

Letter to Congregation – Service Time Changes

Hello Square Campus! First off I want to start by saying thank you to all who are and have been a part of the Service Time change experiment. We intentionally went to 8:45 A.M. and 11:15 A.M. times because we (Pastors and Elders and the Director of Worship) sensed that God was up to something in the services. We wanted to be more hospitable to the Spirit in our services and therefore allowed more time to do so on a Sunday morning.

There have been mixed reviews so far about what people like, don't like, and what they prefer, and what they do not prefer. I respect and expect that, because Madison is a diverse community. However, as we endeavor to follow Christ together as that diverse community, we look to do whatever we can to live, love, and worship together in the spirit of unity. This unity is absolutely important in moving forward. God calls us to unity by His Spirit. We have an opportunity to be sensitive to what God wants, and serve one another in the process.

I pray that doing what it is God is challenging us to do be our top priority that supersedes what we prefer. We truly need His Spirit for the courage it takes to trust God into the unknown. This is truly a follow the "pillar and cloud" moment for our church.

We will be ending the time for this experiment on Sunday, June 11 and go back to the original schedule of a 9:00 and 11:00 service for the summer months. We will also have a time of input and discernment this summer about what we do in the fall.

-I invite feedback to be emailed directly to me at ddelaney@madisonsquarechurch.org

-There will be some options for you to choose from, as well as opportunities for you to give pros and cons for each.

Here's some of the things that we have been hearing:

Q: Why didn't you communicate and let the congregation decide whether you were going to do the experiment? It feels like we were forced to do it.

A: We were convinced that we would not even be able to get the experiment off the ground if we voted before whether we started. We felt that since we were familiar with what we had as former time, we would resist change as a church.

Q: Why haven't you been clear about the end of service times? The front end is a 15 minute change, but the end was ambiguous. Were you setting up a two hour service on the sly?

A: We were not intending to be a "bait and switch" with service time lengths. We wanted to be as flexible as possible leaving time at the end. However, we found out that this became a frustrating thing for volunteers downstairs. We didn't find out until we actually got going that we

should have been clearer with our end times.

Q: How will you know if this test was successful?

A: The goal was to try it. It has been successful in the fact that we trusted God to try the process. The outcomes are yet to be determined, as well as our responses to it.

Q: What if I don't like any of the choices?

A: We have a variety to choose from and discuss, even the time we started with before the change.

Q: Isn't this a problem of poor planning in the time we had? Why couldn't you just take some things out of what you planned in the original times?

A: The challenge is more complex than that. We have had times where we took out some things and service went longer than it did when we had more movements. This isn't something that can be quantified or compacted into a simple formula. If it were that easy we would have done that. There is something about the Holy Spirit that refuses to be predictable.

Q: What if this is too much? I think I'll go over to a different site.

A: We encourage all to stay engaged in the experiment. Chances are, if you go over to the other sites, services will be 2 hours, because they have only one at the Ford and North. That means you may have a longer service than this one at the Square. Another thing, we want to make sure you don't leave for the wrong reasons, and Pastor Brad or Pastor Joy deserve to be informed of what you are doing since Pastor Darrell is your shepherd. It's awkward when you show up to the other sites when you are fleeing your own, unless God is calling you to change sites. At any rate, we expect you to be up front and direct about your changes, even though the choice is yours.

Q: How is majority preference of one of the options not reinforcing privileged choice that repeats status quo?

A: This question we are currently wrestling with. We don't want the process to be short circuited by status quo. On the contrary, we want the Spirit to lead us to the choice that will be best for everyone and honoring to God. So when you vote, keep that in mind.

Again, Thank you for your willingness to stay engaged, and as Pastor Reggie Smith says, "embrace the tension." God is on the move at the Square, and on the other side of this God is preparing us for another level. Get ready!

Process for service time-change dates

Time-line summary:

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| 1. Staff input and congregational input | April 1-30 |
| 2. Pastoral address (PDD) to congregation | April 23 |
| 3. Draft of final proposal approved by elders | April 25 |
| 4. Process approved by elders | April 25 |
| 5. Proposal distributed to the congregation: | April 30 |
| 6. Town hall meeting to discuss proposal: | June 4 (1:00 p.m.) |
| 7. Survey on time change proposal: | June 4-18 |
| 8. Return to 9 and 11 am services | June 11 |
| 9. Elders and Deacons process and discern | June – Aug |
| 10. Start of new time change | Sept 10? |

Time-line explained:

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| 1. Pastor's Letter distributed to the congregation: | April 30 |
| 2. Survey on time change proposal: | June 4-18 |

This would be a process where we would get have a ranking of the options with feedback of each. The decision of what to do finally decide will be done with this feedback taken into account and approved by elders.

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| 3. Town hall meeting to discuss proposal: | June 4 (1:00 p.m.) |
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At this meeting we provide a meal and that we have some people lined up who can talk about the pros and cons of each proposal. Pastor Darrell takes questions from the floor but begin with a strong prayer for unity and grace with each other. Square elders will be present to help run this meeting.