

EFFECTIVENESS OF SUNDAY MORNING DISCIPLESHIP

AT TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH

A REPORT PREPARED BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TASK FORCE¹

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Part 1. Introduction — Why We've Done this Work

The Vitality Report identifies discipleship, the life-long process of being a student and follower of Jesus, as central to the missional health of the church. God's Word points to the ongoing necessity for each of us to be transformed in the likeness of Christ (Rom 8:29; 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:9-10). This transformation is at the core of a spiritually vital life and effective witness. As it is for individuals, so it is for the church as well.

In the following pages you will find a review of the spiritual growth opportunities for children, youth and adults occurring on Sunday morning prepared by a team of people active in and concerned about our effectiveness in the spiritual formation of disciples. We have assessed the levels of participation and perceived effectiveness by Trinity's members and friends and also looked beyond Trinity for current best practices of other evangelical churches. This report represents our effort to both accurately portray what is presently happening and describe possible options that can move us deeper in Christ and propel us further in mission.

Here are some questions we've asked throughout this process.

- Are the classes we offer as effective as possible at fostering spiritual growth?
- Is there a way we can engage more parents with children enrolled in Sunday School?
- How do 'best practice' churches do Sunday School and what can we learn from them?
- What limits participation in spiritual growth opportunities by children and adults?
- Most importantly, what can we do to encourage greater involvement?

This report is part of our plan to revitalize our practice of spiritual formation at Trinity. The Vitality Report also contained several findings and recommendations for discipleship that we quote below to provide a broader context and anchor what we have done in the broader context of revitalization of the church.

Vitality Report Findings & Recommendations for Discipleship

- We need a renewed focus on discipleship at TCC, both individually and culturally (where discipleship is commonly discussed).
- Particular focus on young people in between 15 and 30, which is a critical age after adolescence for which the U.S. church-going population has shrunk drastically.
- Discipling and mentoring should be accompanied by deep understanding and practice of spiritual disciplines.
- Establish an ongoing program of discipleship for those aged 15 to 30 which will encourage both giving back and provide a reason for 20-somethings to stay connected to the church.
- Found a discipleship program within TCC that will foster growth, knowledge and spiritual insight for new Christians.
- Formalize mentoring: the practices of the mentor will enrich the experience of the disciple and provide spiritual encouragement for the disciple's upward, spiraling growth.

Discipleship costs time and demands personal sacrifice. We need to grow more disciplined and serious about spiritual formation.²

² Vitality Report p. 9

Part 2. Taking the Pulse — How Effective is Sunday Morning Discipleship?

Effectiveness depends on several interrelated factors that include the availability and quality of space, the breadth and depth of participation by adults and children, the content of our curriculum and the passion and spiritual gifts of our teachers. We have taken several approaches to gauge the effectiveness of the church's discipling ministries that take place on Sunday Morning.

Section 1: Surveys

We used two surveys of Trinity's constituency to assess the level of participation in Sunday morning discipleship: one survey focused on adults without children of Sunday School age and the second on parents with children participating in children's Sunday School.

Section 2: Conversations with Sunday School Staff

A valuable resource in our assessment is our teachers. We spoke with both adult and children's Sunday School teachers for their input. Do they believe their curriculum is well designed? What practical problems do they experience? Is the physical space they use adequate? Is there parental support? Congregational support? Leadership support? What suggestions do they have for improvement?

Section 3: Attendance Patterns for Children and Adults

We have gathered information on Sunday morning worship and Sunday School attendance patterns by age in order to gain insight about what fraction of Trinity's constituency participates in Sunday morning discipleship opportunities.

Section 4: Survey of Area Evangelical Churches for Best Practices

Recognizing that we are not the only church doing Sunday School, we have surveyed other area churches to address the following questions. What are the experiences of other churches (somewhat similar to Trinity in size and belief) in our area? Are their programs successful? What makes them so? What issues do they struggle with? What is their worship service to Sunday School attendance ratio? How is their curriculum organized?

Section 5: Emerging Best Practices among Evangelical Churches

Looking beyond our geographic area, we decided to study *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth* by G.L. Hawkins and C. Parkinson, (Zondervan, 2011) for insight and perspective on how people grow spiritually through the church. This book is based on discipleship effectiveness gathered by intentional measurement of spiritual growth among church attendees.

Part 3. What We Learned

Section 1: Surveys

What Adults *Without* Children of Sunday School Age Told Us

Numerical Summary:

- (57) surveys completed.
- (29) individuals said they attended every week.
- (14) individuals said they attended most weeks.
- (40) individuals said they were parents and are part of a Community Life group or Bible study.
- (35) individuals said the SLC was meaningful for fellowship
- (45) individuals said the SLC was meaningful for spiritual growth

Representative Quotes:

How and Why Spiritual Life Classes are Important:

- In depth discussions about scripture and connecting scripture to life.
- Opportunity for group study and application of the Bible; a place to be challenged in my life and how I obey God's word. There should be something in place possibly that appeals to younger people in our church family.
- SS is an incredible opportunity for Bible Study, fellowship, interactivity with other Christians and spiritual growth. It used to be more that way. It seems lately that it is somewhat sterile with limited connection to real life and real needs.
- Being with other like-minded believers. Chance to grow in biblical knowledge.
- It's always a blessing when I attend class. These classes are another opportunity for God to work in our hearts through the ministry of His Word.
- They definitely open you to people and ideas. The U2 class takes musical song of the artist U2 and combines rock and Christianity. Two opposites as one.
- Spiritual life classes are important to me as a way to connect with people in the church that I'd otherwise not get to know or to see. I appreciate it is a time to explore the scriptures and discuss with the class how I can grow as a Christian.
- Many times I get more out of the classes than I get out of Sunday sermons. We have a lot of knowledgeable participants who increase the quality of the study.
- I have found the men's class to be a special group of guys that have helped me to grow spiritually and also to challenge me. Well led and very beneficial.

Suggestions to Improve Adult Spiritual Life Classes:

- More structure to scheduling and class offering - right now it all seems fairly random. Better spaces to meet in. (Pastor's office are less than ideal)

- Offer classes with some that do not go on for an extended period of time, but have a start and end date that spans about 8 weeks or so. It's difficult to enter a class that has been studying a book of the Bible for year together.
- Intentionality and planning of topics toward growth outcomes that sync with Vitality and / or church mission.
- Fine for me.... I find it perfect.
- More short term options. (8-12 weeks)
- Continue variety. U2 is great.
- Always have a variety of classes that are geared for people who are at different levels in their spiritual growth. Ex. Class for new Christians, etc... with life application. We already have classes for mature Christians, and class for women and classes for men which is great.

Individual comments on the question, “If you don't participate, what might interest you to attend?”

- People will attend a class that focuses on areas of life that need application of God's Word. Ex. money, marriage, parenting. A class on witnessing, being a witness in our culture, would be of interest to me and others I think. Possibly a class that prays - not for illness, but for spiritual revival, and for God's kingdom to expand.
- Classes centered on the Word - specific books of the Bible.
- More outside the box classes that touch on real issues.

What Adults *With* Children of Sunday School Age Told Us

Numerical Summary:

- (33) surveys completed by parents with children in SS.
- (16) parents said their child attended every week.
- (14) parents said their child attended most weeks.
- (9) parents said they attended a Spiritual Life Class every week.
- (6) parents said they attended a Spiritual Life Class most weeks.
- (16) parents are part of a Community Life group.
- Almost all parents said the Children's Ministry is helping their child grow spiritually.

Parent Suggestions to Improve Children's Sunday School

- Better communication with parents
- Improve curriculum
- Better teacher coverage and class size
- Get more people involved – less teacher burn out
- Encourage more parent involvement – so parents can reinforce lessons taught at home

Adult/Parent Suggestions to Improvement Adult Spiritual Life Classes

- Offer contemporary type spiritual life classes. (similar to the U2 class that was offered last year)
- Offer a class for both the husband and wife to attend together
- Offer a biblically intense class like BSF

Adult/Parent Comments about Adult Spiritual Life Classes

- Classes are old fashioned, vague and support-group like
- It sometimes seems scary to try to start in a class. Don't want to walk in the middle of a class when it is up and going.
- I enjoy and cherish the time with our church friends and family. Getting to know each other and being transparent with each other has been key to my growth.
- Small group interactive and helps me grow.
- It's fabulous and life changing.
- Enjoy the learning and bonding / relationship with other Christians.
- Major source of connection / growth.
- Gifted teachers, Bible scholars.

Section2 : Conversations with Sunday School Staff

We interviewed numerous Sunday school teachers from Pre-Kindergarten through high school grades and asked them what are our Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities to improve Trinity's current Sunday School program. Below are excerpts from these interviews.

Strengths:

- Study guides/curriculum very complete with activity ideas (Pre-K)
- Combining grades and having 3-4 teachers in classroom gives lots of flexibility for more personal activities and for teacher coverage (K & 1st Grade)
- Dedicated classrooms allow teachers to set up for their own teaching style (2nd Grade)
- Good Attendance (High school)
- A good team of teachers with different backgrounds and ages (High school)
- Dedicated focus on students' transition into the larger life of the church (Jr high/Confirmation)
- Students that are attending are well grounded in Christ (6th Grade)

Weaknesses:

- Curriculum is sometimes very dry and hard to engage students (Pre-K)
- Teachers have difficult time dealing with student behavior problems (many grades)
- Most parents are difficult to reach if they are needed to deal with child (many grades)

- Children are habitually late. Most classes don't start until 9:45 instead of 9:30. (many grades)
- Inconsistent student attendance (many grades)
- Class objectives aren't clear
- Weak parent participation in class
- Hard to find coverage if teacher is sick/out...teacher's responsibility (many grades)
- Early morning class leaves many students sleepy/not engaged (Jr/High School)
- Some parents only drop off their children for Sunday School and don't stay for worship service (Many grades)

Opportunities:

- Focus on children to treat each other in a Christian manner (K & 1st grade)
- Need to apply Biblical teaching to real life situations more (4th grade)
- Focus on connecting with students who are forced to be in Sunday School and may not have a relationship with the Lord (all grades)
- Offer classes at different times of the week to encourage participation (High School)
- Harmonize curriculum among grades
- Parents to join in on class time as helpers & learners to reinforce lessons at home
- To make Sunday School a significant mile marker and rite of passage in a student's life (all grades)
- Possibly have Parent/teacher conference for 4th, 5th & 6th grades to engage parents in Students spiritual development (multiple grades)
- Possibly have a "Foundations class" that parents & children attend to grow together. (4th grade)
- Establish age appropriate class Goals & Objectives for growing Discipleship among the students. (4th grade)
- Utilize exciting/fun activities to get lesson across to students to keep them engaged and retained.

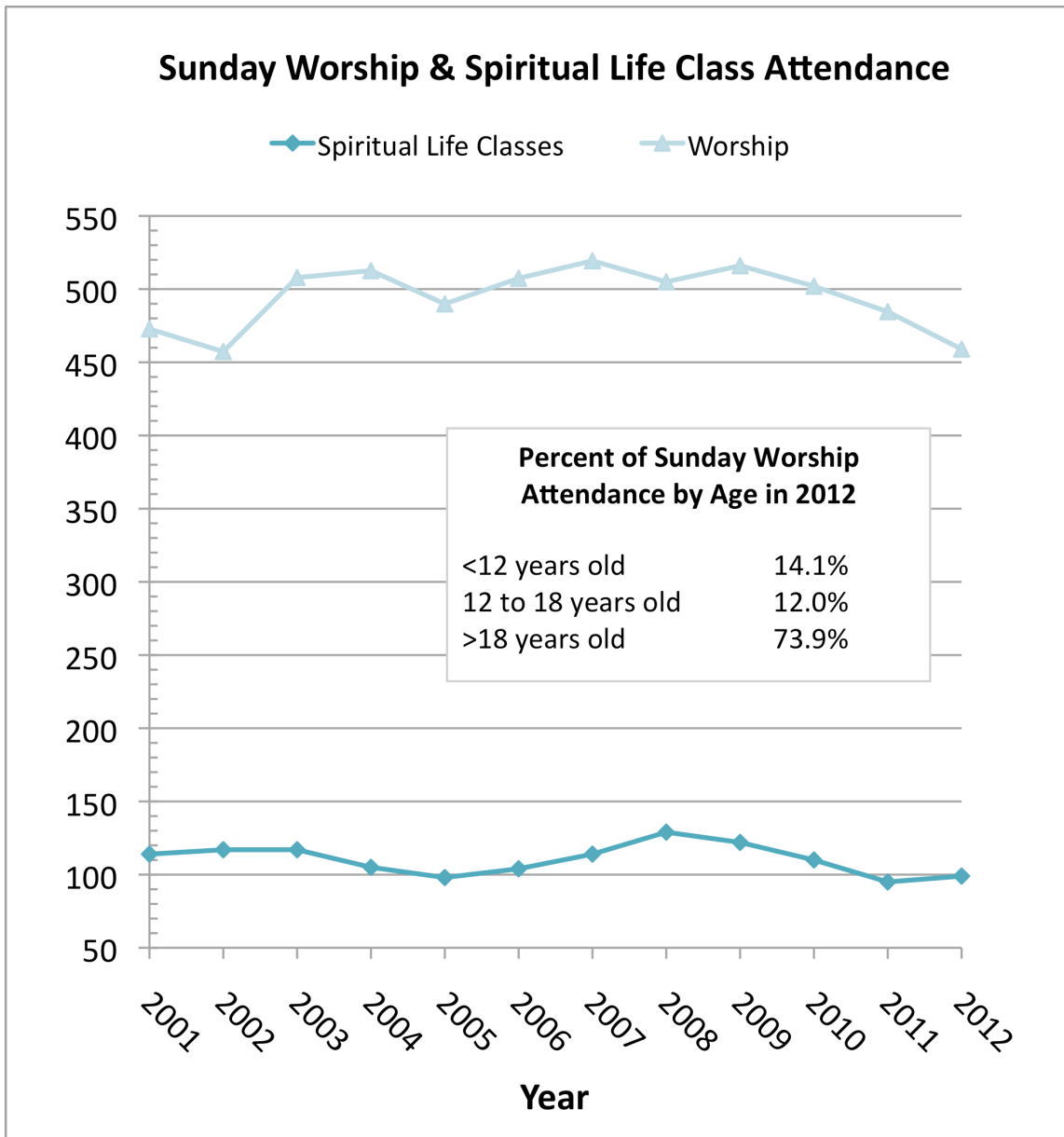
Section 3: Attendance Patterns

Children and Youth

<i>Age/Grade</i>	<i>Potential Participants³</i>	<i>2012 Average Attendance</i>	<i>% Attendance</i>
Birth to 2	22	5.4	24.5%
3 & 4 Year Olds	21	9.2	43.9%
Kindergarten/1 st Grade	18	9.9	55.2%
2 nd Grade	17	6.9	40.5%
3 rd Grade	11	6.2	56.6%
4 th Grade	12	7.0	58.3%
5 th Grade	10	8.3	82.8%
6 th Grade	18	7.3	40.7%
Total k through 6th	86	41.1	47.8%
7 th & 8 th	53	17.0	32.1%
9-12 th	153	56	37.0%
Total All Ages	335	133.3	39.8%

³ Children of Trinity Attendees through grade 12

Adults



Section 4: Survey Results of Practices of Other Area Churches

The Sunday School Task Force members each surveyed one or more evangelical churches in the area to determine if the challenges and experiences that Trinity has relative to the children and adult Sunday School program are shared by other churches. We also sought to determine the solutions that they may have (or tried) and what the results have been.

It was our objective to determine if there would be a 'Best Practice' approach that we could recommend to the Trinity leadership. Congregation size (Sunday morning attendance) varied from a low of 75 to a high of 1800. As far as could be determined the demographics of the churches surveyed were similar to the demographics of Trinity.

Estimated Participation in Sunday School by Age

- Adults; 20% to 60% participation
- Children K through 6; Incomplete information
- Youth 7 through 12; Incomplete information

When Sunday School Happens

- Three churches had a separate time for Sunday School.
- Four churches had Sunday School hours concurrent with one or more worship times.
- One of the churches in the second group has the Adult Sunday School meet on Wednesday evening when the youth are meeting for their program.
- In two cases of the concurrent SS/Worship schedules, it was mentioned that the parents are concerned that their children are not getting exposure to the worship service.
- Two churches continue children's SS through the summer.

Descriptions of Sunday School Curriculum for Children

- Sunlight Kids (for 2 – 3 year-olds)
- “What’s in the Bible” DVD (grades 5-6)
- “Biblically based”
- Gospel Light, Gospel Project, Life Way

Descriptions of Sunday School Curriculum for Adults

- Most churches have a mix of Bible, topical, and Christian book studies.
- Some churches also include at least one Bible study class.
- One church noted that the class topics are often driven by the current emphasis from the pulpit.
- Some churches are including classes on marriage and parenting.

Challenges to the Sunday School Programs

- Several churches mentioned space problems. The concurrent worship/SS was a solution pursued by some.
- While a full year commitment can be hard on teachers, some churches ask teachers to commit to a full school year.
- One church has broken down the class schedule for the adults to three 6 to 8 week sessions.
- Some churches encourage couples to team-teach.
- Each of the churches has a different approach to encourage adult and children/youth in the Sunday School programs.
- One approach is to have a Sunday School Fair where classes have a booth with their particular class presented and a sign-up sheet.

- One church has a Sunday School emphasis the whole month of September; each Sunday a different class grouping is highlighted.
- Some churches have the Sunday School program emphasized from the pulpit once a month.

Our Observations

- Sunday School programs differ widely among churches.
- Each church has had to evaluate their specific needs and find solutions. In some cases they appear to have been successful, while others are still experimenting. We may need to be open to trying new approaches to find a best fit for Trinity.

Opportunities We See

Involving More Adults and their Children

- Involve more adults in Adult Spiritual Life Classes.
- Offer some courses that last 6-8 weeks.
- Classes should appeal to new, middle and mature Christians.
- Have a variety of classes for men, women, and mixed groups.
- Course suggestions: marriage, family life, parenting for various ages, finances, witnessing, and prayer.
- Let people give more testimonies during the service to demonstrate spiritual growth; people value the experience of others.

Involving More Children in Sunday School

- Support children's ministry by...
- Greater emphasis during Sunday worship (prayer, overview/update of what is going on, testimonies).
- More involvement of children in worship (reading, music).
- Involve more of the ministry staff in supporting Children's Ministry.
- Periodically highlight the critical importance of spiritual formation during childhood during worship.
- Affirm Sunday School participation by children, for example by a strong beginning (Fall) and ending (Spring) programs.
- Regular, direct communication with all parents of Sunday School age children about the value and content of Sunday School to engage parents in the spiritual formation of their children.

Involving More Adults in Children's Ministries:

- Encourage adults to serve in Children's Ministry by...
- Helping people recognize their spiritual gifts for children's ministry.
- Providing opportunities for potential teachers to "shadow" veteran teachers.

- Periodically providing a class on Sunday mornings for those who may want to teach.
- Emphasis team teaching so there is more shared commitment.
- Proactively address behavioral issues. Review, revise and communicate the discipline policies. Provide support staff for difficult students.
- Encourage nursery volunteers to teach Bible songs and stories with children.
- We need to improve recognition from the pulpit. We should express the need for teachers as well as the importance of being a part of SS.
- We need to remind the body more often of the commitment we make as a body to the children from the moment they are dedicated.
- A better kickoff/closing program would be helpful. (9:30 Service - at least for the closing) Highlight the importance of SS for both adult and children. (The youth band could play, children can receive their bibles and or awards, and we could share highlights from adult classes).
- We should have a person at the entrance to greet and lead new people to Sunday school classes. This would comfort those who may feel uneasy about going to a new class and make them feel more welcome.

Section 5: Emerging Best Practices among Evangelical Churches

“Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture.”

Move, by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, with a forward by Bill Hybels, is a book that examines how people who attend churches grow spiritually. A researched-based survey called ‘Reveal’, was conducted in which 1,000 churches participated. The data gathered from the authors’ research present a view of the spiritual journey of the 250,000 congregants that participated in this study. It is a well-founded book that provides a very informative examination of the role of the local church in the disciple-making process. Of particular interest is the identification of a spiritual continuum including four segments of church attendees including those who are...

- Exploring Christ
- Growing in Christ
- Close to Christ
- Christ-centered

“Reveal’s deeper value however, is found in its insights about what creates movement along the journey; for example, which church activities, beliefs, spiritual practices, or activities (evangelism, serving, etc.) are most influential to spiritual growth in different points along the journey”⁴.

*“The Spiritual Life Survey is a research tool local churches can use to assess the spiritual health of their congregations.”*⁵

We strongly recommend that the staff read this book to shape its strategic ministry plan. This approaches ministry planning in a well-organized manner that is both refreshing and intuitive. Some members of this task force have been part of the Discipleship &

⁴ *Move*, p. 259

⁵ *Ibid.*

Ministry Direction leadership teams both in and out of Trinity for many years. We found the insight provided in this book to be profound. This book offers methods and ideas about how we (both as a church and as individuals) can continue to grow spiritually. This is an invaluable tool in helping the pastor, directors, teachers and leaders of Trinity to strategically plan, choose and implement curriculum. It also helps in prioritizing, selecting programs and ministries such as Children's and Adult Sunday School, CommunityLife Groups, etc.

As church leaders examine metrics of spiritual growth, they can have better strategic focus on discipleship. Trinity has chosen the Great Commission as its mission statement. *Move* offers the solid evidence and a clear view of the church's role in disciple making. The goal is to bring people closer to Christ.

The Vitality Report identifies "Commitment to Discipleship" as the central pillar of Trinity's focus going forward. The report states that it is "central to achieving"⁶ the two goals it has put forth for Trinity to become a healthy, missional church. The Ministry Direction Team has identified three areas of need for strategic ministry planning. All three of these, "*an Emotional Healthy Church*", "*Healing and Growth through Authentic Community*" and "*Strategically aligning and increasing the effectiveness of our outreach efforts*" will be impacted positively by adopting the growth factors laid out in *Move*.

The Sunday School Task Force has completed its research and has identified changes that need to be made in our Sunday School Program. These changes will help us achieve our goal of making disciples and accomplishing the three goals stated above that we have adopted for Trinity. *Reveal* shows the three areas through which growth occurs and how the church can impact these three categories. The categories are:

- Spiritual Beliefs and Attitudes
- Organized Church Activities
- Personal Spiritual Practices

Best practices churches get people moving: "They embed the Bible in everything."

Because we are embarking on a new path of spiritual vitality at Trinity and the leaders of the church are charged with leading this change forward, we must share some important findings that *Reveal* has discovered. The findings challenge some of our most basic beliefs and even though some of the statements below seem like "of course" statements, the real impact and implications of these are far greater than we now know. Also, some of the statements are the opposite of the conclusions than we might naturally draw. What we want to do at Trinity is provide the best practices we can to move people along the spiritual growth path. What we do not want to do is waste a lot of time, money, energy and effort providing programs and activities that really do not help people to grow as disciples. That's why we want the pastors and ministry directors to really think about these, considering their implications for church leaders: here are some of the statements we need to think about:

- "It is possible to measure spiritual growth."
- "Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture."

⁶ Vitality Report p. 4

- “Spiritually stalled or dissatisfied people account for one out of four church congregants.”
- “Lots of apathetic non-believers who attend church are unlikely to ever accept Christ.”
- “Church activities do not predict or drive long-term spiritual growth.”
- “Leadership matters.”
- “The simplicity of the findings described in *Move* offer insights and strategies that church leaders can act upon with a high level of confidence in the lives of those they serve.”
- *Move* reveals what church congregants need and want from church leaders.

Does this report ‘move’ you, brothers and sisters, leaders of those entrusted into your care, to learn and do all you can to lead our people into a deeper relationship with Christ? We hope so. If it does, then let’s get moving. Read *Move*!

*The following is a link that provides visual graphs and aids available to churches.

<http://www.revealnow.com/move.asp>

Part 4. Options for Sunday Morning Discipleship

A Few Observations

There are about 600 members and friends who consider Trinity their church home. Of these, typically 85-120 people are involved in our Spiritual Life classes, which number between 5 and 7. We estimate that roughly three quarters of Sunday attendance is over 18 years old or about 340 people. Typically, one third or less participate in Spiritual Life classes on a given Sunday. With the exception of the Sanctuary and Chapel, the spaces available for Adult Spiritual Life Classes are limited in number and by size. Clearly, we do not have the physical capacity to provide a Sunday morning experience for learning and fellowship for every adult.

We learned some important things from our survey results. First, it is clear that most of our adult classes function more like discussion groups than as typical classes. To connect with friends is a very positive thing, but it often can deter new people from entering a long-established group as revealed by comments from adults who do not attend currently. Second, it is worth noting that the majority of adults participating in Spiritual Life classes don’t have children in Sunday School. This means that the parents of the children we seek to teach in Sunday School are under-represented among adult participants.

We believe having a place for parents to participate from 9:30 to 10:30am is important to foster participation of children. The Sunday School Attendance Table shown above reveals that more than 330 children and youth are part of Trinity’s ministry. More than half are junior high age or younger. These children, by and large, will only get to Sunday School if their parents bring them. We note the comments by several teachers that many children are irregular in their attendance and often tardy. *If we aspire to maximize the participation of children in Sunday School, it makes sense to make space for their parents in our class offerings.*

The Sunday School Attendance table shows that, on the average, about 48% of children in our constituency are present in Sunday School each week. What are some options to make Sunday School an attractive option for parents? This is an important challenge,

especially for those parents who did not grow up with either a personal experience or commitment to Sunday School.

In addition to Sunday School, Trinity has offered Children's Church during the second worship hour. While it is for a shorter amount of time than Sunday School, it is still an opportunity for the intentional spiritual formation of children. Attendance at Children's Church varies, but typically runs between 30 and 50 children. Of those children who attend, about one third also participate in Sunday School. This means for two thirds of the children attending Children's Church, it is their primary experience of spiritual formation through the church.

We do not have enough space to accommodate all the adults at Trinity in classes during the Sunday School hour. Further, we know that fewer children are involved in Sunday School than are part of the church's constituency. We think one contributing factor may be the lack of space, both physical and relational, for the parents of young children. If they don't find existing classes attractive, where do they go at 9:30am while their kids to participate? How could this be changed?

Here are several options to consider:

1. One option is to make providing classes for parents of younger children (birth through 6th) our highest priority. Given our relative lack of space, this would probably require stopping other popular adult classes. Of course, people without children of Sunday School age have the option of CommunityLife participation for fellowship and spiritual growth at a time other than Sunday morning, but this would require significant sacrifice.
2. A second possible option would be offer more than one Sunday School hour. Typically this is done by offering Sunday School concurrent with worship. While one part of the congregation worships, the other either attends or staffs classes. Many churches do this successfully if their educational space is sufficiently separated from the worship space. In our case, sound from the Sanctuary during worship seems likely to interfere with classes meeting in adjacent spaces. A preliminary investigation by Trinity's Facilities Team has estimated the cost of sound abatement at ~\$12,500. This opens the possibility of a highly cost effective way to offer more Adult Spiritual Life Classes and greater flexibility for families. Typically concurrent Sunday School does not increase the number of teachers required for children's Sunday School due to combining grades. Commonly, churches our size have Children's Sunday School for two or three grade clusters. We see the following long-term benefits to a concurrent Sunday School format.
We recommend that Trinity further explore the feasibility of sound proofing the Sanctuary.

Potential Benefits of Concurrent Sunday School

- a. We would have the opportunity to have a later start time for the first worship hour. This will be more attractive to new comers and allow for better balance in attendance between our two services.
- b. We expect more children participating in a richer experience of Christian formation. In effect, we would replace the briefer Children's Church with a full hour of Sunday School for children who only come to the second worship hour.

- c. We would be able to offer a greater number and more varied Adult Spiritual Life Classes during two services due to greater available space.
 - d. With more classes for adults, we expect greater opportunities to build community.
 - e. Concurrent Sunday School offers a more efficient use of our building.
3. A third related option would be to move classes for adults without children of Sunday School age off-site for class. In years past, classes were held at the Keeney St. Elementary. If people were willing, we could explore the cost of renting space for an hour on Sunday Morning.
 4. A fourth possibility would be to significantly restructure all of our Sunday morning discipleship toward an inter-generational model, where older people, younger people, along with parents and their children all learn together. This would probably require a deep shift in our church culture.
 5. A fifth option would be to offer a formational experience for children that is fully equivalent to Sunday School, but at a different time during the week.

None of these options are ideal and each one has costs associated with it. Some costs are financial, such as renting other space or renovating our present building. But other costs may be even greater. With any of these possibilities, some would experience the loss of convenience and familiar routines. Long-established patterns of how people relate with others in the church would need to be re-thought. Are we supple enough to consider such opportunities? If we are to continue with Sunday morning as our prime time for the spiritual formation of children, it seems that there is room to enhance how children and youth are with the gospel.

Part 5. Concluding Remarks

This report is a snapshot of information compiled to evaluate and examine Trinity's current Sunday School programs and its significant contributions to our church's discipleship efforts. It also identified areas of opportunity to improve our programs based on feedback from both participants and would-be participants. Wide ranging recommendations included alignment of curriculum between adult and children classes, looking at alternate classroom structures to be more inviting and strengthening how we emphasize the importance of our Sunday School programs to the whole church.

We can also learn from the best practices of other community churches both locally and nationally. This can include alternate approaches to adult and children's Sunday School including how it is scheduled and the type of curriculum used. Furthermore, we also can use some of the metric tools used in *Move*, and take away the lesson that best practice churches intentionally "embed the Bible in everything."

We would like to thank the Trinity Leadership team for your continued support, eagerness to learn, faith to pray for guidance, and the courage to listen to God's word to strengthen our discipleship efforts.