

Process for Motley UMC in Potential Merger with Staples UMC

Staples UMC is contemplating an **Adoption / Absorption Merger**. Here is how the Church Merger Guide describes that:

An Adoption, or Absorption Merger, occurs when a smaller - sometimes stable but stuck church joins with a healthy, thriving, and usually larger church. Often these churches have similar values and DNA, making a merger possible and potentially healthy. The joining church effectively turns over everything to the lead church, including facilities, key programs and ministries, and often staff – all that are integrated into the strategy and vision of the lead church. The joining church usually relinquishes their church name, but their heritage, aspects of identity, and signature ministries can be carefully embraced if handled with intention by the lead church.

What has happened so far?

June, 2026-Staples UMC began a conversation with the membership of the church

- Superintendent Messenbrink was present to talk with folks / answer questions, etc.

What's coming up in the process?

September 13 and 20, 2026 - Staples members will worship with Motley UMC

- Suspend worship at the Staples location
- Coordinated with the Pastor of Motley UMC on dates
- After the experience, Staples UMC leadership will host a discussion about people's experience

If Staples UMC leadership indicates an intent to merge, ahead of an official vote, then...

1. September/October, 2026 - Each church's leadership develops a statement of intent to merge
2. October, 2026 - Each Church Holds Congregational Vote on Intent to Merge
 - While this is not a binding vote, it does give each church a sense of congregational support for the merger
 - Each church should look for a threshold for passing (75%?)
3. October, 2026 - Hold final worship at Staples UMC (proposed timeline; this can be negotiated)
4. November, 2026 (proposed timeline; this can be negotiated) - Staples UMC begins worshiping and ministry engagement with Motley UMC.
 - Staples UMC ends ongoing relationship with Dan Crocker as pulpit supply
 - Pastor of Motley UMC assumes care for pastoral needs of members of Staples UMC
5. Begin considerations regarding selling the church building - in consultation with the Superintendent

Completing the Merger Process:

Develop Merger Plan (1-3 months)

- Create a joint merger team separate from individual church transition teams.
- Locate Articles of Incorporation and titles to all properties
- Discuss the following issues as part of the plan development:
 - Name change
 - Effective date of merger
 - Staff changes
 - Physical property and assets
 - Leadership teams
 - Budgets consolidation
 - Articles of Merger
- Consider combining a ministry, program, mission, event prior to the Merger Plan vote.
- Acknowledge the issue of worship time as significant but not part of the Merger Plan.
- Prepare the formal Merger Plan using the template; engage an attorney to review.
- Approve the Merger Plan
 - District Board of Church Location and Building
 - District Superintendent(s)
 - Church Council and Board of Trustees recommends to Charge Conference
 - Congregational Vote at Charge Conference
- File Plan of Merger with Articles of Merger with Minnesota Secretary of State

Prepare for the merger (2-4 months)

- The joint merger team begins meeting to discuss implementation. Considerations:
 - Change in worship times
 - Historical archives
 - Inventory of building contents
 - Member database and financial rolls
 - Key ministries
 - Finances
 - Space allocation
- Action teams are formed to support the various changes and tasks.
- Communication is regular and intentional to both congregations regarding plans.
- The merger date is marked by a celebration worship service.