

From The Desk Of
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To: St. John's congregation

Regarding: Change of start time from 9:30 to 10:00 AM

Dear brothers and sisters:

During my tenure as Rector of St. John's, the topic of the start time for our main service has repeatedly cropped up. As a result, the clergy, wardens, vestry, and various members of the congregation have extensively discussed both the benefits and the costs of a later time start.

During our time at Abington Baptist, there was no flexibility regarding this matter. However, after settling into our new church home, it was again suggested that we give serious consideration to a later start time. Our Bishop Steve and members of his staff — deeply involved in the expansion of Christ's kingdom — also have urged us to address the matter of the Sunday worship time.

1 Decision

Therefore, *effective 2 September* (i.e., the first Sunday in September), *we have decided to change the start time of our primary service from 9:30 to 10:00 AM*, with Christian Education (CE) after the worship service. We are neither anticipating nor planning any change to the 8 AM service starting time and our "Flex Sunday" scheduling will continue as before:

1. First Sundays: meal and fellowship
2. Second Sundays: Christian Education for all
3. Third Sundays: Flexible Use
4. Fourth Sundays: Christian Education for all

"... equipping the saints for the work of the ministry ..." (Ephesians 4:12)

5. Fifth Sundays: Flexible Use

With this change, the flow of the service will look something like figure 1 on the following page. As you look at that schematic, three terms require explanation.

- The modifier “-ish” does not mean we will ignore the clock. It simply means that we have some flexibility and can make use of it. Otherwise, times should be read as “hard” starting and stopping times (e.g. “10:00 *sharp*”) and must be observed with discipline.
- “Soft end” refers to the fact that many enjoy hanging around after meals on first Sundays and Flex Sundays. I recognize that this happens after CE also; however, I don’t want to give the impression that we won’t take ending times especially seriously on CE Sundays!
- “Other Sundays” refer to Flex (i.e. third) Sundays, summer schedule, fifth Sundays, and other similar occasions.

2 Concerns Addressed

Various concerns are addressed in the making of this decision.

2.1 Practical concerns

1. Those who have attended St. John’s over many years will recall that we have changed worship times on Sundays before, in order to fit into the schedule of other churches permitting us to use their space. That previous flexibility shows that a shift of 30 minutes should not dramatically alter your traditions on this day of rest and worship.
2. This gives some relief to those who find the earlier starting time onerous, especially those with smaller children, for whom I have the greatest concern as we look toward the future. This fits within our strategy of “Outreach, Worship, Fellowship”.
3. This change will enhance our position in the marketplace of churches, as many other congregations in our area and in our diocese start somewhere between 10 and 11 AM.

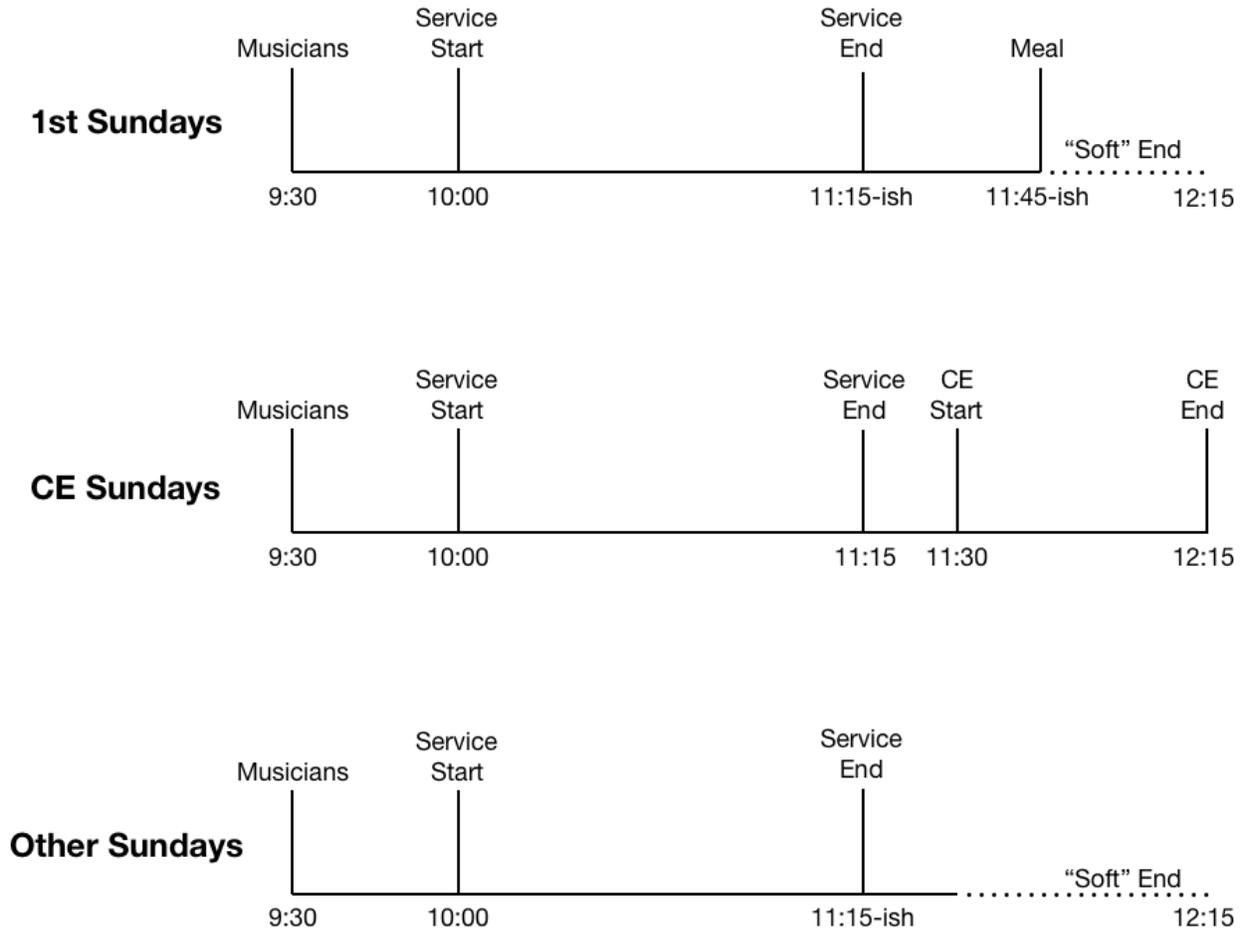


Figure 1: 10 AM Start Time Schematic

2.2 Pastoral concerns

1. For those who travel longer distances, we believe that this will be a welcomed change.
2. For those who have requested a later starting time, we have had an ear for your concerns.
3. This change allows musicians to participate in CE, something that other suggested ideas would not have allowed.
4. It continues to be an important part of our stated purpose to "Know Christ and make Him known" to remove barriers that could prevent someone from coming and staying at St. John's. That purpose was part of the reason for

starting to use modern English in the Bibles (before my tenure) and in the liturgy (during my tenure). Based upon our research, we expect this change to be attractive to new members and our targeted community audience.

3 Conclusion

While some unanticipated adjustments may be needed, I trust that this change will require nothing burdensome of any person or group. Indeed, as has been said, for many it will provide relief regarding the time one must arise on Sunday morning!

I have often spoken of “creativity and flexibility within the standards”. This is one small example of that principle, intended to address both practical and perceived needs as we serve you and reach out to our community.

Your *servus servorum Dei*,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.