



# TRINITY

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the  
Presbyterian Church in America

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## Ministry Staff

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7.15.08

Dear Ones:

Greetings from a summer afternoon. I am thinking about you today—as so many of you labor at work or home, or rest from your labors at the edge of the pool or the edge of the sea. I am praying that the Savior would give you both good work and good rest.

While there's so much I would love to talk with you about, I'm writing today for a very specific purpose. Namely, to follow up and fill out the announcement we made this past week regarding the emergence of a new Educational Hour on Sunday mornings.

For those of you who missed that announcement, here's the gist:

The ministry life of Trinity is largely ordered around the work of ministry teams. There are a number of them—the Worship Ministry Team oversees worship, the Shepherding Ministry Team works on congregational care, the Children's Ministry Team works on how we care for children—you get the idea. Each of these teams is made up of an Elder (or two), sometimes a Deacon, and lots of volunteers from the congregation (people like you) who want to give their attention to enabling our church to thrive in its varied ministry ambitions.

For several months—in one case, several years—some of our church's ministry teams have worked on what we've come to call the Educational Hour Proposal. Simply put, this proposal is for us to have two Sunday morning services (like we do now) but with an hour in between in which all of our Sunday morning educational initiatives (for both children and adults) will happen. This has, as I've said, been brewing for some time, but after giving the congregation a year to rest from last year's changes at Trinity, these ministry teams, along with the pastors and the Elders, believe that it's time to make this move. And so we are.

Here's why:

*Spiritual Formation.* One of the things we most desire for Trinity is that it be a place where people can wrestle with their deepest questions: questions about the Bible, about our theological heritage, about our culture and about how to live faithfully in the world. But we recognize that there are few broadly accessible and fully functioning venues for this at Trinity. We have some really good educational work going on right now—and have had it for years—but we recognize that for some reason under 10% of adults at Trinity are involved in this in any significant way. What we want is to take the good that has been at Trinity for so long and expand its reach, making it available to more and more people in the years to come. This seems especially important as we deepen our ministry to people who have little to no knowledge of Christianity. We think that this new structure will help us.

*Intergenerational Worship.* Another impetus behind this initiative is our deepening desire to have a worship life in which not only adults but also children fully participate. But we realize that for those of you with small children (like me) this is pretty difficult. The morning is long enough already, the service is not always child-friendly, and your children may enjoy Sunday school more than worship. And so we're finding that many of our children never attend worship. In fact, we've found that it is possible for a child to grow up in this church without ever regularly participating in its corporate worship life. Our basic conviction is that this is not good. It's not good for children who need to be shaped by the rhythms of public worship. And it's not good for our larger congregation, which needs the

beauty that only children can bring. So we want to create a Sunday morning structure that makes it easier for all of us—young and old alike—to come and celebrate the Lord Jesus together.

Here's what you should expect from us in weeks to come:

*Communication.* There are likely a number of questions that many of you have in light of this. We're going to try to anticipate these and answer them as fully as we can in announcements and letters. And of course we're available to talk about any of this if you'd like, please just call the church and set up a time to meet.

*Help.* We know that some of you parents with young children are concerned about this change—"How can our kids sit through worship?" I understand. But remember, the goal is not for them to "sit through" worship but to actually worship! To help with this, we want to host an event on Saturday, August 23, in which you bring your children to the Worship Area and we walk and talk through some of this together. It should be fun. We'll send more info along in the coming weeks. Also, we're in the middle of some serious conversations about how we might be able to slightly modify the service in order to more fully enable the participation of children.

Here's what this will require of us all in months to come.

*Flexibility.* Which is, of course, another way of saying love. We anticipate two main strains on our congregational life. The first is with respect to *facilities*. We have done the math from every angle we can think of and believe that our facility can support a move like this one. But it will be tight. With more children coming into worship, and possible additional growth, we will experience more crowding in the worship area. We are trying to ameliorate this crowding and are making plans for some substantive facilities changes, but these will take time. In the meantime, we will need to negotiate the crowding with humor, planning, and something like gratitude. The second strain is with respect to *worship itself*. As hard as it will be for parents with young children to try to sit with their children, with all of the fear of distracting someone, it may be harder still for those of you who are unaccustomed to the wiggly ways of children. You will have to work hard not to be distracted by children. But you should work at it. Perhaps some of you could even see it as your task to help these parents in the service, rather than simply wishing that their children would go away. This is the way of the Savior. All of this to say, this move has inescapable problems. But in making it we are choosing one set of problems over another set of problems. That is, we are choosing the problem of crowding over the problem of poor spiritual formation for our adults and children. We think this is right, but we know that there may be times when the right is difficult. At those points, we will have to work together.

*Hope.* This change is, like all of our initiatives, a labor of faith; a work carried out in the belief that Jesus will use our efforts—no matter how stumbling—toward the strengthening of His church and the advancement of His kingdom. The goal here is a congregation deepened in spiritual maturity and a worship life marked by intergenerational beauty. And we have hopes that Jesus is leading us all in this very way. It will be our collective work to cultivate these hopes until we see them realized more fully.

So, on Sunday, August 24, we're going to move to this new schedule. We will have an 8:30 worship service with weekly communion, a 10:00 educational hour, and an 11:15 worship service with monthly communion. This is the consummation of several years of planning, and it is our hope that this be the last such change to our Sunday morning schedule for some years to come.

In the meantime, pray with us, friends, that the Savior would use all of this—all of it—for His glory and our good. This is our deepest hope.

Peace of the Savior to you,

Pastor Greg