

Bethel United Church of Christ

3033 EAST BALTIMORE STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21224

Pastor, The Rev. Glen E. Rodgers
6865 Parsons Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21207

30 September 1993

Phones:
Office: 675-0905
Residence: 484-0431

The Reverend Robert M. Armstrong
United Evangelical United Church of Christ
3200 Dillon Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Dear Bob:

You'll be returning from your trip and stay in Vermont in a few days. Welcome Home!

It has been 'quiet' in the coverage that you requested from 20 August-2 September and if something does occur this week certainly will attend to it.

Bob, I would like to formally request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience relative to Bethel Church. I would like to get your feeling about the possibility of a Merger with United Evangelical. We are having a Consistory Meeting 19 September after the Men's Retreat at which time I would like to suggest some options for the next 3-4 years. One of them is to merge with another UCC Church, a second is to close the church at a stated date, the third is to continue the way we are at this time with no date of closure or merger.

It would be appreciated if you could take some time to enter into a discussion about Bethel and United as to the possibility of a Merger. We are operating on a very narrow base of people and finances. We have no debt, fewer workers than in recent years but still a determined and dedicated congregation to work to witness in their own way in their part of the 'vineyard.' Thank you for considering such a conversation in the near future.

Sincerely In Christ,


GLEN E. RODGERS,
Pastor

TO: COUNCIL

FROM: PASTOR

DATE: 9-17-93

SUBJECT: BETHEL CHURCH PROPOSAL

I met with Rev. Glen Rogers of the Bethel Church on Thursday, September 17, 1993. Glenn has been Pastor of that church since 1972. He is very enthusiastic about the possibility of that church considering a merger with us and believes that with such a merger, we could establish a strong United Church of Christ presence in this area of the city. He will present the proposal to his Consistory on Sunday, September 19, 1993. If that be approved by the Consistory, he will send us a response in writing for our discussion in our next Council meeting. Let me know if you have any questions about this proposal.

cc: M. Slechta
C. Young

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C. Young

TO: Council

FROM: Pastor

DATE: 9-28-93

SUBJECT: Merger with Bethel Church

I received the attached letter from The Rev. Glen Rogers and send it to you as a report of that project. Note that the Consistory or Council of Bethel approved the recommendation to their Church that the conversation regarding merger with our church be approved. This recommendation will be presented to Bethel at their Annual Meeting on October 17th.

Let me know if you have any questions regarding this matter.

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6865 Parsons Avenue
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Phones:
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Residence: 484-0431

Sunday, 19 September 1993

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Thank you & the Council for the consideration of a possible merger between United & Bethel.

We leave for Vermont (Washington, Chelsea & Montpelier) tomorrow, will return by 25th at latest.

Thank you again for your "openness" and conversation. I, too, think we would make an impact together!

In Christ,
Glen

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The Rev. Robert M. Armstrong
UNITED EVANGELICAL CHURCH
945 S. East Avenue,
Baltimore, MD 21224
(410) 276-0621

October 19, 1993

The Rev. Glenn Rogers,
Bethel UCC
3033 E. Baltimore St.,
Baltimore, 21224

Dear Glenn:

We were delighted to hear of the approval at your Annual Meeting of October 17th, of conversations regarding a merger between United Evangelical and the Bethel UCC Churches. Such a merger would enable both churches to establish a strong UCC presence and mission in this community. I am happy to inform you that our Council unanimously approved these conversations at our meeting of October 5, 1993.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the appropriate section of the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ as that document speaks to such a merger. This is from the 1992 Edition. I believe that the next appropriate step would be to have a meeting between us and to proceed with the appointment of a committee of three persons from each Council or Consistory to plan implementation of our discussions. With your approval, we will proceed with the presentation of the merger idea to our Annual Meeting on November 28th.

Glenn, the fact that we have such a good friendship and working relationship as Pastors and that our people know each other gives us a great head start toward considering this challenging new combined mission.

Kindest Personal Regards,



Robert M. Armstrong
Pastor

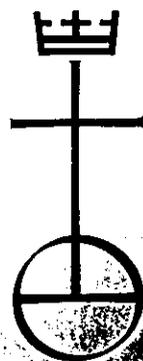
cc: C. Rowell, President
H. Jacob, Financial Secretary
W. Voelker, Treasurer
Council

THE
CONSTITUTION
AND
BYLAWS

UNITED
CHURCH
OF
CHRIST

INCLUDING ACTIONS OF THE
GENERAL SYNOD CREATING OR
RECOGNIZING OTHER STRUCTURES
RELATED TO THE UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

1992
EDITION



12 Local Churches of the United Church of Christ are represented in the General Synod by the delegates from the Conferences to which they belong.

13 An Association or a Conference of the United Church of Christ may, under such provisions as it deems wise, admit, or continue to fellowship with, any Congregational Christian Local Church which is not part of the United Church of Christ. The names and statistics of such churches shall be kept separately; their members shall not be counted in determining the number of delegates which the Conference is entitled to send to the General Synod or hold elective office in that body, except that no ordained minister who has full standing in the United Church of Christ shall be ineligible to be a delegate to the General Synod or to hold elective office in that body. No direct or indirect participation by any such Local Church in, or support of the work of the United Church of Christ, or of any of its Instrumentalities, or of any Conference or Association, shall be construed as making it a church of the United Church of Christ.

14 The Local Churches of the United Church of Christ have, in fellowship, a God-given responsibility for that Church, its labors and its extension, even as the United Church of Christ has, in fellowship, a God-given responsibility for the well-being and needs and aspirations of its Local Churches. In mutual Christian concern and in dedication to Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, the one and the many share in common Christian experience and responsibility.

15 The autonomy of the Local Church is inherent and modifiable only by its own action. Nothing in this Constitution and the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ shall destroy or limit the right of each Local Church to continue to operate in the way customary to it; nor shall be construed as giving to the General Synod, or to any Conference or Association now, or at any future time, the power to abridge or impair the autonomy of any Local Church in the management of its own affairs which affairs include, but are not limited to, the right to retain or adopt its own methods of organization, worship and education; to retain or secure its own charter and name; to adopt its own constitution and bylaws; to formulate its own covenants and confessions of faith; to admit members in its own way and to provide for their discipline or dismissal; to call or dismiss its pastor or pastors by such procedure as it shall determine; to acquire, own, manage and dispose of property and funds; to control its own benevolences; and to withdraw by its own decision from the United Church of Christ at any time without forfeiture of ownership or control of any real or personal property owned by it.

16 Actions by, or decisions or advice emanating from, the General Synod, a Conference or an Association, should be held in the highest regard by every Local Church.

Bethel United Church of Christ

3033 EAST BALTIMORE STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21224

Pastor, The Rev. Glen E. Rodgers
6865 Parsons Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21207

14 November 1993

Phones:
Office: 675-0905
Residence: 484-0431

Dear Bob,

Enclosed please find requested letter pertaining to your Annual Meeting and the agenda item of the Merger.

We are very thankful that you were able to be released from Church Home Hospital and that you are 'on the run' again-though hopefully a fast walk. It was good to be able to talk with you both in the hospital and since your return home. Also, pleased to hear that your good wife got a good report.

As I stated over the phone the meeting at Conference with Tom Hamilton and John Deckenback was another affirmation of past feelings and experiences. They definitely think that a Merger is the wrong way to go, that it won't work as usually mergers don't work, thought we should proceed very cautiously and not expect any real coming together for 18 mos at the very least. They weren't hostile but certainly not encouraging. I think they thought I was coming over there to say I was retiring because they kept coming back to that. They said if several ways what you are going to see is "the big church swallowing up the little church."

I showed them your letter to Bethel but didn't let them keep it. Showed them some of our Annual Report, didn't let them ^{keep} it. They wanted to be kept informed as to our progress but said over and over literally and in other ways, "Don't expect this to happen soon." When I left after about 1½ hrs wondered if they were going to help me down the stairs and out to my car, or should I have Lucy called and she could come and get me!! I managed to drive home by myself!!

As you know we have all agreed that we will be able to meet 9 December at 7 P.M. at Hausner's for a working dinner. My people were very much enthused about the idea of coming together and discussing the Merger. The Council Meeting of your people for 7 Dec is the Night of our Annual Christmas Party. There would be no reason why you couldn't come as planned and walk through the church buildings as requested. Perhaps another evening would be more suitable and will await your response. The Treasurer, Cheryl L. Jordan, and I would be pleased to escort you folks and answer any questions. At least Conference agreed that it was our building to do what we desire with in any Merger. That much was accomplished.

Again, Bethel people and Lucy and I pray that both of you will continue in good health and spirits. May the Lord Bless all of us as we go through this experience together. Have a Wonderful Thanksgiving Season.

In Christ,

Glen

Letter signed by Committee is being forwarded by Clarence Pitz - He wasn't in Church yesterday. You should have it by Sat at latest

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14 November 1993

Phones:
Office: 675-0905
Residence: 484-0431

The Reverend Robert M. Armstrong
United Evangelical Church
945 South East Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Dear Pastor and Members of United Evangelical Church:

Greetings from the Pastor and Members of Bethel United Church of Christ.

After several conversations by our Pastor, The Reverend Glen E. Rodgers, and The Reverend Robert M. Armstrong it was decided that both Pastors would seek the counsel and advice of their respective Consistory and Council to request that a formal act of "exploration" be entered into leading to the possibility of a Merger between United Evangelical and Bethel's Congregations and Ministers.

United and Bethel have appointed members to a Joint Committee to "explore" the possibility of a Merger and will have a dinner meeting 9 December for this purpose. In the meantime United's Council will visit Bethel and the appointed Committee from Bethel will attend a Worship Service at United.

It is the understanding of Bethel that the subject of a Merger will be on the agenda for the Annual Meeting of United on 28 November. It is the desire of the Consistory and the Committee, following a unanimous vote of the Bethel Church Annual Meeting empowering the Consistory so to act, that United will prayerfully consider a Merger between the two Congregations and Ministers.

We at Bethel are continuing to seek the Lord's guidance. It is our feeling that a Merger between the two Congregations and Ministers would create a new and refreshing impact in East Baltimore. We pray that this Merger will be a working reality.

Respectfully,

Glen E. Rodgers
GLEN E. RODGERS
Pastor and Clerk

Samuel F. Poole
SAMUEL F. POOLE
President

Cheryl L. Jordan
CHERYL L. JORDAN
Treasurer

Clarence Pitz
CLARENCE PITZ
Committee Member

The Rev. Robert M. Armstrong
UNITED EVANGELICAL CHURCH
945 S. East Avenue,
Baltimore, MD 21224
(410) 276-0621

November 14, 1993

Council,
United Evangelical Church
3200 Dillon Street,
Baltimore, MD 21224

Dear Friends:

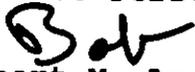
The next meeting of our Council will take place on Tuesday, December 7th, at at 7:30PM at the Bethel United Church of Christ, 3033 East Baltimore Street (484-0431). Pastor Rogers will meet us there and with a member of their Consistory will show us through their building prior to our Council meeting. Hopefully, by then our Annual Meeting will have approved our merger talks with Bethel church.

On Thursday, December 9th at 7:00PM, our Committee on the merger will meet Bethel's merger Committee and Pastor Rogers at Hausner's Restaurant for a dutch treat dinner meeting to discuss next steps in the merger. Our Committee consists of Clarence Rowell, Harvey Jacob, Bill Voelker and myself.

Pastor Rogers has met with Tom Hamilton, Associate Conference Minister, and John Deckenbach, Conference Minister, to bring them up to date on our conversations regarding this merger.

Because of the importance of these meetings for the future of our church, please make every effort to attend.

Kindest Personal Regards,


Robert M. Armstrong
Pastor

cc: M. Slechta

The Rev. Robert M. Armstrong
UNITED EVANGELICAL CHURCH
945 S. East Avenue,
Baltimore, MD 21224
(410) 276-0621

November 29, 1993

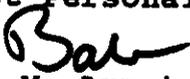
The Rev. Glen Rogers
6865 Parsons Avenue,
Baltimore, MD, 21207

Dear Pastor and Members of Bethel United Church of Christ

I am delighted to report that at the Annual Meeting of the United Evangelical Church on November 28, 1993, the congregation voted unanimously to approve the merger talks between Bethel and United. Our Committee looks forward to our beginning talks on December 9th for this purpose.

We are excited by the possibility of building a new mission combining the strengths of these two great churches and of working with you in a new outreach ministry in East Baltimore.

Kindest Personal Regards,


Robert M. Armstrong
Pastor

cc: Council, M. Slechta and C. Young

COUNCIL

Bethel United Church of Christ

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6865 Parsons Avenue
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1 December 1993

Phones:
Office: 675-0905
Residence: 484-0431

The Reverend Robert M. Armstrong
United Evangelical Church
945 S. East Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Dear Bob:

Greetings.

This is to confirm our appointment for Monday at 10 on 6 December. I look forward to once again sitting down with you as we continue to discuss the possible merger with United. Last Sunday during the Worship Service our Committee talked with the Congregation about attending, working and being a part of the larger fellowship.

Cheryl L. Jordan and I will greet you and your Council at 7:30 P.M. Tuesday 7 December and show you around the church buildings starting with the downstairs Vestry where the Annual Guild Christmas Party will be held that evening. The Parish House will be set up for your Council Meeting.

All of our Committee: Cheryl L. Jordan, Samuel F. Poole, Clarence Pitz and myself will meet you and your Committee at Haussner's at 7 P.M. on 9 December for our first meeting. We are looking forward to meeting with your committee and talking over some of the issues and hopefully arrive at some continuing suggestions as we move to merger-at the wish of both congregations.

Hopefully you received the packets for each of your Committee which I left there at the office yesterday.

With Warmest Advent Greetings,

Glen

GLEN E. RODGERS
Pastor

TO: Clarence Rowell, Harvey Jacob, Bill Voelker, Bill Single

FROM: Pastor

DATE: 11-29-93

SUBJECT: Merger with Bethel Church

Attached you will find a copy of my letter to Bethel regarding the approval of merger talks by our Annual Meeting. For your information I have also prepared an outline of elements of a merger plan for our thinking. Some of this material needs to be filled in to date but we need to review the Plan in our next Council meeting so as to maximize input from all Council members.

The key to making this merger go will be the people relationships and our enthusiasm as we deal with the details. Members of Bethel will have many feelings about the merger which they will have to work through. When you have worked as hard as they have to keep a church going, it is difficult to let it go. Think of what this would mean to each of us if we were to give up United - change comes only out of pain. Another way of putting this is "wherever good is being done, a short distance away you will find his Satanic majesty." Therefore, we must approach this task in an attitude and spirit of prayer.

Keep the Faith!

MERGER OF BETHEL U.C.C. AND UNITED EVANGELICAL CHURCH
MEETING DECEMBER 9, 1993 AT HAUSNER'S RESTAURANT AT 7:00 PM

PRESENT: UNITED EVANGELICAL: HARVEY JACOB, FINANCIAL
SECRETARY, WILLIAM VOELKER, TREASURER, AND PASTOR
ROBERT ARMSTRONG

BETHEL UNITED CHURCH: CHERYL L. JORDAN, Ph.D.,
TREASURER, CLARENCE L. PITZ, VICE PRESIDENT, SAMUEL
F. POOLE, PRESIDENT, AND PASTOR GLENN ROGERS

ABSENT: UNITED EVANGELICAL: CLARENCE ROWELL, PRESIDENT

Pastor Armstrong opened the meeting by asking Pastor Rogers to say Grace. Following this, he asked the representatives from Bethel to share what brought them to the decision to seek this merger relationship. Mr. Jacob complemented the people of Bethel and made the point that the church looked like it was going forward reasonably well financially. The members of Bethel said they had come to the conclusion that while they were surviving economically, it was time to re-evaluate their mission in the light of the increased difficulty in getting people to assume leadership for the church and to provide for their future. Mr. Voelker said that the United people were very interested in the merger but that it was not for financial reasons. Many United people know people from Bethel through the Sour Beef Dinners and trips and have enjoyed them. He said that any money from the sale of the building at Bethel should be held in escrow for use in covering the cost of operating the Bethel's building prior to it's sale. After that a decision could be made regarding the use of this money by the new entity. There was concensus by both Committees on this point.

Mr. Jacob said that United people appreciated the pain of people of Bethel in letting go of a building and a church for which they had fought and struggled to keep open all these years. The Committee agreed that the major problem in this merger may come in bringing the people of these two churches together and that the technical details probably could be worked out if the people on both sides were happy with the merger proposal.

The Committee discussed the relationship of the churches to the Central Atlantic Conference. We agreed that we would be open to input from the Conference officers, but that the decision regarding the merger should be primarily by the two churches involved. At this time both Annual Meetings had approved the merger talks. Pastor Rogers reported his conversations with Dr. Tom Hamilton, Associate Conference Minister, Central Atlantic Conference (CAC) and Dr. John Deckenbach, Conference Minister. He said these men looked negatively upon this merger proposal. The Committee agreed that once the merger process was underway, we needed to

support it because people could become ambivalent. We need to get on the side of supporting the merger and push. Because of the pain involved in this change, members of the churches will need to talk about the merger again and again.

We agreed that the first priority in this process should be to introduce people to one another. Fifteen members of Bethel will attend the Tinsel Day Worship and Program at United Evangelical Church on Sunday December 12, 1993. Members of Bethel will come for Dinner and the program following. They will wear purple ribbons to identify themselves. If possible, members of Bethel will be spread out among the people from United.

Three members of Bethel will be invited to join Council of United so as to keep them involved in the merger process and so that they can learn about the work of the Council of United. In addition, plans will be made for a February worship service in which Pastor Armstrong and Pastor Rogers will conduct worship together; and lay members of Bethel will help usher and receive the offering. Pastor Armstrong and members of United will participate in the noon Lenten Services at Bethel and Pastor Rogers and members of Bethel will participate in the Wednesday evening Lenten services at United.

Members of Bethel will be invited to attend the Worship Service and Congregational Meeting of United on January 30, 1994 immediately following the 10:00AM worship service so they can observe the congregational meeting in action and be introduced again.

A plan will be made to set up a committee to create a joint common mission statement.

In our discussion, it was clear that the Committee from Bethel wanted Pastor Rogers to retain status as a Pastor and that was Pastor Roger's wish too. The Committee agreed that this could probably be done. Pastor Armstrong said he believed that he and Pastor Rogers could work well together. Pastor Rogers gave Pastor Armstrong a document entitled Summary "Getting Together: Models and Processes for Local Church Cooperation": Draft 12/92 UCC Resources. This document will be studied by both Committees (see attached).

The meeting ended with positive feelings and hopes for the future of this merger. Pastor Armstrong was asked to prepare for Bethel Committee members sets of Church Brochures from United along with pictorial Directories

FOR THE COMMITTEE
Respectfully Submitted,

Robert M. Armstrong, Pastor

A significant proportion of the local churches of most mainline denominations average less than 50 members in worship each Sunday. Many of these are located in rural areas or small communities where growth is not likely. Most of these churches, as well as others, are engaged in a constant struggle to find and keep trained pastoral leadership and to maintain the basic functions and activities of a local church. Under this pressure, attempts often are made to find ways for two or more churches in this situation to enter into a cooperative arrangement to better their needs.

CONSOLIDATED OR MERGED

(These) churches are the result of an organic union or merger of two local churches. The original congregations are dissolved and a charter membership roll for the newly named local church is established. The consolidated church usually (continues) its identity with the UCC

REASONS FOR GETTING TOGETHER

There are a variety of reasons which lead local churches to consider a cooperative ministry with one another. Ideally, local churches approach one another about cooperation out of a desire to strengthen the mission and ministry of the Church in the community. It must be recognized, however, that most often the motivation behind these approaches to one another occurs when there is a perceived problem. Sometimes the strength of one or both churches is perceived to be on the wane. At other times, although stable in size, the churches are not able to keep up with increasing costs, particularly the cost of a full time, seminary trained pastor.

Those who would give leadership to efforts of local cooperation need to recognize that initially many church members will perceive the idea of new cooperative arrangements as less than desirable, even as moving backwards and giving up something valued -such as their autonomy, heritage and tradition, building, or sense of close family relationships which exist among the members.

Whatever the initial motivation, experience has shown that to be successful it is necessary for the two churches to view cooperative arrangement as strengthening each's mission and ministry capability. Even if the initial motivation is out of a sense of survival, unless both churches are helped to envision the cooperative effort as a faithful response to God's call to service and witness in that community, the ability to meet the challenges of cooperation will not be present.

The conviction that the community deserves a better witness and better stewardship from the churches is a solid foundation upon which to engage in church cooperation discussions. Similarly, theological understanding and commitment to the unity of the Church can be an important source of energy and determination sustaining those who look and listen for God's call in the midst of explorations

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Whatever the initial motivation, experience has shown that to be successful it is necessary for the two churches to view cooperative arrangement as strengthening each's mission and ministry capability. Even if the initial motivation is out of a sense of survival, unless both churches are helped to envision the cooperative effort as a faithful response to God's call to service and witness in that community, the ability to meet the challenges of cooperation will not be present.

The conviction that the community deserves a better witness and better stewardship from the churches is a solid foundation upon which to engage in church cooperation discussions. Similarly, theological understanding and commitment to the unity of the Church can be an important source of energy and determination sustaining those who look and listen for God's call in the midst of explorations

Several Principles to follow as informal moves to formal discussion or possibilities:

1. Anticipate and be clear about decision-making process from the beginning. A Joint Committee is formed to guide the effort. Composed of representatives from the two local churches and from the Conference.
2. It needs to be decided if the Joint Committee will report and make its proposals directly to the two congregations, or whether it will report and make its proposals to the governing boards of the two congregations which, in turn, will report to the congregations.

THE ROLE OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE:

1. Develop a proposal for cooperation to be considered by the two local churches.
2. Keep both churches thoroughly informed as discussions proceed. It is very important for regular communication to happen in both churches to receive identical reports. It will do great damage to the process if rumors are allowed to circulate or if the two churches have different perceptions of what is happening. One way is to share the minutes of the meetings of the committee with both churches. Another way would be to hold information meetings in which members of both churches are invited to go together to hear reports from the joint committee and to raise questions and share ideas with it.
3. Create ways for members of the congregations and their organizations to get to know one another besides through the joint committee and its reports. The process will be enhanced if fellowship and educational events for members of both churches are planned which allow them to get to know one another and provide for them to engage in activities in one another's facilities. Joint meetings of similar organizations (women's, men's, youth fellowships, etc) could be planned. Members should be encouraged to visit one another's worship services.
4. Careful records of all meetings should be kept which highlight agreements which have been reached. The joint committee should have as its goal a written proposal which spells out in great detail the nature of the proposed cooperation between the two churches. The document should be written so that in the future those who have not been involved in the process can understand clearly the agreements reached.
5. The final agreement could be put in terms of a covenant between two churches. The language of covenant means not only the terms of the agreement between the two churches but acknowledges that the two churches have developed and entered into the agreement through an intentional process of trying to discern the will of God in their relationship. The covenant will acknowledge that

that God is a partner in the relationship that now exists. If this perspective is maintained throughout the exploration and ways found for the joint committee and the two congregations to seek the will of God, the entire experience will be enriched for all involved.

6. If at the conclusion of the process a formal proposal is placed before the two congregations for a vote, it is recommended that a joint information meeting first be held in which members of both congregations hear a presentation of the proposal by the joint committee and engage in question and answer time with the committee. Following this, at a later time, each congregation should have its own meeting or meetings to consider the proposal and vote on it. Votes should not be tabulated until both churches have voted, and then the tabulation of both should be done at the same time and simultaneously in both churches.
7. After decisions are made, it is important to celebrate the process and the decision. If a cooperative relationship is to be entered, a special liturgical service needs to be created for both churches involved to celebrate the anticipated future and offer it to God. If the result of the exploration is not to enter into cooperative arrangement, ways should be found for the churches to wish one another well as they continue in their separate ministries.

PASTORAL IDENTITY

1. A characteristic of relationship is the selection and sharing of pastoral leadership in some form. (Both Pastors are Ministers in Full Standing in UCC, Conference, Association)
2. Where the Pastors live....How expenses are handled(whether in church parsonage or home ownership.). Important to have in writing -pastor lives in church owned, or privately owned housing and housing expenses are paid.
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4. Pastoral Job Description and Priorities
To know what is expected, description of job needs to be written,
To know pastors are available, how to be reached
- 5: Co-Pastors (UCC Pastors-4,062, 111 Co-Pastors in 57 churches)
(Total UCC Churches 6,305)

FACILITIES

1. It is often very difficult for the members of one church, particularly if it is perceived to be smaller or weaker than the other church, to move to the facilities of the other church without feeling it is losing something important in the new cooperative relationship. If one of the existing facilities is to be used, careful planning needs to be done for installation into that facility of important and symbolic components and furnishings from the other church's facilities.

A FINAL WORD

The success of any commitment to merger is dependent on:

- (1) Members understanding of and commitment to what God is calling them to be and to do at the time. The theological clarity the members have about the nature and purpose of the church must be achieved before structural and organizational forms are meaningful
- (2) The culture has taught us that we should measure a church's success primarily by membership, growth, increased budgets, many programs, property acquired, and full time, fully trained pastors. While all of these have importance, the church has been called not to certain forms of institutional life but to be faithful in its witness and mission in whatever situation it finds itself.
- (3) Those who would provide leadership for two local churches to explore a cooperative arrangement will:
 - (A) First and Foremost...lead in an exploration of how to be faithful to God's call. Emboldened with conviction about God's mission in their communities, they will seek for the organizational forms to most effectively and joyously join that mission

(OFFICE FOR CHURCH LIFE AND LEADERSHIP, UCC, DECEMBER 1992
SUMMARY, THE REV. GLEN E. RODGERS FOR COMMITTEE ON MERGER DEC 1993)

MERGER OF BETHEL U.C.C. AND UNITED EVANGELICAL CHURCH
MEETING DECEMBER 9, 1993 AT HAUSNER'S RESTAURANT AT 7:00 PM

PRESENT: UNITED EVANGELICAL: HARVEY JACOB, FINANCIAL
SECRETARY, WILLIAM VOELKER, TREASURER, AND PASTOR
ROBERT ARMSTRONG

BETHEL UNITED CHURCH: CHERYL L. JORDAN, Ph.D.,
TREASURER, CLARENCE L. PITZ, VICE PRESIDENT, SAMUEL
F. POOLE, PRESIDENT, AND PASTOR GLENN ROGERS

ABSENT: UNITED EVANGELICAL: CLARENCE ROWELL, PRESIDENT

Pastor Armstrong opened the meeting by asking Pastor Rogers to say Grace. Following this, he asked the representatives from Bethel to share what brought them to the decision to seek this merger relationship. Mr. Jacob complemented the people of Bethel and made the point that the church looked like it was going forward reasonably well financially. The members of Bethel said they had come to the conclusion that while they were surviving economically, it was time to re-evaluate their mission in the light of the increased difficulty in getting people to assume leadership for the church and to provide for their future. Mr. Voelker said that the United people were very interested in the merger but that it was not for financial reasons. Many United people know people from Bethel through the Sour Beef Dinners and trips and have enjoyed them. He said that any money from the sale of the building at Bethel should be held in escrow for use in covering the cost of operating the Bethel's building prior to it's sale. After that a decision could be made regarding the use of this money by the new entity. There was concensus by both Committees on this point.

Mr. Jacob said that United people appreciated the pain of people of Bethel in letting go of a building and a church for which they had fought and struggled to keep open all these years. The Committee agreed that the major problem in this merger may come in bringing the people of these two churches together and that the technical details probably could be worked out if the people on both sides were happy with the merger proposal.

The Committee discussed the relationship of the churches to the Central Atlantic Conference. We agreed that we would be open to input from the Conference officers, but that the decision regarding the merger should be primarily by the two churches involved. At this time both Annual Meetings had approved the merger talks. Pastor Rogers reported his conversations with Dr. Tom Hamilton, Associate Conference Minister, Central Atlantic Conference (CAC) and Dr. John Deckenbach, Conference Minister. He said these men looked negatively upon this merger proposal. The Committee agreed that once the merger process was underway, we needed to

support it because people could become ambivalent. We need to get on the side of supporting the merger and push. Because of the pain involved in this change, members of the churches will need to talk about the merger again and again.

We agreed that the first priority in this process should be to introduce people to one another. Fifteen members of Bethel will attend the Tinsel Day Worship and Program at United Evangelical Church on Sunday December 12, 1993. Members of Bethel will come for Dinner and the program following. They will wear purple ribbons to identify themselves. If possible, members of Bethel will be spread out among the people from United.

Three members of Bethel will be invited to join Council of United so as to keep them involved in the merger process and so that they can learn about the work of the Council of United. In addition, plans will be made for a February worship service in which Pastor Armstrong and Pastor Rogers will conduct worship together; and lay members of Bethel will help usher and receive the offering. Pastor Armstrong and members of United will participate in the noon Lenten Services at Bethel and Pastor Rogers and members of Bethel will participate in the Wednesday evening Lenten services at United.

Members of Bethel will be invited to attend the Worship Service and Congregational Meeting of United on January 30, 1994 immediately following the 10:00AM worship service so they can observe the congregational meeting in action and be introduced again.

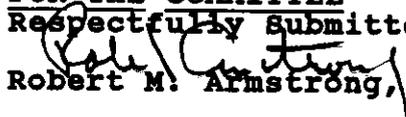
A plan will be made to set up a committee to create a joint common mission statement.

In our discussion, it was clear that the Committee from Bethel wanted Pastor Rogers to retain status as a Pastor and that was Pastor Roger's wish too. The Committee agreed that this could probably be done. Pastor Armstrong said he believed that he and Pastor Rogers could work well together. Pastor Rogers gave Pastor Armstrong a document entitled Summary "Getting Together: Models and Processes for Local Church Cooperation": Draft 12/92 UCC Resources. This document will be studied by both Committees (see attached).

The meeting ended with positive feelings and hopes for the future of this merger. Pastor Armstrong was asked to prepare for Bethel Committee members sets of Church Brochures from United along with pictorial Directories

FOR THE COMMITTEE

Respectfully Submitted,


Robert M. Armstrong, Pastor

SUMMARY "GETTING TOGETHER: MODELS AND PROCESSES FOR
LOCAL CHURCH COOPERATION" DRAFT 12/92 UCC RESOURCES

A significant proportion of the local churches of most mainline denominations average less than 50 members in worship each Sunday. Many of these are located in rural areas or small communities where growth is not likely. Most of these churches, as well as others, are engaged in a constant struggle to find and keep trained pastoral leadership and to maintain the basic functions and activities of a local church. Under this pressure, attempts often are made to find ways for two or more churches in this situation to enter into a cooperative arrangement to better their needs.

CONSOLIDATED OR MERGED

(These) churches are the result of an organic union or merger of two local churches. The original congregations are dissolved and a charter membership roll for the newly named local church is established. The consolidated church usually (continues) its identity with the UCC

REASONS FOR GETTING TOGETHER

There are a variety of reasons which lead local churches to consider a cooperative ministry with one another. Ideally, local churches approach one another about cooperation out of a desire to strengthen the mission and ministry of the Church in the community. It must be recognized, however, that most often the motivation behind these approaches to one another occurs when there is a perceived problem. Sometimes the strength of one or both churches is perceived to be on the wane. At other times, although stable in size, the churches are not able to keep up with increasing costs, particularly the cost of a full time, seminary trained pastor.

Those who would give leadership to efforts of local cooperation need to recognize that initially many church members will perceive the idea of new cooperative arrangements as less than desirable, even as moving backwards and giving up something valued - such as their autonomy, heritage and tradition, building, or sense of close family relationships which exist among the members.

Whatever the initial motivation, experience has shown that to be successful it is necessary for the two churches to view cooperative arrangement as strengthening each's mission and ministry capability. Even if the initial motivation is out of a sense of survival, unless both churches are helped to envision the cooperative effort as a faithful response to God's call to service and witness in that community, the ability to meet the challenges of cooperation will not be present.

The conviction that the community deserves a better witness and better stewardship from the churches is a solid foundation upon which to engage in church cooperation discussions. Similarly, theological understanding and commitment to the unity of the Church can be an important source of energy and determination sustaining those who look and listen for God's call in the midst of explorations

Following are some of the reasons local churches typically have approached one another to explore new cooperative arrangements:

1. One or both churches foresee the time when they will not be able to continue to secure full-time, ordained pastoral leadership. This usually occurs when membership has not grown or has declined resulting in budgets not able to keep up with rising costs.
2. The presence of two churches in the same community is perceived as no longer needed or desirable. Often multiple churches were organized in a single community to meet the needs of specific members of that community, such as ethnic churches formed by settlers from a specific part of the world with a common church tradition and/or who spoke a common language. With the passage of time the original reasons for the separate churches have diminished or disappeared altogether. Now, the two churches are seen as duplicating their efforts by competing for the same persons and carrying out similar programs.
3. Occasionally the initial motivation may result from an issue involving a church's facilities. A church building may be destroyed by a fire or wind storm, or may be in need of major repairs beyond the financial capacity of the congregation. A cooperative venture with another local church seems to be a reasonable option to explore

Unless churches considering cooperation can see and affirm within the exploration the possibility of enhancing their identity and ability as the "Body of Christ" in their community, the effort will likely not achieve its potential. Thus, all involved in giving leadership to the exploration will need to find ways for members of both churches to acknowledge and own this goal.

ADVANTAGES OF GETTING TOGETHER

- (1) It embodies theological commitments to the unity and mission of the church. It communicates to the community that mission is more important than differences and it transcends denominationalism
- (2) Churches in cooperative arrangements develop skills in managing differences and in decision-making. The community is advantaged as these skills of members are utilized in other settings in the community

EXPLORING COOPERATION: IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING ISSUES

- (1) However the issue gets raised, it will be helpful to involve all of those who have an interest in the possible cooperative relationship as soon as possible. Thus, if two local churches in a community begin the conversation, it is important for each of them to inform their appropriate judicatory offices and invite their participation into the process (Central Atlantic Conference)
- (2) Focus on two basic issues--(A) How to best meet the needs of the two congregations and how to best fulfill the needs of the community for ministry and mission

Several Principles to follow as informal moves to formal discussion or possibilities:

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(OFFICE FOR CHURCH LIFE AND LEADERSHIP, UCC, DECEMBER 1992
SUMMARY, THE REV. GLEN E. RODGERS FOR COMMITTEE ON MERGER DEC 1993)

TO: GLEN ROGERS

FROM: BOB ARMSTRONG

DATE: 12-24-93

SUBJECT: MEETING TO DISCUSS ROLE RELATIONSHIPS IN MINISTRY RE MERGER

GLEN AND I MET TODAY, DECEMBER 21, 1993, TO TALK ABOUT THE NEXT STEPS. GLEN SAID THAT HIS PEOPLE FELT THEY OUGHT NOT TO BE PRESENT AT OUR CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SO THAT WE COULD FEEL FREE TO TALK ABOUT THE MERGER AND OTHER ISSUES UNDER DISCUSSION. HE SAID THAT HIS PEOPLE FELT POSITIVE ABOUT THE MEETING OF THE MERGER COMMITTEES OF THE TWO CHURCHES AT HAUSNERS ON DECEMBER 7TH AND THE MEETING OF OUR COUNCIL AT BETHEL ON DECEMBER 5TH AND THAT EVERYONE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH THE TINSEL DAY JOINT EXPERIENCE AT UNITED ON DECEMBER 12th GLEN MENTIONED THAT SOME OF HIS PEOPLE HAD BEEN THINKING THAT MEMBERS OF THEIR CONSISTORY MIGHT MEET WITH OUR COUNCIL WITHOUT THE PASTORS IN ORDER TO DISCUSS VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE MERGER. WE BOTH INDICATED TO EACH OTHER THAT THIS MIGHT NOT BE WISE SINCE WE BOTH PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THIS MERGER.

I MADE THE SUGGESTION THAT WE MIGHT SPEND TIME TODAY DISCUSSING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OTHER IN THE MERGER

SINCE WE BOTH HAVE POSITIONS OF GREAT INFLUENCE IN OUR CHURCHES AND THAT THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF THE MERGER WILL REST UPON OUR BEING ABLE TO WORK SMOOTHLY TOGETHER. I SHARED FOUR ASPECTS OF THIS WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH GLEN WHICH I FELT WERE KEY.

THE FIRST OF THESE WAS THAT OF OUR HAPPINESS AS INDIVIDUAL PASTORS WITH OUR NEW ROLES IN THE MERGER. IF WE ARE HAPPY, THE MERGER WILL GO WELL. IF NOT, WE COULD BOTH HAVE A SERIOUS PROBLEM AND SO WOULD THE CHURCHES.

THE SECOND CONSIDERATION IS THAT OF OUR AGREEMENT ON THE MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE MERGED CHURCHES.

THE THIRD ISSUE TO LOOK AT WAS STYLE. WILL HE FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THE STYLE OF WORSHIP WHICH WE HAVE AT UNITED SINCE THIS WILL BE THE BASE FOR OUR WORSHIP EXPERIENCE TOGETHER? I REVIEWED SOME OF THE ASPECTS OF THE STYLE: I.E. THE USE OF ASPECTS OF THE CATHOLIC TRADITION AS THE SOLEMN DECLARATION, THE OPENING SENTENCES (I WAS GLAD WHEN THEY SAID UNTO ME, LET US GO INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD), THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON AS A SUMMARY STATEMENT OF THE BASICS OF OUR FAITH, AND THE USE IN WORSHIP OF REPETITION AS A WAY OF TEACHING AND OF ANCHORING THE FAITH OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH IN TIMES OF CRISIS. IN GENERAL, WOULD GLEN BE HAPPY WITH THIS FORMAL WORSHIP STYLE? I SUGGESTED THAT OUR JOINT LEADERSHIP IN WORSHIP COULD GIVE BOTH CHURCHES A FEEL FOR THIS AREA OF OUR

COMMON MISSION. IN OUR DISCUSSIONS GLEN POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS ACCUSTOMED TO THE FORMALITY OF WORSHIP WHICH I DESCRIBED IN TYING TOGETHER THE CATHOLIC AND REFORMED TRADITIONS SINCE HE WAS VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED TRADITIONS IN HIS EARLY DAYS OF FOLLOWING THE E.&R. WORSHIP BOOK. HE SAW NO PROBLEM IN OUR WORK STYLES IN WORSHIP AND FELT COMFORTABLE WITH MY POSITIONS IN THE EXAMPLES OF AREAS CONCERNS WHICH I SHARED.

WE AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE A COMMON MISSION STATEMENT WHICH WE WOULD DEVELOP.

WE DISCUSSED THE ISSUE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. WE NEED TO EACH BE RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL FOR OUR AREAS OF WORK. I INDICATED TO GLEN THAT I NEEDED TO FEEL COMFORTABLE IN USING MY SKILLS IN IMPACTING THE MINISTRY SUCH AS USING MY SKILLS IN RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH, ESPECIALLY YOUNG ADULTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 20 AND 40 YEARS. GLEN POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS VERY INTERESTED IN FOLLOW UP -IN THE NATURE OF PASTORAL SERVICES TO THESE NEW PEOPLE SO THAT WE CAN RETAIN THEM AS MEMBERS AND MEET THEIR NEEDS AS WELL AS IN PROVIDING SKILLED PASTORAL SERVICES TO OUR OLDER SICK AND DISABLED PERSONS. I AGREED THAT GLEN HAS A VERY SPECIAL SKILL IN THAT AREA OF MINISTRY AND THAT WE COULD COMPLEMENT EACH OTHERS SKILLS -I WITH THE BROADER CONCERNS OF THE MINISTRY INCLUDING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES AND GLEN WITH HIS SKILL AND CONCERN IN WORK WITH THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHURCH

MEMBERS. WE AGREED THAT WE NEED TO SPELL OUT THESE AREAS MORE SPECIFICALLY AS WE MOVE ALONG (PERHAPS IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS WHICH FIX OUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE COUNCIL) BUT THAT IT SEEMED TO US THAT WE HAVE THE BASIS FOR A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP AND NEED NOT BE TOO CONCERNED ABOUT HOW THESE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WILL PAN OUT.

WE AGREED THAT WE WOULD THINK ON THESE THINGS AND THAT AFTER I RETURN FROM MY CONFERENCE ON JANUARY 9TH AND GLEN FROM HIS TRIP ON JANUARY 8TH, WE WOULD PLAN THE NEXT SPECIFIC STEPS IN THE MERGER PROCESS.