

Q&A on Relationship of St. Luke's and King Avenue
January 2018

"We are a community of servants called by God's reconciling grace to open doors of sanctuary, to create new avenues of ministry, to equip Christians for discipleship, to lead reconciling ministries.

Q: What is being proposed?

A: St. Luke's UMC has a worship attendance of approximately 45 and can no longer afford the salary package for a fulltime pastor. Near the end of 2016 it approached the district superintendent, Linda Middelberg, with the possibility of initiating merger conversations with King Avenue.

Q: Would this be a merger?

A: No. King Avenue is more than ten times the size of St. Luke's with significantly more ministries and staff. The more appropriate language to use would be "acquisition."

Q: How would an acquisition work?

A: The model to be followed is the relationship between New Life and North Broadway. As did New Life, St. Luke's would cease all operations for a period of time, probably 9-12 months. This is called "going dark." A pastor would be appointed to King Avenue with the mission of developing a vision and new ministries out of the St. Luke's property. After the "dark" period St. Luke's would re-open as an expanded ministry of King Avenue. Church conferences at both St. Luke's (a vote to close and give the property to the district) and King Avenue (a vote to begin and support a new ministry start at St. Luke's) would be necessary.

Q: When would the church conferences occur?

A: It is hoped that King Avenue's would happen in late March and St. Luke's after that.

Q: Is this action a done deal?

A: No, it requires the church conference approval of both churches.

Q: What does "going dark" mean?

A: That all church activities such as worship and Bible studies would cease. Community activities such as AA will need to be determined. We shall need to address what happens with the MRDD ministry. This is the one about which they will be most concerned.

Q: Why the need to "go dark"?

A: The conference experience indicates that new starts are more likely to succeed if given a fresh start, and this period of closure will allow time for a fresh start. Experience indicates that a total closure insures a better new start.

Q: What would become of the current St. Luke's members?

A: To follow the New Life/North Broadway analogy, the members would be encouraged to affiliate with any congregation they desire. We would hope it would be King Avenue. When the new ministries begin at St. Luke's, they are welcome to affiliate with them.

Q: Who will be responsible for the St. Luke's building?

A: The district would own the church building and the other property west of the church and lease them to King Avenue for \$1/month. The King Avenue trustees would be responsible for the properties and expenses. The property is in excellent condition. The property is in excellent condition, and the district has preliminarily offered to provide a property inspection report for additional review.

Q: Would the property continue to be called St. Luke's?

A: Probably not. King Avenue's name recognition is so good, its name would need to be visible. The final name could be selected by the folks who would make up the team working with the St. Luke's setting and approved by King Avenue.

Q: What are the future ministries which would happen out of St. Luke's?

A: Ultimately this will be the job of the person appointed by the cabinet. It is his/her job to develop the vision and mission for the ministries and gather a core team of people who have a passion for that vision. It is fun to dream what the ministries would be. It could involve youth, children, worship, community mission, education. Since the ministry will be part of King Avenue, it will be compatible with our vision, mission, and brand.

Q: What qualifications will the new pastor have?

A: He/she will be a graduate of the Conference Greenhouse Program for new start pastors. This pastor must follow guidelines and will be monitored by Brad Aycok, the Conference Director of New Church Starts. The pastor will be required to meet benchmarks for contacts in the Grandview community. At the same time, this pastor will be on the King Avenue staff and accountable to our SPRC. Since the St. Luke's site will be dark, the pastor will be visible at King Avenue and know our congregation. This is will be critical in replicating the King Avenue spirit in the new ministry. The current King Avenue pastoral staff would offer emotional, spiritual, and pastoral support. King Avenue would also provide administrative support.

Q: What is the projected start date?

A: It is hoped to be July 1, 2018.

Q: How will the King Avenue congregation learn more and ask questions?

A: In February and March there will be numerous sessions to do this.

Q: Would this acquisition of property relieve the space crunch at King Avenue?

A: The space is to be used for new ministries and outreach which is not currently happening here or elsewhere. If we are only using the property for current activities, we would not be eligible for any new start funding. Further, we would not be fulfilling our Vision Statement. However, some current King Avenue activities could be transferred to St. Luke's.

Q: Will this be like the starting of Stone Village Church?

A: Yes and no. Yes, in that it involves a risk in spreading God's message of inclusive love. Yes, in its being an expenditure of financial resources. No, in that there is no intention for it to become independent. It would always be a ministry of King Avenue. We would become a one church with two sites. Practically, there would

be a unified budget and program. For example, a King Avenue program may be offered at either site. Statistics such as worship attendance and baptisms would be recorded under King Avenue.

Q: Would King Avenue ever own the properties?

A: Once the new ministry is determined viable, the conference would turn the property over to King Avenue. The probable timeline for this is 2-4 years.

Q: What happens if the new ministry does not work out?

A: The conference would keep the property, and King Avenue would discontinue its involvement.

Q: What funding resources are available for this ministry?

A: This project, which is seen as a 2-4 year proposition, would be a shared responsibility involving King Avenue, the district/conference, and UMC grants. King Avenue should think in terms of its share being 1/3. For example, dependent on the vision of our ministry, the district may provide \$100,000 to support this growth in ministries to reach new people. This would more than fund the first year, but would not be wise stewardship to use all of it in the first year.

Q: What will be the cost to King Avenue?

A: Much of this would be determined by the revenue streams. The expenses for the first couple of years would be lower. It will depend upon the ministry plan that develops, as of now we would expect to cover a portion of the costs of the salary package for the assigned pastor and ensure the current building is maintained. We could expect to spend up to \$200,000 in 2018 and 2019. The main point is to consider this money spent as investment toward the growth of new ministries that would bring along with it new members, new giving units, and new income (ideally growth), but it will be a laggard to the investment in alignment with our vision. As with all investments, it looks toward the future and believes in the future.

Q: Why would King Avenue consider this kind of expenditure when we are expected to have a deficit budget in 2018?

A: The tendency for churches facing a deficit budget is to reduce expenses. Reducing expenses entails reducing ministry and staff. This reduction results in reduction on income which results in a reduction of ministry and staff. The cycle perpetuates itself in a downward movement. The best for which a church could hope is a posture of maintenance. Maintenance is not a motivation for giving. The risk of a venture such as acquiring St. Luke's generates the vitality to risk in giving. In short, there is a reason to give and risk giving more because we can see how we are living into our vision statement.

Q: From where will King Avenue's funding come?

A: At present our funding comes from our members and funds such as the endowment, Huggins, and parsonage. We shall need to look at a capital campaign in 2019.

Q: What does a capital campaign entail?

A: It would be created to fund ministries and projects which are not and cannot be funded through our current funds. This would be similar to the highly successful one we did in 2005. We would hire a company whose representative would guide us in strategy and implementation. We would identify the items for which funds are needed. This would be an exciting process which would put flesh and bone on our Vision Statement. It could include a variety of initiatives: boiler replacement fund, stained glass repair, audiovisual

and technology improvements, renovation of our rental property, scholarships for MTSSO students living in the rental property, enhancement of Huggins and building funds, funding of St. Luke's site pastor and staff additions at King Avenue, funding of St. Luke's site ministries.

Q: Why would we want to acquire St. Luke's?

A: It is a tremendous opportunity to open doors of sanctuary, create new avenues for ministry, to equip new Christians for discipleship, and lead in reconciling ministries. In living out our Vision Statement we would be the salt and light which Jesus calls us in Matthew 5:13-16. King Avenue has excellent name recognition and its brand is well known. We could expand our brand into a population which is growing rapidly. Yes, this is a risk and commitment. Faith and new life are risks and commitments. These are the things that bring new life to us and keep us alive and growing. The fact is that, if we did not participate in this opportunity, we would need to initiate something else. Otherwise we would stagnate. With stagnation comes complacency and decline. This opportunity is a living of the Christian truth of death and resurrection. From the dying of St. Luke's, King Avenue demonstrates the reality of resurrection. We become a parable of Christ's Kingdom preaching.