



# ALL SAINTS'

EPISCOPAL CHURCH & DAY SCHOOL

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## A Letter from the Rector: Sunday Morning Service Changes at All Saints'

### Background

Since I arrived at All Saints' almost 9 months ago, I have heard from some people who are dissatisfied with aspects of our Sunday morning schedule. Not all dislike the same things, but it has become clear that our current pattern, which we have followed for 5 years, was not fully meeting the needs of everyone. Not wanting to be rash about any changes to something as fundamental as our pattern of worship, I have been listening and learning about this pattern, paying attention to the particular rhythms of life here. Although the authority to set our worship schedule rests solely with me as rector, I wanted to gather information more systematically before making any decision about our Sunday worship and schedule. And so we designed and released a survey exploring a set of issues related to Sunday worship and education. Almost 270 parishioners responded. Many positive things were shared about our worship, particularly related to the clergy and the music. Most parishioners feel a high degree of satisfaction with our worship, and it was heart-warming to hear so much appreciation. At the same time, there were many suggestions for improvement. The responses were diverse, but some themes became clear. Among them were: a strong desire for a children's chapel (a service of the Word for younger children, who join the main service for the Eucharistic prayer), a wish for our children to worship in the main church, and a sense of community division because of two simultaneous services.

### Why change now?

In my experience, there is never an ideal time for change. All we can do as faithful people is to try to discern what God intends us to do, and then do it, trusting that God will be with us. One particular factor, though, is urging us towards a decision now, rather than later. As we have just announced to the parish, Father Don Monson will be retiring at the end of this month. While his departure is by his choice, and not budget-related, it is not prudent at this time to replace his part-time position. We all know that All Saints' has significant financial challenges. We have been successfully meeting those challenges through the generosity of our parishioners, and with the leanest budget in recent memory. At this point in the year, we are running a small deficit, and in that condition, we cannot yet afford to hire another priest, even a part-time one like Don. Although we do have unpaid, volunteer help from Fr. Lierle and Canon Dombek, we cannot ask of them anywhere near what we asked of Don. And so, All Saints' finds its clergy staff reduced from its usual 5-7 priests down to 3 priests, two of whom are full-time (me and Licia) and one of whom is part-time (Bishop Burrill). We have not had this few clergy in many years. With our staffing stretched so thin, we cannot sustain our schedule of 5 services on a weekend after Don's departure.

### Challenges with the current schedule

Upon reflection, and considering your input, the biggest challenges with the current worship schedule include:

- \* A sense of community division due to simultaneous services at 10am
- \* Clergy interacting with only half of the community on any given Sunday
- \* Limited opportunity for our children to worship in the main church, with a full musical, architectural, and liturgical experience
- \* Diminished clergy resources
- \* Three small services (Sat 5pm, Sun 8am, Sun 12noon) out of five, which is not a good use of clergy or music resources. Two of these services were instituted in the past for reasons that no longer apply (for example, the 12noon was originally for those who preferred the 1928 Prayer Book).
- \* Insufficient variety. Our only large services are both at 10am.

## Core Values

In considering all of the different possibilities in conversations with the staff and vestry, we have particularly tried to keep in mind several core values that we share at All Saints’:

- \* Excellence in worship and music
- \* Inclusion of all, especially our children and youth
- \* Provision of a varied and full liturgical experience
- \* A history of flexibility. All Saints’ has had any number of different Sunday schedules in its history, reflecting the differing needs of its community at the time.

## The New Schedule

After much consideration, here is our new weekend worship schedule.

Regular Schedule starting September 12, 2010	Summer Schedule (Sunday after Memorial Day—June 6, 2010 through Labor Day—September 5, 2010)
Saturday 5pm Holy Eucharist (chapel)	Saturday 5pm (chapel)
Sunday 7:30am Holy Eucharist (church)	Sunday 7:30am (church)
Sunday 9am Holy Eucharist (church)	Sunday 9am Adult Education (Manning Hall)
Sunday 9am Children’s Chapel (chapel)	Sunday 10am Holy Eucharist (church)
Sunday 10am Formation & Education	Sunday 10am Children’s Chapel (chapel)
Sunday 11am Holy Eucharist (church)	

Children’s chapel will be at 9am (10am in the summer) in the chapel for ages 4 and up (including any teens or parents who wish to join them for the liturgy of the Word), with everyone returning to the main church at the peace for the Eucharistic prayer.

The basic character of the services will be the same, with the 7:30am identical to the current 8am, the 9am and 11am being full liturgies with the 9am also including components for younger parishioners.

## Advantages of the new schedule

- \* Everyone gets to worship in the main church, with greater resources and a deeper experience of our tradition. We can share our very best with our children.
- \* Children’s chapel (parents can worship without their children for the first part of the service, if they wish, and children receive an age-appropriate worship experience with a priest and other leaders).
- \* Flexibility of a 9 or 11am service, each a full service, but offering variety. While the 9am will be in many respects a “family” service, which is essential, it will be quite different from Church-in-the-Round. Moreover, many families may also prefer the option of the 11am service.
- \* Full-time clergy can be with the two largest services most weeks.
- \* Easier schedule to staff (one fewer service, and none simultaneous).
- \* Summer schedule to take into account our reduced summer attendance and clergy and other staff vacations.

Please understand that I do not make these changes lightly. In many respects, I wish we could postpone this topic for a year or more! Although no one’s usual service is shifting by any more than an hour, any change in the pattern of one’s day can be jarring for some. I know that many will embrace these changes, but others will have concerns. I respect the different opinions and emotions that will result from this, and am willing to talk with anyone who wishes to do so. Please join us at 9am in Manning Hall on both May 9 and May 16 for a discussion. After gathering extensive information, and consulting at length with the staff and vestry (both of whom support these changes), I am convinced that this new pattern will enable us to be more inclusive, flexible, and ready for growth, while using our human resources more strategically. I hope that all of you will embrace these changes, and show the flexibility and grace which are the hallmarks of our community. May God continue to bless All Saints’ and guide us into the future God intends for us.

Faithfully,

*Poulson +*