

## **WHY MERGE?**

Some Questions and Answers about a possible merger between Northwest Community Church and Living Hope Community Church

By Pastor Dan

Since sharing with all of you about the possibility of merging with Living Hope Community Church, you may have questions such as how did this all come about? How will this merger look? If we were to merge, when will it happen? I want try to answer some of these questions in this article.

### **How common are church mergers?**

Not that common. According to Leadership Network about 2 percent of US Protestant churches merge annually, which is about 6000 congregations.

### **How did the possibility of merging with Living Hope happen?**

Several months ago, I approached Dave Collins, pastor at Living Hope, about the possibility of combining our two children's ministries together. After discussing ideas of how this might look, the idea of a possible church merger came out of those discussions.

### **Why do we want to possibly merge?**

There are many reasons, however, for Pastor Dave and I, we believe we can be better together. With combined resources, gifts, and people, there is a possibility that we can be more effective at ministry in NW Tucson and beyond.

Living Hope and Northwest have already done several things together over the past several years including combined worship services, Vacation Bible School, and pulpit fill. Through these times together, both churches have blended well, and the reaction from both churches coming together for these events have been overwhelmingly positive.

### **When would this possible merger happen?**

While there has been no firm date set, Pastor Dave and I were thinking that the merger would take place by January 1, 2019.

### **Would Northwest stay at its current location and remain a part of the Brethren Church?**

Yes and Yes. Northwest will stay at its current location with Living Hope joining us, and we will remain a part of the Brethren Church. As a part of a merger,

Pastor Dave and his associate pastor, Corey Peters, will pursue ordination with the Brethren Church. In addition, Northwest's mission statement will remain the same: To make disciples who serve Christ by serving People.

### **Will Northwest change its name?**

This is a distinct possibility. In a church merger, we are trying to create a new organization from 2 existing orgs. So it's possible that the merged group will assume a new name; it's also possible that the new merged organization will exist under our current name Northwest Community Church. A less likely (but still possible) scenario is that the new organization will be called Living Hope. But at this time, that decision has not been made.

### **What will the staffing look like?**

Not all of the details have been worked out with staffing. What we do know is that I will remain the senior pastor and Pastor Dave assume a teaching pastor role. Details of how this will look still need to be worked out.

### **Will we have enough room for both churches?**

At this time, we anticipate that we will have enough room for both churches to worship and grow together. If we are crowded, we can always look at going to two worship services and other ways to accommodate people.

### **Is merging a way for Pastor Dan to leave Northwest?**

No, No, and No! Pastor Dan is not leaving Northwest. I am taking a two-month sabbatical beginning in June. I believe I am still called to pastor Northwest, and intend to do so. I am not going anywhere!

### **I am really nervous and scared. It just seems like a lot of change.**

I understand, change is hard and there are times I don't like change. However, change can't be avoided. In fact, it's the one thing that is constant in life. While a possible merger with Living Hope would bring change, it also has the possibility of being very positive for both churches. As long as we remember who we are and what God has called us to do, I think a possible merger with Living Hope can be a good thing. And no matter what, Jesus says, "I am with you always, even to the very end of time." (Matthew 28: 20)

### **We have done things with Living Hope for several years, why don't we just merge now?**

There are two main reasons why: 1. We have a lot of details to work out. This includes budget and staffing. 2. We want to make sure we hear from God and from all of you. We want to make sure this isn't about us or our agenda. We want to discern what God may be telling both churches. Part of this process is hearing from you. We want to give people a chance to talk and for the leadership to listen. We also want to give people time to process what is happening. All of this takes time and rushing this process could lead to mistakes or even worse harm to both churches.

**I still have questions, who can I talk to?**

You can contact Pastor Dan, Jill Walrath or one of our lay Elders: Chuck Wilson, Eric Burch, Louise Waller, and Tim Walrath.

**How will you communicate what's going on with me and the rest of the congregation?**

When it comes to something like a merger, one can never over communicate. I will update the congregation often, in fact, it may even be weekly or even several times a week. I will communicate on Sunday mornings in the worship service, on the info line, and special congregational info. sessions as needed. So, please make sure to check your email and read the info line and e-news link. If you do not receive these emails already, you can sign up on the church's website: [www.northwest.cc](http://www.northwest.cc) under Get Connected on the home page, or contact Tara: [tkelly@northwest.cc](mailto:tkelly@northwest.cc) and she can subscribe you.