

# Plan of Union

New Life Presbyterian Church, Roseville with  
Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ, Falcon Heights  
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# Introduction

New Life Presbyterian Church (NLPC) is an inclusive Christian faith community “daring to live in Jesus' transforming love.” NLPC values loving God, creation, all people exploring our faith, broadening our minds and deepening our hearts. The congregation is the result of a 2014 merger of Knox Presbyterian Church (founded in 1890) and North Como Presbyterian Church (founded in 1951). The two congregations began worshipping together in late 2013. The merger was recognized in January 2014 by the Presbytery of the Twin Cities. We worshipped, served, visioned and prayed) together and in October 2014, chose a new name for ourselves - New Life Presbyterian Church, Roseville.

At NLPC, our hope is that each person who participates in the life of this faith community will experience the miracle of transforming love and can express that love in the world through acts of justice, mercy and peace. Our mission is “Daring to live in Jesus' transforming love.”

Soon after the merger, NLPC opened its doors to others, including but not limited to the Kenyan Christian Outreach Church (KCOC), Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), and Gospel for All Nations Church (GFANC). With our onsite preschool, the existing 38,000 sq foot building was well utilized.

Momentum shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic and after the closing of the onsite preschool. Since those events, NLPC has seen significant declines in membership and worship participation. As of 2024, NLPC has a total of 145 active members, and those members are quickly aging with 65% being over the age of 56. Adults younger than age 56 equate to 34% of members. On any given Sunday, between 30 to 60 members participate in person or online.

Recognizing the continued decline in the number of members over the last 5 years, the Session and the Congregation has undergone a discernment process about our future. At the beginning of 2023, the Session of New Life Presbyterian Church held a retreat after having read the book, “Quietly Courageous: Leading the Church in a Changing World” by Gilbert Rendle. At the retreat, the Session wrestled with the declining membership in the context of declines in the mainline denomination as well as the future of the existing congregation and the demands our church building places on members. At the retreat the Session considered the following questions:

- What is the future of NLPC in the ever-changing world?
- How do we continue our mission?
- How has our ministry changed?
- How do we maximize the use of the existing underutilized building and land?

Out of discernment, the Session established a Congregational Reformation Task Force (CRTF) and charged it with:

Exploring and recommending ways to revitalize that church that includes engaging consultants for the purpose of financial and membership growth, building use and partnering with other organizations including churches.

The CRTF has been meeting regularly since and has continuously engaged the congregation. The CRTF further studied the book, “Gone for Good? Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition” by Mark Elsdon (Editor), Willie James Jennings (Foreword). In agreement

with the NLPC Session, the CRTF has concluded that a significant part of our mission is to share our property with other non-profit organizations and worshipping communities who serve our community. As of today, virtually all our space is now – again – being used by such organizations and worshipping communities. While we celebrate this feat, we have come to terms with that fact that our membership is declining and aging. As time continues, the congregation will bear the burden of maintaining a very large building and serving as landlord for multiple tenants. This presents a long-term strategic challenge that is not expected to improve.

In addition, to improve ministries for our youth and younger members, NLPC, has been exploring ministry partnerships with North Church – A Presbyterian Community in North St. Paul, Presbyterian Church of the Way in Shoreview, and Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ (FHC). With each, we have been in fellowship. We have worshipped together, conducted pulpit swaps, and merged our youth programming. With North Presbyterian Church, we experimented by holding a new non-sermon-based service. That was approved of by both sessions and lasted a year before our members decided that the distance to North was prohibitive. In addition, throughout this, we have been in discernment about what our future holds and have evaluated decisions about staying status quo, disbanding and closing, or exploring a merger with another. Like the Knox/North Como merger, we decided to pursue merging with a strong partner.

As we considered partners for possible mergers, we considered ministry and mission, worship and organizational culture, and geographic location. Many of our members had indicated that they did not wish to travel long distances to participate in the life of a new church.

Throughout these activities, NLPC has sought regular consultation with the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, the Board of Trustee's, and other Committee Chairs with the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (PTCA).

Through careful discernment, we have determined Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ (FHC) fits well with our current congregation. It is both geographically close, culturally similar, and we share many common missions. In addition, our existing mission statements are very similar.

FHC welcomes people to their church by proclaiming, "We are an inclusive church, a community of people from many religious and personal backgrounds who come together to worship, serve others and grow in God's love. No matter who you are, no matter where you are on your life and faith journeys, you are welcome, and you have a place here. We look forward to meeting you and getting to know you!" Like NLPC, FHC is an Open and Affirming — LGBTQ friendly congregation and welcoming to all. Like NLPC, FHC welcomes all to partake of Holy Communion. And like NLPC's mission of "daring to live in Jesus' transforming love", the vision for FHC is, "Seekers and servants, growing in God's transforming love." Like NLPC, FHC has 133 members with between 40 to 50 attending services in person and 20 to 30 participating online.

Since reaching the decision that FHC was a strong partner, we have more actively engaged in plans to merge our congregation with their congregation, while maintaining our Presbyterian Church (USA) affiliation. During a congregational meeting on Sunday, January 19, 2025, the congregation of NLPC passed a resolution approving the formation of a joint committee,

comprising members and leadership of New Life Presbyterian Church and Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ, to be tasked with developing a Plan of Union for members of both churches to consider upon its completion. The motion passed as follows:

- 51 votes
- 41 voted for plan of union development
- 9 voted against the plan of union development
- 1 abstention

With this background, we at NLPC wish to present a Plan of Merger to the NLPC Congregation and the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (PTCA) for adoption.

### **The Challenge:**

Presently, NLPC has a total of 145 active members, and those members are quickly aging with 65% being over the age of 56 and only 34% of adult members being under age 56. Members age 70 and older account for over 75% of total annual contributions. Opportunities for and participation in the life of the church continue to decline and our ability to provide ministry to the broader Roseville community is limited. The current building, totaling just over 38,000 square feet has become a strain on the existing membership, finances, and ministry goals.

In addition, the current building is too large for the existing congregations of NLPC and FHC to operate and the likelihood of FHC moving to the New Life building is low. The FHC church building is smaller and more correctly sized to a united congregation.

### **The Opportunity:**

As it explored possibilities with maximizing building use, NLPC was approached by a consortium of three organizations - Montessori American Indian Childcare Center, Department of Indian Work-Interfaith Action, and American Indian Family Center. Independently, the mission of Montessori American Indian Childcare Center is “to address the early childhood needs and the academic achievement gap of American Indian children, through revitalizing language and culture”; the Department of Indian Work-Interfaith Action’s mission is to “mobilize diverse faith and spiritual communities to engage in work that supports our neighbors’ stability and economic mobility”; and the American Indian Family Center’s (AIFC) mission is to “provide American Indian families with programs and services enriched by traditional values and culture.”

These three groups are founding members of the Oyate Ota Center (OOC). The Oyate Ota Center is a transformational vision for the future of social service delivery in Saint Paul and beyond. Meaning, “The People’s Place” in the Dakota language, this vision is powered by a coalition of non-profits and public agencies that are eager to co-locate services in one shared, community-centered space that can serve anyone who comes to it for services. More information is available here: <https://aifcmn.org/about/oyateotacenter/>

The missions and the purpose of these organizations was appealing for NLPC in that we felt that we could extend our own mission through the work of these organizations. Given this, NLPC has entered into lease arrangements with these groups. Since well before moving in, this coalition has also expressed a strong interest in purchasing the church property so that they can finally establish the envisioned Oyate Ota Center (OOC). This interest affords both NLPC and the Presbytery of the Twin Cities area an opportunity to realize a new future and new ministry opportunities. In addition, it creates an opportunity to go one step further towards rectifying the

sins of the church of the past – those around the poor treatment of native peoples. This is an opportunity for our congregation and the Presbytery to do something substantive for the indigenous community over and above expressing land acknowledgement. It creates an opportunity to return land to indigenous peoples so that they may create a center to “minister” to their own and others in the community at large. An act of reconciliation, we at NLPC believe that this action is important for addressing the harm caused by past and present injustices against Indigenous peoples, creating a more just and equitable society, and is a way to build a better future. As John 10:10 indicates, Christ calls us to reconciliation and unity.

Both NLPC and FHC are energized by the possibility this sale presents and for merging the two congregations and what a new ministry could mean to the Falcon Heights and Roseville Communities. For both, this may address the long-term challenge of declining and aging membership. It also allows us to further utilize PCUSA resources as “a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world” under section G-4.0201 of the Book of Order.

## Presbytery Motions:

NLPC is entering the following motions into consideration by the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (PTCA) and its committees and ministry teams:

### Presbytery Leadership Team:

Authorize the Congregation of New Life Presbyterian Church (NLPC), Roseville to merge with the Congregation of Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ creating a new dually affiliated church belonging to two denominations – the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ.

### Board of Trustees:

Authorize the existing Session of New Life Presbyterian Church (NLPC), Roseville to sell the New Life Presbyterian Church property located at 965 Larpentour Ave W, Roseville, MN 55113 to the Oyate Ota Center after a NLPC congregation vote to the affirmative passes. The building shall be sold “as is”. The Session of NLPC may negotiate a sale price not less than \$3,200,000. In the spirit of reconciliation, the Session of NLPC may provide a seller concession between \$100,000 to \$750,000 as a method to further the mission of the church, the PCUSA, and the Oyate Ota Center. The Session may also negotiate a rent back option as part of the sale as it pertains to the timing of the merger of NLPC with Falcon Height United Church of Christ, the timing of a move, or any other barrier to successfully completing the merger. The sale shall be completed within 12 months of this motion passing. The proceeds from the sale will pay any necessary expenses associated with the sale of the property and any outstanding loan balance owed to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. NLPC will retain the remaining sale proceeds to be held in a dedicated account and used in the future by the newly merged PCUSA/UCC congregation as “a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world” under section G-4.0201 of the Book of Order and in accordance with the Plan of Union being submitted to the Presbytery for adoption.

### Commission on Ministry:

Authorize the existing Session of New Life Presbyterian Church, Roseville to continue the terms of call for Teaching Elder **Risley Prakasim** under the newly merged Falcon Heights UCC & New

Life Presbyterian Church. In addition, the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area recognizes a Formula Partner arrangement with the **Rev. Rick King**, who has a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and is the present UCC Pastor at Falcon Heights UCC. The Commission on Ministry will complete all necessary steps to secure the continuation of both pastors for the newly merged church.

## Plan of Union

### Board of Directors and Congregational Agreement:

The existing Session of NLPC, being the dually elected Board of Directors, and the Executive Board of FHC agree to the following provisions in this Plan of Union.

A Joint Ministries Agreement may be entered into if it is deemed needed. The agreement will terminate when the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (PTCA) approves the merger, this Plan of Union, the position description for the pastors and the conditions of their call or hiring.

### Retaining Affiliations:

The newly merged NLPC and FHC will be mutually affiliated with the Presbyterian Church United States of America (PCUSA) and United Church of Christ (UCC) denominations. The newly merged church shall follow both the PCUSA Book of Order and the UCC Manual on Local Church.

### Governance:

The governance of the newly merged church shall include equal numbers of members of the existing Session of NLPC and the existing Executive Board for FHC. Members shall be elected or appointed by the united congregation and those members shall be of equal standing. The new board (session) shall become the Board of Directors or Session for its respective corporation until a civil merger or other civil reorganization has been completed and a new Board of Directors, consisting of members of both prior corporations have been elected or appointed. Until such time as the civil merger or other civil reorganization has been completed, these two Boards will be responsible for managing any real property, other tangible property disposition, financial, and civil transactions required for the ecclesiastically merged congregation. Each board shall select a President and a Secretary.

All NLPC members who were previously ordained as a ruling or teaching elder will retain that status and be eligible to serve the newly merged church.

### Additional Requirements:

The new Board of Directors (Session) shall:

- Provide for the election of a Congregational Nominating Committee to nominate officers, an audit committee, and at-large nominating committee members;
- Create a committee structure that reflects the new congregation and its mission;
- Form a personnel committee to review, evaluate and report on the working relationships of the Pastors every 90 days at least for the first year as well as any other employees of the new merged church;
- Form a Budget/finance Committee to oversee the current 2025 budget, review and amend it as necessary and prepare a proposed budget for 2026;

- Elect one Clerk of Session or Board Secretary and one Treasurer;
- Identify a new vision and mission for the new church;
- Open a new minute book and a Book of Covenant Membership while retaining the previous minutes and membership history;
- Oversee the writing and adoption of By-Laws for the Merged Congregation; and
- Address any other issue or concern that may not have been explicitly identified in this agreement.

### **Financial Disclosures:**

Prior to merger, NLPC and FHC shall arrange for their audit committees to review the financial records – contributions, restricted funds, controls, expenses, and financial record keeping procedures of the other church and will report any findings, conclusions of concern and remediation plans to both the Session of NLPC and the Executive Board for FHC .

### **Civil Merger:**

NLPC and FHC shall determine if it is best to merge both corporations with the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office or create a parent corporation that maintains control over the two existing corporations or enter into a memorandum of understanding or another option. By doing the latter, the newly formed church is more likely to inherit planned gifts given by others without creating unanticipated problems. NLPC and FHC shall provide the appropriate notices to both the Minnesota Attorney General's Office and the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office. Careful consideration will need to be made if tax payer and employer identification numbers shall be changed.

### **Estate, gift or grant intentions:**

Estate, gift or grant intentions of donors to the former congregations will be understood under Minnesota Statutes, section 317A.641 to be directed to the new corporation, as the successor corporation, unless otherwise provided for by donor's instrument.

### **Name:**

When a name for the new congregation has been selected and appropriate filings and required documents have been completed, The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (PTCA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC) conference will be informed.

### **Operating Documents:**

NLPC and FHC shall modify Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and Manuals of Operations to appropriately reflect the requirements of the PCUSA and UCC denominations and its ongoing affiliation with both and any needs the newly merged church has under its new organization. The Bylaws of Macalester Plymouth United Church Saint Paul, Minnesota may serve as an example.

### **Building and Land:**

#### **New Life Presbyterian Church:**

##### *Sale:*

The existing Session of New Life Presbyterian Church is responsible for completing the sale of the building and land located at 965 Larpenteur Ave W, Roseville, MN 55113 to the Oyate Ota Center in consultation with the Board of Trustees of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. The

existing Session of New Life Presbyterian Church shall pay any outstanding loans or sale expenses with the proceeds of sale and hold any remaining in a dedicated account to be used to “accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world” under section G-4.0201 of the Book of Order.

#### **Lease Back Option:**

If the existing Session of New Life Presbyterian Church determines that the timing of the sale of the building and land does not coincide well with the merger with Falcon Heights UCC, the Board may execute a lease back option.

#### **Existing Tenants:**

The existing Session of New Life Presbyterian Church is responsible for communicating with existing tenants of the building. The Oyate Ota Center shall determine if it wishes to continue leasing space to the existing tenants. If the Oyate Ota Center has determined that it does not wish to continue leasing space to the existing tenants, then the Board of Directors or Session of NLPC may assist in finding new space for the tenants.

#### **Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ:**

The Executive Board of Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ shall assess their existing building to determine how the building might fit the ministry needs of the new church and create a plan in consultation with NLPC on how changes may accommodate the ministry needs. FHC shall also identify any necessary building improvements needed to repair issues with the existing building as well as their costs.

#### **Historical Space:**

A historical space shall be designated in the FHC building. It will be dedicated to the history of Knox Presbyterian Church, North Como Presbyterian Church, New Life Presbyterian Church and Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ. This space will be used to display photographs, artifacts, documents, furnishings, and other items of sentimental value to the membership.

#### **Ministry Space/ Quilters:**

Space shall be identified for the quilters and other ministries.

#### **Disposition of Property:**

The existing Session of NLPC shall designate an individual, group, or committee responsible to dispose of any NLPC movable property in consultation with the Pastor, or the Building & Grounds Committee as needed. This individual or group shall consult with representatives of FHC and the Oyate Ota Center to assure that items needed by the new congregation are identified and moved and that items needed by the OOC are left after the sale of the building. Such moveable property may be identified in sale documents.

#### **Staff:**

In collaboration, the existing Session of NLPC, and the Executive Board of FHC shall identify a staffing plan for the newly merged church and its ministries. This staffing plan shall identify

terms of call for the Pastors of each respective church. The terms of call shall be voted upon by the newly merged congregation and in accordance with the governance of both denominations.

#### **Membership:**

All members of NLPC and FHC shall become members of the PCUSA and UCC Denominations. Those who choose not to be members of the new congregation will notify the existing NLPC Session and the FHC Executive Board or the joint board of the merged congregation.

#### **Historical Records:**

Minutes of New Life Presbyterian Church shall be preserved as historical documents. These minutes and other historical records, including the records of membership may be sent to the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia or placed in the Minnesota Historical Archives. Any records related to the Falcon Heights UCC Church shall be archived according to their guidance.