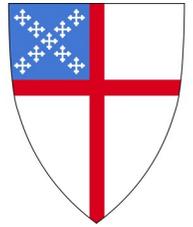




**Memorandum of Understanding between
The Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter
and
The Episcopal Church of the Nativity,
Cedarcroft**



Introduction: The clergy and lay leaders of The Lutheran Church of The Holy Comforter, on behalf of Holy Comforter's congregation, seek to open discussion with leaders of the Episcopal Church of the Nativity, Cedarcroft on the structure for a potential partnership. The Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU) developed by the Episcopal Diocese in consultation with the Delaware-Maryland Synod-ELCA prepares the way for an agreement to be reached between our respective congregations on certain fundamental elements of the form and structure of our possible alliance. The document offers a useful structure by which we can reach understanding on key elements by which we might be **Better Together**.

Proposal: We believe that it is more than sheer coincidence that our congregations have come together as they have thus far. We believe the Holy Spirit is guiding a process by which the strengths of our respective congregations are enmeshed to offer an innovative approach for carrying God's Word and saving grace to more residents of Baltimore. Based on our wonderful experience of worshipping together twice, as well as preliminary discussions among our clergy and lay leaders, we believe the stage is set to take our discussions to the next level.

Clarity of our vision is critical. Pared to its essentials, we propose collaboration under which:

1. Holy Comforter moves from its present location at 5513 York Road to share space at Nativity, Cedarcroft at 419 Cedarcroft Road.
2. The congregations of Holy Comforter and Nativity would remain separate, independent legal entities that worship jointly, interspersing liturgical elements and traditions from the Episcopal and Lutheran churches, with the clergy and lay members working together.
3. Holy Comforter will make a monthly contribution to be negotiated for the shared operations of our partnership.
4. Every effort is taken to implement this alliance by late Fall 2015, prior to the winter heating season.
5. Members of the two congregations work together to further Christ's Mission in Baltimore and beyond – via joint efforts for worship and music, evangelism, stewardship, social ministry, Christian education, and maintaining Nativity's property.
6. Both congregations continue this alliance indefinitely, while remaining open to changes that might be deemed more appropriate in the future.

Memorandum of Understanding

In keeping with the prayer of Jesus, “that they all may be one”, (John 17:21), the ordained leadership and elected lay leaders of The Church of the Nativity, Cedarcroft and Holy Comforter Church prayerfully enter into this understanding.

This memorandum outlines intended areas of sharing and cooperation that can be anticipated now but may expand, be altered, or amended as the two congregations get to know each other and are open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to take them in directions they do not now imagine.

- I. It is intended that the congregations of Nativity and Holy Comforter share space at Nativity, 419 Cedarcroft Road, Baltimore, Maryland. A joint administrative committee will be formed to make office and meeting space available for the Pastor and other HC-specific gatherings. Shared space will be identified for storing church records and files, vestments, robes, banners, etc.
- II. A contribution to Nativity from Holy Comforter will be negotiated. Nativity will consider deferring contribution payments in full or in part until January 1, 2016.
- III. Nativity’s Parish Administrator will serve both congregations. Monthly print newsletters and weekly email updates will be combined. The two websites will also be combined linking to each other so that no one visitor is ever misdirected.
- IV. Each congregation will be responsible for compensating its respective clergy leaders at the respective agreed-upon amount. Each congregation is responsible for its debts and obligations.
- V. It is intended for both congregations to worship together. The proposed schedule includes Holy Eucharist, Rite I (Episcopal) at 8:00 am. Adult Forum at 9:15am and joint Lutheran/Episcopal worship with Holy Eucharist at 10:30am followed by fellowship. HC’s monthly Jazz Vesper service will continue with financial support from HC.
- VI. The rector of Nativity and pastor of Holy Comforter will share preaching and presiding responsibilities, as they determine. They will also share in the ministries of teaching and preaching, evangelism, social ministry, stewardship and pastoral care as they determine is best for the congregations and the gifts and talents with which God has blessed each ordained leader. The rector and pastor will together negotiate a written working document of roles and expectations to avoid any misunderstandings and for clarity within the congregation. The president of the council and senior warden will review this document with mutual ministry committee to be formed.
- VII. The Order of Worship will be planned to incorporate Episcopal and Lutheran prayers and hymns. Worship could also be rotated such that Lutheran and Episcopal worship settings are interspersed Sunday to Sunday, though this may not be optimal.
- VIII. Money received will be divided by pledge envelopes to the respective congregation from which the envelopes originated. Loose plate offering funds will be divided equally.

- IX. Denominational giving in the form of Allocations/Mission Support will be calculated on the respective formulae of each judicatory office.
- X. Should Holy Comforter bring into the space, musical instruments, office equipment or other furnishings from its Govans location, a list of said items will be made, kept and agreed to by the leadership of both congregations.
- XI. Impact of this shared space understanding on insurance of property and liability will be investigated by leaders from both congregations with their respective insurance providers and judicatory offices. Any resulting increase on insurance premiums will be paid by mutual consent of both parties in a manner acceptable to both parties.
- XII. Should new members present themselves wishing to join this new worshipping community, they shall be presented with the option of choosing a denomination (ELCA or Episcopal) at the time of their reception/baptism/confirmation or whatever entry rite for which they are eligible.
- XIII. The leadership and members of both congregations agree to pray regularly either privately, corporately, or both, for continued guidance of the Holy Spirit as this new expression of God's church unfolds.
- XIV. Both congregations agree to keep their respective judicatory offices informed of their progress.

This memorandum of understanding shall serve as a guide into an uncertain future of ministry together. It has no term specified by intent. It is fully expected at some point the congregations will enter into a more formal agreement in consultation with their respective judicatories. Both parties agree to be open to other expressions of shared, combined, federated, Lutheran-Episcopal congregations currently existing or forming now as examples of what Nativity and Holy Comforter might become. The vestry and council will continue to meet monthly as stated in the bylaws of each organization. The vestry and council will meet together at least quarterly to continue to evaluate this partnership in ministry discerning and following the dream God has for this community. This MOU will be reviewed 6 and 12 months after the commencement date and at any mutually agreeable time.

The commitments outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding will commence on November 1, 2015 and is agreed to by:

 The Reverend Doctor David W. Eisenhuth, *Pastor*
 The Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter

 The Reverend T. Stewart Lucas, *Rector*
 The Episcopal Church of the Nativity, Cedarcroft

 Joel Boerger, *Council President*

 Neal Baroody, *Senior Warden*

 The Reverend Wolfgang D. Herz-Lane, *Bishop*
 Delaware-Maryland Synod, ELCA

 The Right Reverend Eugene T. Sutton, *Bishop*
 The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland