

## FAQs

### Skillman Church of Christ exploring God's mission

*This document will be updated as Skillman Church of Christ moves through the discovery and discernment process of whether to join The Hills. FAQs are divided into two areas. Questions concerning the process can be found in **Exploration Process**. Questions about what will happen at Skillman can be found in the **What Happens To ?** section.*

- [Exploratory Process](#) – Last updated Feb. 5
- [What Happens To ?](#) – Last updated Jan. 28
- [Member Questions](#) – Added Feb. 13

## Exploration Process

### **Q: Why is Skillman Church of Christ exploring the possibility of joining with another church?**

A: There are a number of factors that have led to this point in our church history. Attendance and participation in our church's life has been on the decline for a number of years.

In 2017, the church had two young ministers on staff, John Mark Davidson and Jake Jacobson, whom the elders believed were capable of drawing and leading a revival of young adults and families. For a period, under their leadership, the church did gain members and some momentum with this group. Participation in weekly classes and life groups was on the rise. Then the pandemic struck in March 2020, and that momentum was lost.

In the summer of 2021, John Mark announced he was resigning to lead a local non-profit. As numbers began declining again, church elders began looking for other avenues to regain traction with our mission to go, preach the gospel, and make disciples. One of the avenues the elders discussed was to join with another church, especially since many churches were, and still are, suffering from post-pandemic membership trends.

In November 2021, church leadership surveyed the membership about whether a merger with another church was an idea to be considered. The survey results were that 86% of the membership either wanted to pursue a merger with another congregation, wanted more information about a merger, or were undecided on whether to join with another church. The elders, after a period of prayer and discernment, elected to move forward with exploring this possibility.

### **Q: How did the elders decide to explore the possibility of joining with The Hills?**

A: The elders believe that this opportunity has come through God's planning and God's timing. Several church elders have relationships with members of The Hills who are in leadership positions. Informal discussion of The Hills vision and emphasis on discipleship, missions, community service, and family development occurred over a period of time. The elders also became aware of The Campus Church, a group of Christians currently meeting in a Dallas school auditorium. This group had a relationship with The Hills. When Skillman elders contacted The Hills, their leadership was extremely interested, as they had a vision that included expansion of their church with two campuses over the next five years, focusing on Dallas County. The leaders of both churches met in early January 2022 to further learn about each other's visions and goals.

The elders discerned that similar emphasis on missions and child development could help refocus Skillman's efforts on making new disciples in Dallas County.

At the same time, the elders also contacted The Campus Church, a group of Christians currently meeting in a Dallas school auditorium, and invited them to consider joining with Skillman. Many members of that church have been visiting Skillman in recent weeks as we have heard messages from The Hills about their mission and vision for growing disciples.

**Q: Have the Skillman elders already decided to join with The Hills?**

A: No! The elders believe in exploring the possibility of joining with The Hills because of similar emphases within both churches. However, a vote taken at the Skillman church will ultimately decide this question. Additionally, The Hills also must decide if their vision of a Dallas location is in north Dallas, Plano or another area of Dallas.

**Q: Have The Hills decided to join with Skillman Church of Christ?**

A: No. Like us, The Hills is prayerfully and prudently considering whether they can fulfill their God-given vision to expand in Dallas County by joining with Skillman Church of Christ. The exploratory process that is occurring at Skillman is simultaneously occurring at The

**Q: If both church's leadership teams decide to proceed, who will decide whether to join with The Hills?**

A: The Skillman elders are convening a stand-alone advisory committee to further explore joining with The Hills. This committee's mission is *to evaluate whether joining The Hills presents the best opportunity for Skillman Church of Christ to be faithful stewards of the resources God has provided to us to fulfill His mission of making disciples.*

The independent advisory committee will convene February 2022 and hopefully complete their exploration by mid-March. During this phase, the elders will publish regular communications, so the Skillman membership can be informed of the process, including key dates. There are many moving pieces and much information needs to be gathered, along with much prayer and discernment, to make a fully informed decision.

The Advisory Committee will present their findings to the church mid- to late March, and the elders will make a recommendation. Should the recommendation be to move forward in joining with The Hills, the elders will notify the membership of the date, time and location of a vote, after which a vote will be taken at the Skillman church to decide whether Skillman Church of Christ joins with The Hills.

The Hills will follow their own process to decide whether to move forward with a union.

**Q: Will a vote be taken at Skillman Church of Christ on whether to join The Hills?**

A: Yes. However, the elders want to ensure three things before a vote is held:

1. The Advisory Committee has plenty of time to perform their due diligence and submit findings to the church.
2. The membership has answers to their questions and appropriate family discussion has taken place.
3. The membership and elders have a clear vision of God's will for Skillman.

The elders will provide at least 30 days' notice of any voting date, time and location, but as of Jan. 25, the general timeline for this is expected to be in April 2022 (subject to change).

**Q: How will I learn of new information during this process?**

A: Members have several ways to keep informed:

1. For important updates, the elders will make announcements during the service, followed by an email to the Skillman membership.  
\*If you are currently a member who is not receiving emails from Skillman and wish to be on the Skillman email list, please contact the church office at 214-823-2179.
2. Important dates will be published in Skillman's weekly email, the Skillman Messenger.
3. Periodic announcements will be made at service as a reminder of important dates.
4. Members can access a Web page that has information and other resources to educate themselves about this process and about The Hills. Updates will be published with the most current date, so members will see new updates and be able to review them.
5. The elders will host a Q and A forum at the chapel Feb. 6, 2022, at 9 a.m.
6. Members can email [elders@skillmanchurch.org](mailto:elders@skillmanchurch.org) to ask specific questions about this process or ask for updates.

*Corrected Feb. 5*

**Q. Why did the elders suspend the affirmation process of June Martin and Ken Teague?**

- A. Skillman Church of Christ considered the role of women in church leadership positions in 2021. As part of that consideration, the elders invited Dr. Mike Armour, Dr. Carson Reed, and Dr. John Mark Hicks, to present Biblical positions and texts to the congregants that explored various viewpoints on women in church leadership positions, and specifically eldership positions. As elders, we prayerfully sought God's guidance on this question, as in our long history, we had not considered women in these roles.

During the elder nomination process, which began in October 2021, the nominating committee received nominations that did include women. After we vetted nominees, we announced to the membership in November 2021 that two candidates had emerged for consideration: June Martin and Ken Teague.

After the announcement, elders received many written concerns and some objections, which led us to postpone an affirmation process until we could prayerfully seek guidance. At around the same time, the elders had conversation with The Hills leadership on how God was leading them to consider joining with a church in Dallas.

We unanimously felt that this was God's timing and *might* be His plan; therefore, we suspended the affirmation process in order to explore joining with The Hills and to discern if this truly is God's will.

**Q: Why are we considering joining a nondenominational church rather than a Church of Christ?**

A: Yes. As stated on page 44 of the Advisory Committee Report, "The Hills 'is church of Christ'. The [North Richland Hills] campus' sign notes that it is Church of Christ. Much of the ministry staff and all the senior leadership staff was educated at institutions well known to the Skillman members to be church of Christ centric." And on page 79 of the report, "The Hills promotes itself as being nondenominational to non-churched audiences, so as not to be a stumbling block to the saving message of Jesus Christ. Through research, The Hills learned that this was sometimes the case when "Church of Christ" was added to their name. To some, that signified that The Hills was not a diverse church. Therefore, The Hills leadership agreed that they did not want a name to turn away any that might have "ears to hear." In fact, The Hills is incorporated as a Church of Christ, and their Statement of Faith aligns with Skillman's Statement of Faith."

Your Skillman Elders are determined to NOT lose our bonds with other Churches of Christ or step away from our focus on resurrecting this place as a house of worship and community of Christian service, The Hills has embraced these objectives in the Assurances.

## **What Happens To ?**

### **Q: If Skillman joins The Hills, what happens to our facilities?**

A: The elders believe the facilities belong to God, and that He has given us stewardship over them. The Hills have a similar belief—all the resources they have belong to God and God alone. The question is whether Skillman can better steward our resources singly or in union with The Hills.

### **Q What happens to the Skillman staff?**

A. At this time, nothing has been determined definitively concerning the staff. Most likely, our staff members will have the opportunity to apply for positions with The Hills. Should any of our staff members choose not to continue, they will be compensated generously for their efforts in working with the Skillman Church of Christ. The Hills will offer to work with any of these individuals on placement in a new role at a new location should this be necessary. Additionally, the elders have asked the Advisory Committee to explore this further.

### **Q: What happens to the Child Development Center (CDC)?**

A: Because of the commonality of vision for child development and Christian education for children, the CDC would continue to operate. The Advisory Committee will seek more detailed information about this.

### **Q: What happens to Skillman's missions efforts?**

A: Skillman Church of Christ has a long and committed effort to support international missions. Indeed, the missions and missionaries we currently support appear to meld with The Hills 5- year vision. We expect, and The Hills has agreed, that these missionaries and mission efforts will be wholeheartedly supported, remaining intact after a union, should one occur. Additionally, Skillman would take on The Hills missions efforts, so the Skillman Church of Christ would instantly adopt a much larger missions effort!

### **Q: What happens to Skillman's Sunday church services?**

A: Should Skillman join with The Hills, Skillman will experience services differently. One change will be the addition of instrumental music worship. Skillman has experienced instrumental music worship in the recent past, and that would be re-introduced.

Another change would be the use of video technology for the sermon. Many Sundays throughout the year, the preacher will be seen via video from one of the other campuses. However, Rick Atchley, the Senior Teaching Minister at The Hills, did commit to be physically present at the Dallas campus of The Hills, especially at the beginning of the process. While the sermon time will be seen on video many Sundays, the rest of the service will be held live and in person, including worship, communion, welcome/announcements, baptisms, and blessings.

The Hills participates in communion every week, and this would remain an integral part of worship

services at this location.

**Q: What happens to Skillman's name?**

A: If we join with The Hills, most likely the name will change. The elders recognize that the heritage and history of Skillman can never be changed nor should it be erased. The Hills leadership would honor the heritage of Skillman. The Skillman Church of Christ has delivered God's saving Word and will continue to do so, whatever she is called. However, this is an area that the Advisory Committee and the elders will further explore.

**Q: What happens to monetary endowments, such as the Moeller Fund, specifically given to Skillman Church of Christ?**

A: Both churches are debt-free, and both enjoy generous financial contribution from their respective memberships. If both churches determine to move forward in joining, the monetary resources would likely be combined together. However, the Advisory Committee will be looking at this closely to determine how a union would impact finances.

*Added Feb. 13*

## **Member Questions**

**Q: I'm getting emails from a committee calling itself "Save Skillman Church of Christ Committee." Did the elders appoint this committee? Who is this?**

A: No, the elders did not appoint this committee, nor did the church provide any email list to this committee. More in-depth information is addressed by clicking below:

[Elder's Announcement, Feb. 13, 2022](#)

**Q: I was unable to attend the Feb. 6 Q and A forum. Is there a way I can get information about what was discussed?**

A: Yes! We have a recording of the forum that is available to any member for viewing. Please call the church office at 214-823-2179 to schedule a time convenient for you.

**Q: What will "church life" look like as The Hills vs Skillman? For example, what will be different on a Sunday morning (other than instruments)? Will there be Bible classes for all ages?**

A: This question was asked during the Feb. 6 forum, and David Meyer answered it in more detail. The following is a summary of his answer.

In addition to the re-introduction of instrumental music, another change, and the most visible, will be that Rick Atchley, senior preaching minister at The Hills, will deliver the main message via video. To facilitate that, a large video screen would be installed at Skillman.

Skillman would retain a campus minister and staff who would be present during worship times. All other parts of the service will occur with this staff, live at Skillman, including baptisms, communion, and prayer.

As for Bible classes, The Hills emphasizes small groups. Some of these meet Sunday mornings during traditional Bible study time, but some meet on a day and time convenient to the members of the group. The Hills offers traditional Sunday school classes for children and that would continue at the Skillman campus.

**Q: Regarding finances, will the Skillman contribution or tithes remain with Skillman or be allotted by the Hills Church Main campus?**

A: This question was asked in the Feb. 6 forum, and David Meyer answered it in more detail. The following is a summary of his answer.

All contributions and tithes are collected in one large “pot.” The Hills Operations Committee (OC) then distributes funds according to each campus’ needs. In some instances, this approach presents a cost savings. For example, in purchasing items needed at all campuses, such as light bulbs, buying in bulk will decrease overall costs for those line items. Otherwise, each campus has a budget that is generous to ensure that campus needs are covered.

**Q: Is there one group of elders overseeing all Hills campuses, or eldership specific to each campus? If there is one overarching group, are there representatives from all campuses?**

A: This question was asked at the Feb. 6 forum, and David Meyer answered it in more detail. The following is a summary of his answer.

The Hills has a 9-member Operations Committee (OC) that oversees all campuses. Currently, there are representatives from all three physical campuses represented on the OC. Each physical campus does have elders that represent the needs of each campus and who provide leadership and guidance for that campus within the 51-member eldership at The Hills.

**Q: At what point will a new campus be able to participate in, or have representation in, the eldership?**

A: This question was asked at the Feb. 6 forum, and David Meyer answered it in more detail. The following is a summary of his answer.

The Hills has said they would “seed” a new campus with both elders and new members who would help to facilitate the transition into joining with The Hills. In the future, the eldership at this campus would be selected based on leadership qualities. There would be opportunity for current Skillman members to be considered for eldership roles at that time.

**Q: Are there currently any female elders in The Hills?**

A: This question was asked at the Feb. 6 Q and A and answered by David Meyer. Following is a summary of his answer.

Currently, The Hills does not have female elders; however, The Hills has made a concerted effort in the last several years to ensure that women have leadership roles at all campuses. The Hills values women and has huge respect for the work accomplished by women in the church. Mr. Meyer specifically recognized Ruth Ann Prude and the amazing work she has done with the Child Development Center as an example of leadership by women at Skillman that would be incorporated into The Hills campus in Dallas. Currently, The Hills has women in leadership positions who are designated as ministers, as well as who lead other ministries, teach, lead prayer, facilitate communion, and perform a wide range of other important leadership roles.