

Double Service Grapevine – Gospel Hospitality

The gospel, the good news of Jesus is absolutely incredible news. For in Jesus we see the character of God, his love, his grace, his justice, his truth. In Jesus we have the promise of life to the full, a limitless joy that is not tied to circumstance, a peace that passes all understanding. Through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection we are forgiven, made God's children by adoption and grace, and made heirs of an eternal kingdom. In Jesus we have the Spirit of God that transforms us from the inside out. Such incredible news must be shared. In fact, in our thanksgiving for this news Jesus invites us to have it bubble over into our sharing it with others. (Matthew 18:16-20; Acts 1:7-8)

At Little T however, we have a hindrance to our sharing that good news. We have a limiting factor to allowing more ears to hear, more eyes to see, more hearts to respond. We have no more space in our morning service. No more room to extend hospitality to friend, to stranger, to spiritual seeker.

At Easter this year, knowing that if we didn't do something, we would be turning people away; we gave our community a foretaste of a possible future. A morning of two equal services at 9am and 10:45 am. Same music, same sermon, same liturgy, same children's ministry; only slightly shorter than our current 10:30 service. The change allowed us to extend gospel hospitality to some 500 people on Easter Sunday morning. It was beautiful to behold. Thank you!

In the aftermath of Easter I heard much feedback. Attendees surprised that each service remained the Christ focused, joy-filled, exuberant worship that we have come to appreciate at Little T. Children's ministry leaders thankful for the deeper discipleship engagement smaller group sizes allowed for. Volunteers thankful they had the opportunity to serve at one service and attend another without missing a thing.

I was pleasantly surprised when many gave an indication that they sensed God's calling in this direction, and indeed saw few alternative options for addressing our growth. As a community rooted in the scriptures, we seemed to very quickly see such a change arising from a gospel imperative, the desire to see more come to encounter Jesus and grow in Him. Thoughts quickly turned to the practical outworking of such a future. As we look to that future I wanted to respond to a few of your most common questions.

Q1: What will the second morning service look like?

Exactly the same.

Some of you will remember an earlier morning service at little T. This will look very different. As at Easter this second service will have the same musical worship. Same sermon. Same Liturgy. Same youth and children's ministry. Exactly the same.

One of the most labour-intensive areas to bring about this vision will be in the area of children's ministry. We are committed to running the same programming and care for all ages at both services. However, we will need to size leadership teams according to both the number and ages of children attending each particular service. If you are a caregiver of children please do let Tiffany or Natalie know as soon as you are able which service you are thinking to attend to aid them in that planning.

Q2: Won't this impact existing relationships?

Some will yes be impacted, but we can make steps to minimize that impact, and growth has with it the undiscovered treasure of new relationships.

We are rightly concerned for the impact on our relationships. Relationships are absolutely vital to our humanity, absolutely vital to our growth as disciples. At Little T the strength of relationships has helped us to weather both internal and external headwinds as a community. Relationships are to be honoured and celebrated.

Currently there are some 500 people who call Little Trinity their spiritual home. It would be impossible for us to have relationships with everyone. Everyone of us however, has certain relationships in this community that are important to us, relationships that God has used to form us as disciples of Jesus, relationship we long to maintain. We anticipate that you will and would in fact encourage you to speak to those people about how you might continue those relationships. Perhaps it would be agreeing to attend the same service, investing more in your cluster or small group, volunteering together, connecting during the overlapping coffee hour, or some other avenue of deepening in relationship.

The addition of another morning service to create space for others to encounter the good news of God in Christ will also bring about the undiscovered treasure of new relationships, new friendships, new ways for God to use the reciprocity of relationships to deepen us as a followers of Jesus.

Q3: Will it be expected that I expand my volunteering time for this additional service?

No.

At Little T we give thanks to God for the many gifted lay leaders who give of their time and talent to support the ministry of our community. As in every church, this sacrificial offering is not evenly distributed, a large portion gets carried by a few. This leads some in the face of this news to feel stretched too thin.

The addition of a second service opens up the privilege and opportunity for gospel ministry to a larger portion of our community. In the fall we will plan to have a "Volunteer Sunday" to ensure we are well situated for the transition and give all of us the opportunity to plug into gospel service, perhaps as a greeter, a sides-person, a lay-reader, a children or youth ministry leader.

The addition of another morning service also gives a benefit to volunteers that we have never had before. The ability to *attend one, and serve the other*, without missing a thing. This will be for some a welcome option that not having in the past may have kept you from offering time and talent to a particular ministry.

Q4: Will I be designated to attend a specific service?

Absolutely not.

Which service you attend will be entirely your choice. Some of you will prefer the 9am, some of you will prefer the 10:45am, and some of you will appreciate the option of choosing week to week depending on your schedule.

That said, for this to be successful in extending gospel hospitality it will be imperative that we have a critical mass at each service and that will best happen if we divide evenly over the services as we did at Easter. In the fall we will take a survey of our community to see where each of us is leaning. If there is imbalance, we will certainly make you aware of where the need is for your prayerful consideration.

All change, even exciting, necessary change like this, can be unsettling. It moves us from a known to an unknown. As we commit these plans to the Lord, and lean on his direction let us trust He has us in His hands, it is His church not ours. As your pastor, and as a ministry team we are available to you, to answer any questions or queries you might have, and to walk with you in and through this to chart a course toward further gospel hospitality.

Thank you for the privilege of serving you as pastor.

Yours in Christ,

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