

Harbor Becoming Redeemer - FAQ for Congregations

1. What is being proposed?

Desiring to more fully participate in God's mission to expand the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ both here in San Diego and globally to "every tribe and language and people and nation," and after a season of prayerful exploration, discussion, and engagement among the leadership (Sessions) of Redeemer Presbyterian Church and Harbor Church San Diego, the proposal is for Harbor to join Redeemer, becoming Redeemer's second congregation in the Scripps Ranch area of San Diego. As a result of this merger:

- Redeemer would transition from being one church in one location to becoming one church in two locations (Encinitas and Scripps Ranch).
- Each location would be a distinct congregation of Redeemer with its own lead pastor, staff, and local Session oversight.
- Both locations would be ministering as one team, developing leaders, and united by a shared ministry philosophy and mission for gospel renewal, discipleship, church planting, and global missions.

2. How did this merger discussion come about?

For Redeemer: As part of their 10-year vision ([video](#)) to see many in San Diego come to know Jesus, make disciples, train leaders, and engage in church planting both locally and globally, Redeemer desires to go from one church in one location to one church in multiple locations. One of these identified new locations is in the Scripps Ranch, Mira Mesa, and Rancho Peñasquitos area, where over 100 individuals and families from Redeemer currently reside. As Redeemer explored the possibility of launching its next church plant in this area and began discussing the need for a qualified church planter/lead pastor, a merger with Harbor was considered for the following reasons: 1) Harbor is located in Scripps Ranch and is in alignment with Redeemer's gospel vision, mission, and values; 2) Before becoming the lead pastor of Harbor, Pastor Peter Hwang was assessed and approved by our denomination to be a church planter and was actively considering church planting with the PCA; 3) Harbor has a shared history with Redeemer; 4) The timing for Redeemer's vision to expand and Harbor's current ministry season seem aligned (win/win).

For Harbor: Harbor has been in a season of replanting and revitalization. Harbor's longer-term goal is to move towards its final "mission chapter," becoming a thriving, healthy, outward-facing church, releasing disciples into our families, workplaces, and communities to bless the city of San Diego and strategically engage in church planting and global missions. In engaging with Redeemer's leadership to explore a merger possibility, Harbor's leaders believe there is alignment not only with Redeemer's philosophy of ministry but also with its vision and mission. Therefore, joining Redeemer would help accelerate Harbor's progress towards its goal.

3. If Harbor becomes a Redeemer congregation, what would happen to the identity of Harbor?

Redeemer serves as the “lead” church, and Harbor would be the “joining” church, aligning with Redeemer’s mission and vision, ministering to the Scripps Ranch area as part of the Redeemer family.

4. What would happen to the current lead pastors at Redeemer and Harbor?

Pastor Paul Kim would continue to serve as the lead pastor for Redeemer Encinitas, while expanding his role as a movement leader within Redeemer to come alongside, encourage, and coach the lead pastor of Redeemer’s second congregation.

Pastor Peter Hwang would serve as Redeemer’s lead pastor of the newly merged Scripps Ranch location, benefiting from Paul’s guidance, support, and leadership development.

5. What would happen to Harbor and Redeemer’s elders and diaconate?

Harbor’s elders and diaconate would integrate into Redeemer’s broader organizational structure. While the elders of Harbor will join Redeemer’s central, joint Session, they would focus on shepherding and overseeing the Scripps Ranch congregation. Similarly, Harbor’s diaconate would become part of Redeemer’s larger diaconate, yet remain dedicated to providing localized care and diaconal support for the Scripps Ranch location. In addition, some of the elders and diaconate from Redeemer’s Encinitas location may consider making the Scripps Ranch congregation their church home and become part of its local session and diaconate.

6. What would happen to Harbor’s staff? Redeemer’s staff?

Redeemer’s existing staff would remain as is, serving the Encinitas congregation, while Harbor’s staff would integrate into Redeemer’s broader team, participating in shared staff training and leadership development. We anticipate that a merger would lead to growth in attendance at the Scripps Ranch location. In response, the local leadership there would prayerfully and wisely evaluate staffing needs, including both current team members and potential new hires.

7. How is the leadership at Redeemer and Harbor approaching this merger?

Drawing on the framework from the book, [Better Together](#), leadership from both churches have been approaching the merger in three distinct phases, each guided by a key question:

Phase 1: Is it Possible?

- Do we share an overarching vision and mission?

Phase 2: Is it Feasible?

- As we evaluate important areas such as organizational structure, finances, programming, and staffing, is a merger viable?

Phase 3: Is it Desirable?

- After walking through Phases 1 and 2, and as we get to know each other more deeply, is the Lord confirming this direction among both congregations and their leaders?

8. What is the potential timeline, and what are next steps?

- 1) September to December 2024 - **Possibility Confirmed (Phase 1)**: Leadership from both churches agree that they share a common vision, mission, and values, and have concluded that a merger is possible.
- 2) January to February 2, 2025 - **Communicate Intent**: Leaders share with members and key people in each congregation about the potential merger.
- 3) February to June 2025 - **Feasibility Assessment (Phase 2)**: Both churches engage in prayer, discerning whether this is from the Lord. Leadership will explore practical considerations (e.g., finances, staffing, structure) to determine if the merger is truly viable.
- 4) June 2025 - **Decision on Feasibility**: Each congregation decides whether they sense that God is leading Harbor to join Redeemer.
- 5) June 2025 to March 2026 - **Desirability Assessment (Phase 3)**: A dedicated season of prayer, relationship-building, and collective discernment. Leaders also finalize discipleship and program plans (children, youth, community groups, etc.) and establish necessary systems (central services, website, communication, etc.).
- 6) March 2026 - **Decision on Desirability**: Leadership decides to pursue congregational votes to approve merger.
- 7) Easter 2026 - **Merger Completion**: Pending an affirmative congregational vote, Harbor officially becomes Redeemer's second location. The exciting new chapter begins!

As for next steps: Having concluded Phase 1, the leadership of Redeemer and Harbor believe that a merger between our congregations is possible. We are now communicating intent to our respective members, sharing the exciting news of a potential merger with both congregations, and inviting members of both congregations to join in the **Feasibility Assessment (Phase 2)** from February to June 2025, a season of open-handed, humble, and prayerful reflection and discernment before God, asking, "Is the Lord in this?" (Proverbs 3:5-6)

9. What will this next phase ("Feasibility Assessment") look like from February to June 2025?

- **Prayer and Discernment**: Both congregations are invited to commit this time to prayer, seeking God's leading, guidance, and wisdom together.
- **Leadership Review**: Church leadership will assess the merger's viability, diligently working through critical questions and details about the organizational structure, finances, and staffing needs.
- **Open Communication**: We understand that many will have questions about the merger process and related decisions. We will create opportunities for you to ask those questions.
- **Commitment to Transparency**: As we identify key considerations and address them, we will keep each congregation regularly informed throughout this phase.

- **Relational Connectivity:** There will be opportunities for both congregations to connect, from meeting the pastors and leaders from both congregations, to having joint fellowship gatherings and prayer meetings.

10. How will decisions about the merger be made, and will congregants have input?

Having explored the possibility of a merger, members are now invited into the conversation. Leadership in both churches want members to play a pivotal role throughout the process. Toward that end, we are planning for prayer meetings, Q&A's, and informational sessions before any final decisions are made. Ultimately, the decision to merge will require a vote from each congregation, ensuring that members have a critical part in the final outcome.

11. How will we shepherd and care for members who may struggle with this change?

We recognize that change can be difficult. It is natural to experience feelings of grief or loss when going through any kind of transition. Our goal is to ensure everyone feels seen, heard, and cared for. Pastors and elders will remain available for one-on-one conversations, and there will be regular opportunities, such as prayer meetings, Q&A's, and information sessions, to share concerns and receive support.

12. What if, during the process of this merger, we determine that it was not the right decision?

Members are encouraged to remain engaged and share feedback throughout the process. If the leadership concludes that the merger should not move forward, they will communicate that decision promptly to each congregation.

13. What role can I play in supporting this merger?

We invite you to join us in prayer, asking for wisdom, unity, and God's leading as we move forward and take the next steps! Stay engaged by attending prayer meetings, informational sessions and sharing feedback, questions, and concerns. Look for opportunities to foster unity and build relationships, both within our existing church family and through joint fellowship events.

14. Is there a way to ask questions and give feedback?

The leadership at both Redeemer and Harbor recognize that you may have specific questions about the merger, and deeply care about any concerns or feedback you may have. Each church will provide an email address where people can share their thoughts, ask questions, and give feedback. As mentioned, there will also be opportunities to engage with the leadership with questions and hear updates!