



# BETTER TOGETHER

God has recently brought Cornerstone Community Church and Menlo Church San Jose to an exciting new place. After several months of conversation, prayer, and deep consideration of the mission, vision, and direction of both churches, the leaders and elders of Cornerstone and Menlo San Jose believe the Lord has led us to join together as one church.

We have come to believe that this is the best way for our individual communities to more effectively reach out to the 1.2 million people of San Jose for Jesus. We have come to the conclusion that we are better together, and that God has opened a door for us to move into the future together.

## **WHY WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER.**

There's an African proverb that puts it this way: "When you run alone, you run fast. But when you run together, you run far." But is that true of churches? Is it possible for two churches to be "better together" than they might be separately? We believe it is. Specifically, we believe that by joining Menlo Church San Jose and Cornerstone Community Church into one church we will be more effective at reaching the unchurched population of San Jose, we will be better able to serve the needs of our community, and we will be able to offer a larger variety of high-quality specialized ministries within our church. We believe that this will be a win for Cornerstone, a win for Menlo Church San Jose, and most importantly, a win for the Kingdom of God.

## **HOW DID THIS MERGER IDEA COME ABOUT?**

Menlo San Jose's campus pastor Josh Hall and Cornerstone's senior pastor Craig Selness met over the summer to dream about how our churches might partner together to better reach the San Jose community with the gospel. After a few meetings the idea of the two churches becoming one came up for discussion, and was passed along to both Cornerstone's Elder Board and Menlo San Jose's leadership team for consideration, evaluation and prayer.

## **WHY ARE WE CONSIDERING A MERGER?**

Cornerstone is a stable church with a 20+ year history, but it is not currently maximizing the potential of its facility or its mission. Menlo Church San Jose is a growing campus of Menlo Church, a multisite church with 3 other Bay Area campuses. The congregation launched in March 2015 at Branham High School and is currently meeting there for 2 services each Sunday as a portable church and looking for a 24/7 facility in San Jose. We believe joining together would help both congregations better fulfill their mission to reach and serve more people for Jesus in San Jose.

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS PROPOSED MERGER?**

The new merged congregation will launch with two services and a whole host of fun people from both churches who love Jesus and who are passionate about making an impact for the Kingdom of God. The new church will be staffed with a campus pastor, a youth pastor, a children's pastor, a connections pastor and a worship pastor. The new church will benefit from additional financial resources that will enable needed renovations to the current facility making the church more attractive to our guests and more functional for everyone. This merger would also increase the number of dedicated volunteers serving together in effectively reaching San Jose for Jesus.

## **HOW DO I HELP?**

There will be ample volunteer opportunities in the new church. Over the next few weeks we will be forming a transition team from both communities to help make the transition for current volunteers and attendees as seamless as possible. If you want to help or volunteer to serve you can email the transition team at [bettertogether@menlo.church](mailto:bettertogether@menlo.church).

## **WHO WILL BE THE PASTOR? WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE CORNERSTONE PASTOR AND STAFF?**

John Ortberg will be the Senior Pastor and Josh Hall will be the Campus Pastor of the new church. All of the Cornerstone Community Church Staff are in discussions about their future roles with Menlo Church. Craig Selness will continue on in a pastoral role at Menlo Church. Denise Schmidt will continue in her role as an administrative assistant at Menlo San Jose. Jeff Lane, Cornerstone's worship pastor, is in discussions with the Menlo leadership team to assess his role and potential future opportunities.

## **WILL THE NEW CHURCH HAVE A NEW NAME AND WHAT WILL IT BE?**

Typically, in situations like this where one church "adopts" another church, the adopted church takes the name of the parent church. So the new church will be called Menlo Church San Jose.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE CORNERSTONE ELDER BOARD?**

Menlo Church San Jose is governed by an Elder Board consisting of nine church members and Pastor John Ortberg. This Elder Board governs all four of Menlo's campuses - Menlo Park, Mountain View, San Mateo and San Jose. Upon completion of the merger, Cornerstone's Elder Board will be dissolved.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE CHURCH'S FACILITIES?

The new church will meet at the current Cornerstone facility at 5655 Gallup Drive, San Jose. The lease will be assumed by Menlo Church. The plan is to do a number of renovations to the building to get it ready for a "Grand Opening" that is planned for Sunday, February 28, 2016.

## WHAT WILL THE WORSHIP SERVICES BE LIKE?

There will two identical worship services each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. There will be a live band to lead in worship. The messages will be given on most Sundays by Senior Pastor John Ortberg by video feed from the Menlo Park Campus with occasional live in-person messages delivered locally. Each service will last about 65 minutes. Baptism, Communion, Scripture Reading and Prayer are also a regular part of the worship experience.

## ARE THE BELIEFS AND THEOLOGY OF THE TWO CHURCHES COMPATIBLE?

While Cornerstone is a Baptist church and Menlo Church is a Presbyterian church, our beliefs and theology are in fact very closely aligned. Cornerstone members can go to Menlo's website at [Menlo.Church](http://Menlo.Church) and select "Who We Are" at the top of the screen to go to an explanation of Menlo Church's vision, values and beliefs. Menlo Church members can go to [cornerstone-church.org](http://cornerstone-church.org) and select "About Us" at the top of the screen to read Cornerstone's mission statement and statement of faith.

*Briefly, here is how Menlo Church expresses its values:*

"Menlo Church considers itself to be a Jesus Church. Our life, health, vision, and strength is centered in the person of Jesus Christ. We will keep Jesus at the center of our faith and life together.

Life rooted in Scripture: We value Scripture - the Bible - as the basis for understanding who God is and how to orient our lives fully around him.

Relationships formed in Community: We value authentic Christian community as a necessary context in which spiritual formation can occur.

Faith expressed in Action: We value action empowered by the Holy Spirit as a natural outflow of our faith in Jesus, expressing God's love, compassion, and justice in word and deed in our everyday lives.

We seek to live out the values that we see represented in the life and teachings of Jesus in all areas of our life together seeking to be a community where: Everyone's Welcome, Nobody's Perfect, and Anything's Possible."

## HOW WILL THE BUDGET AND FINANCES BE MANAGED?

The budget and finances will be overseen by pastoral staff of Menlo Church San Jose which is overseen by Menlo Church's Leadership Team and Elder Board.

## HOW WILL CURRENT CORNERSTONE MEMBERSHIP BE TRANSFERRED TO MENLO CHURCH?

Current Cornerstone members can choose to have their membership automatically transferred to Menlo Church San Jose if they choose on the merger vote day. Cornerstone members and attendees will be invited to participate in Starting Point, a class that will help them get better acquainted with Menlo's vision, mission values, beliefs and ministries.

## WILL CORNERSTONE'S DENOMINATION AND AFFILIATIONS CHANGE?

Menlo Church is a member of ECO - A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. Upon approval of the merger, Cornerstone's formal membership with Converge PacWest will end. The leaders of Converge have been part of the merger discussions from the beginning and are fully supportive of the adoption by Menlo Church. You can learn more about ECO at [eco-pres.org](http://eco-pres.org).

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO CORNERSTONE'S MISSIONARIES AND MINISTRIES?

Menlo Church San Jose will continue to support Cornerstone's current missionaries and ministries for at least one year, and will evaluate the continuing fit of each missionary and ministry within the mission, vision and values of Menlo Church.

## HOW WILL THIS DECISION BE MADE?

Menlo Church requires elder approval and Cornerstone Community Church requires congregational approval for the merger to be finalized. Menlo Church Staff and Elders and the Cornerstone Community Church Staff and Elders have already approved and recommended that this merger take place. What remains is for the Cornerstone Community Church congregation to take of a vote of approval with a minimum of 2/3 of active members voting which will take place on Sunday January 17th.

## WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THIS PROPOSED MERGER?

We will have a congregational Q&A meeting at Cornerstone on December 20th. This gathering will provide Cornerstone with a chance to meet with Cornerstone Senior Pastor Craig Selness and elders and Senior Pastor John Ortberg, Executive Pastor Kevin Penry, Campus Pastor Josh Hall, and other staff, and leaders from both churches.

Cornerstone's members will take a congregational vote on Sunday, January 17th on the unanimous recommendation of the Elder Board to merge with Menlo Church San Jose. If the church approves the Elder's recommendation, Cornerstone will have a final celebration service on Sunday, January 31st. In February, we will all meet for worship together at Branham High School 1570 Branham Lane in San Jose (Services at 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.)

During the month of February, a number of renovations will be made to the facility at 5655 Gallup Drive in San Jose. The goal is to all move back together on Sunday, February 28th for our "Grand Opening" as the new Menlo Church San Jose!

This Grand Opening is planned to line up with the launch of Senior Pastor John Ortberg's series "Jesus On Location," looking at the life and teachings of Jesus, that was filmed on location in Israel where it actually happened. Together we will look toward Easter weekend on March 27th when we hope to invite and reach more of our friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors in San Jose than either of our churches have ever reached before!

Timeline —

- Sunday Dec 13 Cornerstone presents to their congregation their recommendation for merger and gives out FAQ sheet at weekend service.
- Sunday Dec 20 Cornerstone hosts a Congregational Q&A meeting to address FAQ's and merger proposal with their congregation.
- Sunday Jan 17th Cornerstone takes a congregational vote to join Menlo San Jose.
- Sunday Jan 31st Cornerstone hosts its final celebration Sunday Service.
- Monday Feb 1-Friday Feb 27 Cornerstone joins Menlo San Jose at Branham while the 5655 Gallup Drive space undergoes renovations.
- Sunday Feb 28 Grand Reopening of Menlo San Jose at the new building starting with the "Jesus on Location" Series and building toward Easter March 27!

## WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS?

There are a few things you can do. First, prayerfully seek God. Pray that we accomplish His will in ways that please and honor Him and pray for the leaders and for both communities. Secondly, join the conversation. Be an active participant in this process. If you have questions, don't hesitate to ask for clarity. Third, please give. We are asking that you continue to support your church with the giving of your time and resources, especially during this time.

## WHERE DO I GO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

In addition to the opportunities above - attend congregational Q&A meetings, submit your questions/comments via communication cards, talk with the transition team, or email questions to Josh Hall at [jhall@menlo.church](mailto:jhall@menlo.church), Craig Selness at [cselness@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cselness@sbcglobal.net), or email the transition team at [bettertogether@menlo.church](mailto:bettertogether@menlo.church).