

Frequently Asked Questions Document

For the past several months, God has been stirring in the hearts of the Shepherds at Poplar Creek Church to the possibilities offered by joining Glen Ellyn Bible Church in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. We, as the Shepherds, live under awareness of the responsibility of spiritual leadership. **We believe adoption by GEBC is God's preferable future for our congregation.** We believe this unanimously and with deep conviction. Listed below are questions you might have and our answers to them.

How did this adoption idea come about?

Having become aware of Glen Ellyn's vision for a multi-site church, on November 2nd, Alex reached out to GEBC through email talking about Poplar, our vision, current challenges, and consideration of a partnership between congregations. From that initial email, on November 11th, Alex and Jon Ransdell met with their Senior Pastor (Kelly) and Executive Pastor (John) to learn more about our churches' visions, challenges, and how we might partner. In this meeting, they clearly expressed a heart for PCC (and God's Church) to succeed. We began asking, "What might God have in store for this new church relationship? Is it even possible that we'd find our paths paralleled or converging?"

From there the Shepherds began praying and talking about the newly formed friendship and what we felt God leading us to do. Glen Ellyn's leaders did the same. Throughout our conversations, GEBC emphasized a desire to come alongside us in a way that would bless us and our ministry whether that be as part of GEBC's vision for a multi-campus church or on our own with their coaching and mentorship.

On January 9th, both leadership groups (our Shepherds and their Elders board) met at PCC for a time of fellowship, sharing, and prayer. We talked about the similarities, differences, strengths, and challenges of becoming adopted. Both teams agreed that GEBC draft a "letter of intent" detailing what the adoption of Poplar might look like. The letter outlines the foundational framework under which we might proceed.

The two groups met again after reviewing the letter of intent and their Elder's Handbook for a Q/A and more detailed discussion. After prayer and discussion among PCC MDs and staff, we decided that adoption by GEBC is where God is leading our church.

Why are we considering an adoption?

Poplar Creek Church has been blessed in so many ways over its 30+ year history and we have seen many ups and downs. Our vision has always been to reach and impact the neighborhoods in our immediate area for Christ and His Kingdom. To an extent, God has allowed us to do so. However, we have never experienced the growth (in ministry impact or numbers) for which we have hoped and prayed. Despite our size and financial challenges, we have

endeavored to operate as a much bigger, healthier church with programs, events, and outreaches not generally attempted by a church of our size and resources. That we have been able to do so is a great testament to the love, commitment, and sacrifice of our congregation, leaders, and staff, but it has come at a cost.

The shepherds have identified two core areas of struggle within our church. The first is financial and the second is staff and MD burnout. Our hope and prayer as leaders is that we would have the financial flexibility to hire a staff team that can help expand God's Kingdom in the community. With the loss of members through COVID and the ongoing bills and mortgage, financially our hands have been tied. This means our small staff and MD team has had to do more leading to widespread burnout. After prayer and discussion, the Shepherds are in agreement that we cannot keep doing what we've been doing. We will get the same result and eventually perish.

What are the benefits of this adoption?

The opportunity to partner with GEBC has presented itself as an answer to the needs listed above. Financially, GEBC is strong with a culture of generosity and eyes toward kingdom building. The first project will likely be a capital campaign to completely eliminate our mortgage. This would free both churches up to begin building a staff team at the PCC campus.

On top of benefits for finances and staffing, GEBC would provide doctrinal, procedural, and administrative systems that are solidly built and proven effective. **We believe that adoption will help us fulfill the vision of both churches, be better for our congregation, the community, and the Kingdom of God.**

Who is Glen Ellyn Bible Church?

Glen Ellyn Bible Church is a community of people learning to follow Jesus and being transformed by a relationship with God. They were planted in 1943 and have 1,000+ in attendance dedicated to expanding God's Kingdom in DuPage County. They have eleven full-time staff and nine part-time staff. Similar to Poplar, GEBC is committed to the word of God. They believe that a relationship with Jesus changes everything and so their primary mission is to help people find and follow Jesus. Some things that make this church unique are their care center that provides prayer and groceries for the under-resourced once a month, a thriving children and youth ministry, and a congregation that loves to worship and sing praise to God. **You can learn more about GEBC at gebible.org**

What are the differences between GEBC and PCC?

Historically, Poplar Creek has refrained from official statements of doctrinal stance beyond the Bible itself in order to welcome those of various denominations and backgrounds. Being an almost 80-year-old church, Glen

Ellyn has more established statements of doctrine and theology. **The Shepherds have thoroughly reviewed the doctrinal positions and found agreement on almost all of them.** We have identified a few differences in how GEBC structures and leads their church. If you have any questions or concerns about GEBC's doctrine, please reach out to us at shepherds@poplarcreek.com.

Why is GEBC interested in adopting PCC?

From GEBC's Letter of Intent:

*"Our purpose in adopting PCC would be to strengthen the disciple-making effort of **both churches**. We want to see the Gospel proclaimed throughout DuPage county with more and more people coming to follow Jesus, and we are eager to strengthen that effort beyond 501 Hillside, in Glen Ellyn."* [bold added to highlight]

From meetings with PCC Shepherds:

The GEBC leadership has shown a real desire to come alongside us to help reach the communities around us. They believe that they have the "bench strength", organizational maturity, financial health, and vision to make that happen. They see the unique culture, community, and commitment of the PCC congregation as valuable and well-aligned to be an important part of both our success and their vision for a multi-campus church.

"Adoption" – what does that mean?

In the context of our churches coming together, adoption represents our joining the GEBC church family. We will join their "family", and as such be under the governance and protection of that new family. This means some things will change, particularly in the administrative, organizational, and financial areas.

Both churches have done an extensive study comparing doctrine and procedures to understand how compatible our two churches are. **Both church leaderships believe that we are well aligned culturally and doctrinally. Adoption means our acceptance of their leadership, direction, vision, and policies.** We believe that it is an adoption more than just an "absorption" as we bring a character and personality into the larger family as well.

Would our name change?

Potentially, BOTH churches may go through a name change, but our name might change to reflect our new identity as a campus of what is now GEBC. The Shepherds (and GEBC Elders) are aware of the history and connection to the name Poplar Creek. Any decision for a name change will be done with input from both leadership teams.

Who will be our pastor?

The plan is to hire a campus pastor who will be present leading and shepherding the church and staff. When it comes to preaching, there are different models and styles of multi-campus preaching. **GEBC has expressed a plan to have live in-person teaching offered at our**

campus. GEBC has a deep bench of biblically grounded and engaging staff that would assist with preaching on Sundays. The eventual campus pastor hired for our campus would preach most often, preaching 25-30 times a year.

Whether or not Alex will serve as the campus pastor will be decided during a season of discovery, evaluation, and assessment. It was mentioned that as the potential campus pastor, Alex might be asked to serve at the main campus for a time learning about the culture and procedures at GEBC

What does it mean for our current staff? (Alex, Susan, Bianca, Jen, Darrel)

With a transition of this type, it is hard to provide absolutes. **GEBC has expressed the value that they see in our staff and a desire to keep and care for them.** Once an adoption is finalized, every one of our staff members will go through a season of discovery, evaluation, and assessment. The plan during this stage is to learn more about our team and plug them in where they are best gifted.

What does it mean for our Shepherds and Ministry Directors?

Our current Pastors and Shepherds group will disband, although we expect that they would help with change management and transition. The responsibilities of Shepherds and Ministry Directors would ultimately be given to GEBC leadership. The Elders Board of the combined church would have oversight for both campuses as one church. GEBC has expressed a commitment to developing Elders from each campus. As ministry area leaders lay out the multi-campus vision, our current ministry directors, and volunteers will participate in these new plans. Ultimately, each of us would become a part of what God is doing through GEBC here at this location, just as we did when we joined PCC.

Who are these folks? Can we trust them? What is in their hearts?

We have met with Kelly (Senior Pastor) and John (Executive Pastor) multiple times and with their Elders board multiple times. We have shared personally with them, prayed with them, shared vision and goals as well as challenges and fears. They have consistently shown their integrity, high degree of compassion, faithfulness, and kindness to us. They are driven, confident, and competent, but display humility and meekness as well.

The Shepherds believe that GEBC is a godly caring community with a true heart for God and His Church (big “C”). They have consistently expressed their concern and passion for Poplar Creek even if this adoption does not go through. From Kelly their senior pastor, *“Bottom-line, we want to be a blessing to you (PCC), even if we don’t move forward, we want to see you succeed and will do what makes sense to help you in that.”* We have purposefully discussed what it means to be “adopted” as opposed to “taken over.” They explicitly expressed, *“we are not interested in taking your building or land.”* Discussions have always been about going forward as God leads to further His Kingdom.

What will our worship services be like?

In many ways, GEBC's worship service is similar to ours. Both churches have a contemporary worship style, sermons rooted in biblical truth, and practice baptism of believers by immersion (not as infants). **The only notable difference between churches is communion. At GEBC, communion is offered once a month. The elders at Glen Ellyn have affirmed that they hold this stance loosely and would be open to our campus partaking in communion weekly.** The big change that you might see in our worship service is more visitors in the chairs and more volunteers on stage that transferred from Glen Ellyn.

What is the timeline of the adoption?

Ultimately, the timeline is in God's hands. **The goal is for the adoption to be completed by year-end.** Until that time, we expect a lengthy transition process that includes assessment and integration of our ministries, staffing, and finances into their system. As leaders, we have moved on this with care and intent and will continue to do so.

Won't we lose who we are?

We are who we are because of the people we have become, not because of the name on the sign out front. We have seen many changes over the years in terms of leadership (Pastor Dave, Pastor Mike, Pastor Lee, Pastor Ian, Pastor Ryan, Pastor Alex, and many Shepherd changes) ALL under the headship of Christ. Joining the GEBC family (also under Christ's headship) will mark another change to who we will become. Still, there is no reason to think we cannot be the welcoming, loving congregation that we have always been as we bring who we are to our new growing family.

How will our giving be used? - Will our giving stay with the Schick Rd Campus?

As part of one church family, giving from this campus would be combined with giving at the Glen Ellen campus to support the ministries and vision of the combined church. **There may be specific giving campaigns for one or the other campus, but general funds would be combined.**

How will the specific needs of this campus be managed in the combined church?

Staff and volunteers at both campuses will be part of ongoing communication, reporting, and meeting processes to assure that the needs across the one church can be met. Facilities and ministry/outreach issues that are specific to one or the other campus may be handled locally but will be managed as part of the overall vision, planning, and expense controls of the one church organization.

What if we lose people over this?

Our prayer is that none of our members would react and leave without consideration for the vision and heart of what we and GEBC are embarking on.

We hope that as we move forward, each attendee at Poplar Creek will prayerfully consider where God is leading them and then be obedient to His leading. That may mean that members choose to transfer elsewhere and we would not discourage them from such a call.

As leaders at PCC (and GEBC), we are committed to open and honest communication with any who are not sure, considering transferring or leaving church outright.

But yes, with this big of a change we might lose people.

Why Now?

We believe that God is always at work in the world for His Kingdom. Our job is to recognize what He is already doing and join Him in it. When PCC started, the timing was right, because God had been already working in the hearts and minds of our founding pastors, the CDEA church planting organization, and in the hearts of those who founded many of the ministries that we still have today. When Pastor Alex and Olivia joined us, God had been orchestrating their coming to Illinois, and linking that with our need for a new pastor.

Now, we see God's hand working at GEBC to give them the vision and resources to expand into a multi-campus church and our vision to grow the church here in the same ways in the same area.

Simply put, we believe now is the time to join God in what He's doing at GEBC and in our area.