



THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AND HOLY COMFORTER
AN EPISCOPAL-LUTHERAN COMMUNITY IN BALTIMORE

Frequently Asked Questions

about the Federation Process

1. What is being proposed?

Since November 1, 2015, the congregations of the Church of the Nativity, Cedarcroft and The Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter have worshipped together under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding negotiated by the Vestry and Congregational Council, and approved by our bishops. Now we plan to formalize our interdenominational partnership through a process known as federation. We want to proceed from what has been an extended “engagement” to enter into formal “marriage.”

2. Things seem to be going well now so why do we need to federate?

Yes, most everyone likes our unusual partnership as “Lutherpalians.” Federating would enable us to lock in that partnership for the long term. Under a federation, we would legally become one congregation, while preserving the best aspects of our Episcopal and Lutheran identities and traditions. It also would enable us to eliminate certain redundancies and duplicative efforts, while saving money on such things as insurance. For example, we now maintain different sets of financial books, operate under two budgets and maintain separate endowments.

3. So, what changes under a federation?

Although we presently worship and serve the world as one congregation, we legally operate under two separate corporate charters. Under the federation we would dissolve Holy Comforter’s corporate charter. Nativity would remain as the surviving corporate entity because Nativity holds the title to the buildings. Nativity would change its name to become The Church of the Nativity and Holy Comforter. This would enable the church to retain certain grandfathered regulatory provisions that saves us money and a lot of government hassle.

Upon federation, the finances of both congregations would become one, including the existing endowments. Member contributions, bequests and other income would go into a common account and Holy Comforter no longer would pay a separate voluntary monthly “rental” fee to Nativity.

4. What else changes?

The existing “Vestry” and “Congregational Council” would become a single nine-member “Church Council.” The “Rector” would now be known as “Pastor.” The “Senior Warden” and “Junior Warden” become “President” and “Vice President,” respectively, and the “Registrar” will now be “Secretary.” Certain decisions that the Vestry previously could make on its own would now require the Congregation’s approval. For instance, the annual budget (as well as calling a new Senior Pastor) would now require approval of voting members of the Congregation at an Annual or Special Meeting.

5. *Did you use a model in developing the new Agreement?*

Yes, there are a number of Episcopal-Lutheran partnerships across the nation but the more we looked at such congregations in Michigan, Oregon, Maine and Florida, among others, we realized our partnership is unique. We have spent months in consultation with our Diocesan and Synod leadership, attorneys and bishops. As we drafted the Agreement together, we wanted a model that could be used by other interdenominational partnerships.

6. *Will I continue to be a member of the Episcopalian (or the Lutheran) church?*

The Church itself will be a duly recognized parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, TEC, the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA, and the ELCA, all of whom are known as judicatories of the two denominations. Church members may participate in assemblies, conferences, conventions, committees and/or other activities of either of the denominations, without regard to whether they previously identified as Episcopalian or Lutheran. You may continue to identify yourself as a member of one or the other denomination or just say you're a Lutherpalian!

7. *How will we "count" things, such as attendance and member giving, once we federate?*

We will be one congregation known as The Church of the Nativity and Holy Comforter. In the annual "parochial" reports of our activities required by the Diocese and Synod, we will report half of our membership, attendance and spending to each judicatory, adding a note to each report that we are a Federated congregation with combined numbers. We plan to give equally to both the Diocese and Synod.

8. *What is the process for approval?*

The proposed Agreement of Federation has been preliminarily reviewed and approved by attorneys for the Lutheran Synod and Episcopal Diocese, as well as by Nativity's Vestry and Holy Comforter's Council. A Special Congregational Meeting has been called for 9:00 a.m. Sunday, August 26 in Hart Hall, at which parishioners will be asked to formally approve the Federation. With approval, the document will be signed by Pastor Stewart, Vestry and Council leaders and, finally, by clerical and lay leaders of the local Diocese and Synod.

Once the documents have been approved and signed, work will begin to implement the actions outlined in the Federation Agreement, such as dissolving Holy Comforter's corporate status and combining funds and investments. We are already planning our joint budget for 2019.

9. *What should we expect upon federation?*

There will be a lot happening behind the scenes – combining banking and investment accounts, dissolving and changing corporate identities, modifying various insurance documents, etc. – but the typical member will see little or nothing that's different. Everything that we most enjoyed over the past two and a half years as partners continues unchanged – together worshipping and studying the Scriptures, together breaking bread (both at the Eucharist and at potluck meals), together doing good works. Federation merely formalizes what we already know: we truly are ***Better Together!***