

The Church on Rush Creek and Fellowship of the Metroplex FAQ

Celebrating the Past . . . Adapting to the Present . . . Visioning the Future

1. How did discussions about a potential merger take place?

In August 2010, after several consultations between Russ Barksdale, the Lead Pastor of The Church on Rush Creek and Scott Oldenburgh, the Senior Pastor of Fellowship of the Metroplex, a conversation occurred about a potential merger between the 2 churches. After approximately 5 months of follow up, Fellowship of the Metroplex declined to move forward, stating that it was just not the best time for this merger to occur. In October 2011, Scott re-contacted Russ to see if the conversation could be revisited at that time. Those conversations led to staff and board follow up meetings to ask 3 questions: Is this possible? Is this feasible? And is this desirable? Both RC and FOM leadership met in a retreat and now believe that this merger is the right decision for both churches.

2. What is the goal of this merger?

The guiding focus of this merger is: Will our churches be able to do more to advance the Kingdom of God together or separately? The goal of this merger is to form 1 unified church with 3 individual expressions/campuses. (In the long term other campuses will most likely be added)

3. Who is The Church on Rush Creek?

Rush Creek is a church with a multi-campus strategy to further the Kingdom and make an increasing impact on the community. They presently have two campuses: the Green Oaks Campus and the Mira Lagos campus in SE Mansfield/SW Grand Prairie. Their mission is to help people far from God become contagious followers of Jesus.

4. Who is Fellowship of the Metroplex?

Fellowship of the Metroplex (formerly Fellowship of Arlington) began as a church plant in 1996 from The Church on Rush Creek. Over the years, FOM has journeyed from Bryant Elementary to Barnett Junior High to a permanent campus on Hwy 287, and now Linda Jobe Middle School. The guiding hope at FOM is to help people develop a genuine worship of God, genuine relationships with one another, and a genuine compassion for our world.

5. What are some similarities between Rush Creek and FOM?

One of the great advantages of the long term relationship between Rush Creek and FOM is that our theological statements, governance, mission, vision, and strategy are very similar. The basic DNA of both churches is extremely similar, yet the personality of each church is unique.

6. What are the greatest benefits of this merger?

The greatest benefit of this merger is the synergy of efforts between both churches. Specifically, this merger is a step further in the mission of The Church on Rush Creek, fulfilling their strategy to have multiple campuses in order to reach further into the local community. For FOM, the stability of leadership and the opportunity for greater ministry impact and involvement are 2 of most exciting features.

7. What will change with this merger?

One of the values of both churches over their histories has been the reality and necessity for change. This merger will bring about necessary change to help both churches fulfill the mission. At Rush Creek, the most significant change will be the presence and attention needed from staff and leadership to help with the future success of the new campus. For FOM, most of the changes will be in our systems and development of leadership/ministry behind the scenes. However, there will be some noticeable public changes:

- There will be a new name: FOM will change names and will now be known as The Church on Rush Creek: Mansfield West.
- On Sundays FOM will feature new signage and worship folders.
- At FOM, there will be the immediate opportunity to plug into a stronger missions emphasis, access to a well-developed counseling ministry, and when appropriate, there will be combined efforts between all of the Rush Creek campuses.
- Perhaps the greatest visible change will be in the worship dynamic at FOM. Barry Parker will help lead the new campus in 2 of its areas of greatest needs: Life Groups and Touch Teams. Barry's heart for people is a crucial part of this transition and will be a great asset to the future success of Mansfield West. This "face change" will be something that will be different, but the commitment to create vibrant worship that attracts people far from God and leads people to celebrate God's presence each and every week will not change.

8. Where will Mansfield West be located?

One of the first goals of Rush Creek is to help Mansfield West find a better situation for future growth and development. Our hope is that early on in the merger transition, Mansfield West will have a home campus. Negotiations are already occurring to lease a property for Mansfield West.

9. Will there be any noticeable program changes or ministry partnership changes?

Fellowship of the Metroplex has a rich history of ministry partnerships throughout the local community. These partnerships will continue as a part of our future. The only main programming change that will be visibly evident is FX Live at the Mansfield West campus. The heart and vision for parents to become the most influential spiritual part of a child's life is very much a part of Rush Creek. In future days, the concept of FX Live will be discussed and decisions on its future will be made known. However, FX Live as part of the Sunday morning programming lineup is not going to continue with the merge.

10. What will happen to the staff of FOM?

Rush Creek has graciously reached out and implemented a strategy to bring each staff member from FOM to the new staff at Mansfield West. Each staff member of FOM will be given a 6 month guarantee as part of this merger. It is the hope and goal to give every staff member ample opportunity to continue in their roles at Mansfield West. Each staff member is aware of the challenges, but also is 100% unanimous in the decision to merge and have given their full efforts to make this merger a great success. It is in no one's interest to lose staff!

11. How will people at FOM become active members at Rush Creek?

Upon completion of the merger, Rush Creek will transfer all members of FOM who have been baptized by immersion after their salvation experience and who indicate their desire to be members of The Church on Rush Creek, into membership at Rush Creek. This will be done by completing a form indicating the desire to transfer membership.

12. How does Rush Creek make decisions and how will FOM be part of future decision making processes?

Both churches operate on a similar congregational policy. The most basic and important issues are brought to the church for a vote: approval of the annual budget, calling of a pastor, acquiring of property and/or debt, constitutional changes, selection of lay leadership. FOM currently operates with 2 boards: a Vision Board and a Finance Board. Rush Creek has a Church Council presently consisting of 4 lead team (staff) members and 5 trustees (lay people). Upon approval of the merger, Rush Creek will make a constitutional change to add another lead team and trustee to the council. This new trustee will be selected by the FOM Boards and will serve for a 4 year term. There are no future guarantees of trustee selection from any campus. Such selections are made by the Church Council according to the leading of the Spirit and in keeping with what is best and healthiest for the church as a whole, regardless of campus affiliation.

For a period of 6 months, the FOM boards are invited to be a non-voting party at Church Council meetings. During this time, Scott will maintain a campus advisory team that will help address any issues that may arise during the transition.

13. How will budgets be affected by the merger? What is the current debt status of both campuses?

Following the merger, we will be one church with 3 locations. Therefore we will have one unified budget with individual expressions according to each campus. FOM currently has too small of a margin in its financial picture, largely due to the size of staff. The merger will have an immediate impact with savings between campuses in economy of efforts. However the new campus will need to see growth over a period of time in order to not make further staffing reductions.

Rush Creek currently has approximately \$9,200,000 on both campuses in debt.

FOM currently has no debts.

All assets and liabilities will be transferred to Rush Creek.

14. Does the staff and church leadership of both Rush Creek and FOM approve of this merger?

The staff, both FOM Boards, and Church Council unanimously bring this recommendation to both churches.

15. What is the timeline for this merger process?

The following timeline has been agreed on by both Rush Creek Church Council and FOM Boards:

- February 19: Presentation of information to both churches
- February 22: FOM Forum
- February 26: Rush Creek Forum (2:00 p.m.) FOM Forum (4:00 p.m.)
- February 29: Rush Creek Forum
- March 4: Church votes (both Rush Creek and FOM)
- April 8: Official launch date (if merger is approved)

16. What happens if the merger is approved? What happens if the merger is not approved?

If the merger is approved, both churches will immediately begin the behind the scenes processes to move forward. With an official launch date of April 8th, there is much to be done to be ready.

If the merger is not approved, it means different things to both churches. Specifically, Rush Creek will continue to pray about the opportunities to birth or merge new campuses in the future. The Board and staff of FOM firmly believe that if the merger is not approved there will be serious, if not catastrophic consequences for the future of FOM.

17. What can I do during this process?

- Celebrate: Mergers like this truly take a movement of God! Celebrate the opportunity that God has put before us!
- Pray: Pray for leadership and staff of both churches who have many details to work out through this process.
- Serve: Continue to serve in the Church. Every one of us is needed to continue to reach our community for Christ!
- Give: Continue to be faithful in your tithes and offerings. It is essential that we continue to be faithful even in the midst of change! Our giving is a spiritual discipline that will continue to make future ministry efforts possible.
- Communicate: Change happens best when communication is done well. If you have further questions, attend the forums, email your staff, board, or Church Council. Your encouragement, questions, and follow up is greatly appreciated!