Our Redeemer Merger Investigation FAQ's

Updated FAQ's 9/28/26

- **Are there other LCMS churches that have successfully merged?**

Within the Michigan District, between 2017-2024, seven churches have successfully merged. Currently there are another 8-10 are in some form of discussions about merging.

- **What is the relationship between Our Redeemer and Little Lambs Preschool?**

Our Redeemer operates Little Lambs Preschool. The preschool staff is part of Our Redeemer staff (similar to Trinity's school staff who are part of Trinity's staff). The preschool is financially self-sustaining, not requiring any funding from the church.

- **Are Trinity and Our Redeemer congregations receiving the same information?**

A merger page has been set up on both churches' websites containing identical information. Any updates to information occur concurrently on both websites. It is extremely important that information is shared consistently with both congregations.

- **If my Trinity family attends Our Redeemer sometimes, do we automatically get attendance credit for school?**

You are welcome to attend Our Redeemer at any time. However, the tuition attendance requirement of 75% is for Trinity in-person attendance, not other churches, including Our Redeemer. We are keeping the attendance tracking separate between the 2 churches until after a merger occurs. At that time, we would become a single church so attending either site would apply towards attendance requirements.

- **What is the long term plan for Pastor Josh beyond the merger investigation period?**

During the merger investigation period, Pastor Josh will serve as Site Pastor regardless if the investigation takes 12 or 24 months. If we agree to complete the merger, Pastor Josh will remain as Site Pastor. If we agree not to merge, Pastor Josh will return to Trinity and Our Redeemer will search for a new pastor to call.

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Original FAQ's 5/26/26

- **Are we voting to merge with ORLC (Our Redeemer Lutheran Church)?**

No. We are not voting today (June 14) on merging. We are voting today on whether to enter an exploratory period to evaluate a potential merger. If we vote yes, we will enter a 12-24 month period where we will explore the advantages and disadvantages of merging.

- **How did the discussion on a potential merger begin?**

Twelve years ago, the LCMS Synod began encouraging Trinity to explore how we might leverage our resources and ministry culture to help other LCMS churches in the area. The long-term pastor at ORLC retired over a year ago. Although they have been operating with an Intentional Interim Pastor, Trinity has been providing pastoral support over the past year including a month period this spring when the Intentional Interim Pastor was on vacation. Pastor Josh led services, bible studies, and conducted pastoral care during that period. As ORLC worked through the call process, Synod formally suggested they consider a merger with Trinity. On May 2, their congregation overwhelmingly (113 Yes – 13 No) approved entering into a 12-24 month contract with Trinity to evaluate a potential merger.

- **Is Pastor Josh leaving to join ORLC?**

No. ORLC will contract Trinity to provide pastoral support during the evaluation period. Beginning Sept 1, Pastor Josh will become acting site pastor at Our Redeemer. ORLC will compensate Trinity for Pastor Josh's salary and benefits during the evaluation period. If we ultimately move forward with a merger, Pastor Josh would become the site pastor but would still report to Pastor Justin as Senior Pastor. All Trinity pastors will preach at Our Redeemer during the evaluation period as it is important for them to become familiar with all of our pastors.

- **What is a multi-site church?**

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A multi-site church is a single congregation that operates in 2 or more sites while sharing the same overall leadership, vision, ministries, and sermon teachings.

- **What is the vision after the merger?**

If the merger is completed, we would be a single congregation operating in 2 sites (Utica and Washington). We would have one senior pastor (with a site pastor at Washington), one leadership team, one budget, a single staff (some centralized, some localized), shared ministries, and a common mission of Making Disciples who Share Christ's Story with Love.

- **Why are we considering merging with ORLC? What's in it for Trinity?**

Trinity's mission is to Make Disciples who Share Christ's Story with Love. Merging with Our Redeemer affords a greater opportunity to fulfill that mission. By merging we can leverage each other's strengths to potentially win more souls for Jesus. That is our ultimate mission and ministry. As a practical example, Little Lambs Preschool is a ministry of Our Redeemer with just over 100 preschoolers. We see an opportunity to work with those families to bring them into the church, strengthen their faith, and also be able to offer a Christian education at Trinity's Day School. Those families do not have that K-8 Christian education option today at Our Redeemer.

- **How will we evaluate the possibility of a merger?**

A Merger Committee (consisting of Pastor Justin, Pastor Josh, and a few lay leaders from both congregations) has been formed which will lead the evaluation. Through the 12-24 month evaluation period we will be investigating synergies where we can work together to better accomplish our mission of Making Disciples who Share Christ's Story with Love. If we identify enough of those opportunities that will help us to continue to accomplish our mission, then leadership will recommend the merger to both congregations.

- **Is ORLC a church plant?**

No. In a church plant, a single congregation selects a new site to start a new church. This is a potential merger of 2 established congregations. We are using the term merger, but other terms might be partnership, collaboration, unification, consolidation, or adoption.

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- **Why is there a 12-24 month merger evaluation period?**

We need time to conduct a thorough evaluation to determine if there are significant benefits to merging. The target is a 12-month evaluation period with the option to extend the evaluation up to 24 months.

- **What happens if we decide not to merge?**

If we decide not to merge, Trinity and Our Redeemer would continue to operate as separate LCMS congregations as we have in the past.

- **Who will make the decision – voter's or church leadership?**

The Merger Committee (Pastor Justin, Pastor Josh, and a few lay leaders from both congregations) will be leading the investigation. However, they will be relying on expertise of staff and members to study specific aspects of the investigation. For example, a financial subcommittee consisting of staff and members from each congregation will conduct a financial review of each organization and will provide recommendations on how to combine into a single organization. Although the Merger Committee will lead the investigation, the voters at both congregations will be the final decision makers on the merger. There will be multiple communications and congregational updates throughout the evaluation period to keep both congregations apprised during the process.

- **Will merging affect our worship style?**

We don't see where the merger will affect our worship styles. We will still offer various traditional and contemporary worship styles.

- **How will merging affect the Sanctuary Renovation project?**

The merger evaluation process will not impact the Sanctuary Renovation project. The Board of Properties leads the renovation project. They will be asked to provide input on the merger evaluation, but that will not impact the Sanctuary Renovation project.

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- **How will merging affect our ministries at Trinity?**

Ministries at both churches will be a significant discussion during the evaluation. We will be looking for areas of synergy where we can build from each other's ministries. We anticipate some ministries to remain the same and others to be enhanced through merging.

- **How long will the merger take and what will it cost?**

The merger decision will be made during the 12-24 month evaluation period. If the merger is approved, we would immediately begin operating as a single congregation in a multi-site church. Research shows the average cost of church mergers is about $100,000. The actual cost varies greatly depending on the specific circumstances, but we anticipate our cost to be less than the average. The primary cost for our merger will be for legal fees to conduct the merger of the business entities and the cost of the financial review.

- **In corporate mergers, people typically lose jobs. Are people getting fired?**

While companies merge in order to gain efficiency through reduced headcount, our motivation for merging is to share the gospel with more people. We don't anticipate any reduction in staff directly related to the merger. We will be looking at staffing and how to best utilize or leverage the various talents of all staff members.

- **Is ORLC financially healthy?**

Our Redeemer is a financially healthy congregation. They owe about $700k for their mortgage which is due to be paid off in 8 years. Trinity recently completed an external financial audit. As part of the merger investigation, Our Redeemer will conduct a similar audit with the same company.

- **Is the ORLC building in need of repair or updating?**

Our Redeemer completed a sanctuary renovation in the early 2000's. A thorough inspection of their building will be conducted as part of the evaluation, but there are no apparent major repairs evident at this time.

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- **Can I attend ORLC if I live closer to there?**

Trinity is providing pastoral support to lead worship throughout the summer at ORLC. We will be rotating our pastors through Our Redeemer to familiarize their congregation with the Trinity pastors. Beginning Sept 1, Pastor Josh will serve as lead pastor during the evaluation period. You are welcome to attend Our Redeemer at any time to see their worship style and get to know the members there.

- **Where is my offering money going?**

During the merger evaluation period, the finances will remain separate between the 2 congregations. We are encouraging you to continue to support Trinity with your giving, just as we are encouraging the Our Redeemer members to continue to support Our Redeemer with their giving. Your offering goes to Trinity if you give through the Trinity website or Church Center app, direct deduction from your bank account, or giving through the offering plate at Trinity. However, if you attend Our Redeemer and place your offering in the plate there, your giving will go to Our Redeemer.