

A Return to Tradition

by Jay Tolson

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Daniel Wallace, a professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, which trains pastors for interdenominational or nondenominational churches, says there is a growing appetite for something more than “worship that is a glorified Bible class in some ways” (p.42).

In Richardson, Texas, Carl Anderson is the Senior Pastor of Trinity Fellowship Church, an independent, nondenominational church of some 600 members. “Eight years ago there was a sense of disconnectedness and loneliness in our church life,” he says. The entrepreneurial model adopted by so many evangelical churches, with its emphasis on seeker-friendly nontraditional services and programs, had been successful in helping Trinity build its congregation, Anderson explains. But it was less successful in holding on to church members and deepening their faith or their ties with other congregants (p. 47).

Trinity sought to reconnect with the historical church by emphasizing the power of liturgy to direct worship toward God and “not be all about me,” Anderson says. Adopting the weekly Eucharist, saying the Nicene Creed every two or three weeks, following the church calendar, Trinity reshaped its worship practices in ways that drove some members away. But Anderson remains committed to helping evangelical churches grow beyond the dependence on “celebrity-status pastors” (p. 47).