individual or to either group. It all belongs to God. If someone gave some cherished item to one of the churches, it belongs to the church and stays with the church even if the person decides not to unite with the new church.

If the churches each have a building, discussions should be held as to which building (if either) will become the home of the new church. In some cases, both properties may be sold and an entirely new location is then secured for the new church. What is done with the previous building is a decision that should be made by the new church rather than the old church.

• **The issue of Timing.** When to go public with the new church is an important issue. Timing is said to be crucial to the success of many ventures including the merging of two congregations. In some cases, circumstances may dictate deadlines for action such as an impending foreclosure. Normally, plenty of time should be given for discussion and fellowship between the two churches so people do not feel rushed into a decision. It is hard to give up that which is beloved and familiar in order to embrace something that is new and unaccustomed.

Some would advocate merger talks should take no more than thirty days, but this seems unduly hasty and can lead to decisions that are later regretted. Haste does make waste. In some cases it may take as much as a year for the merger to occur. It is better to take whatever time is necessary to ensure that people understand what is happening and the ramifications of their decisions. Most of the work will be done behind the scenes by the leaders of the church, but it is imperative that the people in the congregation are kept abreast of developments and have adequate input into the process.

Palm Sunday and Easter are ideal times for starting the public services of the new church. Attendance normally is larger on these special days. It is a good time to launch a new ministry in the community with a new name and a new hope for all involved.

**Guidelines for Church Mergers**

Mergers take time, energy, and commitment. They go through three stages: exploratory, developmental, and implementation. Much of the work is carried on by the leadership of the two churches involved.
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The Exploratory Stage

1. **Develop a solid understanding of your motivation for merging.** Why do you want to do it? What do you expect to gain from doing it? Will this really solve the problems your church is facing? Are you looking for an easy way out? Do you expect the other church to bail you out of your negative situation? Are you willing to give up influence and power in the new church? Are you truly committed to staying with the new church?

The heart of man is deceitful and can easily lead a person or a church astray. You need to have an honest grasp on why you want to merge with another church. Doing so will significantly increase your potential for success. This will allow you to bring your motives into line with the Great Commission command of our Lord. Be honest about the real issues and don’t disregard them; ignoring the past will not help you move forward in the future.

2. **Do your homework to understand why many mergers fail.** There are many reasons why church mergers fail. Nine causes of merger failures were listed earlier in this paper. Examine each of these and ask yourself honestly if any apply to you. It would also be helpful if the church leaders talked with churches that had merged successfully as well as some that did not work. By doing so, you will gain insights that will help you avoid similar tripwires along the way.

3. **The suggestion to explore the possibility for merger may come from several sources.** Another church may approach your church about the possibility of merging with you. The pastoral leadership may recommend exploring a merger with another church or the suggestion may come from members of the congregation or lay leaders.

4. **Normally, early merger discussions will be confined to the church leadership group.** This will include the pastor, deacons, and trustees. As they wrestle with the issues facing the church they may look at the pros and cons of merging with another church. They might discuss several potential merger partners, and the pastor (with the deacons’ knowledge) might even contact one or two area pastor to see if they are open to the idea. Discussions at this point should be kept confidential until the leadership is in agreement that uniting is the best course of action. Involving lots of people from the church body will not likely lead to anything good if the leadership is uncertain about what is best.

5. **If a merger seems desirable and feasible, the church’s congregation should be consulted.** How do they feel about merging with another church? Are they supportive of the idea? Are they willing to give up their building and relocate? Would they be willing to have a new pastor and new leadership? You are looking for consensus here, not a binding vote. You are asking their opinion about pursuing further merger talks or not.

The Developmental State

1. **Pastor to pastor talks would be the first step in the merger process at this stage.** The two pastors should meet on several occasions to discuss the possibility of merging. What are the pros and cons of doing so? Do their philosophy of ministries coincide? Do they share a common understanding of the church’s mission? What are their core values? What possibilities and dangers does a merger hold? Which one would become the pastor of the new church? It is vital that these two men be in basic agreement if merger talks are to continue.

2. **At some point, the deacons from the two churches should meet for ongoing discussion.** What do they see happening if the two churches merge? Are some of them willing to step down from their positions of influence (deacons do have influence)? Do they favor or oppose the idea of merger?
What advantages (and disadvantages) do they see? Do they think they can work together as a unified leadership team?

3. *Seek to develop a mission/vision-driven merger rather than a survival-driven merger.* If your goal is simply to survive you will make short-term decisions that may undermine the long-term success of the new church. Determine with conviction, prayer, and faith that you will strive to fulfill the Great Commission or close the doors and pull the plug. Don’t seek to survive in order to simply exist. Live with a purpose and a passion in mind.

4. *Establish clarity in pursuit of common goals, values, vision, theology and culture.* Determine what you want to accomplish by merging (goals), what will be emphasized (values), what the new church will be like in the future (vision), what it will believe (theology), and how it will function (culture). Talk about worship styles, music standards, Bible translations, philosophy of ministry, objectives and expectations with the other group. Unexpressed expectations lead to disunity and failure whereas clarity leads to strength and a healthy atmosphere for growth.

5. *Make sure you have a profound sense that “God is in it.”* Is God leading in bringing the merger about or are you running ahead of him? Are you trying to force the issue. Bathe the entire process in prayer and seek God’s heart and will throughout the process.

6. *Each church should be willing to “walk away” at any point in the process.* It is better for one or both leadership groups to walk away from merger discussions than to take the churches through a painful and unsuccessful merger. If agreement is not there, if uncertainty is prevalent, DO NOT proceed.

The Implementation Stage

1. *Choose your leadership carefully.* The choice of pastoral leadership should not be based on who has the largest church nor on who has the most years of experience. Rather, it should be based on which leader is the most visionary, personable, and evangelistic leader. He should possess good communication skills. The decision regarding pastoral leadership should probably be made by the pastors themselves and then confirmed by the new congregation. New deacons should then be chosen on the basis of biblical qualifications rather than longevity, social standing, business ability or previous experience.

2. *Avoid operating by “the biggest will rule” principle.* Don’t allow the church with the most money, most people, and biggest building to make all the decisions. Decisions should be made jointly. Think unity rather than harmony. Deal with the most difficult issue first and make decisions that are biblical and right.

3. *If the stronger church doesn’t believe it can truly help the weaker one and serve them with integrity, then the merger should not move forward.* Sometimes stronger churches will make unrealistic promises to a weaker church in order to get the other church’s building. This is never right. Merger is not about buildings. It is about people and it is about ministry. God will not honor dishonest motives.

4. *Keep the people informed through public merger meetings.* Explain to your people that things will change and function differently. Life and ministry will not be the same. The leadership structure will change. The focus and emphasis of the church will be new. Style may be altered. There may be a new pastor. There will definitely be a new vision. Help your people embrace the changes that a merger will bring. We all have difficulty accepting change, so help your people see the benefits of it.
5. **Provide people with the time and opportunity to ask questions.** People tend to be down on anything they are not up on. If people do not understand what is happening, they will be against it. So, help them to understand by allowing them to express their fears and doubts in the form of questions. Be sure to answer their questions openly, honestly, and fully.

6. **Cast a clear vision of the future as it can and must be.** The best reason to unite with another church is to reach more people. Describe for your people what the new church will be like. Paint a word picture of the people’s lives who will be touched by the ministries of the new church. Help people to focus on the future rather than the past.

7. **Allow the people to vote and to cast the deciding ballot when it comes to mergers.** The people are the church and they are being asked to give up a lot in order to believe in the future. The final decision must reside with them. If they do not favor the merger, they will simply go somewhere else.

8. **Work through the mechanics of making the merger a reality.** This involves the writing of the foundational documents, the obtaining of tax-exempt status, the liquidation of assets, the choice of the first public services of the new church, and a thousand and one details that will take weeks and months to work through.

If handled properly, a merger can be a great blessing to both congregations, and the result can have a significant positive impact on the community. If handled poorly, the results can be disastrous.

**Questions to Ask in Church Mergers**

There are literally hundreds of questions that need to be asked as a church moves through the merger process. Here is only a sample of what should be asked:

1. Why are we talking about merging with another church? What are our motives and reasons for seeking to merge with another congregation?
2. What will we have to give up in order to merge with another church? Are we willing to surrender our building to another group? Are we willing to give up control of how the church is run? Are we willing to give our money and resources to another group that may use them differently than we would?
3. Are we willing to give up leadership positions such as pastor, deacons, trustee, treasurer or teacher?
4. Are we willing to allow the name and testimony of our church to disappear and be forgotten?
5. Are we willing to function under new leadership and a new constitution.
6. Are we willing to change our worship and/or music style? Are we willing to use a new Bible version?
7. Are we willing to work as hard in the new church as we do in this church? Are we willing to tithe regularly and to sacrifice to make the new church a success?
8. Which churches would we be willing to merge with? Why? What things do we have in common with them? Would we want their pastor to be our pastor?
9. Are their standards, music style and theological beliefs similar to ours?
10. Would the cause of Christ be better served by closing our church and giving the assets to a church-planting mission agency?
11. Is the economy changing for the better so that there is hope of things improving as far as attendance and offerings are concerned?
12. Are we expecting the other church to do the “work of the ministry” for us rather than doing it ourselves?
13. How do we expect to be involved in the new church?
14. Is there a possibility that the members of the other church will outvote us when decisions are made in the new church? How do we feel about that? Is that okay with us?
15. What benefits do we expect to receive from merging with another church?
16. What drawbacks are there to merging with another church?
17. Is our purpose for merging based on survival or vision? How do we know?
18. What “sacred cows” do we have that we are not willing to give up?
19. Are we willing to accept the death of our church in order to give life to a new church?
20. What convictions do we hold that must be present in the new church?
21. Are we just looking for a “way out” of our troubles?
22. Are we in this for the long haul or do we plan to bail out after we have closed our ministry with dignity?
23. Are we willing to trust the other church with leadership and with our resources?
24. Are we willing to give up ownership of all that we possess as a church?
25. What does the other church bring to the table? What assets will they contribute to the process?

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