

KFBC Order of Service Change

Change is inevitable, and it is also often necessary. Some changes are bad, some are good, and some are a bit of both. Often the quality of a change is largely linked to how much time has been spent considering it, and how sincerely it has been given to God in prayer. Further, and perhaps most importantly, a good change can be received very poorly if the purpose and nature of it isn't properly and routinely communicated. With all of that being said, I am hopeful I can help make sense of the deeper "whys" behind the change. On the surface, we are making this change to incorporate communion into our weekly gathering. If you peel back the layers, however, there are a number of reasons for the change we have made. Below is a short outline of the changes to the gathering, followed by an explanation of each point.

As you should expect by now, the explanations are thorough.

***Please note that not all of these changes will take effect immediately – we already have a lot of moving parts and want to facilitate everything well! Future changes will be written in *italics* and explained below. ***

Welcome

- *The Music Team opens with a song*
- *Welcome and Updates – Done by a Welcome Host volunteer, not the pastor*
- *Ministry Spotlight – Done by a Ministry Leader*

Music

- *The Music Leader will open in prayer*
- *Most of the music team's songs will be done together*

Prayer

- *One of the Elders will lead the church in prayer*
- *People will be invited to receive personal prayer from our Prayer Team during the break*

Break

- *The Elder leading communion will dismiss everyone for break after a brief explanation*
- *Families will check in their children with Kids' Ministry*
- *Others will greet one another, grab a coffee, and collect the communion elements before returning to their seats.*

Communion

- *One of our Elders will lead the church in taking communion*

Message

- *Whoever is preaching will share with the church and close in prayer*

Close & Dismissal

- *Our music team will lead us in a song as we close and our prayer team will be available to offer prayer*
- *The main speaker will thank and dismiss everyone*

Welcome

This is the part of our gathering that is the most subject to change in the coming months. For the short term, I (pastor Elijah) will continue to do our welcome and updates – but have every intention of seeing new faces step up to fill that role.

The way a church does their welcome says a lot about the covenant community. As new people are coming in, our welcome provides an opportunity for us to introduce the people who make KFBC a church. Theologically, inviting members and long-time attenders to welcome the church as it gathers communicates that the church *isn't* the pastor, and the pastor *isn't* the face of the church. The church is made up of many faces, personalities, and stories, and it is important we honor them and make them visible. Our welcome host will introduce themselves, perhaps briefly share how they are connected to the church, welcome new and regular attenders, and then go through the various updates we need to know about.

Our ministry spotlight will become an integral part of our welcome. We have a number of different ministries and groups at KFBC. Usually, during our updates, I will highlight upcoming events and attempt to connect volunteers with whoever is leading the ministry. Moving forward, we will create a space for the Ministry Leaders to introduce themselves and share with the church: What events are coming up? What is going well? What needs prayer? If someone wants to help, what volunteer position is most needed, and what does that position entail? Week after week, the church will hear about one of our active ministries from the person leading it.

Finally, we will eventually transition to opening with a song. The reason for this is entirely practical: our welcome and updates are important, and so is our welcome host volunteer. It usually takes a few minutes for people to get in their seats and settled, and I can say from personal experience it can be very challenging to welcome everyone and go through the updates while so many people are still talking and not in their seats. No one is seeking to do anything wrong, and the pastor is notoriously late at times (10:33, heaven forbid!), but it creates an environment that will be difficult for volunteers to feel comfortable in. So, to make the transition smooth and ensure everyone is ready to connect with our welcome host, we will open in song. It also gives us an opportunity to kick the morning off on a celebratory note!

Music

Rather than doing half our music before prayer and half after, our music team will do most of their music in one big chunk. This will allow us to have our kids in the service for all the music! This will also help the music team, because splitting their songs up can really interrupt the flow of music. As I mentioned previously as well, I use the term “music,” rather than “worship” deliberately. The entire Sunday gathering – praying, singing, giving, serving, preaching, taking communion, embracing fellowship, and more – is an act of worship. Worship is never confined to a time of singing, otherwise we couldn’t worship God without music!

After we have transitioned to involving Welcome Hosts and Ministry Leaders at our welcomes, the person leading our music team will open our gathering in prayer. In the same way as the Welcome Host and Ministry Leader, our Music Team Leader will introduce themselves to everyone.

Prayer

Now that we have three Elders at KFBC, we are happy to announce that the Elders will be taking turns praying over the church on Sunday mornings. I am so grateful for those who have been leading our prayer time for so long, and am hopeful that the transition is a welcome one.

We also understand that there are often people in the church who want specific prayer, or feel led to share a difficulty they or a loved one is facing. We want to be able to receive those requests and offer meaningful prayer to anyone who wants it. As we continue building a volunteer base, we intend to put together a prayer team who will be available during the break as well as at the end of the gathering during our closing song/dismissal, and we would love to invite people to receive prayer from them.

Break

The purpose of this break is three-fold: First, it helps us facilitate checking children into kids' ministry. Second, it creates a space for people to connect. Third, it gives everyone the opportunity to serve themselves communion.

First – Kids' ministry check-in. As we have implemented our new Child Abuse Prevention policy at KFBC, one area came up that needed work: check in. Currently, we check the kids in before the gathering, and then send them down later. The problem, however, is that once the children are checked in, they are legally under the care of the church – not the parents. A transfer of care occurs when we check the children in, so our ministry workers need to be actively supervising them.

In addition, the church has been praying while the parents take their kids into the kids' ministry. Parents are rushed and miss out on most of the church's prayer time. Sometimes, as a dad, I will have to spend a bit of extra time with my kids before they will go into the ministry environment, and I end up coming into the gathering after we've started our next set of songs. We want our church to be a warm and inviting space for families, so we need to make sure we are not leaving parents behind while the church continues to worship.

Second – Space for connection. I wrote about this briefly in an email this week: I recently witnessed two individuals who have attended the same church for over a year meet for the first time the other day! Connection doesn't happen by accident, and the end of the gathering is a big shuffle – the chairs are being moved, folks often connect with people they are already close with, and many people (particularly new people) head right out the door because they don't know anyone. The third recommendation from our Fellowship Pacific consultation report was "Create a process for Connecting New People." There is a *TON* of work that needs to be done in this area, but we can begin right now by taking this time seriously. How effective it is will largely depend on those who call KFBC home seeing it as a missional opportunity: Is this time to go chat with my friend some more, or should I walk over and introduce myself to someone new? As Elders, we will be routinely reminding everyone of the importance of this time, but whether or not it is fruitful depends on all of us choosing to embrace it. We want people to feel like they belong, but is difficult for people to feel that way if no one takes the time to notice them. Take a minute to greet someone you don't know, ask a few questions, and offer to grab a coffee or go for a hike – anyone who has ever felt alone in a crowd knows exactly how important it is to be seen and cared for.

Third – Partaking in Communion. As we have concluded our series on Baptism and Communion, I have sought to provide a solid biblical framework for understanding the

reverence we should have when we take communion. In some cases, it is right that a covenant follower of Christ refrain from taking communion until they have responded in faith to what God is calling them to reconcile. That's a decision each person needs to make every Sunday by the Spirit's leading, and we don't want to accidentally pressure anyone to violate their conscience. Further, we have begun serving wine alongside grape juice, allowing people to be guided by their conscience in this matter as well. Allowing people to serve themselves simplifies things greatly, and also speeds the process up compared to having a couple people go around the room to hand out the elements.

Communion

Around late summer last year, the Lord laid on my heart a desire to see Communion become central to the gathering. At the time, we only had Raff as an Elder – He and I discussed it quite a bit and agreed in the Lord that it was a good practice. Much of the order of service change reflects that primary commitment: Making Communion central. It, alongside a time for intentional fellowship, is now literally in the middle of the gathering!

The Lord has graciously provided a plurality of Elders, and I am grateful that both Sebastian, Raff, and I will take turns leading the church in taking Communion. This Sunday marks the first time in over two years that I will be participating in Communion without leading it! Praise God. Both Raff and Sebastian have their own godly gifting and perspective to share with the church as we celebrate the Lord's table together.

Message

Given all the changes we are incorporating, I am grateful to say that this will remain the same!

Close & Dismissal

Our closing and dismissal time will remain very similar as well, with the exception of inviting people to receive prayer from our prayer team during the last song and closing comments.

Final Thoughts

For those who were expecting a brief document, I applaud you for making it this far! This is a big moment in the life of the church, and I don't want anyone to feel like they were left in the dark. For each and every change, small or large, there is a well-considered "why" behind it – one that has been thoroughly discussed and prayed over for quite some time among the Eldership of KFBC. We have also invited our Deacons and Ministry Leaders to comment on the plan, and offer up their questions and concerns.

Church growth is a wonderful reality, but it is not without challenges. One of the greatest challenges is overcoming the feeling that "everyone knows everyone." By being strategic and deliberate about creating space for connection, bringing new faces to the front, and making sure all of our speakers introduce themselves, we are making sure that new people are welcomed into a gathering of people who are ready for them. We need to remember that every Sunday may be someone's *first* Sunday – either at our church, or in *any* church.

Consider these two scenarios (and yes, I used real names because I think it matters!):

Scenario #1:

"I went to Kimberley Fellowship Baptist church. A pastor named Elijah stood up, gave the church some updates, prayed and sat down. A woman asked us to stand and sing. A man named Wayne dismissed the kids and began to pray while we headed downstairs with our son and daughter. When we got back, they were just about done praying, and the woman leading music asked us to stand and sing some more. The pastor got up and preached a sermon and closed in prayer. We sang some more, and then the pastor thanked us for being there."

Scenario #2:

"I went to Kimberley Fellowship Baptist church. They started playing music right at 10. When we sat down Sue stood up and welcomed us, told us about her mission to keep the church kitchen organized, and then let everyone know about what's happening in the church over the next month. She invited up the church's Missions Ministry Leader, Mandy, who told us about a fundraiser she and her team have been planning to help children in Uganda access clean drinking water. She asked for prayer for a good turnout at the event, and invited us to help

set up in a few weeks or to come to her if we had any questions. Sylvia prayed over the church before she and the music team played some more songs.

One of the Elders, Sebastian, then got up and led the church in prayer. Another Elder, Raff, got up after the prayer was done and let us know that there would be a short break, and that we could sign our children into the Kids' Ministry and grab a coffee. My wife went downstairs with our kids, and while I was making myself a coffee Gord came over and said hi – he offered his number, and said he'd love to go for a hike sometime if I was interested. My wife and I grabbed communion before we sat down, and Raff led the church in communion. As Raff closed in prayer, Pastor Elijah got up and preached a sermon. When he was done, Sylvia invited us to stand and sing again. When we were done, the Pastor got up and thanked us for being there."

The difference between the two is absolutely essential. Names. Faces. Real people. People may go to a church because they like the sermons, but they stay for community and fellowship. We don't have to reinvent the wheel – we already have a community, and we already have a sense of fellowship. All we need to do is to be deliberate about making it accessible.

There is a lot more that could be said, believe it or not, but I'll conclude here for now. I'm grateful the Lord has blessed me with all of you, and I look forward to whatever He has in store for us next.