



*together as*  
**ONE**

This informational packet is intended for the members of the  
Evangelical Community Church of Abu Dhabi



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Dear ECC Member,

Over the past year, the elders have been considering moving towards a single gathering for our Lord's Day morning worship. We shared with you, the congregation, at our last two members meetings in January and March 2023 and sought your prayers and feedback. After receiving uniformly positive feedback from our members, last month, our elders unanimously decided to move forward with a single gathering for worship, on the Lord's Day, ***together as one***. **Starting in July 9, 2023, we will meet as one church, in one worship gathering, at 10 am on Sunday mornings**. Our weekly Sunday Sessions will begin at 9 am, with multiple classes providing sound biblical teaching and equipping for all age groups in the church. As shepherds of Christ's flock at ECC, we sincerely believe that this is the best step for us as a church and that it will result in great spiritual fruit in our congregation, to the glory of God.

This packet is intended to help you learn more about this change so that we can all move forward with unity and clarity. In this packet, you will find the rationale behind the decision the elders have taken and answers to common questions. The elders have invested several hours together considering this matter, and the staff is working hard to ensure a smooth and seamless transition for all our members. We always welcome any further questions that you might have. Please seek to keep yourself informed and look out for any further communication from us. You can feel free to contact us at [pastors@eccad.org](mailto:pastors@eccad.org).

On behalf of the elders,

Pastor Aubrey

## BIBLICAL RATIONALE FOR A SINGLE GATHERING

This July, ECC will begin gathering for worship together as one. We will gather as one church, at one time, to worship the One true and living God together. Why a single gathering? Why now? We believe that there are good biblical reasons and practical reasons encouraging us in this direction. We believe that this move will bring great glory to God and joy to us as God's people.

### “EKKLĒSIA” = ASSEMBLY

The word “church” comes from the Greek word “EKKLĒSIA” which means *assembly*. Every instance of the 114 occurrences of this word in the New Testament is in reference to a people who assemble. In fact, the word is also used for a general assembly of people (Acts 19:32). A church is therefore an *assembly*. Certainly, the church is *more* than just an assembly, but it is certainly not *less* than an assembly. An assembly is a people who assemble together. A church is a people who assemble together. When we assemble together, we “church” together. Biblically therefore, it fits best when an assembly (church) gathers together at the same time. Then they are truly one assembly (church) not divided by time.

### OUR COVENANT COMMITMENT

Our church covenant states, “We will gather *together* regularly to worship the Lord and hear his Word...”. This commitment is rooted in the biblical command to not neglect our gathering together (Heb 10:25). And we follow this biblical commitment most completely when we actually gather together as one. If some of us gather at one time (and never at the other service time), and another group of us gather at a separate time, then we are not actually gathering *together*. Gathering at the same time ensures that we are able to fulfill our church covenant, not as separate congregations but together as one church, and fully enjoy the presence of each other.

### DEEPER IN FAITH AND LOVING ONE-ANOTHER

As we gather together as one, we all hear the Lord speak to us through His Word, and we can all respond to Him in prayer, song, and meaningful spiritual conversations before and after the gathering. Some of the most character-shaping conversations we have are with fellow members about how God spoke to us through His word preached. Some of our most significant spiritual moments are in praying for one another, singing to one another, or encouraging one another with the Word of God (Heb 10:24–25). We believe these will be increased in the life of our church by gathering together.

### DEEPER IN SPIRITUAL UNION AROUND THE LORD'S TABLE

God gave us the Lord's supper as a sign of our ongoing union with Christ, and our ongoing covenantal union with one another. When speaking of how the Lord's Supper is to be taken, Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 11:18, “...when you *come together as a church*...”. Biblically, the Lord's supper is not only an ordinance of the church, it is an ordinance we are

to take together as an assembly. Meeting together in one place, at one time enables us to do just that—to “come together as a church.” This will enable us to truly be united in faith as signified in the Lord’s Supper.

## **WIDER IN RELATIONSHIP AND WITNESS**

God has been so incredibly good to ECC! In His majestic sovereignty, He has ordained that our church will be a small earthly picture of Revelation 7:9–10. A place in which the tongues, tribes, peoples and nations of the world gather to sing, “salvation belongs to our God!” Meeting together as one will allow us to better display this beautiful unity in diversity which the gospel creates. We believe we would provide an even clearer display to our non-Christian friends and neighbors in the love and unity of such a diverse people gathering together around the throne of Christ (John 13:13–14, 17:21–23). Deeper relationships in a diverse community is a powerful display of the power of the gospel.

## **CLOSER IN SHEPHERDING**

The Elders of ECC will give an account to the Lord, our Chief Shepherd, for the souls of the sheep He has entrusted to us (Heb.13:17). In our two-service model, our elders only get to gather with half the sheep on a Sunday morning. The pain of not being able to see, sing with, pray, and enjoy our whole family is akin to the pain of a parent only being able to meet with half their family at any given time. Meeting together at one time will allow the Elders to more closely and lovingly shepherd the flock and care for our souls. We believe that the benefit of a plurality of elders would be multiplied and more deeply realized when all of our elders are present with all of our congregation every week, before, during, and after we gather as a church. A single assembly increases pastoral capacity to engage in more relationships, make disciples, and for the elders to more faithfully shepherd the flock that is among us.

## **BLESSING OTHER CHURCHES**

We care not only for the good of our local church, but also for the good of the universal church, and we want to see the health and growth of other gospel-preaching local churches in Abu Dhabi. As we move to a single gathering, if we happen to burst at the seams and have more people than space, we are creating opportunities for more people to consider joining our sister churches like New Life church and Grace Church. We rejoice in the opportunity to bless other churches that preach the gospel and aid their growth as well.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. What time will the worship gathering be?**

We will meet at 10 am on Sunday mornings in the two main halls for our worship gathering.

### **2. What will our worship gathering look like?**

The order of service will be largely unchanged from our present order of service. We will meet in both main halls at the same time.

### **3. How will we be able to accommodate a large amount of people coming?**

We have enough seating in both the halls to accommodate us in one service. We have carefully collated and analyzed several months of attendance data; our average attendance is 681. Between the two main halls, we can accommodate 750. All our worshippers from both worship gatherings can gather together at one time, and we will be well within the seating capacity with the two main halls together

### **4. What are the options for parking?**

We are looking into various options for additional parking, including renting private parking space inside Liwa school next door, which will give us 60 private parking spots.

### **5. Have you considered a different space (i.e., renting out a hall) outside the building?**

Yes, but there are significant costs as well as challenges from the government in getting a license/permission. We do not feel this is feasible at this time.

### **6. What are the plans for adult education (Sunday Sessions, other classes) when we move to a single worship gathering?**

To help ECC be “transformed by the renewing” of our minds (Rom 12:2), we are expanding our adult education to include a greater variety of courses in gospel basics, applied theology, church history & theology, and Old & New Testament. We want our people at all stages of life to have the opportunity to learn more and more about the whole counsel of God. There will be multiple classes that will start at 9 am Sunday mornings before the service.

**7. What will be the timings for children's ministry, nursery, & teens?**

- *Children:* Catechism for Kids (ages 5–11) from 9 am to 9:45 am  
Sunday School (ages 5–8) during the sermon
- *Teens:* Teen Sunday Sessions from 9 am to 9:45 am
- *Nursery:* Available for infants and toddlers throughout the worship gathering

**8. Do we have facilities for babies, toddlers, active children, and nursing mothers?**

- Main Hall 1 nursery will be available for babies and toddlers with their parents.
- Main Hall 2 nursery will be dedicated for active children with their parents.
- A private room will be made available on the first floor for nursing mothers.
- Nursery care by volunteers will also be available during the worship gathering for ages 0–4.

**9. What was the process leading up to this change?**

- We went to the Bible.
- We read a number of books and articles.
- We as elders prayerfully considered how to best grow deeper and wider as a church.
- We also talked with other churches that have made this change.
- We spent hours reading, discussing, and praying on what the best course of action is for our church body.
- We considered the arguments for and against a single service.
- At our **members' meetings** in **January 2023** and **March 2023**, we shared with the members that we were exploring this as change.
- We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from many members of the congregation.
- We arrived at a unanimous decision as elders to lead ECC to meet in a single worship gathering on the Lord's Day starting this July.

**10. Will this compromise other churches meeting in the building at that time?**

No, this does not compromise any other churches meeting in the building.

**11. Do we have enough chairs to cater for everyone coming at one time?**

Yes, we will have more than enough seats to accommodate our current level of attendance at ECC.



**12. What happens if more people come and we don't have enough seats?**

Thankfully, there are other gospel-preaching churches in Abu Dhabi! We are thankful for Grace Church and New Life Church that also meet in the city, and we will encourage people to consider becoming members at these churches as well.

**13. Will we need more volunteers than we currently have?**

Yes! Moving to a single service together presents us with great opportunities in a number of our ministries, including Marhaba, working with youth and children, nursery, and adult education. Please consider how you might be able to serve the church by volunteering in one of these areas.

**14. Can we still invite our non-Christian friends to church given that there will be less space?**

Yes, please continue to invite your non-Christian friends!

**15. What are some of the practical benefits moving to a single service?**

- *Greater Growth in Relationships*

We believe moving to one service will help grow the width and depth of our relationships with our fellow members. At the end of 2nd and 3rd John, we hear a deep desire for direct contact from Christ's apostle: "Though I have many things to write to you, I don't want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to come to you and talk face to face so that our joy may be complete" (2 John 12; cf. 3 John 13–14). Moreover, the Apostle Paul said he was eager to get to Rome: "For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom 1:11–12). According to John, face-to-face contact *increases* joy. According to Paul, it provides more opportunity to share spiritual gifts and strengthen weak Christians.

- *Better Shepherding from Elders*

We have had lots of face-to-face interaction between elders and members during our years of multiple services. Still, we think one service opens up the opportunity for all our elders to be available to our members in a single service. Right now, only four of the 13 elders see the whole congregation each week (the vocational pastors who are usually preaching or service leading).

- *Two Become One*

Most members in our body are familiar with the members that attend the same worship gathering. As elders, we have heard countless stories of members of ECC not knowing many other fellow members—because they never come into contact with them, or do so very rarely. By meeting together as a single congregation at one time, it will dramatically increase our face-to-face fellowship among all the members of ECC.

- *More Hospitality*

Meeting together in a single gathering means that we'll have greater opportunities to see the whole body at one time, and connect with each other and pursue meals together after our worship gathering.

- *Less Fatigue*

There is no question that multiple services creates strain on our volunteers, staff, and resources. Moving to a single gathering will dramatically reduce this strain.

- *Grow Deeper and Wider in Worship*

Our worship gatherings will be largely filled, with the whole body singing and worshipping together. This also opens up the opportunity of having baptisms in our weekly gathering.

- *Partnering with other Local Churches*

Ultimately, moving to a single service is a conscious choice to be a church of a certain size. There are real physical limitations to our building. We believe that this is the Lord making clear that instead of opting for more services or a larger building, we should instead seek to plant churches in and around our city. In this way, the preaching of the gospel is multiplied, and the witness of Christ's people is throughout the UAE.

## **16. How can we prepare for this transition and make it most fruitful for ourselves and the church?**

- Please pray for unity and increased joy. Continue to pray through the membership directory.
- Prepare for the service ([eccad.org/prepare](http://eccad.org/prepare)) by reading the text in advance, learning the songs, and discussing the sermon after the service.
- Come to the various education opportunities and open Q&As to learn more.

## NEW SCHEDULE

9 am

- Catechism for Kids
- Sunday Sessions for Teens
- Sunday Sessions for Adults

10 am

- Nursery for infants and toddlers
- Sunday School for Kids
- Worship Gathering



Learn more at [eccad.org/togetherasone](https://eccad.org/togetherasone)

