

## General QUESTIONS:

- ***When will this Sunday morning schedule change happen?***

Since January 2 is still a part of the traditional Christmas season, we have decided to wait and launch all of this on **January 9**.

- ***Will there be any difference between the two services?***

There will be much that is similar between the two: same sermon, Lord's Supper will be celebrated weekly in both, etc. However, musically, there will be some degree of variation. Perhaps the best way to describe it would be this: the first service will be more mellow than our current service; the second service will stay about where our current service is. *We are not transitioning the first service to a bona fide traditional service.* Overall, our goal is to do the best we can to reach out to our diverse audience, both those who are here and those who are to come.

- ***Why are we going to have the services back-to-back at 9 and 10:30 instead of spreading them out?***

Our desire is to offer the two times on Sunday mornings that seem most conducive to people's schedules. Unfortunately, if you move much earlier than 9 or run any after noon, you get outside of the normal range that people (especially visitors) might be used to. In our efforts to do what we can to reach our community, these are the time slots that seem most ideal.

- ***Are we trying to steer specific age groups to a certain worship service?***

In a way, yes. Obviously, each individual/family will decide which service they will attend. However, we want to do what we can to get Southland "regulars" somewhat spread out between the two services. Part of how we are trying to develop that balance is by designing our youth programs as we have (see the next question for a review). Our hope is that families with kids will choose to come for discipleship first and then stay to worship. This is also why we are offering slightly different worship services. Generally, the second service will be more conducive for families. However, it should be re-stated that each individual/family will make the decision as to which service they will attend.

- ***What is the schedule for kids on Sunday mornings?***

Let's break that question down by age:

*Kids up through age 2* – nursery care will be available for the entire morning.

*Kids age 3 – 5<sup>th</sup> grade:*

- 9:00-9:20 = “Cruisers’ Pit Stop” in the Fellowship Hall. This will be available so that parents can attend the first service or have more time for their Deeper Life Group if needed. This opening time for the kids will be more of a fun, interactive way to start their morning at Southland.
- 9:30-10:15 = regular Sunday School classes.
- 10:30-11:45 = Children’s Church – “Lil’ Cruisers” in the Fellowship Hall (pre-K) and Route 14:6 in the Great Room (K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade).

*Middle school and high school students* – their Sunday School will also meet from 9:30-10:15. If parents want/need their family to participate in worship at 9, that is not a problem. But, there will not be additional activities offered for middle school/high school youth during the second worship service.

- ***Will there be any traditional Sunday School classes meeting?***

Gradually, we will be moving to these Deeper Life Groups as our primary means for doing discipleship on Sunday mornings. However, for the time being, we will be offering regular Sunday School classes as well. The initial plan calls for two classes during each discipleship time slot (9:30-10:15 and 10:30-11:15) for a total of four. The curriculum for these classes will be announced leading up to the start of the year. Each of the four classes will be available to all (for example, no classes will be gender-specific or just for married couples).

- ***With the compact schedule and the emphasis on the Deeper Life Groups, how will we be able to staff all the ministry roles that need filled?***

Details such as this one are perhaps the most beautiful thing to watch God work out in this whole process. Essentially, we will be asking each of our groups to take turns serving together along the way (don't worry, we will not force you to work in an area that you are not comfortable with). This will meet two goals. First, it will serve as a means of strengthening your relationships within your Deeper Life Group – serving together has a way of bonding us together. Second, it will help us carry out all the responsibilities that we need covered on a Sunday morning. Beyond that, the two worship service options will give us more flexibility than we have had in the past. In this new format, it will be possible for people to serve during one worship service and participate in worship during the other. In fact, our goal is to schedule in such a way that each person can attend worship every Sunday. Enclosed in this booklet is a response card. Please fill it out so that we can know where you are willing to serve.

## **QUESTIONS about the Deeper Life Groups:**

### **WHY – QUESTIONS about the PURPOSE of DEEPER LIFE GROUPS:**

- ***What do we hope to accomplish through these groups?***

These groups are designed to accelerate our growth in Christ. As we study God's Word together in the context of close relationships, we have favorable conditions for the Holy Spirit to be at work in us. In our discipleship, these groups will help us move beyond information to transformation, intentionally seeking growth. Part of that means they are also designed to naturally multiply. At the end of a group's time together, we will have more people who are ready to help others take the same journey they have been on.

- ***How do these groups fit into the overall mission of Southland?***

If you consider the task Jesus gave us to "make disciples," part of it means that we help those who are already in Christ grow to become more like Him. These groups will actually be quite intentional about that task as they provide us with travelling companions as we journey together on the path of following Jesus. Long-term, these groups will also equip us to reach out to new people who don't know Christ and help them start the same journey we are on.

### **WHO – QUESTIONS about the PEOPLE who will be in these DEEPER LIFE GROUPS:**

- ***How many people will be in each group?***

In order to promote trust, accountability and the building of strong relationships, these groups are designed for 3-5 people. Once you go beyond that number, it becomes harder and harder for people to feel comfortable being genuine.

- ***Can they be mixed gender groups so that a husband and wife can be together?***

In order to develop the relationships these groups are designed to produce, it is important for them to be made-up of people from the same gender. This will enhance the closeness of the groups and help people feel more freedom to share openly with others in the group.

- ***How will people be placed in these groups?***

We really want this to be a process guided by the Holy Spirit through prayer – after all, who knows better the right fits for these groups than He does? To launch these groups, the leaders are prayerfully selecting facilitator's and giving them the opportunity to pray and seek God's leading for who should be in their group.

- ***Does that mean I cannot sign-up for a group or be in a group with a friend or start a group of my own?***

On one side of the response card, there is a place to indicate if you would like to be a part of a Deeper Life Group and if you want to do it with someone in

particular. We will compile that information and share it with our facilitators. While we cannot guarantee that it will always work out, our facilitators will be mindful of such things as they prayerfully seek God's leading when it comes to the other members of their group. As for starting your own group ... overall, we really want these groups to be led by the facilitators the leadership has prayerfully chosen.

- ***What if I bring a guest to church on a Sunday morning? Can they participate in the group with me? Can new people join a group along the way?***

This is a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, in no way do we want to promote any kind of exclusivity where people feel unwelcomed. Yet, on the other hand, these groups are designed to be a place of trust where we can share what might be sensitive information. As much as possible, we want to protect the relational dynamics within a group. We will ask that facilitators lead their groups to read these situations and be mindful of how the Holy Spirit is leading. Of course, there will still be traditional Sunday School classes. Perhaps on a given Sunday, it would be best for you to join your guest in one of these classes. Or, maybe it would be an opportunity for you to have more of an in-depth spiritual conversation with them. Frankly, this is one of the challenges of this particular model. Also, remember that new groups will be launching on a fairly regular basis. If your guest becomes a regular, this will give you an opportunity to participate in a Deeper Life Group together.

#### **WHEN – QUESTIONS about the TIMING of DEEPER LIFE GROUP:**

- ***Why not have these Deeper Life Groups sometime during the week and still keep our Sunday School in tact?***

In a word, it's all about SIMPLICITY and working to keep the main thing the main thing. Those in Christian leadership have long emphasized the need for people to find a small group of 3-5 where you can grow together as you follow Jesus. It's the Proverbs 27:17 idea of "iron sharpens iron." Unfortunately, churches have traditionally communicated this message: "we think such groups are important, but we're not giving up any of our time to make them happen. You'll have to find time on your own." In our day and age, that is unfortunate and creates a huge hurdle to overcome. As much as possible, we want to provide this opportunity for growth without making it one more layer on the calendar. In the long-run, we are choosing to sacrifice the good for the sake of what has the potential to be great. We believe that the discipleship benefits we see in the end will be well worth the challenges we face in making this transition.

- ***Do these groups have to meet on Sunday morning or can they meet another time throughout the week?***

Since people are already here on Sunday mornings, our desire is that this becomes the *regular* time when Deeper Life Groups meet. However, there will be some groups who meet at other times throughout the week. This will be helpful for those who have work schedules that require them to be gone on Sunday morning or for those who are actively involved in teaching a kids' Sunday School class. There is great flexibility in this way of doing discipleship and we do not want to be overly rigid with the specifics.

- ***Will they all start in January or will they be rolled out more gradually? How long will they run?***

Right now, it is our goal to launch groups in three phases: in January, March and May (potentially a fourth in September). They are designed to run approximately a year, meaning there should be some variation on when groups are done. Of course, that opens the door for a variety of new starting times in early 2012 as we launch the second generation of these groups. While our desire is to get as much participation as possible, if people are unable to get connected to a group early in 2011, there will be further opportunities down the road.

#### **QUESTIONS about the LOGISTICS of DEEPER LIFE GROUP:**

- ***Where are all of these groups going to meet?***

Ultimately, each leader will be responsible for deciding the location of their group. However, in many ways, this is far less of a problem than it would be if we were trying to find classroom space for larger groups. For example, a Sunday School class could not meet in an office, but a Deeper Life Group could. Also, the small numbers make it possible for a group to do it off-site at a coffee shop, restaurant or even in someone's living room.

- ***What will the curriculum be for these Deeper Life Groups?***

We are developing a sort of discipleship manual for these groups. It will help our groups walk together through the basics of what it means to follow Jesus, hitting on topics and texts from all over Scripture. Each week, group members will need to spend some time studying on their own in preparation for their group time together.

- ***How will we develop a sense of confidence within the group to feel comfortable sharing with one another?***

Because of the closeness of relationships that these groups will foster, trust is going to be a huge ingredient. To help establish that trust, at the outset of the group, members will be asked to sign a group covenant. This will include commitments to participate regularly, to maintain confidentiality, etc.

Accountability to that covenant will be handled within the individual group. Of course, if needed, the leadership can be brought in as deemed appropriate by the facilitator as a last resort.

- ***What if a person needs to leave one of these Deeper Life Groups?***

Again, part of the commitment a group member will be making is to participate regularly with the group. However, ultimately, these groups are voluntary. Our hope is that you come to value this group so much that you wouldn't want to leave. However, if circumstances dictate that it must happen, we will handle that as situations arise.

## **The Biggest QUESTION: Why mess with what is now working?**

In essence, this is the \$64 million question: why are we changing? Here is how this process evolved among the leadership ... it is the consensus that we need to move beyond where we currently are. There are certain ways that our current system hinders us from effectively making more and better disciples. It can happen (and is happening!). However, these limitations prevent us from doing so to the best of our ability. Since that mission is to be our focus, we have to make adjustments so that we can do it better.

As we have felt the Holy Spirit leading us in this direction, the leadership has had three priorities:

- (1) Move to two services to facilitate an increase in attendance (both already and still to come).
- (2) Have the most optimum Sunday AM time slots for worship at 9 and 10:30.
- (3) Continue to provide solid opportunities for people to grow in depth (discipleship).

Because of those factors, we have to overlap worship and discipleship to accomplish both on Sunday mornings. That means change has to happen. We feel God is opening these doors for us at this time. Most importantly, in the end, they will help us flourish as we grow in both depth and numbers. Ultimately, being faithful to God's leading is the path we must choose even over our comfort and routine.

If you have further questions, we encourage you to submit them via e-mail (send to [gotquestions@gosouthland.org](mailto:gotquestions@gosouthland.org)) or by leaving a note in the office.