

Vital Merger: Prayer Guide for a Vital Merger

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# Introduction

Welcome to the Prayer Guide for a Vital Merger.

The foundational book, Vital Merger: A New Church Start Approach that Joins Church Families Together, lists twelve commitments that the churches involved in a merger must make. The first, and without a doubt most important commitment is to “Bathe the merger in prayer.”1

“Of course, prayer should be at the center of everything we do in the church. However, taking the giant step of merging existing, and sometimes unhealthy, churches into a new church start requires that the process be bathed in prayer. Leaning on the ingenuity, persistence, skill or willfulness of any of the pastors or laity, will not result in a healthy Vital Merger. Through prayer people will discern God’s direction for their church. Through prayer people will be empowered by the Spirit of God to create a new church together.

“Starting a new church is a spiritual matter. Through prayer, people can intercede for everyone involved in the Vital Merger, praying for the transition process to be one of Christian conversation, unity, and love as people encounter the inevitable hassles and problems transitions entail.”2

Churches that have been involved in a Vital Merger have kept the focus on prayer in various ways. Some have gathered a dedicated group of people from the various churches in the merger, who are gifted in prayer and intercession, to come together on a regular basis to bathe this merger process in prayer. Others have held weekly prayer meetings for all in the church that want to attend. Still others have kept a prayer focus on the merger during the worship service each week.

For example, “when the churches that became Fellowship Church began the Vital Merger process, they focused on the need for prayer. The minutes of the first merger meeting state: “We first prayed. Then we agreed we needed to pray, pray, pray, pray, pray!” Bob, one of the lay people at the Fellowship merger, wrote a prayer that the Merger Team prayed at each meeting.3

Dear God,

As we begin our work here this today, please help us to remember that we are here for you and that the effort we put forth here today is for you. Please grant us the wisdom to plan a church that will bring disciples to your ministry, members to your church and will help those in our community who need you to find and come to you.

Please grant us the humility to remember that we are here for you, and provide us the strength to put aside our personal feelings and loyalties so that we may build a church that will last a hundred years; a church that will meet the needs of your children, young and old, in and around Conneaut; the children that you love so much; a church that will assist them in knowing the joy that comes from accepting and loving you and the eternal life that will come to them when that happens.

In your son Jesus' name, we pray. Amen4

“Pastor Betsy said, “This prayer was a uniting force reminding us the work we were about was God's work – kingdom building work, not a matter of mere money or survival. We ask God to direct us rather than to ask God to bless what we wanted.”5

At Connection Church, another Vital Merger, Pastor Carl called together representatives from five community churches for prayer every Monday evening. They simply prayed that the Holy Spirit would move in the county, bringing unity in the churches and softening people’s hearts to the Gospel message.

The Gathering Church developed a “Vision Forward Team” with members from the five churches and charged the group:

“To prayerfully discern how God is calling us:

* To better stewardship of resources
* To improve relationships between congregations
* To strengthen our joint witness in the community
* To more effectively proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ
* To reach beyond our church walls.

Prayer became the foundation of the entire Vital Merger process.”6

# How to use this resource?

The intent of this resource is to identify and gather a group of people together for 40 days of prayer for the Vital Merger. Each week is built around a focused subject area, with seven days of prayer. Each day contains a scripture related to the prayer focus, some defining guidelines, and three or four prayer points. Space is provided for you to take notes of any specific leading or direction you sense while in prayer.

Groups are encouraged to come together to prayer. This could happen on a daily basis, or people could pray individually daily, and meet together on a weekly basis for prayer and discussion around the topic.

Above all, keep the churches involved in the Vital Merger in your prayers!

# Week 1: Laying the Foundation

At the beginning of the Vital Merger process, many foundational pieces need to be in place. This first week of prayer will focus on building a solid foundation.

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:10-12

## 1. Pray for an openness to God’s presence.

*“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.” Isaiah 43:19*

Often churches entering a Vital Merger have been in decline for a number of years. It is time for a fresh awakening to the presence of God in the church.

* Pray for awareness of God’s presence as the churches consider a Vital Merger.
* Pray the people of all the congregations would be comforted by God’s presence and open to guidance.
* Pray specifically for each church considering merger.

Notes:

## 2. Pray for an openness to God’s action through the Holy Spirit.

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere —in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

Nothing of any great substance can happen in the church without the power and movement of the Holy Spirit.

* Invite the Holy Spirit’s action in the life of these churches.
* Pray the people recognize and accept the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit.
* Pray that the people of this new church would be effective witnesses in the mission field.
* Pray for the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the people of your community to make them receptive to the Good News of Jesus and to increase the compassion and understanding of the churches to be invitational in ways that meet real needs.

Notes:

## 3. Pray for the Merger Team

*“May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” Matt 6:10*

The Merger Team has a monumental task ahead of them. They must listen to God and make decisions that they believe are best for the church. They will be responsible for the direction that this new church moves.

* Pray for team members by name.
* Pray that they will be open to God and willing to make difficult decisions.
* Pray that they will not be swayed by personal agendas, either their own or the agendas of others in the congregation.

Notes:

## 4. Pray for your neighbors

*One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?” The man answered, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!” The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

*Luke 10:25-29*

Who lives in the mission field (the community around the churches)? What are their needs? How can this new church effectively meet their needs?

* Pray for the people in the mission field.
* Pray for those in the mission field who are hurting.
* Ask God how the new church can effectively meet the needs of your neighbors.

Notes:

## 5. Pray for the Mission

*At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he laid out the mission/purpose of what he came to do. “He (Jesus) unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.’ Then he began to speak to them.*

*‘The Scripture you’ve just head has been fulfilled this very day.’” Luke 4:17-21*

The Mission or purpose of the church guides the direction and ministries of the church. Agreement and alignment are essential.

* Pray for clear direction from God about the Mission of the church.
* Pray for an agreement in the church around the stated Mission.
* Pray for peace and a willingness to align all ministries of the church around the Mission/Purpose.

Notes:

## 6. Pray for Vision

*“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Proverbs 29:18*

The new church must have a clear understanding of the vision and direction of the church in the next few years. What is God’s vision for us?

* Pray that we would have a clear understanding of God’s vision for us?
* Pray for the Merger Team to be sensitive to God’s leading as they discern the vision.
* Pray for the congregation to affirm the new vision.

Notes:

## 7. Pray for Clarity of values

*“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other.”*

*Matt 6:24*

Values undergird behaviors and practices in the church. They are crucial to the culture, the shared attitudes, and beliefs that define a church. Much has been written about the church and culture. Most of it, however, refers to the culture around a church. Just as important is the culture within a church, the shared attitudes, values, and beliefs that define a church and shape its practices.

* Pray for understanding of the values of each church discerning a Vital Merger.
* Pray for clarity around the values of our new congregation.
* Pray for the Merger Team as they discern and clarify the values of the new church.

Notes:

What leadings did you have as you prayed for God to lay a solid foundation for your church?

# Week 2: Working through Difficulties

Whenever people come together for a shared purpose, they should acknowledge potential difficulties. Each person has ways of communicating, expectations, or baggage from the past. These might be traditions, or unspoken ways of handling problems. They might be differing communication methods, or past hurts that people have buried. What are the difficulties that might be facing the new church?

## 8. Pray for an awareness of the potential difficulties that may hinder the church.

*“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:35*

Competing values and desires of what the church should be like can have the potential to cause struggles in the merging churches. Unity is necessary for the growth of this new church.

* Pray for discernment to recognize the difficulties the churches may be facing.
* Pray for wisdom to address the differences effectively and lovingly.
* Pray for courage to move into this new relationship despite the unknown issues ahead.

Notes:

## 9. Pray for an openness to new traditions.

*“I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.” Gal 1:14*

Traditions of any kind are difficult to let go. They provide a sense of status and order, of comfort and familiarity. The Apostle Paul appreciated traditions, yet he was able to let go and adopt new traditions. Some old traditions may stifle growth. They may no longer serve their original purpose, and may be unwelcoming and confusing to new people.

* Pray for grace and understanding as the church decides which traditions to let go.
* Pray for openness to establishing new traditions in this new church.
* Pray for a creative caring spirit as the church develops new traditions that honor the merging of some new and some old traditions in this new gathering of people (including new people from the mission field).

Notes:

## 10. Pray for conflict and hard feelings to be forgiven.

*“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” Matt 6:14*

Unresolved conflict within one or more of the churches, or conflict and resentment toward other churches merging together will be a constant hindrance to true growth and health if it is not resolved with forgiveness and love.

* Pray that old areas of unforgiveness and conflict will be brought out into the open for healing.
* Pray that new areas of conflict will be resolved without side-taking and gossip or manipulation.
* Pray that people will be honest about their feelings and hurts.
* Pray that forgiveness and healing will flow through the church.

Notes:

## 11. Pray for ineffective systems to be set aside.

*“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins.” Mark 2:22*

Ineffective systems are often a relic of the past. They may have been effective at one time, but now they are an obstacle to healthy ministry.

* Pray for powers (and people) that once controlled the church would no longer feel the need to control.
* Pray that the Merger Team would seek out and implement new, effective systems.
* Pray that the new church will be open to these new systems and practices.

Notes:

## 12. Pray for clear communication of expectations.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jer 29:11*

We often have assumptions of what life will be like in the future. In the church we also come with expectations. As the churches come together as a new congregation, what expectations will people bring?

* Pray for people to share their expectations openly.
* Pray for understanding and spiritual growth as some expectations will not align with the new mission and vision.
* Pray for peace and a willingness to grow into unexpected areas of life and ministry.

Notes:

## 13. Pray that turf issues will be minimal.

*“I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.” 1 Cor 1:10*

One of the greatest areas of conflict, as well as potential long-term problems in Vital Mergers involves turf issues. People from one or both congregations try to hold onto “things” or “traditions” or “power,” resulting in turf issues.

* Pray that turf issues will be recognized, understood, and resolved early on.
* Pray that people will be willing to lay aside their preferences for the mission of the church.
* Pray for peace among the churches and people merging together.

Notes:

## 14. Pray for a healthy grief process.

*“God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matt 5:4*

Grief is a natural part of the merging process. People grieve the loss or closing of “their” church. They grieve the loss of friendships as some people move on and do not join the merger. Some grieve the loss of the building or the new changes that are happening.

* Pray for people who are grieving the loss of their church.
* Pray that people will express their grief openly and in healthy ways.
* Pray that people will accept the changes and embrace the new opportunities this new ministry will bring.

Notes:

What are areas of concern that might hinder the new church?

# Week 3: Making New Disciples

The “Great Commission,” as it is called, sends Jesus’ disciples out into the world to make new disciples. We are to go into all the world, presenting the Good News message and inviting others to become disciples. A disciple is one who follows the teacher, learning from the teacher, and doing what the teacher instructs.

## 15. Pray for new people.

*“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19*

Jesus’ last command was to make new disciples. The church must be faithful in reaching those that have yet to experience the love and grace of God.

* Pray for people in the community, that their hearts will be softened and they will be open to experience God’s love.
* Pray of boldness in the members of your churches, that they would be willing to talk to others about their relationship with Jesus.
* Pray for divine appointments of people who are open to hear about God with people who are willing to share their relationship.

Notes:

## 16. Pray for children.

*Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.” Matthew 19:14*

It is true that children are the future of the church. Children and young families are a sign of a healthy, vital congregation.

* Pray for the children, youth and young families already in your churches.
* Pray for the church to create opportunities to meet the needs of children.
* Pray for new workers to come to the church that will have a heart for and gift in ministry to children.
* Pray for children in your mission field.
* Pray for your church to reach out to these children in creative and effective ways.

Notes:

## 17. Pray for young families

*But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without begin sent? Rom 10:14-15*

Children will not attend the church on their own. Their parents need to see the need to be in church before they will ensure their children will be there.

* Pray for the hearts of the young adults in your mission field, that they would desire a relationship with God.
* Pray for the church to develop effective ministries to meet the needs of young parents.
* Pray for young adult workers who can be effective in reaching other young adults.

Notes:

## 18. Pray for more diverse people.

*“After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb.” Revelation 7:9*

Martin Luther King, Jr. said that Sunday morning is the most segregated hour. Heaven will be a diverse place. The church needs to reflect that diversity.

* Repent of any racial prejudice present in your community.
* Pray that the church would be open to ministry to all people.
* Pray that all the people of your mission field will be drawn to your church and find a welcoming home there.

Notes:

## 19. Pray that God would bring people from all directions.

*“And people will come from all over the world—from east and west, north and south—to take their places in the Kingdom of God.” Luke 13:29*

God desires that all people experience God’s love and grace. The church should reach a more people, more younger people, and more diverse people.

* Pray that the hearts of people in all directions from your church would be softened and open to the grace of God.
* Pray that the church will be open to the needs of the people in all directions.
* Pray that ministries and programs will be created to reach people in all directions.

Notes:

## 20. Pray for unchurched people

*“And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere.” Acts 1:8*

The church’s responsibility is not to gain new members from other churches, but to make new disciples.

* Pray that the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of the people will be met.
* Pray that the church will be open and receptive to people who do not have a history of church.
* Pray that the church will reach out to unchurched people in ways relevant and meaningful to them.

Notes:

## 21. Pray for people to accept Christ as Savior

*Jesus told him “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” John 14:6*

The church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, which involves having a change of heart and life.

* Pray that people would have a spiritual hunger and openness.
* Pray that the church will take to heart the responsibility to help people develop a relationship with Christ.
* Pray that church people will make sharing their faith a priority.

Notes:

While in prayer, what impressions did you have about making new disciples?

# Week 4: Needing workers

One of the major hindrances to growing as a new church is the lack of workers. As the church launches new ministries to reach new people in the mission field, an adequate number of passionate workers need to be in place.

## 22. Pray that God would bring people to fill the gaps

*“He said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So, pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.’” Matt 9:37-38*

There are probably many gaps where trained workers need to be in ministry.

* Pray that the leadership of the church would identify where the greatest need of workers exists.
* Pray that people with a passion for ministry would come to the church.
* Pray that adequate ministry training would be provided.

Notes:

## 23. Pray for new teachers

*Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. James 3:1*

Teaching is a weighty responsibility. The church needs sound people with passion, knowledge, and gifting to teach.

* Pray for people to have a passion to teach God’s word.
* Pray that teachers will have a hunger for learning and continued spiritual growth.
* Pray that new people will be welcomed into the church who will grow and accept the call of being a teacher.

Notes:

## 24. Pray for more youth and children workers

*“But Jesus said, ‘Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.’” Matt 19:14*

A recent survey by the International Bible Society found that 83% of all Christians make their commitment to Jesus between the ages of 4 and 14. The Barna Research Group surveys demonstrate that American children ages 5 to 13 have a 32% probability of accepting Christ, but youth or teens aged 14 to 18 have only a 4% probability of doing so.7

* Pray that more members will be inspired to work with youth and children.
* Pray that people with a passion for working with the youth would come to the church
* Pray that people with a passion for young children will volunteer to work
* Pray for these workers to share their love for Christ with the children and youth

Notes:

## 25. Pray God would bring young adult workers

*“A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.”*

*1 Cor 12:7*

Young adults often feel out of place in the church. Many churches provide a strong youth program, but have no specific ministry to draw young adults.

* Pray God would raise up people with a passion to reach young adults.
* Pray for the church to be welcoming to young adults, not imposing its own agenda on them.

Notes:

## 26. Pray God would bring tech people

*“All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.” 1 Cor 12:27*

Because we live in a tech-savvy world and young people understand and speak the medium of technology, today’s worship needs to reflect this new technological-centered world-view.

* Pray that the church would be open to new forms of technology in worship.
* Pray that money would be put in the church budget to purchase quality technology equipment.
* Pray that people gifted in various forms of technology would feel welcome and encouraged to serve and lead with their gifts.

Notes:

## 27. Pray that God would bring more musicians

*“Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heaven! Praise him for his mighty works; praise his unequaled greatness! Praise him with a blast of the ram’s horn; praise him with the lyre and harp! Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with strings and flutes! Praise him with a clash of cymbals; praise him with loud clanging cymbals. Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord! Praise the Lord!” Psalm 150*

Gifted, talented musicians inspire us to worship. Talent also attracts more talent.

* Pray that God would connect the church to gifted, called musicians in the community.
* Pray that members would step forward and use their musical gifts in ministry.
* Pray that the church would be open to a variety of musical gifts.

Notes:

## 28. Pray that God would bring diversity in workers

*“For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. . . He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.”*

*Eph 2:13-16*

Heaven shows a picture of great diversity, as people from many backgrounds and races come together as one body. The church today should welcome diversity. For the church to be more diverse, diversity in leadership is needed.

* Pray that our new church will reflect diversity of our mission field.
* Pray that God would bring diversity in leadership and workers.
* Pray that we can learn from the richness of diversity.

Notes:

What excited you about God sending new workers to your church?

# Week 5 Transforming Church and community

Jesus calls us to not only make new disciples, but in the process to transform the world. That starts with transforming our church and our community into a more loving, Christ-centered, grace-filled place.

## 29. Pray that our community would be transformed.

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free. . ..” Luke 4:18*

Not only are we to make disciples of Jesus Christ, but we must transform the world, and specifically our community, to reflect the Kingdom of God.

* Pray for the specific needs of your community.
* Pray for the powers that promote injustice to be exposed and or courage to help bring change.
* Pray for God’s peace to move through the community and change lives.

Notes:

## 30. Pray we could grow as missionaries and evangelists.

*“Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.” 2 Timothy 4:5*

Missionaries and evangelists take the Good News of the Gospel to the people in their community. Each Christian is called to be a missionary and an evangelist.

* Pray for the people of our church to be bold in telling what God is doing in their life.
* Pray for divine appointments to share our faith journey with others.
* Pray for openness and a softening of the heart as people hear the Good News and respond.

Notes:

## 31. Pray for enthusiasm in worship.

*“Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.” Psalm 100:1-2*

John Wesley gave this instruction about worship: “Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength.”8 Our faithful worship can transform our church and community.

* Pray for openness to the Holy Spirit’s presence and action in our worship services.
* Pray for music and worship practices that connects to our mission field.
* Pray for the message to be relevant and meet the spiritual needs of the people, both members and guests.

Notes:

## 32. Pray for enthusiasm in hospitality.

*“Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!” Heb 13:2*

True hospitality in the church shows guests that we welcome them to our church. As Bishop Schnase writes in Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations, “Christian hospitality refers to the active desire to invite, welcome, receive, and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ.”9

* Pray for a spirit of hospitality to be evident in the people at our church.
* Pray that our hospitality will go beyond a cordial greeting to show God’s love to others.
* Pray that when guests attend our church they will experience our openness and hospitality.

Notes:

## 33. Pray for generosity in our giving.

*“Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous.” 2 Cor 9:11*

The Bible is full of stories of giving, possessions, and wealth. God is the giver of every gift, and we are to respond with a giving attitude. John Wesley said, “Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.”10

* Pray that the people of the church will have a willingness to give generously.
* Pray that the church leaders will be good steward of the money entrusted to them.
* Pray that the new church will give generously to the community and world.

Notes:

## 34. Pray for involvement in Risk-taking mission and service.

*“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. James 1:22*

Being in mission means that we become conscious of the needs of those around us and reach out to make a difference. “Risk-taking” moves us beyond doing that which is comfortable to respond with compassion and love.

* Pray that the people of our church could be involved in hands-on mission projects.
* Pray that we could be aware of the needs of our neighborhood and find ways to meet people’s real needs.
* Pray that the people of our church will take risks for the sake of the Gospel.

Notes:

## 35. Pray for an openness to try new things.

*“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.” Isaiah 43:19*

Time marches on. Communities change. The church must be involved and relevant.

* Pray that the church is attentive to the changes happening in the community.
* Pray that the church takes risks to reach unchurched people.
* Pray that the people in the community respond favorably to the many ways the church reaches out with God’s transforming grace and love.

Notes:

What specific areas of transformation did God lead you to pray for?

# Week 6: Transition

William Bridges writes in Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change, “Before you can begin something new, you have to end what used to be. Before you can learn a new way of doing things, you have to unlearn the old way. Before you can become a different kind of person (church), you must let go of your old identity.”11

## 36. Pray for the new name of the new church.

*“Never again will you be called ‘The Forsaken City’ or ‘The Desolate Land.’ Your new name will be ‘The City of God’s Delight’ and ‘The Bride of God,’ for the Lord delights in you and will claim you as his bride.” Is 62:4*

The new name of the new church reflects the values of the church as they try to reach unchurched people in the community.

* Pray for clarity among the merger team as they discern the values of the new congregation.
* Pray for unity in the church as they choose a new name.
* Pray for a church name that will attract the people of the community in a meaningful way.

Notes:

## 37. Pray for the new church’s pastor.

*“If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously.” Romans 12:8*

God used Moses to lead the people out of Egypt, out of the past way of life. Moses led the people through the wilderness to the edge of the Promised Land. But God used Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land and a new way of life. God will use a new pastor to lead the church after the Vital Merger.

* Pray for the Bishop and Cabinet as they discern the best pastor for your church.
* Pray for the openness of the pastor and family to the new opportunity of leading your church.
* Give thanks for current pastors who will move to a new church and pray for their transition.
* Pray for a smooth transition for the new pastor and your church.

Notes:

## 38. Pray that the buildings would sell in a timely manner.

*For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to tear down and a time to build up. Ecc 3:1,3*

One of the drains of a Vital Merger is the delay in the sale of the church buildings. The sale is needed to provide funding of a new building, as well as to avoid the financial drain of upkeep and utilities spend on unsold buildings.

* Pray for a rapid sale of the buildings.
* Pray for buyers that have a positive vision for the building that will benefit the community.
* Pray for the members as they grieve and remember the life-changing events that have taken place in the building.

Notes:

## 39. Pray for the Location Team to identify the right location.

*“I am about to build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord my God. It will be a place set apart to burn fragrant incense before him. . ..” 2 Chron 2:4*

The new location, as well as the eventual new building must reflect the vision and values of the new church. The new location might be an already existing building, a new building, or a rented facility.

* Pray for the Location Team that they would have a clear vision of all God’s wants to accomplish through the building.
* Pray for the congregation to have patience as the Location Team seeks the best options.
* Pray for the finances to meet the costs of a new location.

Notes:

## 40. Pray for a great celebration as the churches come together as one.

*“Shouldn’t we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life?” 2 Cor 3:8*

The merger celebration should symbolize the beginning of a new future for the new church. It is a time of bringing together those churches that have spent months - or years - visioning, planning, and working to make this new church a reality.

* Pray for the church members as they celebrate new life together.
* Pray for great unity and joy to be present in the new church.
* Pray that the people would integrate and form one, united faith community.

Notes:

How can you continue to pray for a smooth transition for your church?

# Other helpful resources:

Go to VitalMerger.com for more helpful resources

Vital Merger Facebook page

1 Dirk Elliott, Vital Merger: A New Church Start Approach that Joins Church Families Together, (Fun and Done Press, 2013) 25.

2 Elliott, Vital Merger, 25.

3 Elliott, Vital Merger, 42.

4 Elliott, Vital Merger, 42-43.

5 Elliott, Vital Merger, 44. 6 Elliott, Vital Merger, 41.

7 Captain Cassidy, What The 4-14 Window Tells Us About Christianity’s Future, May 13, 2016, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rolltodisbelieve/2016/05/13/what-the-4-14-window-tells-us-about-christianitys-future/.

8 The United Methodist Hymnal (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), vii.

9 Robert Schnase, Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007) 11.

10 John Wesley, “The Use of Money,” Sermon on Luke 16:9, The Works of John Wesley, 3rd ed, vol 6, 124.

11 William Bridges, Managing Transitions, 3rd ed, (DaCapo Press, 2009) 23. 12 Bridges, Managing Transitions, 5.