

SUNDAY MORNING CHANGE FAQs

From the beginning, God has called humans to be in community together. After having made Adam God knew “it was not good for man to be alone” and thus made Eve so they would love together for their mutual good and God’s Glory. Even after the Fall, God designed families to be the vehicle for knowledge about Him to go forth. We see Cain and Abel sacrificing to the Lord because they were taught about worship by the example of their parents. Throughout the Old Testament, we see God specifically instructing His people to pass on the truth of who He is and His promises to the next generation (Genesis 17:7; 18:19, Exodus 3:13-15; 12:14, 24-27, Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:4-9; 11:18-19; 32:46, Psalm 78:1-8; Joel 1:2-3). Therefore it is important for us to reflect and evaluate whether we are fulfilling the Lord’s calling as it pertains to the next generation of Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church. Are we as the Family of God encouraging and equipping our families in such a way that they are actively passing on the faith to their own children?

Although there are many means to accomplish this goal, we believe that nothing can replace the importance of corporate worship in passing on the truth of who God is because it includes the means of grace that God had given to us (corporate prayer, preaching of His Word and the sacraments—baptism and communion). Therefore, even though there is great value in other age-appropriate programs for our kids and teens, we believe that they cannot replace the role of regular corporate worship in their lives and thus the church needs to do all that it can to encourage the next generation to participate on Sunday mornings. Therefore, we are making a change to the structure of our Sunday mornings to reflect this expectation and priority and to remind us what the Lord has called us to be as a Family of God.

In addition to raising up the next generation for the Lord, we also believe that a change on Sunday morning can provide two other important functions for our people. First, we believe this change can provide opportunities for people to get connected in a deeper way at Cedar Springs by becoming a part of a smaller, discipleship focused community while they are already on our campus on Sundays. Also, the Lord has given us all gifts and has called us to use those gifts for His Glory and this change also provides that opportunity for us to serve the church on a Sunday morning. Below are some of the questions that have come up most often that will also flesh out the benefits we are looking to get out of this change:

1- What will a Sunday morning look like?

The new schedule will be:

- 8:15-9:30- 1st Service
- 9:45-10:45- Sunday School
- 11:00-12:15- 2nd Service

The main change will be that all Sunday School classes will meet between the worship services (which will include TEAM Kids and Middle School and High School Sunday School) to create the opportunity for families to worship together either before or after Sunday School. There will, however, be nursery available during all three hours. The change will go into affect on April 23.

2- *Why should kids be included in worship?*

Jason Helopoulos wrote in his article "Children in Worship - Let's Bring it Back" these reasons:

1. **Our children are members of the covenant community (the church):** Corporate Worship on Sunday morning is the primary activity the covenant community engages in together (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19-21, Hebrews 10:24-25). Therefore, our children as members of this community should be included in this crucial aspect of covenantal life.
2. **Our children will be present in the midst of the means of grace:** Our children benefit by being where the Word is preached (Romans 10:14), the sacraments are administered (Matthew 28:19-20), and corporate prayer is practiced (Acts 2:42-47). These are the chief means by which God pours out grace upon His people. Why knowingly rob our children of this blessing?!
3. **Our children will be present in the midst of the entire congregation:** Our children benefit greatly by being in the presence of Christians of various ages. They are able to see that the faith of their parents is not a faith that they own alone, but is a faith that is important to all of these people who are gathered around them on Sunday morning. This only reinforces what Mom and Dad are modeling and teaching when they see this incredible gathering of people reading the Word together, praying together, confessing together, and singing together (Deuteronomy 31:9-13). They need to see the body in action.
4. **Our children will be present with their parents:** Worshipping together as a family helps to counter the current trend in our society of fragmenting our families. If our children join us in worship from four years of age until they are eighteen they will worship with their parents in 780 Sunday morning worship services! Think about the cumulative effect of a family worshipping together, in the midst of the means of grace, meeting with God for 780 Sundays in a row.
5. **Our children will witness their parents worshipping:** It is the Biblical role of parents to disciple their children in the faith (Deut. 6; Psalm 78; Eph. 6). What a benefit there is when children witness their mother or father singing with conviction, praying in reverence, listening intently to the sermon, or receiving the Lord's Supper in joy. In these moments a child witnesses the importance of faith and worship. There are few greater encouragements to a child's faith then seeing their parents worship God with reverence

and joy. (Exodus 12:1-28; Deut. 4:9-11; Deut. 6; Psalm 78; Ezra 10:1; Nehemiah 12:43; Joel 2:12-17; Acts 16:33).

6. **Our children will learn the rhythms of church life:** Teenagers in our culture often balk at attending corporate worship. But how many of our teenagers have we setup for this reaction, because we did not consistently include them in worship until they were a teenager? If attending church for years has always meant coloring Bible pictures, singing songs to a cd, playing games, and doing crafts—then we should not be surprised that our young people find worship to be odd, uncomfortable, and even boring. I love good children’s songs—they ring through my house. I love good children’s Christian crafts—they decorate my study. But if this alone is the rhythm of church life we have set up for our children week in and week out, we have done them a great disservice. They must see, know, and learn that the singing of the great hymns of the faith, the preaching of the Word, reading of confessions, corporate prayers, etc. is anything but boring. It is the gathered life of the community of faith. It is our weekly rhythm—appointed by God, designed by Him, established for the ages—this is what we want them to know, because we want them to know and worship Him.

3- *What age children will be allowed to come to worship?*

Our hope is that children of all ages will feel welcomed at our services but we also acknowledge the unique challenges of having young children in a worship setting. Therefore, there will continue to be nursery and Kingdom Kids for children up until Kindergarten. Once a child enters Kindergarten, we believe that they can begin to participate in the worship service.

4- *What about those of us who do not have kids?*

Although our parents and kids will be most affected, we also acknowledge that this change will impact the entire congregation. Each of us members of the church take the following vow when a baby is baptized:

“Do you undertake the responsibility to assist these parents in the Christian nurture of this child?”

By affirming this we are basically all saying that we see these babies as part of our family and that we have a part to play in their discipleship. Our role may be like a grandparent or sibling, but we all have a role to bring up the next generation for the Lord. Therefore, all of us will have an impact on these children by how we treat them at church (even when they are fidgety and a little louder than we like) and by setting an example of what it looks like to worship the Lord. What a privilege we all have to be used by the Lord for such a task!

5- *How will this change help build community?*

Our expectation for our members is that they will be here on Sundays for at least one worship service and the Sunday School hour. In our current format, those with children and teens often just came to worship while their kids are in Sunday school thus keeping either group from fully accessing the full benefit of a Sunday morning. We strongly believe God has called us into community together as believers and that we all need smaller groups where we can be truly known and loved and at a church our size that can be difficult. We also know that we are all leading very busy lives and even though we may desire the benefits of a smaller community, the idea of finding another hour in our week may seem nearly impossible. We acknowledge this reality for some of you and thus desire to provide an opportunity for community and discipleship on Sunday mornings when you are already here. For some of you it will be getting connected to one of the Sunday School classes that already exist. For others of you, we will be providing 4 to 6 week elective classes around topics that will be of interest to you. Our hope is that these classes will include people of all ages and will allow members of the church to get to know each other while learning. We believe that this will help make our big church seem a little smaller.

6- *How will this change help allow our folks to better use their gifts to serve?*

The Lord has given gifts to us all and has called us to use their gifts for His Glory (1 Peter 4:10). One way we can do that is to serve at Cedar Springs on Sunday morning. We have an entire missions field in our walls every Sunday between the many visitors and children who attend. Our hope is that those who are already connected in community would be willing to serve on Sunday mornings. There are many openings currently in the nursery, children's ministry, student ministry, and in welcoming and greeting on Sunday mornings. As we make this change, many more opportunities will be created which will require an even greater number of the church using their gifts in order to fulfill our mission on Sundays.

7- *How will this affect the current Sunday school structure?*

We feel blessed that we currently have a number of excellent Sunday School classes that do a tremendous job of teaching and building community amongst our people. Our hope is that this change will create opportunities for more of our people to access these classes while their kids are in their own Sunday School classes. We are in the process of creating standards and expectations for our Sunday School classes to help ensure they are being effective at discipling and caring for our members. Another advantage is that we are able to assign each class their own classroom which means no more

feeling rushed by a class waiting in the hall or feeling shortened by a class getting out late. Our hope is that the Sunday School classes will be the first layer of connection for folks who typically only have attended worship.

8- How will the church provide help for parents?

We know for many parents the possibility of having their children join them in worship will seem like a daunting task. We as a church are committed to help parents with this very important job. First, we are going to provide a class on Wednesday nights from Feb. 8-Mar. 1 to help parents as they seek to disciple their children both at church and home. Second, we will be making some minor changes to the Sunday services to make them more accessible to our children. We will have a set liturgy provided for each week so that children can follow along with their parents as well as to provide them theological truths that they can learn from an early age. Next, we are in the midst of developing resources to be used by the kids on Sunday morning. We desire to provide age appropriate activities that will allow the children to follow along and be active participants in what is happening on Sunday mornings. We are also committed to continuing this training for new families as they join the church.

9- Will this help go beyond just worship on Sundays?

We believe Scripture is clear that discipleship begins in the home and that parents are the primary spiritual influences on their kids. We have found that parents are either unaware of this unique privilege given to them by God or feel unable to fulfill it because of a perceived lack of training or ability. We as the church believe it is very important for us to come alongside parents in this important task and see our role as encouragers and equippers for our parents. Although our Children's and Student Ministries have always been committed to partner with parents, we see our role in that changing as the needs have changed. We are in the process of developing even more resources for parents to aid them in the discipleship of their children both at church and even more so at home. You will hear more about these in the year to come.

10- Why not just do away with Children's and Student Sunday School altogether and just have worship?

We believe that age-specific programs can have great value for children as they grow and mature. These programs allow children to hear truth on their level and to be encouraged to apply it in practical ways in their own lives. In addition, we believe that building a community of peers who have the same

faith that you do helps to strengthen and encourage our kids as they seek to be salt and light in a dark world. Therefore, we believe that completely doing away with these opportunities would be to a detriment for our kids as they are seeking to make their faith their own.

11- What about children and Communion?

One of the blessings of our Sunday morning worship services is the frequency with which we celebrate the Lord's Supper. It is such a valuable and important reminder of God's love and sacrifice for us that we get to experience using all of our senses. Therefore, our desire is to continue having Communion three Sundays a month. As we make this decision, we recognize the potential concern that many might have as far as children and partaking in Communion. Over the last few years, we have left whether a child can participate in Communion up to the parents, but we have realized that we have done so without equipping or informing the parents in how to make that decision. We find ourselves compelled by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 where we are warned not to take the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner." We, therefore, want to do our part as the church for our children to be able to be exposed to the Gospel, taught what it means to follow Jesus and have the opportunity to respond in faith before taking Communion. We are considering a number of options that we are investigating and we will have an answer and process in place well before we make the change.

12- Have kids ever been in the service? If so, why did they leave?

Cedar Springs has a long history of children participating in the worship service alongside their family. The idea of age-specific ministries came about in the 1940s and 1950s but weren't adopted by the church until the 1970s. Therefore, for most of our history, children and parents worshipped together. In the 1990s during a period of explosive growth, Cedar Springs leadership decided to go to our current format in order to free space both in the Sanctuary and to accommodate our Sunday school classes, which were very full. The hope was that children would still come and participate and especially as they entered Middle and High School. Unfortunately, as time has gone on that has not been the case. We find ourselves with only a small fraction of our children participating in corporate worship on a regular basis. There are a number of families who have desired to bring their children to worship now but have been met with resistance by members of the congregation when their children have been there. Therefore, our hope is to create an environment where our children can be not only accepted but seen

as a valuable part of our worship on Sunday mornings and for us all to be an example of worship to the next generation. As it currently stands, we have space in both worship services to accommodate the inclusion of our children.