

Swedesford Road Church and Harvest Bible Chapel Merger

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: How did we get here?

A: In early 2020, a mutual friend helped connect Tim Green, elder at SRC, and Matt Townsend, pastor of HBC. Tim and Matt met and began to dream of what ministry could look like together. Could we accomplish more for the kingdom, advance the gospel and fulfill a bigger piece of the great commission together? Could we accomplish more together than apart? Matt Townsend, Andy Sparks, Tim Green, and Scott Larsen began talks in earnest in August of 2021 to consider merging. The elders of SRC and HBC recruited the assistance of The Center in early 2022, an outside Church Consulting firm, to aid in this exciting opportunity.

Q2: Do mergers really work?

A: There are 6,000 church mergers each year in the USA. Assuming at least one of the churches is reasonably healthy; studies show that 90% are successful. Currently, 5+% of churches (15,000 churches) report they are in conversations about merging.

Q3: What are the benefits of mergers?

A: Both churches are closely aligned doctrinally and philosophically and have already successfully collaborated in special events. We have successfully shared a building since July 2020. The elders from both churches started meeting formally in October 2021 for prayer and study. We believe that the proposed merger has a greater potential to affect the advancement of the cause of Christ than if they stayed separate:

- We believe our churches will be stronger together than apart
- We believe we will reach more people for Christ together
- We believe we can make a greater impact for the gospel together
- We believe we can make more and better disciples together
- We believe we can better serve our community together
- We believe we can leverage the legacy and good reputation of the past to build a new and bright future together
- We believe we can maximize church resources and opportunities better together

Q4: When would the merger take place?

A: It is our hope that the merger can be completed by the end of September, 2022.



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Q5: Are the Elders from both churches in full agreement?

A: Yes. Having prayed, sought wise counsel, and met together as elders, the Elders of both churches believe this is the will of God and have unanimously agreed to proceed with the process for merging with each other at this time. The Bylaws of both churches specify that it is the sole responsibility of their elders to make the decision on behalf of their individual congregations.

Q6: Who will be the Pastor, and will we function as one church?

A: We will be one flock, not two. Matt Townsend will be the Lead Pastor and Andy Sparks will be the Associate Pastor. Tarah Ferrier will also serve as the Administrative Assistant. The elders and leaders of Harvest Bible Chapel are committed to wholeheartedly loving, shepherding, and caring for the good people of Swedesford Road Church as they have their own people. During the transition period, the leadership of SRC will labor with the HBC elders to help in the joining of the two flocks into one. The one flock will be led by HBC's current elders. Much effort will be made toward fully integrating the two congregations into one. The priority will be on relationships and fellowship in order to build trust and unity for both groups.

Q7: What will happen with the current staff of SRC?

A: The elders of SRC are unanimous in the decision of the merger with HBC and also coming under their leadership and vision. With respect to the current leadership of SRC, the elders will continue on in a transition team capacity serving under the elder board of Harvest until the end of the year to assist with activities leading up to and immediately after the official merger date of the end of September.

Regarding the current pastors of SRC, Steve will continue to be the senior pastor of SRC until September. As he is also an elder, he will also be a part of the transition team with the other elders. SRC is very grateful for the ministry of the Carters. Steve has loved well and humbly led SRC through some very difficult times. Prior to the merger, SRC was in need of healing and restoration and SRC gives God the glory for sending Steve to faithfully shepherd the flock. SRC is forever honored and grateful for the Lord bringing Steve and Susan to them and for the blessing they have been.

We rejoice with Matt Anthony as he is finishing his degree at WTS! Throughout this summer Matt and Ashley will be meeting with churches as they seek full-time placement. SRC commends Matt and Ashley for the wonderful blessing they have been to the flock.



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Q8: What will be the leadership structure?

A: Both churches are governed by elders. The new church will also be governed by elders. The current elders at Harvest Bible Chapel will be the elders of the new church at the beginning. As would be true in any healthy church, adding new elders will be important for the future.

Q9: Will there be a name change?

A: A new name for the church shall be chosen to reflect the new identity of two congregations unified as one, decided upon by the elders with the input of leaders from both churches. The name change will be selected and announced prior to the official merger.

Q10: Are the doctrine, polity, and vision compatible?

A: The two churches are highly compatible. This has been demonstrated as the two churches have collaborated in other endeavors together. Our combined Easter and Good Friday services were the most recent illustration. The two churches are nearly identical in all the essential areas of doctrine, and polity. Harvest has a vision campaign called “Forward”. Once the churches are merged, this vision will be tweaked and recast as the vision for the new church.

Q11: Will we meet as one congregation?

A: Yes. The new church will meet in the same place each Sunday at 10 A.M. We will no longer be two churches but one church.

Q12: How will the fiduciary (financial and physical) matters be meshed?

A: Once the Elders have signed the necessary documents the churches will be fully merged. The State of Pennsylvania will recognize both 501c3 corporations to be one legal entity. Like a marriage, all the finances, property, equipment, debts, deeds, and things tangible and intangible will be combined and ultimately controlled by the leadership of the new union.

Q13: How will membership work?

A: During the first year, those who are current members of Swedesford Road Church and Harvest Bible Chapel will be granted membership in the new church pending their agreement with the new church’s Covenant, Constitution, and Doctrinal Statement. After year one, a regular process of membership classes, etc. will be used to add new members.



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Q14: Does either church belong to a denomination?

A: No, neither belong to a denomination. Both are independent, autonomously governed Bible-believing churches.

Q15: What will the service “style” be like?

A: The new church will be contemporary without compromise, both in worship style and atmosphere of the people. The preaching style will be primarily expository with an emphasis on life application. Communion/The Lord’s Table shall be offered during each service until at least February 1, 2023. At that time, careful consideration and evaluation shall be given to any adjustments made and careful implementation of any changes.

Q16: Will there be a youth and worship pastor in the future?

The pastoral team, with the input of elders from both churches, will soon begin the search for a full-time youth and worship pastor.

Q17: Where can I serve as a volunteer?

A: Ideally, every member should have a meaningful place of service within the church that aligns with his or her gifts, abilities, and passion. To have a vibrant church, the need for volunteers will increase significantly. We look forward to you serving with joy, ease, and effectiveness.

Q18: Will the missionaries from both churches continue to be supported?

A: Missions is a vital ministry in both churches. All current missionaries and mission efforts (eg. OCC, Amnion, Ukraine Relief, Barbados Church plant, CEF) of both congregations shall continue to be supported for not less than 12 months from the date of the merger. Upon such time, careful consideration and evaluation shall be given to determine future partnerships. All missionaries shall be subject to the policies and procedures (new church name).

Q19: Will the building be sold

A: No part of the property or building located at 501 E. Swedesford Rd Wayne, PA shall be sold or solely rented to any entity other than a gospel preaching, Bible-believing, faith-based church prior to May 1, 2025. If the building should not be used for church services for any reason (such as but not exclusively, relocation due to congregation growth) preference should be given to building use for gospel and/or ministerial purposes prior to divestiture.



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Q20: Where will the church offices be?

A: The church offices will likely be moved on sight to the Swedesford Rd church facility.

Q21: What if I have more questions?

A: All questions are welcomed. Please see one of your church's elders. This FAQ will be updated as needed.



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