

**2025 Merger: Traverse Bay United Methodist Church
and Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City**

PREAMBLE

Today, in 2025, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church and Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City are the two remaining United Methodist churches in Traverse City. We members choose to become one strong and loving church congregation. We will continue the legacy of United Methodist values in this beautiful city on Grand Traverse Bay, serving communities near and far. It is in following the guidance of the Holy Spirit as a faith community that we United Methodists, with dedicated prayer and discernment, continue the tradition of embracing grace, forgiveness, and redemption.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR MERGER

It is the purpose of this merger to allocate God's resources for strategic ministry and missions today and beyond, and to better serve our community. In this move, we open our hearts to a new understanding of God's call for The United Methodist Church in Traverse City.

While Traverse Bay United Methodist Church lacks operating revenue necessary for ongoing ministry as a solo entity, it has significant capital assets provided by generations of faithful members and contributors. Members of Traverse Bay UMC want to continue to see these assets put to use strategically for United Methodist ministry and mission in Traverse City, Haiti, and beyond. Investing in Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City is to invest in United Methodist ministry including pragmatic missions and community programs that are critical to the health and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable people. Therefore, a merger with Central UMC is a strategic path forward in ministry.

NAMING

The merged congregation will be called Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City, and it will worship at the 222 Cass Street church building built in 1911. We note the building and name have a profound history for both churches. In 1911, a merger was planned between Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church (originally named Second Methodist Episcopal, a predecessor of Traverse Bay UMC) and First Methodist Episcopal. Part of the merger included the construction of the Cass Street building and a name change to 'Central.' Though the merger never took place, First Methodist Episcopal continued with the name change and moved into the current location. The bishop at the time proposed to have one strong congregation as opposed to two weakened ones. More than a century later, the ground is still laid for vital, combined ministry in the Grand Traverse area.

COMPATIBLE MINISTRY VISIONS

Traverse Bay and Central United Methodist churches are longtime ministry siblings, sharing the work of United Methodists in Traverse City and around the globe "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world".

Specifically, we note that prior to merger both congregations have had longtime, powerful witness and hands-on service in the Grand Traverse Region. Both have given substantial care and attention to the needs of those in our community who lack adequate housing and who need shelter, food and other basic resources. Both have given attention to creation care and stewardship of land and resources. In addition, each church has invested significantly in relationships, programs and services with siblings in Haiti. Traverse Bay UMC has fostered relationships in Mizak, Haiti, where church members have been instrumental in building and funding the New Life School. Central UMC has a longtime partnership with Soaring Unlimited and was the single largest contributor to a recently opened women's clinic and birthing center in Cap Haitien. It is the intention of the combined congregation to continue these commitments, including, but not limited to, both Haiti-related missions.

Not only is there incredible synergy in our organizations' ministries and missions, we also find that our stated values dovetail.

Note the values of Traverse Bay UMC, as expressed at the time of merger:

Pray, Listen, Go, Repeat

We value prayer as a two way communication with God. We pray and listen for guidance and answers. Then we take that and move out into our community and world, returning to prayer as we go.

Serving Neighbors Near and Far

We value the opportunity we have to serve our community and world. Through missions in Haiti and support for missionaries in Africa we reach beyond the boundaries of Traverse City. Through donations to food pantries, local schools, and other organizations, we reach out to our community on a regular basis.

We're Glad You're Here

We value friendliness; the chance to greet you and build a relationship with you. Through our Sunday coffee time, weekly small groups, and community events, we truly enjoy getting to know you and invite you into our family.

Different, United By Grace

We value unconditional love. As a congregation we are not always of one mind, but respect each other and strive to extend the grace of God to each other. Our differences make us stronger as we know that all points of view and all ideas are valued here.

Below are the values we express as a merged organization. These are the values stated by Central UMC prior to the merger. We adopt them today as the values of the merged

congregation, noting that these adequately align with and encompass the historical values of Traverse Bay UMC.

As a merged congregation, we adopt the following mission, values, and statement of welcome:

Our Mission

"Together in Christ ... Reaching Beyond our Doors"

Core Values and Vision

As a Christ-centered congregation, we strive to:

- Be shaped by the historical Wesleyan emphasis of a vital personal faith, social justice, ecumenism, and a global concern.
- Provide opportunities for passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity.
- Nurture an inter-generational community.
Offer radical hospitality to all people in a friendly downtown church.
- Respect diverse perspectives, while uniting in Christian essentials and resolving to love.
- Standing upon these core values, we step into the future with the hope of becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

Statement of Welcome

In July of 2019, Central UMC voted to become a Reconciling Congregation. A Reconciling Congregation is a United Methodist church that welcomes and affirms all people, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. Reconciling congregations are part of the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), which advocates for full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the United Methodist Church. This commitment will continue.

We adopt the following welcome statement, already in effect at Central UMC.

Welcome to all who seek true community, or who have no church home, who have been here awhile, or have just arrived, who need strength, who want to follow Christ, who have doubts, firm convictions, or who aren't sure what they believe. Welcome to new guests and to old friends. Welcome to people of all colors, cultures, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities, to old and young, to believers and questioners, and welcome to questioning believers.

PROCESS OF MERGER

Traverse Bay UMC approached Central UMC in the summer 2024 as Traverse Bay UMC was considering its options and strategic plan for future ministry and mission in Traverse City. Traverse Bay UMC was short of the necessary operating funds, a condition expected to continue into the foreseeable future. Financial analysis showed the church would not have enough funds to pay a pastor by July 2025. Various options were considered. A straw poll was

taken, with significant support for the idea of a merger with Central UMC. It was understood at the time that such a merger would mean worship at the Traverse Bay building would cease. In addition, the combined congregation would retain the Central UMC name, values, and reconciling position. This would, in many ways but not all, resemble an 'adoption' merger, where Traverse Bay UMC would become part of the ministry of Central UMC.¹

Traverse Bay UMC requested merger talks, with the councils of both churches voting in October 2024 to begin formal talks. A joint Engage to Merge team was tasked with the process of drafting a formal merger plan. Known as the Engage to Merge Team of 12, this team was formed with six members from each of the two congregations.

Should all required parties agree to merge, including the charge conferences of both congregations as well as the District Superintendent, the merger will go into effect July 1, 2025.

STATEMENT OF SHARED ASSETS

At the time of merger, neither church has debt and all ministry shares are current. All assets of Central UMC remain unchanged. Assets of Traverse Bay UMC will transfer to Central UMC, including all financial assets, as well as the Traverse Bay UMC parsonage at 10160 Pickwick Court.

The Ramsdell Street church building, or the proceeds from its sale, will also transfer to the newly merged Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City.

These assets come to the merger unrestricted – with the following exception:

–In the event of an immediate church building property sale (within one year of merger), the net proceeds of a sale will be divided and distributed according to the following formula:

- 25% to Traverse Bay UMC Missions, as follows:
 - 20% to Habitat for Humanity
 - 40% to Living Media International (Traverse Bay Haiti mission)
 - 40% to Missionaries Delbert and Sandy Groves.
- 75% to Central UMC, unrestricted.

The Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church computes ministry shares on a four-year rolling average. For the next four years, this amount will be calculated including numbers from both congregations while they operated separately. The merged Central UMC will budget for any change. Funds transferring from Traverse Bay UMC should be sufficient to cover the Traverse Bay portion of expenses. Any shortfall will be assumed by Central UMC.

Traverse Bay UMC Trustees are given full discretion on disbursement of items of personal property in the Ramsdell Street church building to members for sentimental reasons, to Central

¹ Adoption mergers are currently understood to be among the more successful approaches to merger. The idea is to retain the health and vitality of the larger church, while infusing it with resources (capital, properties and people) that can help it to grow in vitality and mission.

UMC, and to other nonprofit organizations – so long as removal of any given item does not diminish the value of the church property for sale or its next use.

STATEMENT OF MEMBERSHIP

Members of Central UMC and members of Traverse Bay UMC will become members of the merged congregation.

Membership comes with responsibility. Our United Methodist vows include expectations that we faithfully participate in the church's ministries by prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

STATEMENT OF LEADERSHIP

At the time of merger, Central UMC leadership teams and structures will remain in place, with one member of Traverse Bay UMC immediately joining the nominations committee of the combined Central UMC. It will be the goal of the nominations process for January 2026 to invite at least one member who comes from Traverse Bay UMC onto each of the Central leadership committees – including Council, Drive Team (a team of laity and staff, chaired by the lead pastor, tasked with implementation of ministry visions and values through programs and services), Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations, Finance, and Trustees. It will also be the goal of Central UMC Missions to recruit members from Traverse Bay UMC. The six-month delay is not necessary, should someone seek an early nomination to leadership. However, we believe many Traverse Bay members will welcome a chance during this transition to attend worship at the new location and to affirm a commitment to the combined congregation.

STATEMENT OF PERSONNEL

Traverse Bay UMC employees interested in a position at Central UMC may apply for open positions.

STATEMENT OF RADICAL HOSPITALITY & HOLY CURIOSITY

It is the primary responsibility of Central UMC, all its members and leaders going forward, to engage in a faithful process of hospitality, welcome, and full inclusion, so that those members who come originally from Traverse Bay UMC will be received fully as equals and given opportunities for leadership and service. It is, likewise, a primary responsibility of historical members of Traverse Bay UMC to come with a holy curiosity and openness to participate. If we do this well, programs will shift over time to allow for God's Spirit to be at work among us.

SIGNATURES:

Chris Roeder, Chair of Trustees, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

Secretary of Charge Conference, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

Matthew Chapman, Pastor, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

Glen Lundin, Chair of Trustees, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

Secretary of Charge Conference, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

Linda Stephan, Lead Pastor, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

Jodie Flessner, District Superintendent, Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church *Date*

Exhibit A

Traverse Bay United Methodist Church

Assets To be Merged With Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City

1. Real Estate (the Church building and property) located at 1200 Ramsdell Road, Traverse City, Michigan
2. Real Estate (the parsonage) located at 10160 E. Pickwick Court, Traverse City, Michigan
3. All personal property (furniture, fixtures, contents) located at 1200 Ramsdell Road, Traverse City, Michigan and 10160 E. Pickwick Court, Traverse City, Michigan
4. All Financial Assets (cash & investments) on deposit at Huntington Bank

MERGER RESOLUTION: TRAVERSE BAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WHEREAS: Traverse Bay United Methodist Church desires to merge with Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City on the first day of July 2025; and,

WHEREAS: the memberships must, by majority vote of the members present, approve the merger at a special meeting called for that purpose,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the members of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church at a special meeting, duly called on the 27th day of April, 2025, do vote to merge with Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City. The merger will take effect on the first day of July 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The members of each church were duly informed and by this resolution confirm they understand that all assets, liabilities, and members of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church will transfer into Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City, which will receive not only the membership and all assets but be solely responsible for all liabilities existing and contingent of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church. See attached merger document and exhibit A.

Chris Roeder, Chair of Trustees, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

Secretary of Charge Conference, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

Jodie Flessner, District Superintendent, Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church *Date*

Matthew Chapman, Pastor, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

The above action of the membership is concurred in and stands approved. All assets, liabilities, and members of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church shall merge into Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City, which shall receive all members and assets and hereafter be solely liable and responsible for all liabilities (existing and contingent) of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church. It shall be the responsibility of Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City to file all necessary state and/or federal documents required by law (i.e., Articles of Merger, IRS tax forms, etc.) to document and complete the merger of record.

Chris Roeder, Chair of Trustees, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

Secretary of Charge Conference, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

Jodie Flessner, District Superintendent, Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church *Date*

Matthew Chapman, Pastor, Traverse Bay United Methodist Church *Date*

MERGER RESOLUTION: CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF TRAVERSE CITY

WHEREAS: Traverse Bay United Methodist Church desires to merge with Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City on the first day of July 2025; and,

WHEREAS: the memberships must, by majority vote of the members present, approve the merger at a special meeting called for that purpose,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the members of Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City at a special meeting, duly called on the 27th day of April, 2025, do vote to merge with Traverse Bay United Methodist Church. The merger will take effect on the first day of July 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The members of each church were duly informed and by this resolution confirm they understand that all assets, liabilities, and members of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church will transfer into Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City, which will receive not only the membership and all assets but be solely responsible for all liabilities existing and contingent of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church. See attached merger document and exhibit A.

Glen Lundin, Chair of Trustees, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

Secretary of Charge Conference, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

Jodie Flessner, District Superintendent, Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church *Date*

Linda Stephan, Lead Pastor, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

The above action of the membership is concurred in and stands approved. All assets, liabilities, and members of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church shall merge into Central United Methodist Church – Traverse City, which shall receive all members and assets and hereafter be solely liable and responsible for all liabilities (existing and contingent) of Traverse Bay United Methodist Church. It shall be the responsibility of Central United Methodist Church – Traverse City to file all necessary state and/or federal documents required by law (i.e., Articles of Merger, IRS tax forms, etc.) to document and complete the merger of record.

Glen Lundin, Chair of Trustees, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

Secretary of Charge Conference, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*

Jodie Flessner, District Superintendent, Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church *Date*

Linda Stephan, Lead Pastor, Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City *Date*