

#### 8. What is the financial situation this would produce?

Both congregations would come into this partnership with budget deficits, but this would not double our debts. In fact, by combining resources, and duplicating the use of everything from hymnals and Sunday School/VBS materials to staff and volunteers, we reduce many of our costs. Atonement does take on an increased financial obligation by including another pastor in our ministry staff. However, a reasonable expectation is that both campuses would grow in excitement, commitment, and disciples. It is a reasonable expectation because other multi-site congregations have experienced such growth.

#### 9. Does Marysville need two LCMS churches?

Marysville is rapidly growing in two different directions. One is a rural, farming direction. The other is a suburban, young professional direction. St. John's Lutheran in Marysville is connecting with the rural community and the newer housing developments near their campus. Living Truth is not attempting to reach the same demographic. Essentially the two ministries are fishing out of two different ponds. There will be people that Living Truth will never reach because of size, style, etc., for whom St. John's will be the right church home. The same can be said for people who would find St. John's too large, so they cannot connect interpersonally as they need to. For them Living Truth is a great church home.

#### 10. Is the distance between too far?

It depends on who's driving! We've clocked it at 30 minutes from door to door, though some are reported to have closed that gap a bit more. Northwest Columbus is a different community than Marysville. There is a fascinating element of cross-cultural ministry involved here, though our cultures are not that different.

Atonement members of both campuses are witnesses wherever they live, work, and play. In Acts 1:21, Jesus tells His followers that we will be His witnesses to three distinct communities: "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

There are examples of churches that have spanned greater distances to partner together and succeed. This distance does not prevent us from doing anything that is necessary for the health and growth of both congregations.

#### 11. What do we need to sacrifice?

Such a partnership creates a new reality and we're all called out of our comfort zones. Each campus would sacrifice some time with the pastor they're used to, but would be engaged by another pastor that will bring a fresh perspective and voice. Each campus may lose familiar faces to the other campus, long-term or short-term. Families from the Columbus campus would be asked to prayerfully consider a commitment to worship at the Marysville campus.

As mentioned before, budget concerns are on most of our minds. We need families to also prayerfully consider how they may be able to financially support this significant move forward in ministry for both locations.

## If two should become one...

Answers to the most frequently asked questions

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 NIV

## 1. Why are we talking about this?

A prayer shared between two pastors led to an idea, which led them back into more prayer. Prayer brought this question: Should Atonement partner with Living Truth?

This question led both congregations into discernment and discussion. That's where we are now. Pastor Brian and Pastor Derrick began to see that the needs of Living Truth Ministries in Marysville began to align with Atonement's strengths. In addition, oddly enough, they began to notice how Atonement's needs were aligning with Living Truth's strengths.

## 2. Who has been involved in this discussion?

Early on, Pastor Brian asked Atonement's members to seek God's will in prayer. Pastor Derrick asked the same of the people of Living Truth. After praying about this possibility, Pastor Brian invited a group of Atonement's lay leaders into a process of prayer and discernment to investigate the possibilities of this partnership.

A Discernment Team was formed to lead the process where the Church Council, the Board of Elders, as well as the whole congregation, could engage in conversation and prayer about the potential partnership.

## 3. What does Living Truth need from Atonement?

Living Truth needs resources: people, time, energy, experience, leadership, and faith mentors. Living Truth is a congregation of predominantly new disciples.

Living Truth is growing. Over the past year more than 15 new disciples have been participating in ministry with Living Truth. New disciples are great, because this means the kingdom of God is growing. But new disciples also present a challenge, because new disciples need leadership, people who can walk with them into a deeper relationship with Christ. New disciples need committed Christians coming alongside them who can invest time, patience, energy, personal faith, past experience, leadership, and grace. These resources are in great supply at Atonement.

## 4. What can Atonement gain from partnering with Living Truth?

Both congregations are great congregations, and both congregations have needs. Living Truth needs the resources of an existing congregation of mature Christian leaders; Atonement has a wealth of that leadership. Atonement needs focus on the mission field God wants us to reach; this is Living Truth's focus. Simply put our needs and our gifts match.

Receiving the additional leadership of a pastor who is gifted as an evangelist would propel Atonement toward being "the beat of Jesus' heart by meeting needs in Atonement's community" and beyond.

## 5. Does this distract us from our vision?

Illuminating something with a flashlight is a bit different than using a laser pointer. A laser pointer has a very accurate focus, but a very limited scope. That's our vision - extremely accurate: "meeting needs in Atonement's community." Note we defined Atonement's community as the neighborhoods around our campus, therefore limiting our outreach.

When we were discovering this vision we answered the question: What can we do with the resources we currently have? But, what happens if God increases our resources in a way we could not have expected? What if God provides us with a second pastor to still point us in the same direction but gives us a flashlight instead? We will better meet the needs of the neighborhoods around Atonement, and see a community that extends well beyond those neighborhoods that Atonement can reach with the Light of the Gospel!

With the additional pastoral leadership of someone gifted as an evangelist, and also with the resources of another congregation of inspired, activated new disciples, we will be able to make our vision a reality.

## 6. Why two pastors?

Pastor Brian and Pastor Derrick are gifted leaders, teachers, and preachers; but they have two different styles. There are some people Pastor Brian may never reach, but Pastor Derrick will, and vice versa. Additionally, bringing Pastor Derrick on Atonement's ministry staff will better facilitate the mission focus and activity needed at our Columbus location.

## 7. What does the District think of this?

Very early on we sought counsel from President Terry Cripe, Rev. Jeff Stephens, and Rev. Kevin Wilson of the Ohio District, as well as Rev. Matt Hoffmann and Rev. Jim Gau, our Circuit Counselors. These church leaders have been very encouraging of the discussion, the prospect, and the possible precedent that this could hold for other congregations in the future.