

May 18, 2010

Dear Members in Christ,

Recently you received a letter from Jay Metts introducing the Worship Schedule Discussion Group. This group was sanctioned by the Worship Board to identify ways in which the Cantor can be actively involved and present in every worship service. Right now having two worship services at 11:00 am prevents this and hinders maximizing the musical talents of all our members.

This past Sunday the Congregation Council discussed this topic at length along with a proposal offered by the Worship Board to try an experiment. Council approved having only one 11:00 am worship service on the third Sunday of each month during this season of Pentecost. The dates of these Sundays are June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, October 17 and November 21. This service will be called *Third Sundays at Ebenezer*. The 8:30 am Sunday worship service is not impacted since there is no time conflict.

The entire proposal and a question and answer sheet are included below for your information and study. This experiment is for one Sunday each month for six months. During this time period all members are encouraged to participate in worship, pray for our congregation family and offer comment and input. Please direct comments and suggestions to Jay Metts or any of the other Worship Schedule Discussion Group members – Jim Johnson, Kathy Miller, Stan Frick, Nancy Buchan, Nancy Johnson and Tom White. The E-mail address for the group is [ELCworshipschedule@gmail.com](mailto:ELCworshipschedule@gmail.com). They look forward to hearing from you.

In peace,

John Caldwell, President  
Ebenezer Congregation Council

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## **PROPOSAL TO EBENEZER LUTHERAN CHURCH WORSHIP BOARD, MAY 11, 2010 FROM WORSHIP SCHEDULE DISCUSSION GROUP**

### **Statement of the issue being addressed:**

Having two worship services at 11:00 on Sunday mornings prevents our Cantor from providing musical leadership to both services. Through prayer and conversation we seek to identify ways in which the Cantor can be actively involved and present in every service.

### **About the Worship Schedule Discussion Group:**

At its April meeting the Worship Board sanctioned the formation of a discussion group requested and led by Jay Metts for the purpose of exploring worship schedule

alternatives. On April 28, a letter went to the members of the congregation introducing the discussion group, its purpose and membership, and inviting comments.

**Pathway to the desired outcome:**

We are entering this time of discernment with no predetermined answer or timeline. Finding the optimum worship schedule for Ebenezer may require us to think “outside the box” and be creative. It may require the whole body of worshipers to share in sacrifices once a schedule is decided upon. Throughout the process, we will seek the support of the congregation through prayer and open conversation.

**Proposal:**

The Time after Pentecost is the longest season of the church year. The major festivals of the church year, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, have been celebrated and now we take time during this season to focus on our day-to-day life as Christians. It is the season of life and growth, signified by the use of the color green in our worship spaces.

We propose that during this season of Pentecost, we set aside one Sunday a month to hold one 11:00 am worship service and that this will be worship without labels. (The 8:30 Sunday service will not be impacted.) Cantor Tom will be responsible for planning the liturgy and music and using the bounty of talents and resources available at Ebenezer as he deems appropriate. We will encourage and support him in the use of diverse worship expressions to craft worship experiences that help us glorify God and grow in faith.

**Why?**

- It will be an opportunity for all worshipers to experience the diversity of the Lutheran expression of worship.
- It will reinforce to all of us the importance of having Tom’s leadership consistently available to the whole body of Christ at Ebenezer.
- It will be an outward manifestation of our desire to live and grow as Christians as we work together to discern what we are called to do.

We further propose that we designate the third Sunday of each month for this unified worship service and that it be called *Third Sundays at Ebenezer*. Specific dates are:

- June 20
- July 18
- August 15 (*also our fifth baptismal festival of the year*)
- September 19
- October 17
- November 21

**Conclusion:**

This proposal is coming ahead of the period of discussion upon which the desired outcome will be based, but it is not intended to signify a predetermined outcome or

decision. It is intended to give us all a series of common experiences that will facilitate our conversations.

During this six-month period, the entire congregation is asked to remain in prayer to discern what we are called to do. The Worship Schedule Discussion Group will actively seek input from members. We will hold open discussions throughout this time to address all concerns.

**Worship Schedule Discussion Group:**

Jay Metts, Chair  
Nancy Buchan  
Stan Frick  
Jim Johnson  
Nancy Johnson  
Kathy Miller  
Tom White, Cantor

To contact the discussion group please send an E-mail to [ELCworshipschedule@gmail.com](mailto:ELCworshipschedule@gmail.com) or mail a letter to Jay Metts in c/o Ebenezer Lutheran Church, 1301 Richland St., Columbia, SC 29201.

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**Q&A:**

*Why can't we just keep the schedule we have?*

Those who enable New Life indicate a desire to have strong musical leadership, which was one of the qualities the search team found in Cantor Tom. *Third Sundays* would allow him the creativity to serve all the worshipers at 11:00.

*Why can't we add a music associate or part time musician to lead New Life?*

Under the current spending plan and financial outlook for the near future, this is simply impossible.

*What will happen to 8:30 Eucharist on Sunday?*

Nothing. There is no scheduling conflict with this service.

*How will this impact the Chancel Choir and New Life Musicians?*

Planning ahead to combine musical resources on specific dates will allow for much more efficient use of their time and gifts, especially during the summer months when these devoted volunteers will have an opportunity to take some much deserved rest.

*Where will the Third Sunday services be held?*

If you combine the average attendance at both 11:00 services, it exceeds the capacity of the Chapel, so *Third Sundays at Ebenezer* will be held in the sanctuary. The Chapel will continue be used all other Sundays for the New Life service. Many other services are held in the Chapel throughout the year and Cantor Tom has plans to utilize it more and more.

*Are the council or pastors trying to force this on us?*

No. This is a grassroots effort put forth by many members of Ebenezer who are concerned about the current schedule. The pastors support this effort, but are in no way controlling it. The congregation council will act according to its role in governing, but this will be a congregation-wide conversation.

*What will happen at the end of six months?*

We want to emphasize that this proposal is not intended to fast track any predetermined outcome, so our honest answer is, “we don’t know!” We pray that as our conversation begins we will use this time to be guided by the Holy Spirit. In six months we may have a clear understanding of how to move forward, but we cannot predict that we will.

*When will I find out more?*

We will make every effort to get timely information to the people of Ebenezer through multiple outlets: bulletin, Parish News, forums, emails, etc.