

“Grow Together, Worship Together”

November 15, 2019

Dear Friends,

Over the past few months, our Children and Family Ministries committee at *fpcw* has been discerning the most faithful and accessible way to grow the faith of our youngest disciples. The conversation continued this fall as the church staff and Session offered feedback and explored various options. We believe we have arrived at a solution that will help us “Grow Disciples” (as the second phrase of our mission statement calls us to) of all ages on Sunday mornings.

**We are excited to announce that in January 2020 we will be piloting a five-month experiment. From January through May, we will shift to offering an all-church Sunday school “hour” at 8:45am and then move into all-church worship at 10am.** The biggest changes will impact our children (ages 3 – 4<sup>th</sup> grade) and Club 56 students who will now have Sunday school at 8:45 am instead of 10:15 am. Confirmation and Adult Faith Formation classes will continue to meet at 8:45am as usual. And nursery care for children up to age five will continue to be offered from 8:45am – 11:15 am.

We realize this is a significant change for our worship life as a congregation and yet we are excited about its potential. **We are planning an open forum on Sunday, December 15, after the 10 am worship service, where all are invited to come and ask questions.** We will plan a forum for late January/early February to hear feedback from you about what’s working well and what could be better as we experiment with this new model for Sunday morning.

We anticipate some real benefits to our Sunday school and Club 56 programs:

- Instead of asking every parent to teach (which some have found burdensome), we’ll have a small group of dedicated teachers for the rest of the school year (and a pool of people who are willing to be occasional subs).
- Those of us who are teaching will be able to develop deeper, more consistent relationships with the children.
- Parents will be able to participate in meaningful adult faith formation offerings, or enjoy a cup of coffee and casual fellowship with other parents in the lounge. This is a great opportunity to develop friendships with other church families in the same phase of life.
- Sunday school and Club 56 teachers will be able to attend worship!

We’re confident that moving to all-ages worship every week will bear fruit as well:

- Our children will experience worship as a weekly rhythm. They’ll learn how to worship by doing it, and by observing us. Being expected, welcomed, and received in worship on a weekly basis will help them grow into adults who understand the Body of Christ as a loving community, and regular worship as being a valued centerpiece of their lives.

- The presence of children will be a gift to the adults of the church as well. Worshiping with kids is an opportunity for the grownups to live into the vows we make every time a baby is baptized. Praying, singing, and hearing the Word proclaimed alongside children helps us to remember that they are truly our little brothers and sisters in Christ, not an afterthought, inconvenience, or “comic relief.” And according to no less an authority than Jesus, we have much to learn from them!
- Check out the guide we have created, “Worshipping with Children,” full of helpful tips for worshippers of all ages.

The truth is change is inevitable and often transformative. Our bodies change. Our minds change. Our families change. Our careers change. Our neighborhoods change. And, yes, our church changes, too. New hymnals come out. New Bible translations appear. Blue laws that “protected” Sunday mornings disappear. And yet the church goes on, striving to be adaptive and courageous and faithful.

Your church leadership believes this experiment is an exciting opportunity for the Holy Spirit to do a new thing among us. We hope you’ll give this new model a try with open minds and hopeful hearts as we seek to experience God, grow disciples, and transform lives, together! Please don’t hesitate to reach out to any member of Session or staff with questions or concerns you may have.

With gratitude in Christ,

The Session and Staff of FPCW

