



Together God has given us everything we need to create a church that is a beacon of worship, care, learning, and service.

## A Plan for Amalgamation

Prepared by the Amalgamation Steering Team  
Faith, Grace, St. John's, and Transfiguration Lutheran Churches

OCTOBER 11, 2019

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Why Amalgamate?

All our congregations have a yearning to have the resources and energy to strengthen and create relevant, vital missional ministries to serve the needs of the congregations and their neighbours in a fast changing and diverse city. This includes ministry with children and families, and ministry with seniors (young seniors to the aged), and social ministries focusing on food security.

Through amalgamation we will have the resources, ministry staff, volunteers and energy to:

- ✓ Secure and revitalize our much-loved ministries of worship, pastoral care and fellowship.
- ✓ Offer new worship experiences to those looking for alternative styles of worship.
- ✓ Reboot our ministries with children, youth, and families.
- ✓ Begin new social ministries with seniors.
- ✓ Secure and expand our community outreach programs such as the Good Food Box, MacSOC, Aging Together, community meal program, the Friendship Circle, the support of refugee families, and the food and gardening program.

Only together will we have what it takes to build and sustain this vision. Together the congregations will have everything needed to be a beacon of inspiring worship, compassionate care, relevant learning, and effective social service for current and future generations.

## Our Journey: Time to Make a Decision

This plan is the conclusion of a long, detailed, careful and consultative process. Members of our congregations have been involved in discussions about our vision for ministry in Hamilton and area.

Our Boards/Councils, Committees and Working Groups investigated possibilities and drafted plans. We worshipped together and participated in each other's events. We assessed our willingness to enter an amalgamation together through the Amalgamation Proposal and voted on December 9, 2018, declaring our "intention to amalgamate."

Since January 2019, the Amalgamation Steering and Implementation Team has worked on the details for the creation of a church organization and structure that will support the vision for our new congregation. This included:

- Our new name (p. 5)
- Setting criteria for the property and location we need to support our vision for ministry and mission, having our churches assessed based on these criteria, and recommending the search for a new site for our new church. (p.5-6: Appendix A)

- Creating a plan for worship. (p. 6-7)
- Outlining a plan for social and outreach ministries. (p. 7-8: Appendix B)
- Setting in place a transportation program so that everyone can get to the church for worship and other programs. (p. 8: Appendix C)
- Planning for rostered and non-rostered staffing. (p. 8-10: Appendix D)
- Developing a governance structure and new constitution. (p. 10-11: Appendix E & F)
- Developing a financial picture for 2020-2022 that demonstrates that we have the income and assets needed for the vision. (p. 11-12: Appendix G & H)

The results of this work are detailed in this Amalgamation Plan and the accompanying Appendices.

### **What Will A Yes Vote Mean?**

1. Faith, St. John's, and Transfiguration will become one church, as of April 1, 2020. Grace Lutheran will have voted yes to the possibility of joining the new congregation at a later date.
2. We will seek a new church home together where the new congregation will live our vision as described in this Amalgamation Plan. We will give ourselves 18 months (starting January 2020) to look for a new location. This timeline coincides with the closing date for the sale of the Grace building offering the possibility that we will all be ready to move into our new home together.

**For the amalgamation/merger of Faith, St John's & Transfiguration to go forward each of the 3 congregations need to pass the motions to amalgamate, or in the case of Transfiguration – merge, by a 2/3 majority vote. Should the motion fail in any congregation the amalgamation does not go forward for any of the congregations. It's all or nothing for these 3 congregations.**

**Grace is in a different situation. Their vote will set in place a series of conditions to be met before they will join into the amalgamation in July 2021, after their sale on their building closes.**

**Because of our different situations the Amalgamation Plan has been revised to allow for Faith, St. John's, and Transfiguration to vote for an earlier amalgamation and for Grace to vote to join as of July 1, 2021.**

# THE AMALGAMATION PLAN

## WHY AMALGAMATION? – STRONGER TOGETHER

Each of our congregations is experiencing decline in people, energy, and finances. There is significant concern for the wellbeing of our volunteers who are getting older and are being stretched and exhausted. Keeping our beloved ministries going is beginning to feel like a burden rather than the joy God intends for us. It's time to do something different. Grace has taken the first steps by selling its building, and St John's and Faith are in shared ministry.

We yearn to have the energy and resources to create relevant, vital, missional ministries to serve the needs of our congregations and our neighbours and communities in Hamilton. In particular we have a heart for:

- ✓ offering inspiring worship that is meaningful for all generations,
- ✓ providing faith formation for children and families,
- ✓ supporting the health and well-being of seniors of all ages,
- ✓ helping people access good quality, nutritious food.

The city is changing fast. We are seeing an influx of younger families, new professionals, and new immigrants to Canada. Hamilton has become a desirable community for people looking for affordable housing in the wider Greater Toronto-Hamilton area.

At the same time there is a growing population of seniors in the city. They will need housing, services, and opportunities for community, fellowship and the chance to serve in meaningful ways.

There are lots of exciting opportunities for developing a vibrant and connected ministry and mission in Hamilton. We will ensure the church is present as a vital community of faith. We will be creating the best possible conditions for the successful ministry of future generations.

Based on our congregational statistics from 2018, with the 3 congregations together we would have a worshipping community of approximately 200 people and an income from envelope giving of about \$256,000. We would also have the potential for financial resources from the sale of properties.

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**Together God has given us everything we need to be able to create a church that is a beacon of worship, care, learning, and service**

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While the proposal we voted on previously focused on the vision and hopes for an amalgamated church, this Plan outlines the specifics of the new congregation: property, worship, community outreach, transportation, rostered and non-rostered staff, governance, finance.

## NAME

Based on the results of the poll from all 4 congregations, our newly amalgamated congregation will be name Trinity Lutheran Church. Faith, St. John's, and Transfiguration will adopt this name as of April 1, 2020. This name will continue to be used when Grace joins the amalgamation in 2021.

## PROPERTY

### Our Vision

We will have a home together that is centrally located, fully accessible, with adequate parking and access to bus routes. It will feel fresh and inviting, with a bright worship space that is flexible – accommodating different styles of worship, and multipurpose so that we can host a variety of gatherings while still respecting the holiness of the altar and sanctuary.



The entrance area to the church will be a place of hospitality, where people can be welcomed and meet each other. We will have a large hall and plenty of rooms to gather for meetings, classes, outreach programs, and fellowship.

We will be located in an area that facilitates our Social and Community Outreach ministries. We will partner with other churches or community groups for use of other off-site spaces so that our programs and support can be situated within the highest need area(s) of the Greater Hamilton Area (GHA).

The Steering Team and leaders from each congregation through the amalgamation working groups identified and prioritized a set of criteria based on this vision. These were used to evaluate the 3 sites available to us now – Fennell Ave E. (Transfiguration), King St. E. (Faith), and Hughson St. N. (St. John). Evaluators included lay people from each congregation, the amalgamation Property Working Group, and an architect.

The working group concluded that while all sites have unique advantages and disadvantages, our new vision and resources allow us to find an even better location.

The recommendation of the Steering Team is that

- We search for a new site.
- The search begins after a positive vote for amalgamation and lasts up to 18 months (through to mid-2021).
- The search is based on our vision-based criteria as described above.

Until a new site is secured all 4 ELCIC sites (Faith, Grace, St. John's, and Transfiguration) will continue to be used for worship and programming and participate in shared programming.

Trinity (Faith, St. John's, and Transfiguration):

- We will have a single phone number, email and website.
- All renter/user agreements will be honoured in the sites.
- Any new renters/users will use a new rental contract and fee schedule that will be common to all sites.
- Where possible we will consolidate our service contracts for cost savings.

We have reason to believe that other properties, suitable for a church, are and will become available during this time. However, a plan B will be prepared by the Property Committee of the Board in the event that we are not successful in our search during the 18-month timeframe.

The Property Committee will be comprised of 1 representative from each of the 4 sites. Committee members may enlist people from the 4 sites to help as needed. The Property Committee will report to the Board. The sale of any property requires a congregational vote. (Report Appendix A)

**The plans set forward in this document are based on an 18-month transition period while we search for, and secure, our new home.**

## WORSHIP

### Our Vision

On Sunday morning and during the week we will continue to offer meaningful and engaging Lutheran worship in familiar styles – traditional and blended. We will also offer worship in other styles on a regular basis to reach people attracted to alternative worship and spiritual experiences. These may happen on Sunday and/or other times during the week. Other styles of worship include:



- A newly developed more casual worship with modern music and liturgies.
- Meditative and reflective worship and music such as Taizé, Centering Prayer, and others.
- The continuation of the monthly German services.

Communion will be offered weekly at one or more sites.

Trinity and Grace will worship all together once a month. Trinity will worship together at major festivals and feast days.

Between Trinity and Grace, both traditional and blended worship will be offered.

Other styles of worship will be developed and piloted. Grace and Trinity pastors and the Worship Committee will work together in exploring, planning and developing alternative and joint worship services. Changes to our worshipping patterns will be introduced gradually as we move towards worshipping together as set forward in our vision. The goal is to eventually offer 2 different services, at different times, each Sunday. The pastors will lead all types of services. We will work towards being able to offer blended worship at more than one site.

**Sunday School** will be offered from September to June, with a summer program when needed. We will use the same curriculum to provide consistency for the children and volunteers.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### **Our Vision**

We will make a difference in people's lives and help people in our community meet basic needs for physical and spiritual health and well-being. Our community includes people within our congregation, people not directly associated with our congregation, and the neighbourhoods of Hamilton and area.

We will continue our outreach ministries and will explore new possibilities for ministries of love and service. Through our amalgamated resources and by making and developing partnerships with people and community organizations and other churches we will develop new ways to:

- ✓ enhance and support the health and well-being of seniors of all ages;
- ✓ expand our ministries supporting children and youth;
- ✓ participate in social ministries in highest need areas of the city.

Where needed, we will partner with other churches or community groups for the use of space in other areas of the city so that our programs and support can be situated within the highest need area(s) of the GHA. We will have dedicated staff/pastors and volunteers with responsibility for developing and leading these programs.

**During the 18-month transitional period, before we find our new home,** we will continue current community outreach and service programs at all 4 sites. These include, but are not limited to, the Good Food Box, MacSOC, Aging Together, community meal program, the Friendship Circle, the support of refugee families, and the food and gardening program.



New funds will be allocated to develop new community outreach initiatives. The Community Outreach working group will review needs and programs, consult with the congregation, and make recommendations to the Board.

To inform and focus our ministry development with seniors, children/youth and families, and newcomers to the GHA, a Community Round Table will be held in Spring 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter. From this we will learn about specific needs and partnerships for project development. (Report Appendix B)

## TRANSPORTATION

We will provide a transportation ministry to help people travel to and from worship and all other church events and meetings. This ministry is for people with mobility issues, people who rely on public transit when the weather's bad, for those with no other means of transportation and for those who do not feel safe driving.

People can call Hamilton Cab for a ride. The church has a contract with Hamilton Cab. The driver and rider will need to sign a receipt voucher at the time of each ride. Seniors, those 65+, can request a discount when they are picked up and this saves 10% from the total cost.

The church will be given a detailed bill monthly and receive the vouchers to ensure the accuracy of billing. This way a record of usage and costs can be kept. In the event that the driver is not familiar with our account, members may need to pay the fare and submit a receipt to the church for reimbursement.

## STAFFING

### NON-ROSTERED STAFF

The Transition Board is responsible for hiring the non-rostered staff and ensuring a staff team is in place by June 1, 2020. The expectation is that until we have a single location, they will work from home and/or move between the sites as needed to perform their jobs. The exception is the cleaning staff who will continue to service each of the sites as they do now.

The non-rostered team includes:

- ✓ A full-time office administrator or equivalent who will be responsible for secretarial support, phone support, facility rentals, and some financial duties;

- ✓ A bookkeeper;
- ✓ A communications specialist who will be responsible for our newsletter, social media and publicity;
- ✓ A music director who will function as the church musician and choir director as well as arranging guest musicians. During the transition period musicians will be contracted for the Sundays when worship is happening at all 4 sites. Current contracts for all musicians will stay in place until the end of 2019;
- ✓ A parish nurse who will support our pastoral care work;
- ✓ Envelope secretaries (1 or 2) will be volunteer positions.

The location of the administrative staff and others, and the definition of tasks will be the responsibility of the Transition Board. All staff will be paid at least a living wage.

Snow clearing and salting, lawn and garden maintenance, and security services will be provided on a contractual basis.

## **ROSTERED STAFF**

The current rostered pastors of Faith, St John's, and Transfiguration congregations at the time of the amalgamation will form the rostered staff of the amalgamated congregation from April 1, 2020.

The rostered staff will function as a team ministry, committed to building the strong and mutually supportive relationships that allow for the gifts of the pastors to be applied in ways that best support and develop the ministries of the new congregation.

Each member of the team will covenant to working in ways that build a sense of unity within the new congregation, and which encourage members of the founding congregations to look to the team as their pastoral resource. The congregation will support and resource this team approach and its development by budgeting for ongoing coaching support for the team.

Responsibilities within the Trinity staff team will be agreed by the rostered staff in conjunction with a Mutual Ministry Committee to be appointed by the Transition Board by April 1, 2020. This agreement will be reviewed and modified as necessary when Grace amalgamates with Trinity.

The employment agreements between the new Trinity congregation and the rostered staff will be considered as new employment agreements, but each pastor employed will be credited the years of service performed in their respective founding congregations for the purposes of any settlement that may be due in the eventuality of the ending of employment of any pastor without cause.

After amalgamation, staffing will be the responsibility of the Board of Trinity Lutheran Church, working through the appointed Mutual Ministry Committee and any other committees created from time to time according to the normal practices of congregations within the ELCIC.

The Grace rostered staff person will be included in the planning of the worship and other programs and will covenant to work in the spirit of the team approach named above. However, the formal employment arrangements for that staff person will remain with Grace Lutheran Church until their amalgamation with Trinity in July 2021.

## GOVERNANCE

We will become an incorporated church with a single board and committee structure, and a constitution and by-laws using the template provided by the ELCIC and customized for our situation (see Appendices F & G).

Prior to the November 17<sup>th</sup> vote, the Steering and Implementation Team will appoint a “TRANSITIONAL BOARD (TB)” consisting of up to 3 (three) members from each of the Faith, St. John’s, and Transfiguration congregations (maximum of 9 members). The members of the TB will preferably be appointed from either the Steering and Implementation Committee or one of the working groups. The creation of the TB will be included in the amalgamation motion with the names and duties included in the rationale of said motion. The Pastors of the newly amalgamated congregation will be non-voting, ex-officio’s of this transitional board.

Grace will appoint two (2) observers to the Trinity Transitional Board. All minutes of the Transitional Board and its committees will be made available to Grace’s Board and Congregation. Two (2) members of the Transitional Board will be observers at the Grace Board.

Prior to April 1 2020, the existing council/boards of Faith, St. John’s, and Transfiguration will function as normal; and after April 1, 2020, if needed to effectively close out the congregation’s 2020-year end. As of April 1 2020, the TB will assume responsibility for the newly amalgamated Trinity congregation. The TB will serve from December 1, 2019 until May 31, 2020.

All members in good standing of the three founding congregations as of December 31, 2019 will be considered members of the Trinity congregation. All members in good standing of Grace as of December 31, 2020 will be considered members of the Trinity congregation at their amalgamation with Trinity on July 1, 2021.

The first congregational AGM will take place on Sunday May 31, 2020. The first full board of the newly amalgamated congregation will be elected at that time. It will consist of twelve (12) members with equal representation from the three founding congregations. After July 1, 2021 members from Grace will be added to the board.

The Governance Committee recommends six (6) committees be struck to do the work necessary to ensure the smooth operation of the amalgamated church. These committees are:

- Worship Committee
- Christian Learning Committee
- Finance Committee
- Property Committee
- Social Ministry Committee
- Mutual Ministry

The TB will be responsible to recruit members for the above-mentioned committees and get them started as soon as possible after January 1, 2020. Members of the current Steering and Implementation Committee and various Working Groups would be a good resource for implementing these teams. The membership of all committees, except the Mutual Ministry and Finance Committees, will include members from all 4 churches. The Mutual Ministry and Finance Committee will be made up of members from Faith, St. John's, and Transfiguration.

## FINANCE

In our vision proposal of December 2018 we affirmed that as an amalgamated church the Lutheran presence in Hamilton would have the resources and energy to revitalize our traditional ministries and be able to diversify what we offer to connect with the interests and needs of people we are not reaching now. The Finance Working Group has confirmed that the amalgamated congregation will have more than sufficient resources to live into this vision.

Building on conservative estimates of income from 2020, and using current rates of expenditure on staffing, buildings and ministry, the pro-forma budget found in Appendix G demonstrates that Trinity Lutheran Church will have no difficulty meeting its financial obligations, and indeed will have capacity for new ministry work, as well as a healthy contingency for unexpected expenditures.

The budget presented is a model to demonstrate the financial capacity of the new congregation in the event of a 'yes' vote. The actual allocation of the available resources in a working budget will, of course, be for the new Board and the congregation to determine at its first annual meeting May 31, 2020. The asset base of the amalgamated congregation will also be strong with \$1 million available for investment in 2020.

There will be some savings on current costs as over the transition period decisions are reached about the new location of the amalgamated congregation. However, the purpose of coming together as a united Lutheran congregation is not really about 'saving' money. It is much more about having the resources to bring hope and wellness to the communities of Hamilton and the

surrounding area. As we expressed it in our vision for ministry “together God has given us everything we need to be able to create a Lutheran congregation that is a beacon of worship, care, learning, and service.”