

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

About a month ago, I held a church-wide Sunday School class where I cast the vision of a new way to envision and use Sunday Schools that will help us bring more and more people not only into relationship with Christ, but lead them towards becoming disciples, instead of simply remaining followers.

Before I dive into the changes that are starting to come out, let me reiterate something that I said at the church-wide Sunday School meeting: our Sunday School classes are filled with amazing and wonderful people who have built great relationships. Our way forward is designed to build on the success that these Sunday School classes have had by refocusing our current classes and creating new spaces for all the new members who will be joining this congregation over the coming years.

I also want to acknowledge something important... **change can be uncomfortable.** I understand that. For many of you, your Sunday School class is not simply a place you attend on Sunday morning. It is where you have made friendships, shared joys and struggles, prayed for one another, and walked through life together. I do not want to diminish that in any way. In fact, I believe those relationships are one of the greatest strengths of our church.

What I am asking us to do is not to abandon those relationships, but to build upon them and intentionally create more opportunities for them to happen. With that in mind, there are several changes that will begin taking shape in our Sunday School ministry.

1. We will begin working toward a class size of approximately 20 people.

The goal of approximately 20 people per Sunday School class is not intended to be a rigid rule, and **we are not going to break apart existing classes simply because they currently have more than 20 people.**

Instead, as classes reach 20 or more participants, they will eventually be designated as **“full.”** This simply means that when new people are looking for a Sunday School class, we will encourage them to consider one of our other classes rather than continuing to grow an already-large class.

The reason for this is that smaller groups create more opportunities for people to know one another, participate in discussions, share what is happening in their lives, pray for one another, and develop the kind of relationships that move beyond simply sitting in the same room each Sunday. Our goal is to make sure that **people have a place where they can truly be known, can truly know others, and walk with each other down the path of Discipleship.**

2. We want to begin developing smaller Wesleyan Class Meetings within our Sunday School classes.

John Wesley understood that Christian discipleship requires more than gathering together for instruction. It requires Christians who are willing to walk alongside one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, confess where they are struggling, celebrate where God is working, and hold one another accountable to live out their faith.

I would like to see our Sunday School classes become places where these smaller groups can naturally develop. A class of 15–20 people may eventually contain several smaller groups of perhaps 5–8 people who intentionally walk together in their faith. These class meetings are not intended to replace Sunday School. They are intended to **deepen what happens in Sunday School**.

My hope is that eventually our Sunday mornings will not simply be a time when we learn something about Christianity, but a time when we are challenged to ask, “**How am I actually living as a disciple of Jesus Christ?**”

3. Sunday School will become a workshop for practical faith.

I am not saying that Bible study is unimportant. Quite the opposite. **The Bible is foundational to everything we do.** We cannot be disciples of Jesus without knowing His Word. But there is a difference between studying the Bible and allowing the Bible to transform the way we live.

I want our Sunday School classes to become places where we take what we learn from Scripture and wrestle with what it means to put it into practice. Instead of simply asking, “What does this passage mean?” we should also be asking questions like these:

- How is God calling me to change?
- How can this class help me do what Jesus is calling me to do?
- How can we live this out together?

In other words, **Sunday School should be a workshop for Christian living.** There will absolutely still be Bible study. Scripture will remain at the center of what we do. But our goal is not simply to become people who know more about the Bible. Our goal is to become people who **live more faithfully because we know the Bible.**

4. We are going to prioritize discipleship over simply maintaining classes.

Jesus did not call us simply to attend church. He called us to follow Him. And following Jesus means becoming His disciples—people who are learning from Him, becoming like Him, and doing what He commands.

This means our Sunday School ministry has to be evaluated by more than how many people are in a room or how many years a class has existed. We need to ask whether our Sunday School ministry is actually helping people become disciples.

What I am NOT asking you to do

I want to be very clear about a few things:

- I am **not** asking existing classes to abandon the relationships they have built.
- I am **not** asking classes to suddenly stop studying Scripture.
- I am **not** asking anyone to move to a different class.
- I am **not** planning to break apart existing classes simply because they are larger than 20 people.

I **am** asking that we begin moving together in a new direction. As I have said since I came here, and it still holds true today, my office door is always open to any and all who wish to come speak with me about anything that is going on. In that light, please come in and talk, ask questions, discuss how these changes look in your specific class. But I also want to be honest about something: **this is the direction in which we are going.**

As your pastor, I believe that God is calling St. John's to become a church that does more than gather people on Sunday mornings. I believe He is calling us to become a church that intentionally makes disciples who love God, love others, and live out their faith. That will require us to make some changes.

Some of those changes will be easy. Some may be uncomfortable. Some may take time to understand. And some may require us to let go of the way we have always done things. But the destination is worth it.

I want you to hear my heart clearly: **I am not trying to tear down what has been built. I am trying to build upon what is already a great foundation.** The relationships that already exist in our Sunday School classes are valuable. The faithfulness of the people who have taught and participated in these classes is valuable. The years of ministry that have taken place through these groups are valuable. We are going to use that foundation to build something that can reach even more people.

Our church is going to continue growing. New people are going to walk through our doors. Some will have been Christians for decades. Others will have little or no experience

with Christianity. Some will be looking for a place to belong. Others will be looking for answers. And some will be searching for Jesus without even realizing it. I want us to be ready for them. I want every person who comes to St. John's to be able to find a place where they can learn about Jesus, build meaningful Christian relationships, practice their faith, and grow into the disciple Christ is calling them to be. That is why we are making these changes.

So, although I know change can be uncomfortable, I hope you will also see the opportunity in front of us. **We are not simply reorganizing Sunday School; we are seeking to reshape Sunday School around the mission of making disciples.**

Thank you for your patience, your faithfulness, and most importantly, your willingness to follow where God is leading us. I am excited about what God is going to do through our Sunday School ministry in the years ahead.

In Christ,

Pastor Roger