



Message to Runnymede United Church congregation regarding potential merger with Windermere United Church Sunday 5 Mar 2023

This handout contains Brian's announcement of the potential merger on Sunday, March 5th.

Announcement on Sunday March 5th

Good morning!

I am Brian Traquair, Treasurer and a member of the Board here at Runnymede. I want to share some developments with those of you here in person and those at home, and with our friends at Windermere United Church who may be watching.

Robin Pilkey, our Board chair, mentioned in her AGM remarks that Windermere United Church has been going through a process to determine their future as a congregation and church, and had approached the other United Churches in our neighbourhood regarding a potential amalgamation. Windermere United is a diverse and Affirming congregation that strongly supports Truth and Reconciliation, social justice and community outreach in their worship and actions, and which has grown deep roots in our west Toronto community since 1912.

A small team from our Board met with a team from Windermere in January. We were invited back in February to talk in more detail. Last week, the Windermere steering group recommended a merger with Runnymede and their congregation are meeting today to vote on entering into formal talks with us.

Our Board working group presented to the full Board this past Tuesday to provide a briefing on the discussions with Windermere, what a potential merger could look like and what it could mean for the church. After discussion, the Board unanimously agreed that Runnymede should continue discussions with Windermere to clearly define the basis and benefits of the proposed merger.

What does this mean?

Most importantly, the decision on whether or not to merge is up to the congregations of each church. It is not a Board decision. Each congregation must vote yes for a merger to proceed.



For us to make this decision, we all need to have a good and shared understanding of what it would mean. What will change? How does it impact us? What are the opportunities? Are there risks? How are we being called as a church?

Our Board working group is Robin Pilkey, Brian Traquair, Alex Cruickshank, Brenda Lien, Debra Horsfield, Rev. Ted Grady and Laura Gallagher-Doucette.

Through our discussions to date with a similar team at Windermere, we have been able to gain an overall view of what the merger would look like. The next step is to create a more detailed proposal with Windermere. We are beginning our communications with you today, and there will be many more to follow. We will have a townhall and likely other forums to answer questions and discuss the proposal well before we meet to take a decision.

While Windermere has been in a process of discernment about such a decision for some years, it is a new idea for us to consider. We have said we may need until June to make a formal decision.

We have enjoyed our meetings with them, which have been honest, transparent and guided by a passion for the church to continue their legacy of local community outreach and involvement.

Here is a short summary of what is being proposed:

- Windermere United Church would be merged with Runnymede United Church.
- Runnymede United Church would retain its name, governance, staff, worship, infrastructure, policies, programs and funds and would form the foundation of the merged church.
- We would welcome the members of Windermere United Church into Runnymede, adapting where needed and endeavouring to continue the Windermere legacy of local outreach.
- Thanks to a Windermere vision and leadership, their church building has two strong anchor tenants, and a variety of other renters. The rental income after expenses generates a substantial annual surplus. The merger proposal includes keeping the building and creating a two-campus church with worship in the Runnymede sanctuary and with both buildings continuing to be used for meetings, events, long term tenants and renters.
- The additional funds would enable us to manage both properties, invest in community hub outreach, increase building reserves and support general church operations.

I will be at coffee hour this morning with many of my working group and board colleagues, and we would be happy to answer your questions as best we can at this



time. You can also contact me by email or reach Robin Pilkey at boardchair@runnymedeunited.org. We do not have all the answers yet, and identifying and answering your questions is one of our goals for March.

We believe that this merger is an opportunity to help Runnymede fulfill our mission and vision, to strengthen our church, to build on the legacy of Windermere United Church in local outreach and social justice, and to engage with the west Toronto community at a deeper level.

Thank you.