



Proposed Merger of:

Runnymede United Church and Windermere United Church QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Updated April 23

- 1. What's new?** Now that our two Town Hall meetings are complete, our next step will be the Congregational Meeting scheduled for Sunday, May 14, at 11:15 in the Sanctuary. Both members and adherents are welcome to attend and vote on the motion to merge with Windermere United Church. We require a quorum of 20 members. The church service that day will be shortened to allow congregants to leave for any Mother's Day family events. Please be sure to check out the dedicated merger webpage for the most recent information and updates including the Merger Agreement and all Q and A's to date. [Merger \(runnymedeunited.org\)](http://runnymedeunited.org)
- 2. Why does it make sense to add a second campus at Windermere? Why is the Windermere building important to our mission and our congregation? Is this only a commercial decision? What are the risks?**

There are many elements to these questions, and here is a summary.

Through good stewardship, Windermere has established a structure of anchor tenants and renters for the Windermere building that pays for all property expenses and yields an annual surplus. This is a gift to Runnymede that will enable us to continue much of the valued outreach in the community and also strengthen our overall financial sustainability. Without this surplus, Runnymede will have an annual deficit to resolve, more fundraising to do this year and into the future, and we will continue to have to draw down on our Trustee reserves in order to continue the staffing and programming we value. With the surplus generated by the Windermere Campus, we will not have a structural deficit, we reduce our fund raising to our normal activities, we do not have to draw on Trustee reserves in 2024 and 2025, we can afford two full-time clergy and we increase staffing by three positions. We will be stronger and better able to serve our church, our members and the broader community.

As described in the answers to other questions, a physical presence in Swansea through the Windermere building which is part of the fabric of the community enables us to better understand and serve the area, sustain and build new local partnerships, and even draw more people and families to Runnymede.

This is not just a commercial decision, any more than the rental of parts of the Runnymede building to various renters is not just a commercial decision. The goal is to maximize the use of church properties by renting space where it is appropriate to increase our revenues



to cover more of our staff and property costs, and enable local organizations to serve local needs. Without our existing rental revenues at Runnymede, we would have an annual deficit in excess of \$100,000. The Windermere building as part of Runnymede bolsters our presence and our financials at the same time.

If after five or ten years, the Windermere facility no longer meets our needs or is no longer generating a surplus sufficient for us to maintain it, then we can go to the Shining Waters Region and ask that the property be declared surplus to our needs. They would then assume responsibility for the property and determine next steps, which could include selling the property or other actions. We do not own the property; we are just Trustees.

3. A Shared Facilities Manager position has been mentioned. What is the role? How will it impact our budget or create the need to prioritize other activities?

Yes, we intend to create a new role – Shared Facilities Manager. The hiring of this full-time role will begin once approval for the merger has taken place, and then we hope to have a person in place in July or August. The role will be responsible for tenant and rental management across both our locations, major systems in both buildings, major project and contractor coordination and to be onsite most days at the Windermere Campus. Cleaning and maintenance tasks for the Windermere building are contracted out or are the responsibility of the anchor tenants in their own spaces, so there is no building custodian.

The cost of this position will be covered by the Windermere building rental surplus and is already in the merged financials. It will not require us to make any financial tradeoffs.

The merger and the introduction of staff new positions may mean changes in how our team works together, and this is something that our Ministry and Personnel Committee will address.

4. Is there a risk that either of the two anchor tenants at Windermere will leave? How would that impact our financials?

The two anchor tenants are Windermere Kids Daycare and the Swansea School of Dance. Both of these tenants have five year contracts, and both have confirmed that they wish to continue and then renew their contracts at or before the end of their terms. The owners live in the neighbourhood and their clients are in the neighbourhood. It is in their interest to stay.

These anchor tenants have exclusive use of their space within the building and have invested significantly in leasehold improvements including walls, rooms, bathrooms, offices and facilities specific to operating a daycare or a dance school. These investments are another measure of their commitment to their space.

The building would still generate a surplus if we lost one of these tenants and could not replace them. Given the demand for space, we expect that we could replace an anchor tenant with another exclusive space tenant.



5. Will there be a Windermere building review?

We conducted a technical tour and building review at Windermere on Saturday, April 15. Our team of Brian Traquair, Don Dewees, Bart Leung and Janet Williams were given a two hour tour by Cec Mutton, Chair of Trustees for Windermere. Our group of engineers (plus Brian) concluded that the Windermere building is in comparable condition to the Runnymede building. The Windermere team has provided us with a number of third party reports as well as a building systems and maintenance summary. The answers from the Windermere team showed both knowledge and transparency. We are comfortable with the building, knowing that both Runnymede and Windermere buildings have their share of challenges, which is why funds have been set aside as part of the merger.

6. How many Windermere families will likely join us?

Windermere United has 51 people on their membership roll. We do not know how many people from Windermere will join us, but it is encouraging that some have done so already. Each individual or family that decides to make Runnymede their new church home is a success. Please recognize that it may also take time for people to decide. According to the leadership at Windermere, some people are returning to Windermere United as they now feel, with the proposed merger, that there is a future with us. We should also understand that while church attendance at Windermere is low, they have done a great job over the years in reaching out to their community in different ways. Once all is approved, we will be reaching out to the 300+ people on the Windermere mailing list in the hopes of encouraging participation in our church and activities.

7. Music is important at Runnymede. Does Windermere have a choir, an organ, and any music holdings that we can access?

Windermere had a music director until January of this year. There is no formal choir but several people share their voices in service. The Windermere sanctuary does have a pipe organ. Windermere is completing an inventory, which will give us insights into sheet music and other assets.

8. To what extent can Windermere provide leadership for their outreach programs as they move into Runnymede?

At Windermere, there is a great deal of passion for local outreach, and we believe that we can tap into their experience. They may need a time of a sabbatical before taking on leadership roles, given all they have had to manage in recent years, but we expect insights and involvement.



9. Who will lead the Community Outreach and Engagement Ministry? What resources can we call on to support activities?

Our goal is to invite members of Runnymede and Windermere to create a group of interested volunteers who believe in local outreach. Working with Ted and Laura, the group will then discern the goals, scope and priorities of our Community Outreach and Engagement Ministry. Once we are comfortable with the mission, likely in the fall of 2023, we will hire a part-time Outreach Coordinator who will help organize, identify and activate outreach projects. There will also be funds available to undertake projects which need initial funding or financial support.

10. As we plan for our joined commitment to outreach, what are the specifics we can understand now? What is the Stone Soup Network?

Windermere has had a strong focus on both food and housing security and have undertaken a variety of projects such as food bank engagement, providing masks during the pandemic, financial support for people impacted by the Swansea Mews closure, an engaging sign ministry, outreach at the door and meeting the needs of individuals in the community. Some of this work has been done under the Stone Soup Network, which was an approach developed at Windermere to connect those in need to those who wish to donate goods and services. We want to learn where and how the Stone Soup Network model can help us jointly reach people in need. As we discern our new ministry, we have these initiatives as potential ideas for future work as well as thinking about how existing Runnymede outreach initiatives including the Community Meal will factor into this ministry. Discussions will spark new ideas, energize existing ones and bind us more closely to the broader community we serve.

11. How does this merger help us fulfill our mission?

Our mission speaks to a hurting world and our commitment to welcome people into community and support them in following God's call on their lives.

Our mission at Runnymede has always had a strong social justice component. We have a history of helping those in need in Toronto, in Canada and even into Kenya. We now have the opportunity to help more people in our neighbourhood in Swansea and west Toronto by continuing and expanding upon the community and outreach initiatives of Windermere through a merger and extending the initiatives we have at Runnymede to a broader group.

We are fortunate that the Windermere building can not only continue to be a local community hub in Swansea and Bloor West Village, but can also provide the financial resources to undertake and support this ministry, and more.



12. Does the United Church of Canada carve out spheres of influence or areas? Or does the local church/ congregation do so? What will be the new community area for Runnymede, post-merger?

The United Church of Canada does not carve out boundaries for churches. Each church serves their general geographic area and works in partnership with other churches for larger projects and needs. Whether or not the merger takes place, in the absence of an active congregation at Windermere, Runnymede will need to reach out into Swansea and the area south of Bloor Street as part of our pastoral responsibility in addition to Bloor West Village and north of Bloor Street.

13. Is the proposed amalgamation contingent on including the Windermere building?

Yes, the amalgamation or merger includes and is contingent upon Runnymede expanding to include the Windermere building. An important motivation for Windermere seeking an amalgamation with another church was to find a path where their outreach and community activities that depend on their building in the neighbourhood could continue. One of the reasons they chose Runnymede was our openness to creating a two campus church and the amalgamation agreement reflects this understanding.

14. Will the Windermere outside church sign change?

Yes. The label on the Windermere sign will need to change to reflect the merger. It will likely read "Windermere Campus of Runnymede United Church". The sign ministry at Windermere has been important, and we want this to continue, and also combine it with the messaging on the Runnymede Campus sign. As we transition, the Windermere website and other social media will merge into the Runnymede website and social media accounts.

15. What is the United Church of Canada approval process for amalgamations, assuming they are aware of our discussions?

Runnymede United Church and Windermere United Church are both part of The Shining Waters Region of the United Church of Canada. As part of Shining Waters Region, the Communities of Faith Commission is responsible for decisions about churches and congregations (or communities of faith) in the region.

Shining Waters staff have been working with Windermere for about a year as they deliberated on how to move forward, and have provided advice and context on the decisions to be made and the form of any agreement. We provided the Commission with the agreed draft Amalgamation Agreement for their meeting on April 19 to get their input on the structure and terms. The Commission has told us that the agreement is acceptable to them, so we can now proceed to vote.

On April 23, the proposed Amalgamation Agreement will be made available to Runnymede members via our website. Also on April 23, Windermere will vote on the merger. Runnymede will vote on the merger in our May 14 Congregational Meeting. Once



both congregations have voted, and if the votes are “Yes”, then the Communities of Faith Commission will vote on and approve the agreement in their meeting on May 17. If it is approved, it will take effect on 1 June 2023.

- 16.** How will the Trustee structure/ membership and funds work if we amalgamate? How will our assets be merged? Will we have separate bank accounts and fund managers?

Runnymede currently has seven Trustees and Windermere has four Trustees. Once a merger is approved, the two sets of Trustees form one Board of Trustees that includes all of the prior Trustees of both churches, and with the existing Runnymede Trustee Chair (Jeff Horbal) and Trustee Treasurer (Brian Traquair). In a first combined meeting in June, Trustees from Windermere will be invited to continue as Trustees at Runnymede, and they may do so or they may step down, as they wish. The Runnymede Trustees then become trustees of all property and assets of both the Runnymede location and the Windermere location.

All restricted funds at Windermere, which includes a Manse Fund, a Refugee Fund and an Outreach/Benevolent Fund will become part of Runnymede as additional restricted funds (or additions to existing restricted funds) and managed as part of our financial process split between the Trustees and Operations.

Windermere has a fund manager for their Trustee assets. The post-merger Runnymede Trustees will evaluate whether to continue with this arrangement or consolidate with our existing fund manager. We will have a period of transition with multiple bank accounts but we will close the Windermere ones when that transition is completed. There is a very specific itemized action step list for financial and property elements of the merger which would commence once all approvals are in place.

- 17.** What is the difference between the terms merger and amalgamation?

A merger is a form of amalgamation. When we first began our discussions with Windermere and formed our Merger Working Group within the Board, the term merger seemed the right term to use. We were told at that time that amalgamation implied the creation of an entirely new church, which was not the intention of either Windermere or Runnymede. As we learned more from Shining Waters Region, it became apparent that the only term that United Church of Canada policy recognizes is “amalgamation” and that this term applies to any type of combining of churches, including a merger as one example. We therefore use the term merger as the practical description of what is proposed, while using amalgamation in the Amalgamation Agreement which describes in detail that specifics of the merger.



- 18.** Do we have enough capacity in the Runnymede office to manage what is likely to be an increased workload?

The merger will create additional work in the short term as we go through a process of transition and integration, and we are putting in place additional volunteer and paid resources for that time. Once we have moved most Windermere office functions into the existing Runnymede infrastructure and processes, we believe there will be only marginal increases in workload except in the areas where we are hiring purposefully to address them, which are in tenant management, communications and outreach.