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Exploring the Creation of a Cooperative Multi-Denominational (Mosaic) Church Campus

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Abstract

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Countless mid-sized churches experienced a rapid increase in numbers in the late '90s. In their excitement, they built big buildings taking on large mortgages. While charitable giving has increased over the last twenty years, religious giving to churches has decreased by fifty percent, leaving many churches struggling to maintain their buildings. In many cases, church mortgages have become an albatross strangling the church's missional efforts and hearts. This struggle has left the church impotent to fulfill the call of the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of nations" (Matthew 28:19 NIV). The Cooperative Multi-Denominational (Mosaic) Church Campus is a unique church development plan that crosses multi-denominational lines allowing for creativity in making disciples while better allocating monies and buildings. It is not a renter-landlord approach. It is a method of sharing ministries and buildings like that of a cooperative business plan that allows churches to provide quality programming and Bible Studies beyond the limits of their individual budget.

Exploring the Creation of a Cooperative Multi-Denominational (Mosaic) Church Campus

By

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John August Swanson is a modern American artist working primarily in the medium of serigraphs. His style is influenced by medieval Russian iconography and the color of Latin American folk art stylized after the muralists of Mexico. His heritage of storytelling and “his quest for self- discovery through visual images”¹ brings life and meaning to his pieces.

His artwork is detailed, complex, and elaborate. He combines the flat, stylized look of iconography with a bright multi-layered palette of depth. His works are inspiring pieces of life and, most often, the biblical story. His piece, “The Great Catch,” is a visual masterpiece of the church. It represents a myriad of colors, each one a separate and independent screen print in a long process of discovery. Many of the screens have few discernable patterns. Some are dark and multifarious in nature. As each and every layer is laid over on top of the other a picture begins to appear. The full image cannot be experienced or appreciated, though, until one steps back and sees the scope and beauty of the magnum opus.

Five indistinct men are in a boat in a vibrant and tumultuous sea of waves and fish. One is steering the boat. The remaining four arms are intertwined as they strain and pull together on a single net. Some men's arms are touching that of another man. One man's arm and hand are separate and independent yet working in rhythm with the others. The wind is blowing the boat; the movement is evident but indiscernible. The “son/sun” is breaking out of the clouds emanating rays of warmth and hope down on the work of the men. Their net is filled with multihued rich animated fish, but it is not full. Their faces do not convey great joy, though, for darkness creeps and threatens at the edge of their work. There is more work to be done. There are still more fish in the sea.

The image of the church is caught up in Swanson's piece. From the depth and breadth of

¹ “John August Swanson,” The Art of John August Swanson, accessed August 14, 2018, <http://www.johnaugustswanson.com/>.

colors to the layering of impalpable patterns, the work of denominational and non-denominational churches interweave into the presence of God's Kingdom on earth. As fishers of all people, the universal church has "caught" many with the good news of the Gospel. However, there is still a great deal of work to be done before the Son rises.

It is estimated that there are over five billion non-Christians in the world.² Yet, many churches and denominations are reporting a decline. While some mega-churches continue to grow exponentially, most churches draw fewer than one hundred congregants a week. These churches are struggling to compete with mega-churches and their resources. Individuals seeking a church home want quality programming with lots of high-end options and opportunities, state of the art audio and visuals, and a large staff to run the majority of the programming, all of which require lots of servant volunteers and money.³

Countless mid-sized churches experienced a rapid increase in numbers in the late '90s. In their excitement, they built big buildings taking on large mortgages, believing their growth and financial prosperity would continue. While charitable giving has increased over the last twenty years, religious giving to churches has decreased by fifty percent leaving many churches struggling to maintain those buildings.⁴ Growing the church has been circumvented by fears about the budget.

Ebenezer United Methodist Church in Conyers, Georgia is stuck in this paradigm. In 1998 their church worship attendance soared to nearly seven hundred a week with over thirteen hundred members on roll. They built a new sanctuary, education building, and gymnasium.

² Conrad Hackett and David McClendon, "World's Largest Religion by Population Is Still Christianity," Pew Research Center, accessed November 28, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>.

³ "2011 Summary Research Report of A New Decade of Megachurches." Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Accessed November 28, 2018, <http://www.hartfordinstitute.org/megachurch/megachurch-2011-summary-report.htm>.

⁴ "Church Giving Statistics, 2018 Edition," Pushpay, July 18, 2018, www.pushpay.com/blog/church-giving-statistics/.

They assumed a mortgage of \$1.2 million anticipating it would be paid off in less than ten years. They made appropriate and seemingly fiscally sound decisions with a defined repayment plan based on what they thought were conservative projections of attendance, giving, and growth — however, no one anticipated the coming financial crisis.

In 2008 the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment banking company changed the financial landscape of America. The economy went spiraling downward. Excessive risky financial investing resulted in massive bailouts of financial institutions. The default rate on single-family dwelling mortgages skyrocketed. Securities tied to real estate and mortgage investments plummeted out of control. The stock market deterioration followed, producing enormous corporate and personal losses resulting in a rapid increase in evictions and foreclosures. Combined with a prolonged unemployment rate of 6.1 %, a financial catastrophe, nationally and locally, hit American families and churches in the pocketbook.⁵

This financial crisis impacted community demographics surrounding Ebenezer. Struggling middle-class homes began slipping into disrepair. According to congregation members, it visibly changed the background of the area. Furniture and belongings dumped on the street, the result of eviction notices, were evident practically daily. For sale signs began popping up everywhere, flooding the market, resulting in significant losses on home values. The Case-Shiller home price index reported its most significant price drop in history from 2008 to 2012.⁶ This, coupled with a change in the racial makeup of the community, led to many in the upper-middle-class moving out of the area. Ebenezer's upper-middle-class white congregation became surrounded by poor African Americans. Moreover, in a county that had had relatively

⁵ "Conclusions of the Financial Crisis Inquiry" Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, U.S. Government. Accessed November 14, 2018, http://fcic-static.law.stanford.edu/cdn_media/fcic-reports/fcic_final_report_conclusions.pdf.

⁶ "S&P/Case-Shiller U.S. National Home Price Index," Accessed November 27, 2018, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CSUSHPINSA>.

low crime rates, murder, assaults, and robberies began increasing.⁷

During this time there was also a significant change in pastoral leadership. The United Methodist Conference moved the pastor who had led the church into tremendous growth. The subsequent pastor struggled to meet the expectations of the congregation following their "beloved" leader of success. His tenure was short, and he was soon replaced with another. A conflict over vision and the direction of the church ensued. The congregation found little support from the District church leadership or the Bishop. The membership and their offerings drained out the back door. Hurt, confusion, distrust, and frustrations remained.

Staff and salaries were cut. Programs were pulled back and repairs to the building went by the wayside. Rumors of dissension and troubles inside the church walls leaked out into the community, seemingly building distrust of this religious institution in the neighborhood and surrounding area. Parents began pulling students from the vibrant preschool program. Young families left the church looking for larger, more stable children and youth programs.

Finally, in 2013, pastoral leadership changed bringing some peace and calm into the tumultuous environment. Relationships began to heal. Then one night the youth building was set on fire by vandals and was heavily damaged. Due to the lack of funds, the church members had to rally around the building and provide the supplies and the needed workforce to complete the necessary repairs. The work on the building pulled the church back together and, once again, they began working together toward a common goal.

As the church began to stabilize so did the community. Upper-middle-class African

⁷ "Crime in Conyers, Georgia (GA): Murders, Rapes, Robberies, Assaults, Burglaries, Thefts, Auto Thefts, Arson, Law Enforcement Employees, Police Officers, Crime Map," accessed December 14, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-Conyers-Georgia.html>.

Americans started taking advantage of the lower housing opportunities and began moving into the area in droves. New housing developments began in the \$300,000 to \$500,000 range and the financial status of the county started to turn around quickly.

However, the country's financial crisis, the change in the community demographics, and the struggles with pastoral leadership crushed the weekly church attendance to 120 and offerings fell from nearly \$1 million annually to \$325,000. The original loan on the building was \$1.5 million. Ebenezer has been paying on the loan for over 21 years for a total of nearly \$2.5 million. They still owe \$1.07 million with a monthly mortgage payment of \$7,574. Less than \$1800 a month is paid on the loan principal. At this rate, it will take forty-three years to pay off the mortgage.

Ebenezer's annual ministry and mission budgets are zero. The mortgage has become an albatross strangling their missional efforts and hearts. The Administrative Board and leadership are consumed by filling the seats with people who can help pay the bills rather than building the Kingdom of God. Their struggles have left them impotent to fulfill the call of the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of nations" (Matthew 28:19 NIV).

The church campus consists of five independent buildings: the Worship Center, Educational Building, Gymnasium, Student Warehouse, and the Chapel. The Chapel is currently rented out to a small independent African American church. The Student Warehouse is used once a week by a Boy Scout Troop and three or four times a month by the church. The Gymnasium is rented to BOLD Ministries, an independent school-age service for after school care, tutoring, and hunger programs. BOLD will be moving out in 2019 vacating the facilities. The lower level of the Education Building houses our Preschool program. We have twenty-five registered full-day students. Only a small portion of the upper floor is used once a week. A part

of the Worship Center is used during the week for offices and the sanctuary only on Sunday. The utilities average \$4000 a month. The church spends about \$20,000 annually just on essential church maintenance. The interior and exterior of the buildings have suffered from the lack of funds to maintain and update them adequately.

Ebenezer is a traditional stylized church. To be more attractive to others, they have added a praise band to every other service. They have attempted to connect with their community and say they are open to diversity in the church, though they have done little to communicate that to the public. Trying to make the church appealing, they have added other Bible studies and secular events like community blood drives and kid basketball programs. They have attempted to make the service more inclusive and attractive to different audiences by changing the liturgy and participants in the service. Instead of adding layers of color and life into the visual masterpiece of the church it has become an indistinguishable muddled mess. The conflated worship service doesn't seem to appeal or meet the needs of anyone. In an age of specialties and individualism, the church has continued to try and be everything to everyone and has often become irrelevant and unappealing.

Ebenezer's challenges have been intensified by local and national religious issues of competitiveness. There are seven United Methodist Churches within a five-mile radius of the church and twenty-seven other churches located within a three-mile radius. While several of these churches are in a similar situation to Ebenezer, others are growing. Elizabeth Baptist Church in Your City⁸ is a satellite location of the mega-church Elizabeth Baptist Church of Atlanta. It is located less than one mile from Ebenezer. Predominately an African American

⁸Elizabeth Baptist Church in Your City is the official name of the satellite churches associated with Elizabeth Baptist Church led by Dr. Craig Olivier in Atlanta.

congregation, the sermon delivered by the lead pastor of the Atlanta location is streamed live. Springfield Baptist Church is another growing church in the area, located just four miles from Ebenezer's campus. Like Elizabeth, it is a predominately black megachurch with weekly attendance averaging over 4800. They too continue to revel in growth virtually every week.

The National Congregations Study, directed by Mark Chaves of Duke Divinity School, has tracked changes in American congregational life since 1998. The most recent findings substantiate the trend that the average churchgoer is now attending larger churches. Current statistics state the average attendee worships in a congregation with about 400 regular participants. The largest seven percent of churches contain almost half of all church attendees. It is the mid-size to smaller churches that are losing members. However, those churches give more per capita than the individuals in the larger churches. A congregation of about 100 adults receives 18 percent more per capita than a congregation with 400 adults. Moreover, more churches than ever are claiming no denominational affiliation, especially amongst megachurches. From 1998 to 2012, the percentage of non-denominational congregations operating grew from eighteen to twenty-four percent.⁹

A survey of megachurches conducted by Harvard Institute for Religion Research suggests that young and single adults are much more likely to attend a megachurch than a smaller congregation. Many of the megachurch attendees transferred there from other churches, while 25% of their congregations report they had not attended church for a long time prior to coming to the megachurch. Most report they came to the megachurch because family, friends or coworkers invited them. The worship style, the senior pastor, and the church's reputation are factors that transition them into long-term attendees, as well as did the music/arts, social and

⁹ "National Congregations Study," Duke University, Department of Sociology. Accessed December 14, 2018, <http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/explore.html>.

community outreach and adult-oriented programs. Attendees appreciate and value that they can craft their own customized spiritual experiences through a multitude of ministry choices and diverse avenues for involvement.¹⁰

While Ebenezer United Methodist Church is in decline, it is not dead yet. God is in the resurrection business and a true masterpiece must have shadows of darkness in order to shape and form those images into beacons of greater beauty. By God's grace, we can begin to see the serigraph layers of color developing into a new unique piece of art according His design. Ebenezer will once again become a vital element of the "Great Catch."

A Unique Solution for a Unique Campus

Ebenezer's campus sits on nine acres. The chapel can hold approximately one hundred twenty-five in worship and has four small classrooms. The Student Warehouse has a kitchen, a central meeting room complete with an audio-visual system, restrooms, and six classrooms. The Educational building is two stories. The Lower Level contains the church preschool, nursery, and three classrooms. The upper level has ten rooms and restrooms. The sanctuary in the Worship Center can hold around eight hundred and nine hundred including a loft area. There are four classrooms and seven offices also located in the Worship Center. This unique campus provides the backdrop for this project.

Anchored in Ephesians 4:3-8, the goal of my project is to create a distinctive approach to church development with a mosaic multi-denominational church campus rooted in a theological understanding of church unity and diversity that would relieve the financial burden of Ebenezer United Methodist, stimulate a renewed interest and effort in evangelism of the Gospel, and

¹⁰ "2009 Profile of the People Who Attend America's Megachurches," accessed January 7, 2019, http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megachurch_attender_report.htm.

church growth.

In this paper I will discuss the biblical understanding of church unity and diversity; how a Mosaic Church campus differs from other models of unified churches; a case study of a multi-denominational church; how this could relieve the financial burden on Ebenezer UMC as well as other churches; and, the pragmatic steps that have been taken and need to be accomplished in order to bring such a campus into existence.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.⁴ There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called--⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism;⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.⁸ This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."⁹ (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:1-16 NIV.

The Church was and is God's. It is by His design that it is universal and complete in the complexity of diversity and the interwoven linking of arms as seen in Swanson's art. However, the church has not always reflected that concept. The statistics vary, but, there are literally thousands of Protestant denominations throughout the world. Among Methodists alone, in North

America there are the African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Association of Independent Methodists, Bible Methodist Connection of Churches, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Church of the Nazarene, Congregational Methodist Church, Evangelical Methodist Church of America, Free Methodist Church, The North America, Free Methodist Church in Canada, Fundamental Methodist Conference Methodist Church of Mexico, Methodist Protestant Church, Primitive Methodist Church Southern Methodist Church, United Church of Canada, United Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Most of the time, these denominations have been the result of discord over doctrine, personal preferences, or personalities. Individual churches, as well as denominations, have struggled with dissension and disharmony.

Even in the Bible, it is difficult to find a church that has not experienced some level of dissonance. In the New Testament, the church in Jerusalem was troubled with Judaizers (Acts 11:2; 15:1ff), the Corinthian congregation struggled over leadership authority (1 Corinthians 1:10ff), the Philippian church had its Euodia and Syntyche problem (Philippians 4:2-3); and, Revelation 1-3 mentions seven churches struggling with issues that brought division and discord. These examples are by no means exhaustive. Many today are disillusioned with the church because of this perceived dissonance then and now. They are looking for a dream picture of flawlessness that *they think* the church should be. Scot McKnight in *A Fellowship of Differents* writes “The church is a hospital for sinners, not a retirement center for the perfect. Looking for perfect Christians in a perfect church is failure to understand what the church is.”¹¹

Paul in Ephesians 4:1-13, clarifies that the church is a fellowship of others sharing life together under the tutelage of God. It is God’s people growing through love and grace built on the foundation of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:17). Jesus on the cross broke down the barriers

¹¹ Scot McKnight, *A Fellowship of Differents*. Kindle Edition (Zondervon, 2015), 105.

between people and called us into the relationship of unity that matures our faith and walk as Christians (Ephesians 4:10). From Him, the whole body, the church, will grow individually as parts and when fused together becomes the embodied fulfillment of Christ (Ephesians 4:16). This unity is a divine gift from the Holy Spirit that must be cultivated by harmonious relationships and the “bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) as found as oneness in Ephesians 4:1-16.

The individual Christian and the church must “walk worthy of the calling which you have received” (Ephesians 4:1b NIV). In Greek, the word for calling is *klēseos* meaning a calling to the salvation which God offers. Paul connects this salvation to one’s desire and mission in Christ. It is a calling to a way of living that defies worldly existence and is defined by gentleness, humility, and forgiveness. It is an example of unselfish oneness manifested by sacrificial love for others. In Paul's day, the divide and animosity between Jews and Gentiles were great. Paul was challenging the individual and the church to display a unity between these two groups as a powerful witness to the world that will bring peace to all believers. Thereby, it is a challenge that the modern church must also strive to achieve among itself.

Jesus said the same thing the night before he was crucified:

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even 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 sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” John 17:20-23

Jesus’s prayer is that we have the same unity as between the Father and the Son. It is a relationship that is indivisible and of one mind working in unison (John 5:17–19), speaking the same thing (John 8:28), and whose judgment is the same (John 8:16). Without hesitation or explanation of difference Jesus clearly states that He is unequivocally and intimately one with

the Father (John 17:11). This oneness that exists between the Father and Son is practically, tangibly, and mysteriously the unity that He has called the church to live. It is an essential witness to the world (John 17:21b) that is inseparable from the church's relationship to the Son and Father.

Biblical unity is relational with the Triune God and the church while also allowing for diversity within the call. Diversity is found in the gifts and graces, "some" not all are called to a specific form of service (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). However, all services are to be used "so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12b). Note, the body which Paul illustrates this with is a human body, but small and undeveloped (Ephesians 4:14). The body fully developed in strength and power is the church in its eschatological completeness. The individual believer and the church must endeavor to do everything in his or her power to reach this perfection of unity. This understanding is reiterated by scholar Jeffrey Kloha:

There is no aspect of the church's thinking, teaching, behavior, or relationships that are not grounded in its unity in Christ. All the baptized are united because they are God's single eschatological people, formed in him by the gospel and waiting for the last day, when all creation is united in Christ. Any discussion of the church that does not assume that the goal is the "unity of all" under Christ ignores the fundamental confession of Christ as Lord and the proclamation of his gospel.¹²

Unity of faith is desirable; it is to be striven for based on the foundational beliefs of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; but within this unity is full liberty of each member and church to take different positions on minor points. Those differing points are the supporting ligaments that help each of us grow up in love (Ephesians 4:16). Paul never suggested that unity would be achieved through an assigned structure, synchronization of worship practices or moderating interpretation of disputed theological beliefs, but, by acceptance of one another. It is an

¹² Jeffrey Kloha, "The Lordship of Christ and the Unity of the Church," *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 4 (2013): 276.

acceptance that is tangible and visible to the world through affirmation and cooperation that will enhance and enrich the church's witness.

This is inveterate in the historic confession of the church, the Nicene Creed.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. I believe, in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father...and I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church.¹³

The Creed is a statement of belief that is ecumenical as it is accepted, as authoritative, by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and a majority of the Protestant churches. It is spoken often during baptisms, covenantal membership vows, and in many churches every Sunday. It opens the door for the unity of the church within diversity. The people of God are guided by this spirit-filled confession to be one in this foundational belief.

The second half of the eighteenth century was a time of denominational jealousies, cultural turmoil, theological confusion, and social unrest. Beneath the surface was a growing distrust of established religious authorities that threatened special privileges and resulted in competitive religiosity and a power struggle between the Anglican Church and the formation of dissenting thoughts and churches, one of which was Methodism. John Wesley never intended to start a denomination; instead, he pursued biblical unity and fellowship among the churches. In 1749 Wesley preached a sermon titled "The Catholic Spirit" based on 2 Kings 10:15. He stated:

Even though a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without doubt, we may. In this, all the children of God may unite, even though they retain these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may help one another increase in love and good works.¹⁴

¹³ "Nicene Creed," accessed January 8, 2019, <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/nicene.creed.html>.

¹⁴ Rev. N. Burwash, S.T.D., *Wesley's 52 Standard Sermons...as He Approved Them* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 1988), 391.

When Wesley talked about the Christian calling to live and think and exhibit a catholic spirit, he was unmistakable and explicit in his demand that those who professed faith in the God of universal love are called to mirror that love to other Christians and other churches. The unifying question was one of, "Is your heart right with God?" and on that Wesley believed the foundation of Christian unity could be built. Wesley further expressed his vision for Christian unity and cooperation in mission and witness that would spread across confessional and ecclesiastical lines in his "Reasons against Separation from the Church of England" in 1758. These writings define the Methodist commitment to unity and ecumenical fellowship.

To continue this rich Wesleyan tradition and thought, the United Methodist Book of Discipline states:

Christian unity is founded on the theological understanding that through faith in Jesus Christ we are made members-in-common of the one body of Christ. Christian unity is not an option; it is a gift to be received and expressed...As people bound together on one planet, we see the need for a self-critical review of our own tradition and accurate appreciation of other traditions. In these encounters, our aim is not to reduce the doctrinal difference to some lowest common denominator of religious agreement, but to raise all such relationships to the highest possible level of human fellowship and understanding.¹⁵

The denomination's efforts to achieve this are seen in the church history. In November 1946, the United Methodist church worked to unite the Evangelical Church and The United Brethren Church into The Evangelical United Brethren Church following twenty years of negotiation. In 1951 it participated in the founding of the World Council of Churches and worked in cooperation with seven other Protestant churches on the Consultation of Church Union in 1960. The denomination continues to seek to live out this commitment to biblical unity in their work with

¹⁵ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 105.

the African Episcopal Church, Moravian Church (North and South Provinces) and the Uniting Churches of Sweden, to name a few.¹⁶

As a United Methodist Church, Ebenezer has attempted to display this vow to unity. Like many churches, it began as a community church meeting under the arbor over two hundred years ago.¹⁷ The people gathered around a spring on the farm of John Hodge, coming from 75 miles or more, to attend a four-day revival. They lived in their covered wagons or tents on the grounds. They did not care what the individual's theological beliefs were, or focus on doctrinal differences. They worshiped together as one church united by faith in Jesus Christ. They met only once a year as they were on a circuit with twenty-seven other churches.

Eventually, the church grew, the land was purchased, and a small structure was built. A full-time pastor was appointed to the circuit and church meetings increased to once a month. When there wasn't a meeting at Ebenezer, many of the families attended other churches, mostly Baptist churches. Ebenezer was one of the few churches to offer Sunday School so many of the children in the community attended despite which church they identified with. Moreover, other activities throughout the church history focused on unity in diversity. Community people where helped regardless of where they attended the church or if they attended. A church basketball and softball teams were formed to play against other churches in the community.

Even today many events and activities recognize Christ's call to one church. A ladies' Bible study is held in a church member's home with women from other churches attending. The old chapel is rented out to a non-denominational African American church. B.O.L.D, Bread of Life Deliverance, rents the gym, kitchen, and some office space to conduct ministries out of our building. The church recently participated in an Action Ministries "We Serve" event with several

¹⁶ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 23.

¹⁷ Pam Akin and Joyce Ross, *Ebenezer United Methodist Church 1818-2018 "Stone of Help for 200 Years"* (Conyers, GA: Self Published - Ebenezer UMC, 2018), 18.

other churches in the community, packing food kits for the children who attend schools in our county. The youth group has partnered with another youth group for several activities. The Hand Bell Choir has several members from other churches. Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts from many different community churches meet in the church building. The church membership has transferred from many different denominations including Baptist, African Episcopal Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran.

Inherent in Ebenezer's DNA is God's call to unity of His church for the purpose of one common goal. Ebenezer is on a journey of self-discovery that can only be completed in the fulfillment of a visual depiction and expression of the united Kingdom of God working to accomplish that goal before the Son rises again.

OTHER EFFORTS AT CHURCH UNITY WITHIN DIVERSITY

Throughout history the church in America has lived in the hope of achieving this. And, many lessons learned. When the Protestant church began in North America in the early 1600s the pilgrims and colonists brought their faith with them to the new land. They would often gather together in a town hall meeting room, beside a spring, or in an arbor to conduct religious services. The first dedicated church building soon followed and became the norm. Since that time, churches and denominations have tried to find a way to support and encourage each other. In many areas, the population was scarce and scattered, and clergy was limited. Church services infrequently happened with many attending services at more than one church. Limited resources and people required many churches to work together. Over the years, often out of necessity, many have continued to seek ways to work collectively.

The Federated church came into existence in the early 1900s. In a Federated church, two or more congregations from different denominations would choose to join efforts and share worship. Each congregation would maintain their separate representation and affiliation with their designated denomination, but shared a pastor and a building. Members retained membership in only one denomination. It was not intended that they share any resources other than those mentioned. The pastor had to adapt between the denominations. Doctrinal differences were said to have been secondary to the mission. Overtime denominational differences and ties weaken, old issues of survival resurfaced, and most churches merged. Gerald Stone in his book, Administration in a Multi-Denominational Parish: Toward Ecumenical Theology, wrote about the demise of the Federated Church, “A local union such as this does not necessarily eradicate the problems which existed before it was summated.”¹⁸ The Federated Churches of today now identify their affiliation with the United Church of Christ.

A similar attempt under this organizational structure was formed in the late 1930’s known as the Yoked Church. Some pastors found this arrangement helpful.

The yoked field opens the way of knowing who is unchurched and going to them as the agent of the churches without stirring up any rivalry. The plan makes for closer cooperation between the churches and real unity in all types of community work. Makes possible long-term, full-time, well paid, resident ministry.¹⁹

Another pastor noted, “The community on the outside is impressed. It is very wholesome, leading to better understanding and fellowship. Gives the pastor an opportunity of showing to both groups how much alike they really are”²⁰ However, the majority of the pastors involved did not affirm this style, stating it was difficult to keep abreast and represent equally two different denominations and resulted in non-denominationalism among the congregants. Many

¹⁸ Gerald T. Stone, “Administration in a Multi-Denominational Parish: Toward an Ecumenical Theology.” (1975), 2.

¹⁹ Ralph A. Felton, *Cooperative Churches*. (Madison, New Jersey: Drew Theological Seminary, 1947), 45.

²⁰ Felton, 45.

Yoked churches also joined the United Church of Christ while others dissipated. There are no known Yoked churches today.

Around the same time as the formation of the Federated and Yoked church still another form of cooperation was attempted, the Union Church. Under the Union Church effort, generally, two denominations joined together using the same building while maintaining their separate organization and pastoral leadership. The administrative bodies from each church would meet together to discuss "provisions for the use, maintenance, and improvement of the jointly owned property. The expenses [for the operation of the building] were equally shared by the two congregations."²¹ Budget and treasury of funds were separate and dispersed by the individual congregations. Joint Sunday School rotated literature annually between the denominations. There was only one choir and the pastors "share the pulpit" alternating Sundays. As a rule, neither pastor was in charge of the building. The two churches generally came from a "highly similar racial and historical background."²² Although they were called Union Church, they often were divided by competitive feelings resulting in friction, confusion, and unwilling compromise. Benevolence decreased, and even families often found themselves divided. Ralph A. Felton in Cooperative Churches wrote, "We will not have church cooperation simply by putting 2 [sic] congregations together in the same building unless peoples at the same time are taught to cooperate. Cooperation is not simply bodily union, it is a matter of spirit."²³

Other forms of church collaboration today include the same denomination, different language or ethnic group, or a rental agreement. Neither of which genuinely apply to this project, as in the first model it is the same denomination, and in the second example, there is no cooperation between the two churches.

²¹ Felton, 10.

²² Felton, 11.

²³ Felton, 17.

A Mosaic Church Campus (Mosaic) differs in many ways from the previous cases. The Mosaic model crosses multi-denominational lines while retaining denominational authority, structure, and individual identity. There is no sharing of lead pastors. While there are some times of joint worship, each church maintains its worship style and theology. There is not a merging of beliefs, church structure, leadership, congregational decision making, or all of the church ministries. It is a different way of being the church without having to give up the individual church history or existence. Church competition is diminished and scriptural unity and harmony is fostered.

Mosaic is an active and unique reshaping of cooperative church ministry as an expression of God's love across denominational lines that seeks to build disciples rather than buildings, geographical space, or land ownership. It allows for a continuation of a church's legacy while equipping the church to serve God and its community better. Creativity and flexibility in ministry become affordable as the churches are relieved of some of the financial burdens of doing church.

Under this plan, three or more established protestant church bodies will join together on the Ebenezer church campus. However, it is a possibility that Ebenezer could sell its property and together the churches buy land for a new campus. This could include two churches from the same denomination with very different "target" audiences such as a contemporary, traditional, or ethnic focus. Each church will maintain its name and structure. The campus will be referred to as a Mosaic Church Campus denoting the creation of a new beautiful image of the Kingdom of God through the use of many "multi-hued" forms of church. It will take churches who are willing to take a risk and to let some things die in order to live again. There will be a potential for some recognizable losses in the process, such as, the loss of a building, location, or, perhaps

some members of the congregation. The gain in the spiritual realm on earth will ultimately outweigh any losses.

Each church will share in the ownership of the building, be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the building, and the establishment of a building reserve fund. The expense of janitorial and lawn services will be divided among the churches. The shared ministry will be uniquely designed around the gifts and graces of the involved church. Anticipated areas of collaboration might consist of children and youth, some educational programming, and some musical/worship arts events such as cantatas. There will be scheduled days of joint worship as decided upon by the designated churches.

The strength of this linking of arms will shore up each church as they work separately and independently in rhythm with each other. Efforts to reach the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ will be intensified as God's work through the church will take on a new layer of vibrancy and color.

A CASE STUDY

The Mosaic Church Campus is a relatively new concept. After a great deal of research, I have only been able to identify one credible example, Springhouse Ministry in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Deb Murphy is the Building Use Coordinator of SpringHouse Ministry Center and a member of the Board. She is the only one of the original formation committee still in leadership. In an interview she walked me through the process of discovery to an inspirational thriving ministry of hope.

In 2005, Salem English Lutheran Church (Salem) and Lyndale Congregational United Church of Christ (Lyndale) were both unsuccessfully struggling to maintain their buildings while

also trying to finance ministries. Located just four blocks apart they decided to move together into one building. Salem closed their facility in 2006 and moved in with Lyndale.

Unfortunately, Lyndale's building was dilapidated and insufficient to meet their needs, so it was sold. Together, they moved into a shared building with Intermedia Arts. Plans were drawn up to renovate the Salem location to be affordable housing and a Salem/Lyndale Ministry Center. A closing/groundbreaking ceremony was held in November of that year. However, the building market tanked, and everything was put on hold. Finally, in 2010, the project was restarted and an architectural firm was hired.

Lyndale and Salem quickly realized that financially they needed a third party involved to complete the project. During this same time period, First Christian Church (First) was experiencing similar challenges with their building and ministries and had sold their building. They were renting a facility in the area while they discussed the long-term plan for their church's viability and sustainability. By November of 2010, the three churches were in conversation. Deb Murphy, SpringHouse Building Coordinator, said:

We needed to get out from under these really large buildings that were eating all of our money. We were supporting the church building. We were not supporting the church. I remember one of our Trustees as we were moving forward with the process of coming together in this building, he said he was looking forward to working on his faith instead of working to keep a roof over our heads... We can support each other and hopefully survive where we knew we weren't going to survive the way we were.²⁴

In January 2011 before the renovations were completed, all three congregations agreed to enter into a covenant partnership to pay for and complete the restoration of the Salem building to meet their needs as joint owners. Each church contributed one-third of the cost of developing

²⁴ Debbie Murphy, Interviewed by Sheila Crowe. SpringHouse Ministry Center. October 10, 2018. 13:32 minutes. Mrs. Murphy was on the original planning committee and Board during the process of uniting. None of the pastors that were serving in any of the churches, at the time, still serve this location.

the property and thereby own one-third of the Center. Personal property brought into the relationship such as the baby grand piano, pipe organ, or artifacts uniquely pertaining to an individual Church's history, identified members, and materials related to the celebration of the sacraments remain the property of the particular church.

From the beginning, it was important that the combined work of the three churches be referred to as a partnership. The churches did not merge into one body. Under the agreement, each church maintains its own unique identity and denominational relationship. According to their covenant agreement they entered into this association so that each church could individually pursue:

- Living faithfully, stewarding wisely the financial resources of our congregations, the earth's resources, and our ministry for the common good.
- Building a ministry that values the diversity within our congregations, community, and denominations.
- Creating a ministry that uplifts our mutual call, while not comprising our convictions, our unique history and identity, our particular ways of worship, membership and use of the sacraments.²⁵

To maintain clear lines of responsibility and accountability, many powers are reserved by the individual churches and their congregations; and, the covenant in no way gives the churches control over each other in the following areas:

- i. Religious services or sacraments;
- ii. Confirmation and admission of new members of such Church;
- iii. Affiliation with area and national organizations; and
- iv. Selection and calling of a Pastor or other employee or staff member, other than employees and staff expressly hired on behalf of the three Churches;
- v. Theological or justice positions or other unique church ministries.²⁶

²⁵ "SpringHouse Ministry Covenant of First Christian Church of Minneapolis (Disciples of Christ) Lyndale United Church of Christ and Salem English Lutheran Church Agreement," January 29, 2012, 1.

²⁶ "SpringHouse Ministry Covenant of First Christian Church of Minneapolis (Disciples of Christ) Lyndale United Church of Christ and Salem English Lutheran Church Agreement," 2.

A Ministry Center Board was created to organize the three churches around central issues during and following the renovation project and to complete the details of the covenant agreement. The Ministry Center Board is comprised of three lay members from each of the churches and one pastor from each of the churches. At least two of the appointees must be representatives from their church's leadership team. Pastors do not have voting rights unless the required number of Board members from their respective church is absent. A quorum is a minimum of six Board members of at least two members from each church.

Each church designates a Co-Chair from among their three Board Members. The Co-Chairs have equal authority and must coordinate and stagger their responsibilities and functions. The Ministry Center Board may request the Governing Body of the church to replace a Co-Chair if the Board determines that he/she as a Co-Chair has failed in his or her duties. If requested, the Governing Body of the church must appoint a replacement. The Board elects, from amongst themselves, a treasurer and secretary. The Board currently meets monthly.

No action can be approved if all three representatives from one church object. In such a case the motion is tabled. The Ministry Center Board powers are limited to the management, operation, utilization, maintenance, and improvements of the Center and operation of all shared ministries. These ministries include Christian Education, Youth Ministry, the shared work for justice, and other activities that might "enrich our life together." All actions and deliberations of the Board are subject to the respective governing church bodies.

The Board prepares the Ministry Center budget. It is then sent to each of the Governing Bodies of the churches. The individual church Governing Body reviews the budget and either returns it for revisions or recommends it for approval by its congregation. The budget is

comprised of the operating costs, maintenance, repairs, and improvements for the Ministry Center including a capital reserves fund. The capital funds budget covers the cost of such things as replacement of the boiler or other mechanical systems. The budget is then presented for approval at an annual joint meeting of the congregations.

The Board has the right to create ad hoc committees. Each ad hoc committee must have three or more church members. Ad hoc committees were formed to define the operational guidelines and joint educational issues; look, supplies, and use of the kitchen area; building, creating, and scheduling the use of three worship areas; staffing issues; building maintenance, operating costs, capital costs, and each church's contribution. There were some challenges along the way, most of which were the result of personality differences more than anything, according to Building Coordinator Deb Murphy. The biggest hurdle, interestingly, was the color of the chairs.²⁷

None of the three churches can sell, assign or use the property for a loan or mortgage. Nor can they transfer its interest to anyone without the approval of the other churches. If one of the churches chooses to withdraw from the partnership or is unable to meet its financial obligations the other churches have the opportunity to buy the withdrawing church's interest in the Ministry Center. The non-withdrawing churches have sixty days after an appraisal to exercise this option and 120 days to find the funding. If neither of the withdrawing churches wants to acquire the interest, then three churches will work together to find an acceptable replacement church.

Cooperation between the churches goes further than just the building. There are three separate sanctuaries located in the building. The churches rotate the use of the sanctuaries

²⁷ Ms. Murphy, Springhouse Ministry Center.

according to the liturgical calendar. No one owns a sanctuary. Each of the sanctuaries is a different configuration, size, and have a different "feeling." It takes three years for the individual church to rotate into the same sanctuary for the same Christian season. "That is so that no one can say we always did it this way," laughs Ms. Murphy, "because we haven't always been in here in this sanctuary." There are chairs in each of the sanctuaries to allow each church to move things around to fit their style and needs. The churches rotate the weekly greeter responsibilities.

Lyndale chose during the process to retain the pulpit from their original church. It is on wheels and moves with them from one sanctuary to the next. Careful attention was paid to utilize unique features from each of the churches in the current building. Small stain glass windows from First were framed and have hooks on them in order to be hung in the windows in the various rooms. The backs of pews from the churches were utilized as lighting fixtures. Pianos and a pipe organ from the various churches were moved into the new facility.

Baptism fonts from two of the churches were also placed on wheels. First baptizes by immersion and so a baptism pool was added to the building. However, all three churches have decided that baptisms are a significant celebratory event in the life of the universal church, no matter the method. When there is a baptism scheduled for any of the churches, it is done together in the fellowship hall at the start of the worship time according to the chosen method of the baptizing church. Members from all three churches attend and participate in the celebration. After the baptism, the members return to their identified sanctuary for the rest of their service. This embodies the idea of "one church, one baptism" and strengthens the understanding of biblical unity for the congregations and visitors.

The churches have also combined many of their educational programs. The children and youth programs are united during Sunday School, Wednesday Nights, and for special events.

This does not negate the individual churches doing a separate event with their children or youth. During confirmation, all three theologies and polity are taught as a way to educate and inform their youth. There is one Adult Formation Study class that is designed for anyone to attend, although, anyone can attend any of the other churches' bible study classes. The differences of each denomination's doctrine is celebrated, affirmed, and built upon. An air of openness and inclusivity is fostered, nurtured, and developed with intentionality. There is no competition between the individual churches. The universal family of Christ is tangibly expressed and learned. This is the ligaments of the body of Christ working in unison.

The churches worship together four times a year. In January they worship together followed by a lunch and their annual joint meeting. The children and youth lead the service in May. The first Sunday in September is a joint Back to School/Church event, and their Christmas Pageant is the third Sunday of Advent. This expression of harmony is carried out into the community as the churches also join together for "Worship in the Park" in August and a Fall Festival event in October.

The community has taken notice. Especially, in the beginning, many community members would stop by the church wanting to tour the facility and to ask questions. They were trying to understand how it was possible to have more than one church in the same building. This unrestricted access has created an atmosphere of godly acceptance and grace to the point many civic groups, neighborhood associations, and Muslim and Jewish groups feel welcomed in the facility. SpringHouse is an example of the church becoming a catalyst to healing, hope, and grace for all people.

Transitioning from independent churches into three churches in one building has been like “adjustments to life with roommates.”²⁸ Initially, there were some fears about the loss of identity, lack of parking, and the lack of engagement with the children and teenagers. Murphy clarified:

None of those fears have been realized. In fact, all of us have gained more members since we moved in together and we are more connected to our community than ever before...I just completed a survey of building usage over the last year. Only four days out of the whole year our building wasn't used. One day was Christmas, another was Thanksgiving Day, and there were two Fridays this past year. Use of the building was split almost exactly between 50% of the time by the community and the other 50% by the churches... As long as we hold each other in love [though], it will work out.²⁹

Springhouse is a place of love in their community, an authentic and perceptible expression of Christ to the world.

PRESENTING THE IDEA TO EBENEZER

I was informed I would be moving to Ebenezer in April 2018. I immediately began praying, studying the demographics, and reading the church history. I quickly realized my previous doctoral project would not fit my new appointment. I felt a calling from God to pursue the idea of a Mosaic Church Campus. I met with the current pastor, Chris Branscomb, and the District Superintendent Quincy Brown to learn more about the church and its people.

The church was wrapping up a United Methodist Paragraph 213 study. In a Paragraph 213 Assessment, a task force is appointed to do an extensive study of the past, present, and future potential of the church for ministry in their community. The study includes a demographic report of the community, changes, and needs; present ministries of the congregation; number of

²⁸ Murphy. 19:5 minutes.

²⁹ Murphy. 23 minutes.

leaders and style of leadership; fiscal and facility needs; distance from other United Methodist churches; number and size of churches of other denominations in the community; and, other items that may impact the church's ability to fulfill the mission of the Church. The report was presented to the church in the Spring of 2018, with the following recommendations:

- Option 1: EUMC Continues What It is Currently Doing
- Option 2: Hold a Fund Drive
- Option 3: EUMC Divides Property and Sells One Part
- Option 4: EUMC Works with the North Georgia Conference
- Option 5: Lease the Three New Buildings³⁰

In addition to the report findings, the church membership was informed there would be a change in leadership. Three town hall type meetings were held where the congregation was given an opportunity to ask questions and respond to the study's findings. Rev. Dr. Quincy Brown, Atlanta Decatur Oxford District Superintendent for the North Georgia United Methodist Church stated:

There was a great deal of hesitancy to discuss the possibility of selling the building. The congregation was more concerned about the new leadership and were surprised that I was sending them a white female. I was asked why I wasn't sending them a black pastor considering the church demographics. I told them they weren't ready for a black pastor. Half of them would leave the church the following Sunday if I sent them a black preacher.³¹

I was officially appointed to the church at the end of June. The first couple of months I focused on meeting the new congregation and leadership. Due to the church history and their experience with leadership in the past, I spent a great deal of time building relationships and

³⁰ Marvin Akin, Chris Branscomb, and Deon Thompson, "213 Assessment," January 2018, 26–28. Each option is delineated in the report. Option 1 maintains of the status quo. Option 2 is a fund drive within the current congregation to help pay down the mortgage. Option 3 requires dividing the land and buildings in lots to be sold off and the church moving into just one building. Option 4 would be a relinquishing of the church buildings and property to the Conference to be reapportioned or sold as the Conference deemed suitable to the needs and ministry of the area. Option 5 would necessitate the church moving into the old chapel and downsizing accordingly so that the Sanctuary, Educational Building, and gymnasium could be rented out to another entity.

³¹ Quincy Brown. Interviewed by Sheila Crowe. Atlanta Decatur Oxford District Office of the North Georgia united Methodist Church. September 18, 2018.

trust. I did, however, began introducing themes around planning for the future through two of my sermon series, Healing for the Soul and What Am I to Do, where were designed to encourage the congregation to rethink their calling, to encourage relational evangelism, and to help them consider their next steps as individuals and a congregation.

I began an active effort to increase their evangelistic spirit and to get them to think outside the walls of the church through several steps of engagement. In August everyone in the congregation was given ten pennies and told to put the pennies in the left pocket and move one to the right pocket every time they smiled and said hello to someone they didn't know. September they were encouraged to choose five of the people they met over the last month, to share with them a series of Encouragement Cards³³, and to begin to build a relationship with them by getting to know them. They were then invited to bring them to a community event, "We Serve," in October. The purpose of the "We Serve" event was to pack food kits for the children in need in our county. The event was held outside in the parking lot and was a festival event with several activities and a food truck. Over 325 individuals from the community and five different churches participated. Members of the congregation brought at least fifteen new people.

I met one on one with the Administrative Board Chairperson and discussed the struggles the church is facing financially. We discussed the 213 Assessment and the congregation's response. I presented to him the idea of a Mosaic Church Campus as not only a potential solution to the financial crisis but as an important expression of the universal church of God. His initial response was disinterest. Over the next two weeks, though, he came back to me several times and asked questions. He then asked me to present the idea at the August Board

³³ These cards are the size of business cards. There are ten cards with various uplifting secular sayings. On the back of the cards is a scripture. Over 750 sets of cards were distributed. We are in the process of updating them for a second distribution.

meeting. At that meeting, the Board was invited to revisit the 213 assessment and to allow me to add a sixth option, the Mosaic Church Campus. I briefly explained the idea and shared that I would be visiting an example of this in October and would report back. They unanimously agreed to add the option.

A training event for all leaders will be held in January 2019. At this training, we will be reviewing our calling, vision and mission, and 213 Assessment. The team will be invited to use the video from my Attentiveness Project³⁴ to help them consider how the church has reflected the Kingdom of God in the past and how it might project the heart of the founding members into the future. A Bible study on the purpose and role of the church in scripture will be used to encourage the leadership to think out of the box of their current ideas and practices of church to a greater fulfillment of the Kingdom of God

I will conduct a Straw Poll to assess their willingness to make significant changes in the programming and building use and will present my findings on a mosaic church campus. The leadership will be challenged to establish a detailed timeline for moving the church forward including goals and responsible parties. This will include a discussion about how to educate the church membership on the scriptural roles of the church, where and how we plan to reflect that understanding of church to the community around us, our financial status, current building usage, and specific steps to be taken in 2019 to inform and invite the congregation to consider the Mosaic Church Campus.

³⁴ My Attentiveness Project is a self-guided tour through the church cemetery. The narration provides a historical background surrounding the formation of the church. The founding members' hopes and dreams for the church are shared. Participants are challenged to reflect on those buried in the cemetery: what they looked like, what ministries they participated in and supported, how they influenced their community and how they witnessed to the power of Christ through Ebenezer. As they leave the cemetery they are asked to sit and reflect on how the cemetery demonstrated the unity, diversity, division, and future hope of the Kingdom of God on earth.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

There is still a great deal of work to be accomplished. Several factors, including the ending of a financial grant in 2019, are pushing the timeline for this project. The church will have to decide to pursue the Mosaic or not in the next few months. The Mosaic Church Campus would provide some financial relief and assist with facility management while not requiring the congregation to give up the buildings entirely. However, it will take a significant shift in congregation's thinking about the building so they can let go of the past, see the move as a positive step for the Kingdom instead as a loss for Ebenezer, and develop an attitude of willingness to share resources with churches of other denominations.

Additionally, all of the buildings and property of the church is currently held as collateral for the mortgage. The church will have to refinance the mortgage through renegotiation with the current lender, a new vendor, or consider selling church bonds in order to change that. Any change in the church mortgage will require church and conference approval. An openness to move forward on the refinance will be an indicator of the church's readiness to proceed with the Mosaic Church Campus. The above are major hurdles. It is my hope to complete the refinancing of the mortgage by the summer of 2019. Simultaneously, I will work with the Board leadership to educate the congregation on the possibility of the Mosaic project, allow them time to process and ask questions during several congregational meetings, and to approve the pursuit of creating a Mosaic Church Campus for the Kingdom of God on earth.

After the mortgage is refinanced, the church will need to establish a statement of core values that will be a baseline for developing a partnership with other churches. The statement will include an expected shared theology, an understanding of the relationship, and the boundaries of acceptance. Using this set of Core Values, I will encourage the church to begin

the search for partners by visiting International Theological Seminary Dean Dr. John Green in Atlanta, Dr. Larry Cheek with the Stone Mountain Baptist Association, Dr. Phil Schroeder of the North Georgia United Methodist Church –Church Development Committee, the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and several local pastoral groups. It will be necessary to identify the partners before the process can proceed. Once partners have been identified there will be many details to work out, including possible building renovations, staffing, preservation and recognition of each church’s heritage, program sharing, and scheduling.

I believe creating a Mosaic Church Campus could be a radical move toward a visible and tangible statement to the community that as Christians we are united in our diversity. The Kingdom of God and our mission, to make disciples for Christ, would be furthered.

A new church is being born. It may not be the church we expect or want. The church of the future may not include our favorite liturgy or hymn, our central theological principal, or even our denomination! God’s promises always arrive with surprises in them. The form of the new world and new church is not in our hands....What is in our hands is the chance to respond to God’s call. To put our skills and our wills to the tasks of discerning the opportunity points, the place and times for change effort, and to add our gifts to God’s church in this time of change. How God uses our gifts we cannot predict...God is calling people across the face of this country and the world. God's call is to newness for the whole world, not just the church. Those of us who are called into the church have a particular vocation to work for the renewal and refreshment of the church, not as a centering presence from which we may serve the new world that God is creating around us. We have been told that God is making all things new. God is calling us to participate in that new creation...We have also been told that God's time is now.³⁵

The Mosaic Church campus would be corporeal depiction of Swanson’s serigraph of “The Great Catch” brought to life.

³⁵ Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church, Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* Indianapolis, Indiana: Alban Institute Publication, 1991, 87.

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