

## Statement of Opinion RE: Skillman merger with The Hills & The Dishman's 2-minute Pitch

Diane and I have been attending this church for a couple of decades and have come to love and cherish so many of this family here. There is great history and tradition at Skillman and in years past, large numbers of brothers and sisters have served and worshipped with us.

However, there has been a continual erosion in attendance and involvement over the last 8-10 years that is indicative of what has happened to many churches. It is exemplified in many families whose children, although they may attend services, do so at other churches. They do so because of the excitement, enthusiasm, and attraction in worship that we have lost. For whatever reasons, Skillman has become stale, stagnant, and tired so our kids don't come here.

As this process of a potential merger with The Hills has unfolded, we have watched the various groups within our church family state their respective positions. If our observations are accurate, here's what we see as the major points of objection to the Merger:

1. Concern that we would be giving away "our" assets to some other church governing group without adequate compensation.
  - a. The assets of Skillman are not ours; they belong to The Father. We are not using these assets for the sake of "seeking and saving the lost" very well, but it is obvious from detail in the Advisory Committee Report that The Hills are using their assets wisely for the expansion of the kingdom. No compensation for the merger makes any sense since all these assets would be used for the glory of the kingdom.
2. Concern that our voice in the missions efforts we support would be lost.
  - a. Skillman would have a voice in the missions efforts we currently support, and the organization of how that occurs was thoroughly discussed in the same report. An example of another church merger with The Hills was given orally during the committee's discussion on Sunday morning, March 28<sup>th</sup> noting the merger of the Southlake church of Christ with The Hills that resulted in their existing mission efforts continuing and more were added.
3. Objection to the failure to ratify the installation of a female elder.
  - a. The Hills has no female elders, and while this will be concerning to some of our membership, there are also many of our members who believe this position to be appropriate. The Advisory Committee Report designates specifically how The Hills eldership is organized, and Skillman has been assured that local eldership would continue to be a part of our experience.
4. Objection to the use of instrumental music in worship vs. acapella.
  - a. The Advisory Committee Report details all The Hills worship experiences at all its campuses, including an acapella service at the North Richland Hills campus. Their leadership has already reassured us that the family worshipping at Skillman would have an acapella option to attend, as well as an instrumental service.
5. Objection to the name of the church changing from Skillman to The Hills.

- a. The name of the church would be changed to The Hills, possibly noting it as the Skillman campus. This objection can only be answered by the reminder that Skillman has already gone through a name change, from Sears and Summit to Skillman Avenue CofC. If the building were sold, the name on this building will certainly change anyway, and based on our current membership and on its continuing decline, there is little justification to stay in this large facility. Change is coming, one way or another.

When dealing with our church family, there is no question that all members deserve to be heard, and that every position should be fairly and thoroughly considered. The elder-appointed Advisory Committee, composed of members, addressed every one of the above concerns, and while not all these concerns would result in every member being satisfied, each was discussed in detail.

We are an aging congregation, and our energies are not the same as they were 20, 30 or 40 years ago. While we have heard the argument that Skillman could do everything The Hills is doing, the fact is we are not. The Hills (formerly known as North Richland Hills CofC), continues to reflect that name, and their vision for how to go about the Great Commission is being accomplished in significant ways. Just a few weeks ago they had 77 baptisms but Skillman has not had that many in the last decade. They have the resources and the critical mass to do so many good things for the kingdom, and their decision to make Dallas their next expansion move for the work they are doing fits very well into the Skillman situation. Already, over 170 families have indicated an interest in this move into Dallas, representing over 350+ individuals.

We believe that if Skillman does not merge with The Hills, then things will change anyway and not likely for the benefit of the kingdom. Were it not for the CDC, the existing family would be better served in a smaller facility, and while CDC is incredibly successful, it does not generate enough to afford the facility without help from the church. At some point, and not in the too distant future, without a merger we believe Skillman will certainly change.

We want to go on record as enthusiastically supporting this merger and look forward to the excitement and additional growth that will almost certainly come from the merger.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our desire to support this exciting opportunity.

Diane & George