

# A New Season for Emmanuel Church

## A growing family of congregations

A word from our Senior Minister, Hayden Smith, who recently announced some changes to our Sunday Services.



- **Our 8.30am Service is moving to 8am**
  - We are hoping to offer a bus service from Glenhaven Green
  - This is not a “new” Service but rather “relocating” our 8.30am Service to 8am
- **Establishing a new 10am service**
  - Including kids and youth programmes for Toddlers to Year 8
  - Including a simple sit-down meal after the service
- **Establishing a new 4pm service**
  - Including kids and youth programmes for Kindy to Year 12
  - Including a simple sit-down meal after the service

We’ll commence a trial period from Sunday 20th October until Sunday 27th of April 2025. Or, if you speak “school terms”, that’s Term Four 2024 and Term One 2025.

Why are we making these changes? For the following three reasons:

## 1. A Sense of Belonging

The present size of our 10.30am service doesn’t reflect our value and goal of being a church where every person is known and loved. Adult attendance presently sits at 80-90, these numbers often reach 100 or more during the warmer months. When you include up to 40 kids and youth, our service is no longer a little service!\*

Morning Tea after the 10.30am Service is often noisy and congested and it is easy to “miss” people from week to week. When people find it difficult to feel heard, and can slip away without feeling seen, it is easy for people to lose their sense of belonging. Even our 6pm “Church in the Basement” reaches a size where people don’t know each other which, even though it is structured in-the-round as a “house-church” style service. By blending our 10.30am & 6pm services into two new services we hope to create two new close-knit communities of approx. 50-70 adults and 15-20 kids and youth.

## 2. Something Different

This model sets us apart from other local churches. I believe this style of church will connect with people of all ages in the Hills, both churched and un-churched; those who are looking for a deeper sense of social and spiritual connection.

### 3. Simplifying Ministry

In a complex and changing world sometimes simple is best. No, it won't be live-streamed and we won't have an orchestra anytime soon, but it will be authentic and it will be good. And rather than adding extra events through the week (such as Community Plus, which we trialed in 2023), a sit-down meal on Sunday provides space for pastoral care, evangelism, welcoming newcomers, and older Christians setting an example for younger Christians, to happen naturally.

### Why are we making these changes now?

In a sense this journey began in 2020 when our distinctive values were first articulated; namely seeking to be a church where every person is known and loved and where every generation is celebrated. At our 2023 AGM we discussed the options of growing a *smaller* number of *larger* congregations as opposed to a growing *larger* family of *smaller* congregations. In the past 12 months a number of staff and key lay leaders have visited another church, south of Sydney, where they have successfully implemented a model similar to the one we have adopted.

And earlier this year I spoke with Parish Council observing that, from Q1 2023 to Q1 2024, our church attendance had grown by 30% with every congregation experiencing growth.\* This growth was putting pressure on our 10.30am and 6pm Services especially. So, in a sense, this change has been coming for many years.

**But it is also true that, with the present health challenges faced by the Smith Family, our church needs to be prepared for me to be less “present” in the coming months and for me to take leave as needed. This means, in conversation with the Ministry Staff Team and the Wardens, I decided to change to a structure where welcoming newcomers, evangelism, and pastoral care is more Sunday-centric and less dependent on staff.**

### Will there be extra work? Who will do it?

There will be less work. And more. Our 10am & 4pm services will all need to be simplified; including music, welcoming, check-in etc. Our meals will also be simple. The Ministry Staff Team will organise and purchase the meals which will just need to be heated and served. Plus we need chief-pot-washers! But, praise God, we have had many new people join us this year. And we hope the Lord will send more! Many of these new members, as well as their kids, are looking for simple ways to serve.

### Got Questions? Come along and ask away!

**WEDNESDAY**  
**11th Sept at 6.30pm**  
**in the Basement**

**SUNDAY**  
**15th Sept at 1pm**  
**in the Living Room**

**WEDNESDAY**  
**18th Sept at 6.30pm**  
**in the Basement**



# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Will the 8am service have a breakfast afterwards or a morning tea?**

The 8am service will continue to enjoy a morning tea just as they do presently. The rationale for a meal at our later services is to encourage people to sit-down and to slow-down in order that meaningful friendships might be fostered. This sense of community and care is already imperfectly present at 8am! So, at this point, we do not feel the need to add a meal at 8am.

## **Will I be able to choose which service to go to?**

Yes, we'll ask what your service preferences are in the coming weeks, and we may give you some encouragement and guidance, but you may attend any service you wish. We are hoping some may choose to attend both services in order to "worship" at one and serve at the other (eg in kids ministry).

## **But if some of my friends change services I won't get to see them on Sundays!**

We'll work together to ensure that you and your kids have enough friends at least at one of the services. But yes, that will be hard. There are other opportunities to connect with those who attend a different service including midweek Growth Groups, Men's and Women's events, dropping kids off and picking kids up from Gecko/Youth. Or why not just invite them out for a coffee or over for lunch? Following the success of our Anglicare Food Drive, we are also looking at other opportunities for a *second combined service each year*; look out for a combined service followed by a Sunday School Picnic in 2025!

## **Will I be able to swap between services from week to week?**

You may, of course, attend any service but because relationships matter, we would strongly encourage you to make a commitment to a particular service.

## **What will we eat? And will we cater to different dietary requirements?**

The meals will be simple (think chicken wraps), but the hospitality is about the friendships and not the fancy food. And "yes", we will offer gluten-free and vego options. In addition, for fussy eaters, we will offer vegemite sandwiches. Those with complex dietary needs are welcome to BYO!

## **Will it be a sit-down meal? And will there be a kids' table?**

Yes. We believe that a sit-down meal encourages fewer but more meaningful conversations. And "no", kids can sit where they wish but we'd love to see people of every age interacting as they eat.

## **Will we charge people for brunch/dinner?**

Regular members will be invited to make a suggested donation of \$5 per person or \$15 per family. We will encourage guests to enjoy our simple hospitality and not to make a donation. Some will be able to give a little less, some a little more. We believe that, when compared to fast-food options or a store-bought sandwich, \$5 represents good value for a "home-cooked" supermarket lasagne lunch.

### **Who do you think might choose to attend a 4pm service?**

A number of different people might choose a 4pm service including anyone who loves a sleep-in or an avo-on-toast; those who enjoy a Sunday morning bike-ride; families whose children have Sunday sport; shift workers and those who work early on Monday morning (eg CRU Trainees); and those who often travel on the weekend.

### **What do you mean simplify services?**

Smaller services of 60-ish adults plus 15-20 children lend themselves to simpler services eg fewer welcomers, less communion helpers, smaller bands etc. Therefore we will reset *all rostered roles* including bands, morning tea, Bible Readers, AV etc. As we develop a sense of what roles are required we will reach out to particular people to fill those roles. Please be patient with us as we move to this new system.

### **Will staff roles change?**

A little. Elise will be running two kids' programmes, but they will be duplicated. She could do with some extra helpers though if you're keen! Suz and Nikki will continue at our morning services and Suz will be ordering our food each week. I will take pastoral responsibility for the morning services and Paul will take pastoral responsibility for the 4pm service. We will be ably supported by Nikki, Elise and Suz!

### **What can you tell me about the new bus service from Glenhaven Green?**

This has not yet been confirmed but we hope a simple bus service will help some residents to get to and from 8am church more easily. Depending on a number of variables (eg whether we can consistently secure volunteer buddies) the bus may not be suitable for those with limited mobility.

### **Who was consulted as part of the decision making process?**

In 2023 and 2024 I have been working closely with Parish Council and Staff. As our church has grown in scale and complexity, it is no longer possible for every person to contribute to our decision making processes. I have spoken at length to a number of respected members of our church from every congregation and their input has been invaluable in shaping this decision.

### **What if I don't like the decision?!**

That's okay. We're a family and families are allowed to disagree!

And why not just "give it a go" If things can be improved,

we can always make tweaks as we go. I think every

member loves our Emmanuel Church DNA

and I believe this "fits" with our DNA so,

under God, I hope this new structure

is a blessing! And we're still all about Jesus

and seeking, with the Spirit's help,

to grow together in Him. So ultimately

what matters most, and who matters

most isn't changing at all!

