

Church Merger/Marriage FAQs

1. What does a church “merger” mean?

The idea of a church merger—in our context—should be thought of as a marriage. Essentially, we are two healthy bodies deciding to come together as one. The merger will ultimately become a replant of something brand new. Each church brings its own mix of strengths and weaknesses. The individual strengths of each church compliment and balance out each church’s weaknesses. And, much like a marriage, the merger will bring our two individual bodies together to become something new and stronger.

2. How did the merger idea come about?

As many of the members at both the Church at Winchester and Mosaic Bible Church are aware, our pastors—Shay and James respectively—have been close friends since initially meeting near the beginning of each church plant. Over the years, the pastors have considered and prayed about merging the two churches together several times, but the timing never seemed right. In fall 2017, the conversation came up again. At this point, both churches had elder teams in place that devoted themselves to prayer with the specific purpose of seeking God’s direction. Each team feels that the Lord is moving in this direction, at His time, in the lives of our churches.

3. Why are we considering a merger?

This question was answered for the elders of the two churches as we sought the Lord to answer three other questions:

- Could we accomplish more together than separate?
- Would our community be better served together?
- Could the Kingdom of God be further extended by our merger?

In the answering of these three questions, the two elder teams came together and found that there were more “Pros” in a merger of our churches, and more “Cons” in not pursuing a merger. It was determined that we would better accomplish together the following:

- Strengths of each church compliment the other’s weaknesses
- Each member of the church will be able to focus on the gifts God has given them
 - For both churches, many individuals have had to become “generalists” rather than “specialists.” This has led to various people serving in multiple areas, not utilizing or focusing their God-given gifting—and ultimately facing burnout. This merger would allow for people within each church to serve God and the body in the ways in which they are called and equipped by God.

- Members will learn from one another
- More small groups, thus more mission!
- Allow for the potential hiring of a full-time pastor
- Allow for future church planting
- Sharing in burdens
 - Ministry
 - Resources
 - Volunteers
 - Administration
 - Time
- Finally, we will be displaying unity in an increasingly polarized world

4. What are the benefits of this proposed merger?

Simply put, we are better together than we could ever be apart. Both churches bring much to the “marriage.” Each ministry brings a commitment to the Word of God in our lives and the work of God in our community. Both bring a heart for families. Both have local and international missions emphasis. We are motivated, gifted people who want to honor God by using our gifts and abilities to advance God’s purposes.

Coming together as one church will bring a synergy to our ministry, using the best of both congregations to launch us toward our one goal of knowing Christ and making Him known. In essence, we believe this merger will move us further, farther, and faster for the Kingdom of God and the work in our city.

There are several benefits to a marriage of the two churches. The greatest benefit is the opportunity to replant as a new faith family, with the shared gifts of a new leadership team leading a new church with more diverse gifts and abilities.

5. Are the two churches compatible in theology and distinctives?

Our two churches are tremendously compatible in theological perspectives and distinctives. So similar, in fact, that many visitors who have spent time in both of our churches have often asked us—as leaders—“Why don’t you guys merge together, because you’re so similar in focus and theology?”

6. If the merger goes through, what would the vision, mission, and distinctives of the new merged church be?

The vision of the church will be: To see Christ glorified in our community and beyond by making disciples who worship authentically, pray consistently, serve sacrificially, give abundantly, witness unashamedly, and disciple others to do the same.

The mission of the church will be: To Live, Love, and Labor for the Glory of Christ

The distinctives which will drive the new church are:

- Vertical Focus (Matthew 22:37)
- Gospel Centrality (Colossians 1:13-14)
- Intentional Discipleship (Matthew 28:18-20)
- Missional Community (Acts 2:42-47)
- Kingdom Mindset (1 Corinthians 3:6-7; Mark 16:15)

7. What is the timeline for this proposed merger?

Initial estimates would be 6 weeks from the day the merger is proposed to the churches. The vote will tentatively begin on April 22, with voting ending April 29. The church then would tentatively begin meeting as a complete body on May 27.

8. Who will be our pastors/elders/ministry leaders?

Our new elder team would consist of elders from the Church at Winchester and Mosaic Bible Church. Pastor Shay Osborne would serve as executive pastor, and Pastor James Hinton would serve as the lead pastor.

Other individuals will be appointed to leadership roles according to gifting and passions.

9. What will the worship services be like?

Our goal would be to have a worship service that is intentional, dynamic, and vertically focused. The services would rely upon spirit, word, and sacrament. Worship will rely upon the Holy Spirit to move in focusing worship and changing hearts. Worship will rely upon the Word to communicate the truths of God by means of exegetical preaching. Worship will rely upon sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism as means by which the people of God commune with Christ and proclaim the joy of their salvation.

10. Who will preach each Sunday?

Pastor James and Pastor Shay will conduct the majority of the preaching. However, there will be other times—as determined beneficial for the church—where other pastors or guest speakers will be called upon to further sharpen and shape their abilities and gifts for the glory of God and the benefit of the body.

11. How will the budget/finances be managed?

Our church will prioritize budget and finances according to the mission and vision of the church. What we say we value and prioritize will be reflected in the way we spend our money.

Jonathan Zimmerman will provide financial and administrative oversight for the new church. Each body brings in its own financial assets, which will be combined into one lump account under the name of the new church. Neither church brings into the merger any debt or outstanding obligations.

However, given that the new church will have a Kingdom Mindset, funds will be allocated to help further the mission of God in other parts of the country and world. The church will give a percentage of its tithes and offerings to various denominational and church planting organizational commitments.

12. Will the new church have a new name and what will it be?

Just like any other marriage, a new name—or exchanging of names—is often involved. For the new church we will be forming in this merger, this reality is no different. After much discussion, the elder teams have unanimously agreed to call the new church *Mosaic of Winchester*.

13. How will current membership be transferred?

Membership will be transferred under the banner of the new church after an interim period. Each member of each church will automatically be a member. However, the leadership will walk the church through a sermon series detailing the distinctives, vision, and mission of *Mosaic of Winchester*. It is our hope and request that each member stays on board through this series. If, at the end of the series, you and your family feel God leading you to stay at *Mosaic of Winchester*, the series will serve as an on-ramp and “membership class.”

A new church covenant will be presented during this time. All those desiring membership will sign the covenant as confirmation of the new vision and of membership.

14. Who will decide if this merger happens?

Both current churches have an elder-led church model of governance. However, the elders have unanimously agreed that a decision of this importance needs to be voted upon by covenant church members. Therefore each church, in compliance with their constitution and bylaws, will cast a vote either for or against the merger. A majority vote from each church—either for or against—will determine if the merger moves forward.

15. If the merger happens, what will change?

This question is like asking a single person before they get married, “What will change after you get married?” Some things will definitely change. In many ways, those who have loved, served, and labored relentlessly in our churches for the glory of God will never be the same as a result. And that can be a very good thing!

16. What will the merger cost?

Some aspects of the merger will have some financial implications—rebranding, legal costs, etc. While final costs are currently unknown, they are not expected to be significant. Until votes are cast and decisions are made on whether or not to merge, costs will be shared between Mosaic and Church at Winchester. If a decision to merge is reached, all future costs will be reflective of the new, unified church.

17. What will happen to the current church facilities?

The Church at Winchester currently rents a facility on Front Royal Pike. Mosaic Bible Church rents Daniel Morgan Middle School. The plan is to utilize both facilities for usage by *Mosaic of Winchester*. While Sunday morning worship will be conducted in the large auditorium at Daniel Morgan Middle, the building on Front Royal Pike will be utilized for offices, youth ministry, prayer, weekday meetings, conferences, mission team “housing,” etc. Both facilities offer something unique for our church to utilize.

18. What will happen if the merger doesn’t go through?

Our churches will continue to love each other and labor together in a spirit of cooperation and compassion for the city of Winchester. That common mission and goal would not change.

19. What are the next steps for the potential merger?

Prayer and reflection. Over the next several weeks, leaders from each church will be available on an individual basis and at community groups to discuss your fears, hesitations, excitements, and field additional questions.

After this period, each church will vote individually beginning April 22 on whether or not to proceed with the merger. If a majority consensus is reached in each congregation with that vote, the churches will merge and begin meeting corporately together immediately.

Town halls will be held on the following dates, held at Church at Winchester:

- March 22 - 7 pm to 8:30 pm
- April 6 - 7 pm to 8:30 pm
- April 14 - 9 am to 10:30 am

20. What are my next steps?

Again, prayer and reflection. We acknowledge and understand some fears and hesitations that come with this potential endeavor. However, we do not believe it wise or biblical to approach situations in life out of a mindset of fear or uncertainty. During this time we ask that you reflect upon the potential merger set before you, diligently pray and fast over the decision, and ask God to prepare your heart for the vote that will begin on April 22. At that point, we ask that you vote in a way you believe the Holy Spirit is leading—regardless of any excitement or fear you may have—and pray that the Lord’s will ultimately be done.