

Check list for conversation regarding merger of two congregations:

1. Agreement on new bylaws (standing rules) and schedule for their adoption. Article One of bylaws includes the name of the proposed merged congregation. Merger should not be in the bylaws (standing rules) but should be a separate document that refers to the new bylaws. The enclosed are sample bylaws/standing rules for a congregation that might work well as a model.
2. Agreement on whether to continue one corporation and dissolve the other, or simply to dissolve both predecessor corporations and create a new one. Check on necessity of new or revised articles of incorporation, review by attorney.
3. Agreement about disposition of assets, including real property and/or endowments. Merger agreement should include a schedule of funds given for a particular purpose (designated), memorials, etc. and how they will be carried/displayed/etc. in new congregation or its building. (This applies especially to windows, plaques, and equipment given as a memorial.) Presbytery approval needed especially for disposition of real property (G-8.0501).
4. Agreement about disposition of liabilities, including mission pledge, per capita, any outstanding loans. Merger document should include a schedule of liabilities of the new congregation and a commitment to honor them (and any that were not listed through inadvertence or otherwise).
5. Agreement about records of predecessor congregations, including statement that the clerk of session of new church has custody of old records. Merger might include a narrative history of predecessor congregations to the point of the merger.
6. Discuss other areas of potential disagreement, such as (but probably not limited to) schedule of worship and meetings, women's and men's groups and their meeting schedules, church school, sponsorship of community programs, etc. These will necessarily become the responsibility of the session of the merged congregation and the respective groups, but it might help to identify areas and come to some sense of understanding.