

March 2, 2010

Dear Church Family,

Please linger a moment with my greeting: “*Church Family*.” Not “Church Institution” or “Church Organization” or even “Church Community,” but “*Church Family*”—a “household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). And as such, I am calling for a family meeting. For Sundays, April 11, 18, 25, May 2, 9, 16, we will gather together for worship in the sanctuary at our regular 9:15 and 10:45 a.m. times.

For those six Sundays, our services will be neither traditional nor contemporary as we’re accustomed. Instead, whatever music is played will be simple, and we will not utilize our choir, organ, string or brass ensembles, or worship bands in the service orders those mornings—just the congregation and our worship leaders. The services will be planned with excellence as simple does not mean slack. One of the things I want to accomplish during that time is address the worship statement our elders crafted in 2009 after their year-long study of worship. I have included a copy with this letter.

I told the elders I would preach on their work after it was completed. It is easier to do this with the NewSong and Traditional attendees under one roof and the services being neither traditional nor contemporary, nor weighted one way or the other. We remain committed to “bilingual worship” as the enclosed statement articulates, and our NewSong and Traditional services will resume on Sunday, May 23.

This family meeting is not being called because anything is wrong or because I have an axe to grind. There is no open strife or controversies in our church, but rather a great spirit and growth. I am quite happy here Sunday to Sunday and believe most of our church is too. There is so much for which our staff and I express continual gratitude to God.

I prayed through this idea for three months before ever discussing it with staff members, the session elders, and worship teams and committees. They have endorsed the idea and are looking forward to those Sundays along with me. It is often when God’s people step out of their norms and routines that they see and hear from God in new and fresh ways. Besides, the worship of our God is not a performance to suit our Sunday pleasure. It is as Matt Redman sings: “I’m coming back to the heart of worship, and it’s all about you, Jesus.” Interestingly, Redman wrote that song, “The Heart of Worship,” after his church in Great Britain did something similar to what we’ll do in April and May.

A season of health and peace is an apt moment to draw together like this. Not only do I want to address our worship but also matters of vision, direction, and mission for First Evan—an opportune time to consider these things coming out of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations this month. Churches do not unify around services or styles of, churches unify around common mission. I'd like to share with you biblically what such mission looks like and requires of us at First Evan.

Adult and children's Sunday schools are unaffected during those six weeks and we will still have ministry reports, commissionings, and prayers in the services. Again, we're not slacking the services in any way in choosing simplicity for those six Sundays. We are gathering in our sanctuary at 9:15 and 10:45 a.m. (your choice, back-to-back same format/content services) to glorify God through "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16) and edify one another in applying His truth proclaimed—"therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory [the beauty/the boasting] of God" (Rom. 15:7).

I ask not only for your attendance but also your trust and your prayers. God has entrusted me not just with a preaching stewardship but also with leadership responsibilities, and I believe I am following His lead in directing us to this. Perhaps God wants to do something among us during those six weeks that we'll look back on as indelibly transformative. But we must be responsive and attentive to Him.

Grace and peace to you,

Cole Huffman

P. S. Sorry, but the coffee bar and donut table in the Soltau Center will be closed those six Sundays. Now there's a controversy!

The Worship Document can be viewed at <http://www.firstevan.org/about/WorshipDocument.swf>