

PARK CHURCH DOWNTOWN FAQs

Updated January 24, 2020

WHY ARE WE CONSIDERING A PARTNERSHIP?

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus for the glory of God and the joy of all people. We want to see disciples and communities of disciples multiplied all over the city of Denver until the glory of God covers the city like the waters cover the sea. We see Gospel partnerships that strengthen like-minded congregations as a powerful way to accomplish this mission and propel Kingdom movement in Denver. Our elders have long prayed for opportunities for multiplication, and this can happen through planting independent churches and through partnerships between existing churches. However, the data shows that 90% of independent church plants fail in post-Christian cities (like Denver), while partnerships for multi-congregational churches are statistically far more likely to succeed. This is due to the support a larger church can provide.

HOW DID THIS PARTNERSHIP IDEA COME ABOUT?

First, we genuinely believe the Holy Spirit has been at work over the past few years to bring the stories of these two churches to a point of convergence. Many people on our leadership team have been friends with Matt Hand (the Lead Pastor of Grace City) for several years as we shared connections through Acts 29, Redeemer City to City, and Made to Flourish. We have come to appreciate their heart for a Gospel movement downtown and their faithfulness to Jesus. As we grew in friendship, we began praying about the idea of partnering together, and in August we entered into serious conversations about what it might look like to form a mission-motivated partnership. Out of those discussions and prayer came the vision for Grace City to merge into Park Church and for Park Church to become one church in multiple congregations. Both leadership teams have unanimously and enthusiastically supported this next step, and we believe that both churches will be better together.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS PROPOSED MERGER?

In short, we believe that we will be better together. Having two congregations will allow us to focus outreach efforts in the neighborhoods and industries where we are planted and to develop more leaders as disciple makers. We are excited about the opportunity to grow with people from various backgrounds and to mobilize disciples for the work of ministry throughout the city. Great work is already happening downtown, and we are excited to learn from, serve, and partner with other organizations doing Kingdom work downtown and throughout the metro area. As one church in two congregations we can provide better organizational support for pastors, leaders, and members. Additionally, by sending some members to the downtown congregation, we will have more capacity to reach new people in both locations. We also believe that taking this step of faith will ignite a fire for the gospel and for mission in both congregations.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ONE CHURCH WITH MULTIPLE CONGREGATIONS?

This means that we will share mission, vision, values, theology, and liturgy, but will worship and engage with the city in ways that are aligned with each local context. We began as a neighborhood church in the Highlands, but have already grown into a regional church with people coming from all over the Denver Metro area! Our hope is that multiple congregations can provide contextualized settings for worship, community, and mission that help

us all grow as disciples and share his love throughout the city.

Each congregation will have live preaching and a dedicated pastoral team to help equip leaders in different areas of the city. We believe that dedicating pastoral and financial resources towards new congregations can help accelerate Gospel movement throughout Denver. We also see this as an opportunity to learn and grow from people and leaders in both congregations as we collaborate on larger ministries and events. We have seen this model work for many other churches, and we are excited about the way our unified vision will help the advance of the Gospel.

WHO WILL BE OUR PASTOR?

We are currently in a process of adding several more elders to strengthen our shepherding team this Spring. Our elder team will consist of staff and non-staff congregational elders who will shepherd and care for each congregation. In addition, a group of the non-staff elders will also provide top-level organizational and spiritual oversight over all of Park Church.

Gary will serve as the Lead Pastor for both congregations and will be the primary preaching pastor at the Highlands congregation. Matt Hand, the current Lead Pastor at Grace City, will serve as one of the congregational pastors at the downtown congregation along with Miguel Warren. Miguel will also continue to provide oversight for all Gospel Communities in both congregations. In addition, many staff members will continue to provide leadership over ministries in both congregations.

WILL OUR CHURCH HAVE A NEW NAME AND WHAT WILL IT BE?

Our church will still be called Park Church. The only change is that each congregation will have a distinct location tied to the name, Park Church Highlands and Park Church Downtown.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE CHURCH'S FACILITIES?

For the Highlands Congregation (37th and Federal), nothing will change about the use of our facility. We own the building, and we will continue to use it for worship gatherings and other events. As for the Downtown congregation, we will be inheriting a favorable lease agreement for ministry use of the Asterisk building downtown at the corner of Broadway and Park Avenue. We are excited about the location of this building and its proximity to several distinct communities and districts downtown.

WHAT WILL THE WORSHIP SERVICES BE LIKE?

Both congregations will share a common mission, vision, and values, but each congregation will have a distinct flavor based on its context. We want to contextualize our services to best serve each congregation. Due to changing COVID restrictions service times are subject to change, but we will continue to offer multiple services at the Highlands congregation and begin with one service Downtown. Our children's ministry curriculum will be consistent across both congregations. Our plan is to have a common sermon series and order of service between congregations, but we will offset the preaching calendar by one week with obvious exceptions (Easter, Christmas, etc.).

WHO WILL BE THE MAIN PREACHER(S) AND HOW WILL THE SERMONS BE DELIVERED?

We are excited about this offset preaching calendar model (see the previous question!) because both congregations will receive live, in-person preaching each week. Gary will continue to serve as the primary preaching pastor of the Highlands congregation and will occasionally preach Downtown. Matt Hand, the current lead pastor of Grace City, will serve as the primary preaching pastor Downtown. Miguel Warren will also have a significant preaching presence Downtown along with continuing to preach at the Highlands congregation at the same frequency. Other preaching pastors will periodically preach in both locations. We believe that diversity in style and voice is helpful for building up our church body through preaching and teaching. This model will allow for us to have a healthy degree of unity and diversity across both congregations.

HOW IS THIS PARTNERSHIP DIFFERENT THAN PREVIOUS CHURCH PLANTING EFFORTS?

While we have other, cherished church plant partners in the metro area, those situations do not have the level of alignment present in this partnership. Those churches have their own elder boards and although we love the work they are doing to help the Gospel go forth, they usually differ on theology or philosophy of ministry. The multi-congregational model allows our two congregations to support and learn from each other, stay connected through larger events, and learn from concurrent sermon series while also providing distinct opportunities to grow and serve as disciples in unique contexts.

HOW WILL THE BUDGET AND FINANCES BE MANAGED?

Park Church will have one central budget managed by our finance department with oversight from the elders. Tithes and offerings will be designated to specific congregations to help us understand the health and needs of each, but both congregations will operate within one central budget.

HOW WILL CURRENT MEMBERSHIP BE IMPACTED?

Current Grace City members will have their membership transferred over to Park Church. We will offer them a modified Park Church *Foundations* class to help people get acquainted with who we are as a church. Individuals interested in pursuing membership at either congregation will continue to do so through our *Foundations* class.

WILL OUR AFFILIATIONS CHANGE?

We share many similar affiliations with Grace City and therefore, none of our affiliations will change. We will continue to be part of the Acts 29 network of churches, Redeemer City to City, and Made to Flourish.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR SUPPORTED MISSIONARIES AND ORGANIZATIONS?

Supporting Gospel movements throughout the United States and around the world is central to who we are as a church. We will continue to support our current missionaries and partners as well as supporting Grace City's current missionaries and church planters.

WHAT WILL THE MERGER COST? CAN WE AFFORD IT?

There is no upfront cost for Park Church in this merger. Park is in a very healthy financial position due to years of faithful generosity and stewardship from our church body. We believe God is calling us to step out in faith by allocating staff resources and committing to a lease agreement for use of the Asterisk building to help grow disciples Downtown. However, if you would like to contribute financially to this new congregation, you can designate your gift to Park Church Downtown on our giving platform. Thank you for supporting the mission of Park Church in the city of Denver.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE GRACE CITY STAFF?

Grace City Church has just one paid staff member, Matt Hand, and he will become the congregational pastor of the Downtown congregation. We are excited to build relationships with their team of volunteers and their congregation as we grow as Park Church Downtown.

WHEN THE MERGER HAPPENS, WHAT WILL CHANGE?

The biggest change is that Park Church will worship as two different congregations each Sunday, with localized opportunities to serve and share the heart of Jesus in distinct areas of the city. Our hope is that 100–200 members of the original congregation in the Highlands would commit to participating in the congregation Downtown. We know that this will mean making sacrifices, but we believe that God will grow all of us as we take this faithful step. We also hope to grow in our ability to serve both local neighborhoods. With more support needed from staff to facilitate gatherings and programming in both congregations, this will also require more volunteer support. We will share large events, classes, seminars, resources, and student ministry between both congregations.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR GOSPEL COMMUNITIES?

Gospel Communities are a central piece of our life as a church. Throughout the Spring, nothing will change in our Gospel Communities. We believe that it is important to process with those you are already doing life with, and we encourage you to pray through and experience this change in our church with your current Gospel Community.

As people commit to the Downtown congregation, we plan to slowly transition towards congregation-based GCs starting in the Fall. However, we will not be requiring people to change Gospel Communities if they decide to worship Downtown. When we launch new Gospel Communities they will be congregation specific, but existing Gospel Communities will continue or transition in a way that is healthy for each. Gospel Community leaders are working with their GC coaches and Miguel to determine the healthiest path forward for their GC. Miguel will continue to provide leadership for all of our Gospel Communities in both congregations.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PARK KIDS AND PARK TEENS?

Park Kids curriculum will be the same across congregations and will be offered in both locations each Sunday. The Park Kids space Downtown is in the same building as the main sanctuary space and we will have similar check-in and pick-up procedures. We will have volunteer teachers who are trained the same way and who are committed to serving Downtown. Our Park Teens ministry will be a combined ministry across both congregations. Our hope is that this will help teens build relationships across the city as they grow as disciples of Jesus.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THIS PROPOSED MERGER?

The merger was announced to both churches on Sunday, January 24. Park Church is hosting a virtual family meeting next Sunday, January 31 to answer questions, share vision for the next congregation, and to pray together. Both churches will spend a month in prayer and Grace City will hold a formal churchwide vote on Sunday, February 21. From that point on, we will hold preview services and prayer times to listen together to what God might have for our congregation Downtown.

On Easter Sunday, we will publicly launch Park Church Downtown. Over the next year we will continue growing and integrating as one church in two congregations.

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS?

First and foremost, we ask that you join us in prayer. Throughout history, God has used difficult seasons to grow and build His Church, and we are excited about the way that He is doing that right now. Beyond that, here are the events know about (learn more at parkchurch.org/downtown):

- Please join us for a virtual **Family Meeting** next Sunday, January 31 from 8–9:15pm to hear more, ask questions, and pray together.
- We will also share an important **survey** after the family meeting to get feedback, gather questions, and gauge interest in joining the Downtown congregation amongst members of the current congregation.
- We will be hosting two **Vision and Prayer Nights** for the new congregation: Monday, February 15 from 6:30–7:45pm and Sunday, February 28 from 7–8:15pm. Everyone is invited to these meetings, but if you are interested in committing to the Downtown congregation, we ask that you make an effort to attend both evenings online or in-person.
- Throughout March we will be hosting **Preview Services** on Sundays to help prepare for wider public launch on Easter Sunday.

We encourage you to pray about how God might lead you to participate. Whether you ultimately feel led to join the Downtown congregation or to continue worshipping and serving in the Highlands congregation, we are praying that God would ignite in all of us a deeper passion for His Kingdom.