

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are we doing allowing Gateway Pooler UMC to utilize our campus on Sunday mornings at 11 AM for a new church in South Savannah?

White Bluff UMC has a strategically placed location that, while it is used regularly by the community for AA meetings, Home School network, Community Choral meetings and other weekly activities, , etc. it is presently under-utilized for the primary Mission of the United Methodist Church – that of ‘Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.’ This is yet another way to reach out to a target audience in south Savannah, and offer a relationship with Jesus Christ to make a difference and change lives for the better in our area.

2. Why can't White Bluff UMC just start a new church on its campus? Why do we need Gateway Pooler to do this?

Gateway Pooler UMC is a church operating 10 years in the rapidly growing western edge of Savannah. They are one of a new type United Methodist Church operating in the South Georgia Conference that targets 20 to 40- year-olds who have no church experience or have had a poor church experience in the past and are not active in any church setting. All these new UM churches in S. Georgia have young, high passion and energetic leadership, a more personal, informal and focused service and structure that appeals strongly to the 20 to 40-year-old unchurched individual who is not familiar with and is typically not interested in a traditional church service, atmosphere or structure. These churches have no Sunday School program, as such, for adults or youth (children's church is held for Nursery through 5th Grade) but the youth and adults meet during the week for Bible study ‘in the homes of specially trained and focused members.’ The success of Gateway Pooler UMC has resulted in attendance growth from

zero to 700-800 in 10 years. The success of their leadership has led them to seek another (satellite) location on the southern side of Savannah.

White Bluff UMC has for 10 years held a vision to Impact the World for Christ, which is accomplished in many ways but the size, age and resources of the Congregation seemed to offer limited opportunities for success. Offering Gateway Pooler UMC, with its successful model and desire to have a satellite location in southern Chatham County seemed a wonderful collaboration to achieve making more Disciples for Jesus Christ in Savannah. Using the facility on the White Bluff campus will give Gateway a growth opportunity while White Bluff will serve and live out more fully its vision at White Bluff UMC to Impact the world and make Disciples for Christ.

3. How will Gateway develop their new Congregation and when will the Gateway Savannah Church begin meeting on our campus?

Gateway will target a 20 to 40-year-old population within a 10-mile radius of the White Bluff Campus - in late Fall of 2016, the potential new Gateway congregation will begin meeting in the homes of the 'Launch Team'. This Team consists of 35 or so Gateway Pooler 'long term missionaries', or members of the Gateway Pooler church who live on the south side of Savannah and who will become the first members of the new Gateway Savannah congregation. The first meetings will be weekly Bible studies and attendees will be neighbors and friends or acquaintances of the Launch Team personally invited to attend. Social and other media is used extensively for communication and recruitment. In the late summer or early Fall of 2017 the newly formed group will begin a Worship Service and Children's Church Service on Sunday's at 11:00 AM on the White Bluff Campus.

4. Why are they meeting at 11:00 AM on Sunday morning? We heard they might meet at other times and perhaps even on a different day.

The target audience - unchurched residents customarily assume that church is held at 11:00 AM. For the initial new service, using this time will maximize the opportunity for success. Any additional services developed due to growth or need will use other times. Scheduling of any additional worship services or other meetings on the White Bluff campus must be approved in advance by White Bluff/Gateway Join Operations team and the White Bluff Church Council. This is not expected until the church begins to outgrow the gym and children's church facilities on the campus.

5. A. Weren't we initially told the new church would only use the Gym?

B. Then, why is the new Gateway church using the White Bluff Abercorn SS Wing AND the Gym for their service?

A. Yes, White Bluff was initially told the 'Concept' was for a new church that would meet in the White Bluff Gym. "They will only be using the gym for a worship service" was shared in a December 2015 meeting at White Bluff introducing a possible new church. That was based on the limited information available at that time.

Subsequently we learned that Gateway Pooler would be the church using part of our campus and that they have had great success with the 20 to 40-year-old segment of the population. A 200 to 300-member adult congregation in that age group will have children numbering 150 to 300. The demographics in the area surrounding the White Bluff Campus bear this out and the Initial Information Task Group and later the Church Council appointed Transition Team realized that space for a Children's Church program for the new church would have to be allocated, in addition to the Gym on the White Bluff campus. Yes, the new

church would use the White Bluff Gym for Worship, but they would also need somewhere for their Children's Church Program (Nursery through Grade 5) on the White Bluff Campus during the worship service.

B. The target audience for Gateway are 20 to 40-year-old persons who customarily have several children. Safe Sanctuary Guidelines for Gateway require a very specific "No Access" by anyone into their area for Children's Church and that configuration can easily be accomplished using the Abercorn SS Wing. The hallway entrance inside the building will be used and the back entrance to the wing will be secured during the Children's Church program. Parents, on the whole, have a natural and strong concern for their children in church situations due to extensive news stories in on-line, TV and print media about child abuse in religious settings. Gateway is particularly sensitive to this concern and utilizes their strict Safe Sanctuary Guidelines to assure attendees and visitors to their service of their Child Safety and Protection program.

6. How will the White Bluff campus be divided between the congregations on Sunday mornings?

White Bluff's congregation will continue to utilize the kitchen, Horton Hall and choir room area and the White Bluff Sunday School wing attached to those areas, and of course, the Sanctuary for Worship.

Gateway will be utilizing the Gym for worship - they are not interested in a more formal Sanctuary setting. They will utilize the large hallway outside White Bluff's Administrative offices as the Main Entrance to the 'Worship auditorium' (the gym) and Guest Services activities and the back White Bluff SS Wing (Abercorn Wing) entrance for the Children's Church (Nursery through Grade 5).

Note: Of course, White Bluff UMC will continue to have the use of the Abercorn Sunday School Wing of their campus, except during Sunday morning or times when the rooms are reserved for use of others as on the nights AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) or days when other community groups use the rooms, Interfaith Hospitality is in residence or someone has reserved the use of specific rooms for a meeting. The White Bluff Youth, both Senior High and Junior High will continue to have access to their rooms in this wing and the Nathan Bailey Room on Sunday mornings will be available to them as their meetings and teachers are fully compliant with the Safe Sanctuary Guidelines of Gateway UMC and White Bluff UMC.

7. How will we park ALL THE CARS that will be here between 8:30 am and 12:30 PM on Sunday mornings?

In the 1980's, White Bluff UMC had approximately 600-800 persons on the campus on Sunday mornings, without the Abercorn Wing, its additional parking, and the gym and office complex (all built in 1989). An effective parking management plan was in place at that time and the White Bluff Transition Team and other White Bluff members are currently working with Gateway (who have regular parking experience with 800+ persons on Sundays) to research peak parking times and available numbers of parking places, to create a plan allowing both congregations the use of parking close to their Children's or Sunday School Area and Worship location (Gym or Sanctuary). That plan will be complete and available for review by White Bluff members by early 2017, several months before the Gateway South members begin using the campus on Sunday mornings. Training for Volunteers to work in the Parking and Welcome Team for each congregation will be held closer to the time the new worship services begin meeting on the campus.

8. Won't Gateway Savannah need to schedule Adult Sunday School rooms, also?

No, Gateway does not have Youth or Adult Sunday School as those two groups meet in the homes of the members at other times during the week. Gateway may utilize the White Bluff rooms for a meeting from time to time, just as other groups do, by scheduling a room with the office

9. Is it true that White Bluff UMC has:

- 1. MERGED with the Gateway Pooler UMC Church, or that**
- 2. Gateway will be taking over the White Bluff UMC Campus?**

*This is not a merger. White Bluff UMC's Transition Team has created a **Premises Agreement** (Rental, Use and Insurance and Liability Terms) and **Memorandum of Agreement** (How We Will Work together and Use Campus Spaces on Sunday mornings) and both documents have been unanimously approved by the White Bluff Church Council and the Gateway Pooler, UMC. The documents outline the use of portions of the White Bluff UMC campus on Sunday mornings or any weekday time Gateway would like to reserve a room, etc. for a meeting.*

This is not a 'Takeover' or 'Merger' for White Bluff church. While both those terms might have been used by members when initially thinking about or discussing this possibility, this new church is viewed as a Disciple Making and Outreach Ministry for White Bluff UMC.

White Bluff UMC will continue to manage and operate the property via its Board of Trustees - as it has during the entire lifetime of the White Bluff campus. This new church will be a satellite church and South Savannah growth and outreach for the Gateway Pooler UMC ministries.

10. Why are we refurbishing the rooms in the White Bluff Sunday School Wing down from the kitchen and social hall?

These were formerly children's classrooms and it has been many years since any upgrade work has been done on most rooms in the wing. Several persons have expressed interest in possibly donating to the cost of new floors, new counter tops may be available at no charge and paint cost has already been donated. Several Gateway members have expressed interest in assisting in the painting. Wayfarers and Seekers Sunday School classes have already re-located from their former rooms to the White Bluff SS Wing near the Sanctuary. A White Bluff SS wing fund is proposed whereby those interested may donate to White Bluff UMC to assist in the refurbishments.

11. What about the Nathan Bailey Room and the Junior High room - Will our youth be allowed to use their rooms in that wing?

The youth, both Jr and Sr High Schoolers will continue to utilize their individual rooms during their Sunday School time. Gateway has no intention of disrupting the White Bluff youth room arrangements.

12. What about the White Bluff Children's Sunday School? Where will it be located? What if I would like my child to attend the Gateway Children's Church program?

The White Bluff Children's SS program will continue with the children in the program. The Sunday School Renovation Team will be assigning rooms in the wing based on needs and numbers of members. Because some of our classes meet at times other than 11am, this will be possible. There will be an informational meeting for all parents of White Bluff children concerning the Children's Church program at Gateway and while the White Bluff children are very welcome to attend, this should happen only

after parents have a full understanding of how the Gateway program is structured and parents can make an informed final decision. This informational program will occur after Easter and prior to the end of the current School Year.

13. What about the September 30th deadline for the Premises Agreement and Memorandum of Agreement documents set by the S. Georgia Annual Conference and Congregational Development?

With an enormous effort, the Transition Team completed the documents: Memorandum of Agreement, and a Premises Agreement that also includes a Dispute Resolution Plan and a Communication Plan. And presented them to the Church Council for approval at the September 15, 2016 meeting. The Documents were approved unanimously and Phase I- Design and Approve Documents, was completed. Phase II, Planning and Decision Making has already begun.

14. What happened at the Town Hall Meeting held on October 23, 2016? Only 53 members attended but I have heard comments from others about it - can you share what occurred at the meeting?

Member excitement, concern and frustration were apparent in the Town Hall meeting held on October 23, 2016 by the Transition Team. Designed to share the newly created documents (Phase I) and explain the Phase II--Planning and Phase III--Implementation, the Team also spent time dealing with frustrated concerns and questions about statements made in the initial December 2015 meeting to share the concept of a new church. Also, several members voiced concern regarding Gateway's use of the White Bluff facilities and the possibility for Parking congestion and moving Adult Sunday School Classes from one building to the next. Clearly the Communication about the Gateway Savannah church and the ongoing work to make it happen has not reached

enough of the members of White Bluff. The Transition Team Members are very sorry for any confusion, suspicion and lack of information surrounding the new church and will work hard in future weeks to be certain all members have the information they seek about this new church (a White Bluff Disciple Making and Outreach ministry) before it becomes a reality in the Fall of 2017.

In the Town Hall meeting, some members expressed frustration and irritation at not having answers and concern and hurt feelings arising from the 'incorrect' information presented at the December 2015 initial meeting. Rev. Jay Hanson, Executive Director of Congregational Development for the S. Ga Annual Conference has already contacted one or more of these individuals personally, to understand the feelings and clarify his comments and perspectives in that December 2015 meeting. Anyone else with questions or concerns can also contact the Coastal District Supt. Wayne Moseley to clarify.

*Additionally, The Transition Team has created a **Frequently Asked Questions** document containing answers to the questions we have heard most often and addresses the issues brought up in the Town Hall meeting. The FAQ Sheets will be available beginning November 13, 2016 at Worship Service, in Sunday School Classes and Wednesday night Suppers. This document will also be placed on the Transition Team section of the White Bluff website and copies will be available from the church office.*

Please ask yourself how you can help in this process.