

AD HOC SEATING COMMITTEE REPORT

APPENDIX

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APPENDIX #1

CONGREGATION CONSULTATION NOTES

JANUARY 20TH VIEWING OF “PLACES OF WORSHIP”

Impressions of the film “Places of Worship”

- Showed progressive changes – Exposed idea of flexibility of space which = possible revenue usage
- A history of development of churches and theologies – Chairs would make a more usable space but they need to meet our beliefs and practices that is our tradition
- Change is inevitable as history has shown
- The church is the people, not the building
- Very suitable as we are now
- In what ways do you plan to address the theological issues involved in this change?
- A good historic overview of church architecture
- Interesting history of the form of church buildings – not much information on process of converting to chairs, possible setups, costs
- Form follows Function follows FAITH
- Good overview of problems – what are our concerns at Harcourt?
- Big churches in Europe often have chairs, originally people stood
- Good way to educate people on evolution of worship forms and places
- If focus of worship has changed, what is Harcourt’s focus?
- I look forward to hearing ideas from ministers on how flex seating might enhance current worship
- Expected more regarding alternate uses pertinent to our church
- Initiative has nothing to do with worship. Reason is only for renting sanctuary space for non-worship purposes
- There was nothing the video showed that was new or gave us a view of what a difference having seating would do
- I felt that the film didn’t cover what the meeting was about. I expected more about chair formations.
- Not Faith – Form – Function (linear) but rather Faith – Form – Function as a circle. What are the outcomes of changing form? function?
- Helpful film/video revealing incredible variety over many centuries – helpful in encouraging openness to possible future

Impressions of the Idea of Having Chairs in the Sanctuary

- Need to consider: 1. The many different motivations/expectations individuals bring to their attendance at worship, why am I here? 2. How do/can these expectations/motivations interact with the shape/features of the worship space?
- Harcourt is a central building in this neighbourhood. May we have accessible structures to serve those around us. Changes to be meaningful to an ever changing environment
- Form follows Function follows Faith! It is time to share our faith through providing flexible sanctuary space
- I am in favour of chairs as long as they are comfortable. The ones in the chapel are excellent.
- No opinion as yet.
- Manna worship doesn't work in a space with pews because of activities and need for circles, play etc.
- I'm torn on the idea. It makes sense to move to chairs to be more flexible. But I really like the look of the pews, and not chairs. I think I would have been reluctant to have my wedding here if there had been chairs
- Evolution is about Form follows Function follows Faith. Big question: Will benefits of chairs be worth the cost in money and effort?
- Need for flexibility in the use of space by the outside groups is important. Harcourt members can use the facility in the state it is. Rental income for Harcourt will//is important.
- I liked the chair options shown in the video – similar to 3 Willows
- Thank you for sharing this video, it is just greatly informative and inspires thoughtful reflection as we start this process.
- We must keep working – This is an idea whose time has come.
- I'm keenly for moveable chairs and flexible arrangements.
- Interesting history of the architecture of the church. Chairs would provide more flexibility for worship and the choir.
- How will we schedule use of the sanctuary by various worship groups – e.g., Manna and (now) 10:30 service?
- Cost of the project. Who is responsible for moving the chairs for other activities.
- Film interesting. Pro: much more flexible. Con: How much? Who is going to help Darko move?
- Chairs provide a much more versatile space – rentals, choir
- I could picture us using this space for meals together.
- Pews make it harder to get up and participate.
- I could picture us facing the windows. Having more flow to use the garden space.
- Change. What is worshiping God? How to come together and to allow the spirit to move?
- Like aspects of flexibility, comfort and multi-uses when having chairs.
- Where will we store chairs when not in use?
- The floor will need to be uniform, not a mix of concrete and carpet as it is now. What material will work best for multi-use facility renting it out. Also, the expense not there yet.

- Cost? Where is the money to come from?
- What is the focus of worship? How do we connect with each other in the space? Who/what are we connecting with in the space?
- We will need some kind of storage space on the back of chairs for hymnaries
- I hope flexible seating will foster further integration between Manna and 10:30 service (even occasionally).
- I appreciate the desire for flexibility. But as one with limited mobility, I use the pews I'm in and the one in front of me to get up and down. I hope such needs will be taken into consideration. Loose chairs wouldn't give the support I need.
- I understand where we are going and I know it makes sense to have a multi-purpose space, but still not there yet!
- Yes to chairs. Examples in video looked very tasteful.
- Let's do it! Yes to chairs.
- Let's lower the platform and change the linear choir too. No more sitting at the communion table.
- Excellent to explore chairs - allow for creativity and flexibility
- What to do with the pews, no-one wants them. Chairs with hymn book racks are heavy.

Focus Group
Feb. 5, 2019

No one came to view the DVD.
Two people came for the focus group.
There were three people from the committee
Given the size, it was really more of a conversation.

1. What characteristics of the physical environment are important to your worship/spiritual experience?

- Not important
- Comfort
- Ease of movement

2. If the sanctuary had chairs instead of pews, how would this affect your worship experience?

- Not at all
- More comfort
- More options

3. If the sanctuary had chairs instead of pews, how might you see the space being used by the Harcourt congregation and by the community at large?

- Loved the configuration facing the windows – but what about screens? Choir? Sunlight?
- Rest of Guelph doesn't care if we have pews or chairs
- Outside community may take advantage of the flexibility for meetings, events but we don't know that and if they don't, it isn't worth it for two congregational meetings per year

I asked a further question about increased use by the community and rental income citing examples of Milestone celebrations, seminars, meetings etc. and mentioned how the Toronto church is used by their community.

- Increased rental income would only happen if we actively promote the space – would require a staff person to be on top of this all the time
- Could be an option but doubtful
- Who may take advantage will depend on what we charge and for what services
- We need to be prepared to offer catering etc.
- There are lots of groups who would like to use Harcourt's spaces but they cannot afford our fees
- A coffee bar would provide a place for people to meet and talk during the week

4. What are your thoughts about the idea of replacing pews with chairs?

- Neutral but concerned about costs
- Allow different set-ups – pews are formal, dated, stodgy and not visually attractive to younger people

5. Do you have any additional comments or questions for the Committee?

- Sound in the sanctuary is OK for music/vocals but not for spoken word – removing the pews will increase the reverb and spoken word may be even more difficult
- Flooring may be a future consideration both for acoustic and visuals – carpet tiles?
- The cost is a big issue – our church building is aging as is the congregation. Should we be spending on this when it will take away from other things that need to be done. The cost of maintaining the building will continue to increase.
- Harcourt often seems to operate on the premise “If we do this, people will come or people will rent space” and it’s not happening – big concern that financially we are headed for a wall down the line.
- What do the people who attend Manna want? This is the growth area in Harcourt and this decision should not be made by the “old folks” in the congregation.
- The committee needs to reach out to Manna for their input.
- Question was asked “Why do the churches who have changed to chairs not move them more often?” Is it storage? Manpower? Do they need carts? It is hard to anticipate costs without more information.

In response, I shared some of the information we learned from our visit to St. John’s in Georgetown.

Dave asked “What do you need to know in order to make a decision?”

- Costs and what about “unplanned costs” are we going to run into problems removing the pews from the heated floor? etc.
- How will it be done? Phases, cold turkey?
- Storage?

Focus Group Meeting Notes: February 14, 2019

Attendees: 5

Plus 3 Committee Members

1. What are your thoughts about the idea of replacing pews with chairs?

- Are we talking only about downstairs, or in the balcony as well? Just downstairs.
- Were any of the pews donated? The "Singleton" pews are up in the balcony. Not aware of any commemorative plaques on the pews downstairs.
- I'm neutral - I don't come to church based on what I sit on. I recognize the possibilities, but otherwise it doesn't matter.
- Has anyone attended a church with chairs? Three Willows, for a variety of functions. Did not feel that the chairs limited the experience.
- At the "ReImagine" conference there was a variety of seating. The United Church had really old, dark pews that were not comfortable. But they had removed front pews with chairs that could be reconfigured.
- Harcourt's pews are more comfortable than Church of Our Lady or St. George's, and the distance between the rows is good.
- One person's former church replaced pews with chairs and has made much better use of the space since then.
- So many examples have come through on weekly newsletters from Edge and Embracing the Spirit.
- Another church that was rebuilt due to a fire had a chapel with fixed pews adjoining a sanctuary with flexible seating, which served as their main space
- Wonder how much use we would make of this space if the kitchen is downstairs.
- What kind of things would we do for worship service and church-related activities? What makes it more than just another community centre?
- Memories of being in churches with other worship configurations have persisted. For example, St. John's Georgetown rearranges their chairs to face inward during Lent, found that very creative to mark a liturgical season by changing the seating arrangement. Found that exciting to be part of.
- Also a memory of a friend's commissioning service where the chairs were arranged "in the round". Was a very powerful image that has stuck with me. Not sure I would want the setting every Sunday but appreciated the ability to choose that arrangement.
- Another example is the chapel at Loyola House
- Who is going to move all the chairs?

- We have tried similar configurations in the chapel, changing from the round to rows, facing in different directions
- It has been interesting to see the different configurations people have made with the model
- I think it's an exciting idea. Have been in several different churches that have done that, allows flexibility, ability to play around. For example: Three Willows has rows for worship, circles/chairs for harvest bowls, long tables for meetings. * Immigrant Services runs a conversation circle for newcomers. Willow Grove room is then used as the greeting area, then the back of the sanctuary is used for a conversation circle. (We could do that in the Friendship Room or the Chapel, if they weren't busy)
- The after service sharing circle has not taken off at 10:30 - is this because there is not a suitable space similar to the chapel?
- Love the idea of having a labyrinth painted on the floor - why haven't we painted one on the gym floor? If we painted it on the floor, we wouldn't have to move the (heavy) portable labyrinth.
- The sanctuary feels like a more contemplative space - does replacing pews with chairs detract from that?
- We could create a coffee gathering place by removing only a few pews at the back of the church.
- We held the blanket exercise in the gym - might have been more impactful in a more sacred space.
- If we were building this church today, not sure we would go with a gym. It's a cold, unwelcoming space. It works for garage sales and for the preschool. How do we make this building built in the 1950s amenable to this century?
- When Royal City replaced their pews with chairs - pretty cheap chairs. But now having more musical events there. Feedback on pews was that they were uncomfortable.
- What about acoustics? Besides the coldness of the gym, the acoustics are not great (even though it's better than it was)

2. What characteristics of the physical environment are important to your worship/spiritual experience?

- Warmth is important. If I'm cold it's difficult to relax into a state of contemplation.
- It's also a wonderful atmosphere for concerts, lectures, films and similar events.
- Lots of people have talked about the light in the sanctuary, which you don't get in the gym
- There is a definite beauty about the space which draws or anchors the soul. How do we balance practicality of a multipurpose space with the beauty of a sanctuary (e.g., the rainbow coloured altar cloth, cross with seasonal cloth)

3. If the sanctuary had chairs instead of pews, how would this affect your worship experience?

- Lots of people would say "comfort" (depending on the chairs)
- If we are going to the expense and effort of buying chairs, we need to buy chairs that are comfortable and durable (but it's hard to get a chair that first everyone)
- It's hard to know how chairs would affect my experience, because the pews are all we know. We are denied the opportunity to experience something different. Therefore, I find the question hard to answer.
- The choir is already sitting in chairs. We're not sure we like staring at the congregation, but overall we prefer the sanctuary as we have it now (with the platform and window wall) to what it was before the last renovation.
- Pews have their own type of flexibility (e.g., to accommodate both big/small people)
- What about the screens if we move the chairs? People still use the hymn books. Some chairs have a self under the seat.
- Can think of some times when we've had a joining of hands in a big circle, passing the peace, where pews get in the way. Circles also make it easier to relate to fellow congregants.
- Would want some ability to know what to expect Sunday by Sunday - so seasonal changes might be enough.
- At Three Willows, they have coffee in the sanctuary from time to time. The rows are broken into four sections, so it's easier to get in and out in the middle of a gathering.
- In a worship service, I would give little consideration to what I'm sitting on. There are other ways to communicate sacredness (e.g., candle, chalice at the front)

4. If the sanctuary had pews instead of chairs, how might you see the space being used by the Harcourt congregation and by the community at large?

- We have not done much with sacred dance - open space would allow us to have it more integrated into the congregation
- We already have good use for music (e.g., KW symphony, Rainbow Chorus)
- Would allow more flexibility in musical theatre performances (e.g., Fiddler)
- It might even help our weekly gatherings of worship. People are currently so spread out. If chairs were arranged in a more intimate arrangement at the front, it might help people mingle/get to know one another better.
- At 42 Carden Street, we have things like art displays, other cultural displays.
- We sing "Come in and sit down, you are a part of the family" - chairs are more aligned with that

- Having that flexibility might encourage more interaction among our three worshipping congregations, not just on Sundays.

5. Additional comments

- Given the discussion, have you changed your thinking?
- What's the cost? Dave Hume ball-parked \$30-\$40K
- How do we get rid of the pews? Feeling is that this is not a major problem – wood could be repurposed. Could use some as park benches outside.
- The other expense would be related to the floor.
- Would the capacity of the church change? We don't know that yet (pending input from Fire Marshall)
- Not sure a combination of pews and chairs is feasible
- Capacity would depend on the design of the chair.
- What about families with little kids? Pews are more comfortable for them.
- Disappointed that only a few people are involved. Encourage the committee to try to have some more focus groups. If people aren't coming, what does that mean? Some people think it's a foregone conclusion, that it will happen after they've gone anyway. And this has been a bad week weather-wise. Should we maybe have another focus group after we have compiled some more information?
- What other issues might be triggered (e.g., in-floor heating)
- People like to give to something they can see (vs. something they can't see, like programming). Previous reconfiguration, solar panels, accessible washrooms were funded by a small number of large donations.

Ad Hoc Seating Committee

Online Survey Results

Total responses to March 10, 2019: 28

1. What characteristics of the physical environment are important to your worship/spiritual experience?

- Physical comfort, good acoustics, nice lighting.
- Excellent acoustics for the music and speakers. Comfortable seating. Also provisions for a quiet space.
- The possibility of group setting, i.e. seeing the people worshipping with me
- Comfortable, non-hierarchical, open, light, warm and inviting.
- Openness, light. Supportive of a sense of community. Good acoustics. Comfortable. Ability to see worship leaders.
- I really prefer the traditional setting
- Pews, baptism fronts, podium, the stained glass windows. These are all important symbols of worship for our family.
- Light, sight lines, acoustics, and flexibility. As a "community of the people," I believe a worship environment is enhanced by good acoustics and lots of light, both of which Harcourt has. A view to the natural surroundings in wonderful. However, it lacks flexibility. The "stage," with pastoral team and choir separated from the congregation, most of which sits in the further pews, creates an "us and them" setting. I don't think that symbolizes what the Harcourt people are as a spiritual group or seekers.
- a sense of sacred space - natural light, good acoustics , comfortable seating, presence of sacred symbols (eg cross, communion table etc.)
- comfort, visual ease, noiseless, warmth
- Peaceful (uncluttered), comfortable, welcoming (in decor, accessories).
- The architecture and current seating arrangement focus toward the cross.
- facilitates community-building and sharing flexibility to allow a variety of worship experiences possibility of small group sharing to make service more participatory
- Comfortable seating, good lighting and good sound.
- The light which pours in the windows. And seeing nature in the courtyard from the sanctuary.
- Comfort, pleasant appearance, worshipful feeling
- That it looks like a church and not a meeting room
- I prefer to be outdoors but inside it's nice to have some beauty, to look outside, to be comfortable i.e. not in pain, not too hot or too cold, to be able to see & connect with others.
- Not critical at all. I can worship outdoors or in a cathedral or around a card table.

- Beautiful space that is physically comfortable. Ambient temperature, good sound, lighting, see the screens. Safe and accessible.
- Pews. I just associate going to church and sitting in a pew
- Quiet, comfort, good sight lines, natural light, no social pressure
- Comfort, flexibility (multipurpose), lighting
- comfort and flexibility
- I go to the nine o'clock service and I like our comfortable chairs. I enjoy looking out the window at the large pine tree. Because it is a small room I can hear without there needing to be a sound system. In the main sanctuary I like to see the choir at the front with the ministers.
- just the way it is now....tradition !!!
- Simplicity Comfort Flexibility Good Sound Visuals where possible Streaming Accessibility for all I love our windows onto the garden Ability to have smaller groups - more intimate gathering as needed.
- Comfort, space for personal space, good acoustics, good ability to see the front of the sanctuary

2. If the sanctuary had chairs instead of pews, how would this affect your worship experience?

- Depending on the style of chair, I would likely find chairs more comfortable. This would make it easier for me to focus on worship.
- I'm sure that various configurations prepared before worship could enhance the service. When smaller numbers are in attendance, it could feel more intimate (the increased number of empty spaces in the pews are making it feel half vacant at times).
- see above. Church is community for me, so I want to be aware of my community visually as well
- The space would feel more open with so many options for seating formation (for example, a circle or semi circle would be a possibility) allowing for enhancing community and connectedness.
- I think it would enhance my worship experience. Chairs could be in more of a circle, creating more of a sense of community. Also, if the congregation is smaller, the number of chairs could be reduced so it wouldn't feel like a half-empty sanctuary.
- To me I think it might look sloppy and lose some of the elegance it current has.
- We would have to think long and hard about whether the environment helped facilitate a spiritual experience for us or whether another environment might help us feel better connected to God and each other.
- Chairs would afford many opportunities for flexibility and creating comfortable "collective spaces." It nurtures a stronger sense of integration with the worship leaders.
- It would improve it.

- My worship experience would be more flexible and organic. I think the openness and opportunity to move into small groups etc. would be very inviting.
- Suits me (us). I would find it just as welcoming.
- Chairs are designed for individuals; pews are designed for families, couples, friends, groups, etc. etc.....lets keep us together!
- It would meet all my characteristics above: community-building, sharing, active involvement in worship
- It would be much pleasanter
- It would improve it by being able to move the chairs for a different experience.
- I am concerned that it would not feel like church.
- Not too much More rental possibilities
- Hopefully, they'd be more comfortable and provide an opportunity to see others.
- Unlikely to have any effect, apart perhaps from comfort. I do like the idea of the flexibility of being able to move chairs about.
- Not necessarily.
- I would likely stop attending
- Restrictive amount of room for my body and for thing like purse and water bottle. Chairs do not feel safe or comforting in the way pews do. Chairs make me feel exposed. Chairs offer less support when standing or getting up and down. I would be uncomfortable with chairs
- Would be more flexible, allow sanctuary to be used for other events as well
- I would find it more comfortable
- Chairs might be more comfortable than hard pews. Either way I am pleased to attend worship.
- budget implications, grama & grampa could no longer squeeze in the same pew for the special family feeling with their children & grandchildren, noise of moving chairs as you stand to sing, cleaning for the caretaker, who made and/or paid for the current pews etc. etc.
- Increase: comfort, flexibility, adjust the space for other types of worship services (in the round; inclusion of dance; inclusion of drama without necessarily moving all the stage furniture; increase intimacy (e.g.; increase physical ability for physical touch appropriate for some occasions; getting to know each other better visually); increase opportunities for potential movement into small groups for discussion during worship sometimes; free Ministers to consider other ways of worshipping.
- I would like it for more comfortable seating, more variety of community set up for events. It would affect my worship experience in a positive way to help enhance the growth of God's love throughout the congregation and community

3. If the sanctuary had chairs instead of pews, how might you see the space being used by the Harcourt congregation and by the community at large?

- I can see potential for events that require open space (e.g., quilt guild show, provided that the lighting was adequate). I think moving to chairs would have little negative impact on existing usage.
- More engagement with the natural world through the West wall windows for services and weddings.
- I think the flexibility of arranging space as needed will be welcome to many opportunities
- With movable chairs, the congregation and members of the community could make use of the space by arranging the seating in any way wanted. For example, the sanctuary could be used for formal and informal gatherings, meetings, music rehearsals, music and dance performances, etc.
- The space would become very flexible. It could be used for meetings, for different kinds of public events. Tables could be brought in, or the area cleared for events involving movement (dancing, physical activity).
- I am not aware of what the benefits would be?
- The sanctuary is a place of worship first and a community centre second. Jesus cast out the money lenders for that very reason.
- Possibilities with chairs - variety of formations from semi circle closer to the choir, communion table and pulpit to a lectern in front of the side windows or the walled east side. - speakers and choir need not be in the same area - a few empty chairs close to the speakers are better than empty pews at the front of the church. Set up a number of chairs for the expected attendance - concert events and be configured in a variety of ways. This will attract outside groups - the space with windows and a high ceiling is a very attractive space for church banquets or other events with a bit of food and drink at tables. The only drawback is the distance from the kitchen. (This is done in many churches in England where the "sanctuary" is the raised dais and the nave is for the "gathering of the people.) - setting up chairs in part of the church for services leaves an opportunity for a children's area at the back or side. - the "coffee time" after a service would be well attended if it were held at the back of the sanctuary instead of in the gym.
- worship in a variety of forms, could have annual meetings in sanctuary, adapt space for small groups, more adaptable space for appropriate rentals
- Have a labyrinth underneath the chairs. Flexibility with the space. Could bring some closer experiences to everyone. The space could have more versatility.
- Flexible seating- rows, circles, groupings. Flexible space for chairs and tables. Space for activities. Multi use possible.
- don't know
- a more flexible space may allow us to offer the space to a larger range of community groups. This is simply good stewardship of valuable space.
- Concerts, meetings, and other community gatherings

- Many different organizations could create a space special to them and meet their needs. A multi faceted venue.
- I agree that it would be more flexible and yet the downstairs hall already has that flexibility.
- More rental possibilities for the church
- Meetings, seminars, dessert & coffee events like a Coffee House or Theatre, Milestone celebration parties, liturgical dance, a labyrinth on the floor, exhibits, events ... lots of ideas.
- Would love to be able to face the garden. But on the downside, the leaders would likely be seen only in silhouette.
- More flexibility for outside groups. Wouldn't have huge empty rows so the worship would be more intimate. Wouldn't accommodate as large a number of people at busy times.
- With the services and concerts etc that currently use the space.
- No differently. Harcourt has many other spaces with movable chairs.
- Small group study, conversations during worship
- Current groups (symphony) will enjoy the space more with comfortable chairs in conventional patterns. Others will be able to form conversation groups, find space for movement (dance), drama etc. The congregation is free to more experimental in its services. New members will be attracted to a more comfortable flexible space.
- Small groups might choose to only put out a few chairs and larger groups might put out more.
- no change !!!
- Harcourt could innovate around the space; weddings (service and celebration) might be entirely within the sanctuary. Similarly for funerals. New programmes could be placed there that would also be attractive to the community; community groups could rent the space (or go through the nonrental approach for the space; it would be a great space for small conferences for both plenary sessions and break out groups. It would be an attractive space for lunch time/dinner meetings (caterer able to use the kitchen and lift,; great for large community and municipal meetings; comfortable for community movie nights, special events (birthdays/wedding anniversaries etc.).....)
- I would see more space available for the congregation to set up for concerts and events. I'd also see more ability for Manna to combine with the other service more often

4. What are your thoughts about the proposed idea of replacing pews with chairs?

- I am mostly in favour because I think it modernizes the church and makes it feel more accessible and approachable to outsiders. However, I think we need a commitment of financial support (e.g., through fundraising) and careful consideration of the style of chair for comfort and practical considerations such as durability, portability, storage, etc.

- 1. Given the sell-out crowds at music (Harcourt plays) and rental events, how much diminished capacity will there be for seating? 2. The increased load on custodial staff each time rearrangements occur.
- I hope it will happen also for Harcourt. Please remember the churches originally had no chairs nor benches
- I fully support the proposed idea of replacing the pews with chairs.
- I am very supportive. I think it would be great. Chairs could be a bit padded, more comfortable than pews. And it would be much more flexible and contemporary.
- Unless I was to hear a compelling argument I would say I like the pews staying
- Pews are more suitable and comfortable for families to cuddle children, for people who are overweight and for pulling oneself up to stand safely and securely. Money would be better spent on pew length cushions or on pew casters that can move pews when needed.
- I think it's an idea whose time has come in order to make the worship and "mission" of the church more relevant to the church community as well as the community at large
- I am in favour. The issue of logistics re managing storage and reconfiguration are important.
- I like the idea.
- Quite in favour of it.
- see #2 [Chairs are designed for individuals; pews are designed for families, couples, friends, groups, etc. etc.....lets keep us together!
- It's an idea whose time has come. "Form follows function follows faith": our faith is a participatory community-building one. The function of space needs to allow that. Therefore the form should optimize the possibilities of building such a faith.
- Good idea
- Great idea.
- Initially I would not be in favour but I am not a regular attendee so my opinion is less valid.
- Leave it as is.
- I am in favour but only if it is likely that the new flexibility will be used. e.g. will the minister's plan services with different configurations. Will the rental fees be reasonable so that community groups can use the space, will Manna use the space. I am not in favour of changing to chairs if they are only going to be lined up like pews and left there, I would want the space to be used not sitting empty 6 days a week.
- Neutral about the actual furniture change. Very concerned about the cost, and what that might do to other requests for money for other projects.
- I am in favour of it. It will be more comfortable
- Opposed. Unnecessary and expensive

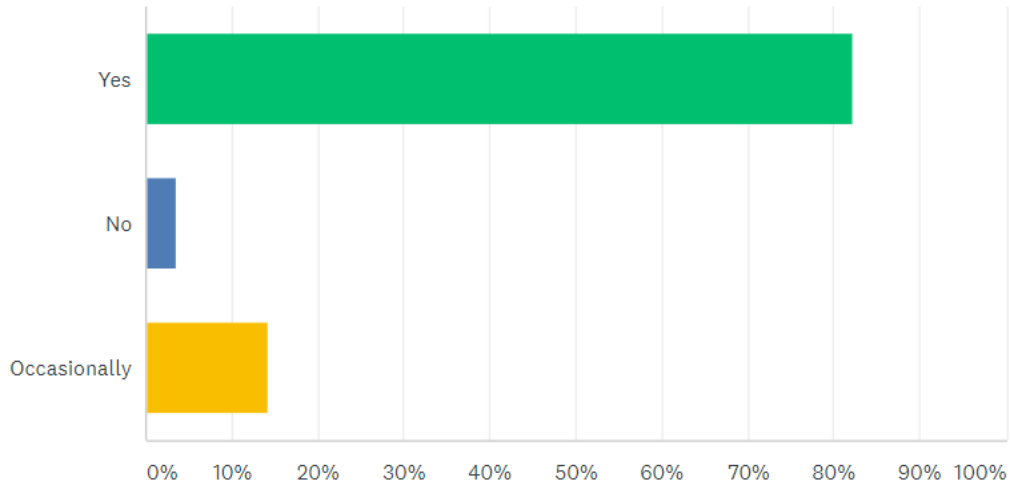
- I am 100% opposed to it. Not everyone fits in a chair. If people want a different configuration of seating they can use the hapless or friendship room
- YES!
- It is a worthwhile investment that could be supported by individuals and families who could buy a chair.
- It would be costly when we are already running a deficit. Where would we store the chairs? Who would be responsible for setting them up NOT busy Darko!
- there must be many other areas where the funds could be put to better use..... change for the sake of change
- Please replace the pews
- I like chairs better, because they're more comfortable and flexible

5. Do you have any additional comments or questions for the committee?

- Just that we have the overspending on the accessible washroom project to continue to raise funds for, and a very large deficit budget to support. Once the estimated costs come in for the flexible seating, perhaps it should be handled like the 50th anniversary project. The money will need to be raised before this proposal proceeds.
- How can we support people who need to worship in benches
- I realize that there may be some congregation members for whom the thought of removing pews and replacing with chairs could be distressing, however, I personally believe that chairs would create a welcoming, open space with flexibility for so many options and varied uses.
- I recognize that pews are important to some people because this is what they are used to. But I've been in several congregations that used chairs, and I much prefer chairs.
- Why when resources are so tight are we wasting time and money on this? Is there a guarantee that community groups will use this space any more than they do now? We want to come to church not to a community centre that holds church on Sunday.
- Good luck! It is challenging to help people change perceptions and generations of expectation re what is "church". Let's hear it for chairs! :)
- Not at this point. Would like to know the cost.
- The logistics will be challenging. Best wishes and blessings!
- I am impatient to get on with this. I appreciate that others may have different views. But as Christianity is changing, to better reflect God's Dream for an active involved community promoting compassion and justice, so must we adapt our spaces to allow this to happen.
- Harcourt is a good community resource, but the sanctuary has limited use. For meetings held in the gym, the acoustics are terrible
- This idea helps Harcourt to move into the future of what worship can become.
- This decision should be made by the people using the facility the most.

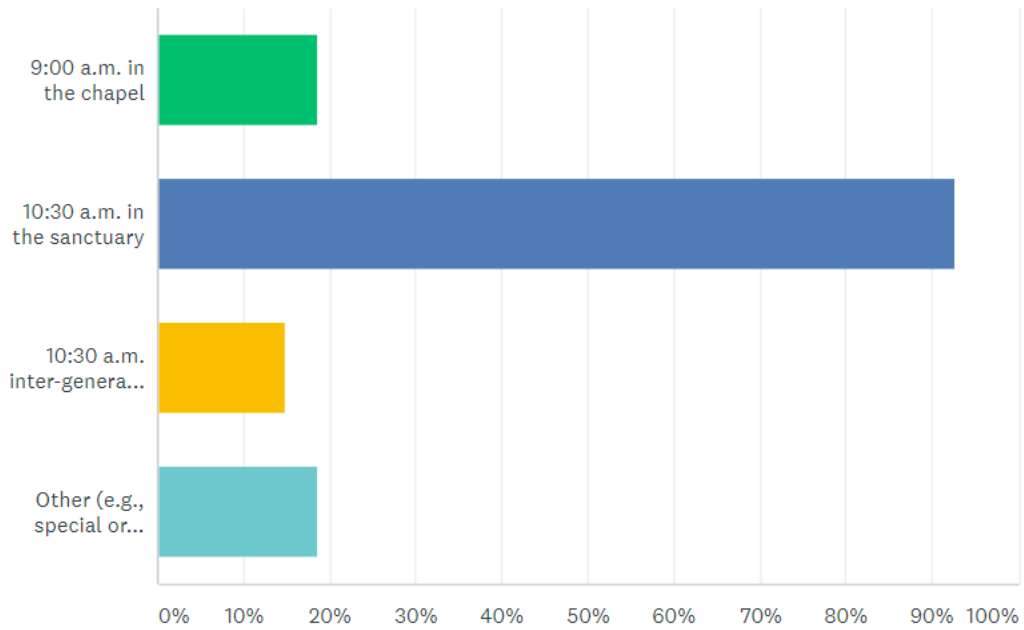
- Questions that need to be answered are storage, moving crews, what about the floor, how will the pews be re-used or disposed of - there are probably lots more - before I can really make a decision.
- Please consult widely in the community. I expect there is no hope of recovering any of this cost in ticket prices, so there needs to be fairly strong positive reaction in support of increasing popularity in rental use of the space.
- No
- No
- Please don't do this. The pews are beautiful and functional. It would also be a waste of money. They are a big part of why I love the church. Please !!!
- No
- There needs to be more discussion about the use of chairs in other congregations...how are liked, how have they enhanced services, how has the wider community responded, etc. We are more likely to get buy in if we know they has been a good step for other churches.
- If this is rejected will there be hard feelings to contend with from the discension?
- why does someone think this is necessary ?
- Storage of chairs which can re-shape this space for an event readily is a key item. This needs investment to be easily mobile. Do not assume it will be within the sanctuary without doing careful sound testing to ensure that the ACCOUSTICS ARE NOT DAMAGED and that the space will not then be less flexible. I would rather see part of the Greeting Area diminished with shallow high "wardrobes" for chair storage. With digital signs coming in the greeting area and well designed "holders with a small flip up table" on the wall, I think we can manage with less space there. I think people who want a quick meeting in a sanctuary with chairs can do so easily. There would be room to spread out with dividers if need be (sliding dividers of interesting glass that it now available).
- I feel the chairs are a good change to improve the sanctuary and make the church even more better

6. Do you attend worship at Harcourt?



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Yes | 82.14% | 23 |
| No | 3.57% | 1 |
| Occasionally | 14.29% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 28 |

7. Which Harcourt service(s) do you attend? (Check all that apply)



PAPER COPY SURVEY RESULTS

14 Responses

What characteristics of the physical environment are important to your worship/spiritual experience?

- Calmness that non-moveable pews provide
- Being physically comfortable. The pews distract me, as they are uncomfortable.
- Physical comfort (and our pews, sadly, are not comfortable for my deteriorated back). Being able to see other worshippers, and not worship leaders/choir members only.
- Being able to see the ministers and choir.
- Beautiful, calm, relaxing sanctuary.
- A space that facilitates a sense of community.
- That it be as bright and open as possible. That the minister/leader be clearly visible.
- Good acoustics and visuals and connect to one another. Beauty. Comfort/ease – so as all can participate equally.

If the sanctuary had chairs instead of pews, how would this affect your worship experience?

- Noisier as chairs move and “scratch” on floor.
- Comfortable chairs would let me focus on the prayers, etc. And chairs could face the lovely outside world.
- I hope the chairs would be comfortable. I hope we could worship in the round. I hope worship could include movement and interaction.
- Really don’t think there is a negative ... as long as I can see and hear the leaders.
- Probably would be the same.
- I am a millennial and I do not like this idea. There is a nice/pure old feeling of pews you will not get with chairs.
- Is it possible to have some pews left?

- More configurations would be possible allowing for perhaps different experiences and more interaction amongst those present. More personal as opposed to sitting in straight rows looking at the back of everyone's head. One's faith can be experienced or expressed in different ways other than in pews screwed to the floor.
- Would allow for social/coffee time following the service
- Open it up – increase the possibilities for ceremony, ritual, coming together – increase comfort as well I would assume.
- I like church pews. It is part of the atmosphere of a church.
- It would be less companionable to sit on individual chairs.
- It would not make a difference.

If the sanctuary had chairs instead of pews, how might you see the space being used by the Harcourt congregation and by the community at large?

- Probably more use by “outside” groups.
- It would be a wonderful rental for wedding parties, and other celebrations. Also, allow so much flexibility in worship – groups, (even coffee).
- I would hope that we would use the space for meetings, celebrations, feasting and refreshments, expanding our sense of sanctuary beyond “worship and solemn music and dramatic performance”.
- So many options! Wonderful idea!
- More rentals, if non-linear seating was desired.
- The space may be seen as friendlier and welcoming - less institutional or traditional – use for the space would wide open – might include a weekly cafe for the neighbourhood
- Could be rented more.
- The community would have a wonderfully large space!
- Social time could be facilitated more easily – all those who avoid coffee time because the gym is downstairs could now be included. Could have circles, spirals. All sorts of formations. Increase attractiveness for outside rentals.
- By whom/when would the chairs be rearranged? Overtime paid?

- If concert tickets, you want seat numbers – you could number the pews.

What are your thoughts about the proposed idea of replacing pews with chairs?

- Cost. Flooring – chairs moving around (not being lifted). More stuff on floor – e.g., purses and people bending to pick up.
- Long overdue.
- An overdue move.
- Again, great idea. Opportunity to change format for concerts, dinners, meetings and other rentals.
- Church population is aging. Who would carry them in and out?
- The idea has been around for a long time. It is time to make the move. It would present a more contemporary space that is open for opportunities.
- I will be sorry to see the pews go but realize that chairs will be much more useful both for us and the outside community.
- Do not like it at all. If this is of importance, perhaps just do one section, but “church” will lose its “church” feeling without pews.
- I ask myself. “What would Jesus do?” I know Jesus would say “yes” to pews!
- It’s long overdue.
- I am opposed.
- I am against it. We can’t afford the cost.
- How will a different seating arrangement accommodate persons who use the hearing assisted devices?
- I do not see this as a necessity
- I have attended services and events in three different churches that have gone the route of taking out pews and replacing them with chairs. I was able to be in these churches more than once and the chairs were always in the same position: in rows, like pews.
- I think at this time, it will involve too much money. I am also of the impression that the chairs need to be fastened down so we could not move them around like in the scale model.

Do you have any additional comments or questions for the committee?

- Accessibility and safety – hymn books are easier to reach on back of pews. Who is paying for this project?
- Is the Fire Dept. okay with loose chairs, or do they have to “lock” together? Also, a designated storage space is needed for chairs not in use. Stacks are messy, and unsafe, in open areas.
- What theology of “sacred space” informs our decision? Where will chairs be stored when not in use? (Stacked against the wall is not an acceptable answer)
- We had chairs at my previous church and we never bothered moving them around ... never.
- I will support chairs in the sanctuary both verbally and financially. It will be our next step into our future.
- Plus, can we lower the front section or make it removable? It is difficult for many to go up those stairs. Plus, can the choir move to the sides – or be dispersed among the congregation – just come together for anthems etc.
- I am very concerned about the financial burden we have taken on. Spending more money to replace the pews is unthinkable. Would we also be paying to keep changing the configuration of the chairs?
- The backs of chairs need to be filled in so that I can use a pillow (or rolled up scarf) for my back.
- The size of the seat of chairs needs to be wide enough for those of us who are borader in the hips.

Do you attend worship at Harcourt? Yes: 100%

What Harcourt services do you attend?

| | |
|-------|-----|
| 9AM | 20% |
| 10:30 | 67% |
| Manna | 0% |
| Other | 13% |

APPENDIX #2

CHURCH CONSULTATION NOTES

Church Consultation

Harcourt Memorial United Church has formed a Committee to consider replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. One of the tasks of the Committee is to talk with churches that have made such a change.

Date: Feb. 20, 2019

Church: **Eglinton-St. George's United**

What led your church to remove the pews for chairs?

- Part of \$4.7 million renovation – theme of renovations “Open doors, open minds, open hearts”
- following amalgamation with Eglinton United Church

How long have chairs been in place?

- Pews removed as part of renovations from 2001 - 2004
- Chairs in place since about 2004

What have you experienced from making the change (e.g., has the way in which worship takes place changed?)

- Chairs reconfigured periodically for worship during the year (e.g., lent, advent)
- “service in the round” - will be doing this for March
- The purpose of having chairs was to provide flexible seating
- Chairs are attached in such a way that they can swivel

Have you any regrets having made the decision?

- None

Did replacing the pews result in changes in how the space is used? What events are held in the space? Did the change bring in new outside users?

- Weekly events
- Banquets, concerts, recitals, dances, Black History Month
- When the “new” church was officially recognized, they had a banquet with tables and chairs and large concert
- Tend to have more funerals than weddings

What kinds of configurations are used? How long does it take to reconfigure the space (time, number of people required)?

- Depends on the event
- Sometimes chairs have been completely removed
- Theatre style for concerts, worship
- Also, “service in the round”
- Tables brought in for banquets
- “Sexton” responsible for reconfiguring space
- Sometimes take an afternoon to reconfigure

How often are the chairs reconfigured or re-arranged?

- Chairs are reconfigured weekly for events
- Configuration doesn’t change as often for worship - seasonally

What are the rental fees for the space? What are the related costs for set-up, custodial costs, tech fees?

- Rental fees include reconfiguring space, moving piano, organ and tech fee
- \$300 to move the piano up or down from the platform

Were there regulations that had to be followed when using the chairs?

- No fire regulations
- Couple members of congregation work for the fire department

Where are they stored?

- Stored along the sides of the sanctuary and behind chancel
- Can be stacked in 4s
- Do have some space in various corners for storing chairs
- Stack chairs using dollies
- Extra matching folding chairs for overflow, stored on carts

Did the seating capacity change?

- Not sure given the renovations that took place
- Probably currently around 500
- Can expand into the “greeting area” because of sliding (glass) doors at back of sanctuary

- Also have folding chairs available that stacked on dollies

What other large meeting rooms do you have, if any?

- They have a number of rooms of various sizes, all available for rent
- Following renovations, very little dedicated space – all can be converted for various uses
- All rooms are configured for flexibility, including sliding doors at entrance points
- A number of kitchens are scattered throughout building
- Have a gym as well as a “wellness centre” comprised of massage table etc.
- Have a room with bamboo floor for such activities as yoga
- Also have a shower room and laundry room

What kind of chair did you purchase? Why? From where were they purchased? What was the cost to purchase the chairs? What did you do with the pews?

- Purchased wooden chairs from a Canadian company with a cylinder connection so chairs can swivel while connected
- Not as heavy as chairs at St. John’s
- Chairs are wood with upholstery, slots for hymn books
- Cost \$175 each
- Pews were auctioned off to members – rest of pews were sent to a church in Cuba
- No chairs with arms
- Chairs not a problem accommodating those with disabilities

How did you fund the costs involved in making the change? (e.g., cost of chairs, any renovations undertaken in addition to purchasing the chairs)

- Cost of chairs were covered through fundraising
- Fundraising activities for chairs was separate from fundraising for renovations
- Chairs considered a separate asset
- Some people were prepared to give \$100 - \$200 for chairs as opposed to donating perhaps thousands toward the renovations

What were the initial reactions to the decision to remove the pews?

- Part of renovation process
- Board and Design Committee drove the process
- emphasized process was lay driven – number of congregational meetings or town halls – created many opportunities to share information and have discussions so by the time it came to move forward on the chairs, they did not vote. Many people were ready for chairs if not impatient for it to happen
- Some people just expected it to happen
- No voting process
- Some who didn’t like the idea came around in the end

- One “flashpoint” was the issue of choir gowns from two churches – decided on new ones

How are people feeling about the removal of the pews today?

- Not an issue

Looking back, would you do anything differently?

- Couldn't think of anything in particular
- Took 2 years to plan for the renovations including Design Committee – put much thought into the renovations – e.g., sliding glass doors at back of sanctuary, organ is moveable, 17 furnaces for the church all hooked up to an automatic monitoring system
- Involved architect in planning – Carolyn Woodland headed up design committee (currently works for Conservation Authority) – good contact
- Invited consultant from the USA, Richard Voscoe, to come and speak about flexibility – specialized in churches in transition and sanctuary alterations - spoke about pews being “faith nailed to the floor” – pivotal moment for the congregation

Additional Comments

- Implementing outreach activities
- Apply for grants – years ago received PTCC Grant for \$275,000 over three years
- Beginning an Intentional Community Project – bought a house for 3-4 young people who want to experience community

Ad Hoc Seating Committee

Church Consultation

Harcourt Memorial United Church has formed a Committee to consider replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. One of the tasks of the Committee is to talk with churches that have made such a change.

Date: March 7, 2019

Church: **St. David's, Woodstock**

What led your church to remove the pews for chairs?

- Part of a larger renovation but gradual approach to replacing the pews with about a 5 year discussion.

How long have chairs been in place?

- Less than a year.

What have you experienced from making the change (e.g., has the way in which worship takes place changed?)

- Lots of comments about comfort
- Better seating for concerts (3 or 4 concerts per year)

Have you any regrets having made the decision?

- None
- 85% voted for it.

Did replacing the pews result in changes in how the space is used? What events are held in the space? Did the change bring in new outside users?

- Yes, one new music group, plus Fanshawe Singers plus Kyly Joe C (a popular local gospel singer)

What kinds of configurations are used? How long does it take to reconfigure the space (time, number of people required)?

- Just variations on rows

How often are the chairs reconfigured or re-arranged?

- Good to know they can be rearranged if needed

What are the rental fees for the space? What are the related costs for set-up, custodial costs, tech fees?

- \$290 for the sanctuary for 8 hours, \$150 for 4 hours
- Discounts for longer rental contracts (multiple times)
- \$25 if the church has to set up and return to regular configuration
- A lot of the changeovers were done by the affiliated scout group and much of that was by the scout leaders

Were there regulations that had to be followed when using the chairs?

- No

Where are they stored?

- Mostly in the sanctuary. The chairs have not been moved very much so far.

Did the seating capacity change?

- Yes – 250 to 176

What other large meeting rooms do you have, if any?

- Kirk Hall, Learning Centre, Friendship Room

What kind of chair did you purchase? Why? From where were they purchased? What was the cost to purchase the chairs? What did you do with the pews?

- ChairTex. Good to work with.
- Pews went to a Mennonite church in Mildmay. Paid \$5000
- \$200/pew sold internally – only a few
- St. David's changed to chairs in the balcony also
- Most of the pews went to the Mennonite Church – the Mennonites detached the pews, took them apart, loaded them in their trucks and had it all done in a morning.

How did you fund the costs involved in making the change? (e.g., cost of chairs, any renovations undertaken in addition to purchasing the chairs)

- Lots of information about costs in the information provided
- The change to chairs was part of a much larger renovation of the whole sanctuary

What were the initial reactions to the decision to remove the pews?

- Gasps then gradually changed

How are people feeling about the removal of the pews today?

- Came around

Looking back, would you do anything differently?

- Maybe change to chairs sooner.

Additional Comments

- Happy with the decision
- Very attractive tile floor (not ceramic) over a floor with radiant heating
- About half the chairs have armrests

Church Consultation

Harcourt Memorial United Church has formed a Committee to consider replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. One of the tasks of the Committee is to talk with churches that have made such a change. Ad Hoc Seating Committee

Date: **February 4, 2019**

Church: **St. John's United Church, Georgetown**

What led your church to remove the pews for chairs?

A chancel renovation was approved for the 175th Anniversary. This project grew to include renovations throughout the sanctuary as a result of people asking things like, "What are you going to do about the carpet?"

No separate approval was sought for changing the pews to chairs. The project committee made the decision. It was a very gradual planning project and detailed communications from the project committee were shared every step of the way with the congregation. A sample chair was available and taken to all meetings for people to try. There was never a formal survey.

The main reason for choosing chairs was for flexibility and comfort. Also, moving into new ways of worship. Their project was called "Creating Inspiring Spaces." The committee held discussion groups around worship. After visiting a Toronto church, the consciously did not ask any questions that would create divisiveness (polarizing questions).

How long have chairs been in place?

Since 2014

What have you experienced from making the change (e.g., has the way in which worship takes place changed?)

The capacity was reduced to 156. They have 8 chairs stored in a hallway and at busy times like Christmas, Easter and funerals, they add one row to the front and use other plastic chairs at the back. Carolyn has attended a funeral there that was SRO.

The center aisle needed to be reduced to allow space for walkers etc. on the side aisles.

Have you any regrets having made the decision?

They didn't order enough extra chairs. As part of the chancel renovations they did not allow for sufficient under the platform spaces for cords and they need a technical upgrade. No regrets about the chairs.

Did replacing the pews result in changes in how the space is used? What events are held in the space? Did the change bring in new outside users?

Not really. The chairs are reconfigured only for Lent. They have tried a few different arrangements and provided pictures of these.

They have many concerts, performances etc. but this has not changed. Only the chancel area is re-arranged for these events.

What kinds of configurations are used?

Round and Herring Bone for worship during Lent.

How long does it take to reconfigure the space (time, number of people required)?

Didn't ask this one. They have a group of volunteers that reconfigure the chancel area regularly and the chairs once a year. The custodian is not involved.

How often are the chairs reconfigured or re-arranged?

Once a year during Lent and once for a September service.

What are the rental fees for the space? What are the related costs for set-up, custodial costs, tech fees?

Rental fees were not discussed. However, there are no set-up costs to the renter. Set-up is free.

Were there regulations that had to be followed when using the chairs?

No fire regulations imposed – the chairs do connect however.

Where are they stored?

Not an issue. Only the 8 extra chairs are stored in a hallway by the music room. If space was totally cleared, there would be a problem where to put them.

Did the seating capacity change?

Yes – lower. Mainly because, if necessary, people can squeeze together on a pew.

What other large meeting rooms do you have, if any?

Gym – used for meetings etc. acoustics are not great. There are a number of smaller meeting rooms.

What kind of chair did you purchase? Why?

Purchased rather heavy chairs that resemble pews. Chairs measure 20” high by 22” deep. They are set-up with 3’ between the backs of the chairs. The set-up crew has a guide to measure between the legs – 14”. Bought 190 chairs – 26 are used for the choir and on the chancel area, 156 for the congregation, 8 extra chairs.

From where were they purchased?

They came from New Holland in Pennsylvania.

What was the cost to purchase the chairs?

US \$43K - \$52 - \$53,000 Canadian. This works out to \$275 - \$280 per chair.

How did you fund the costs involved in making the change? (e.g., cost of chairs, any renovations undertaken in addition to purchasing the chairs)

As part of their 175th Anniversary Campaign they raised funds for “Me to We” and for the church. Fundraising for the chairs was done in stages –there was an individual donation of \$50K (as long as the amount was matched by the congregation?). This was a real spur for donations.

What did you do with the pews?

After dismantling, some were made smaller and taken by members of the congregation or others in the community – some people gave donations. Others have been spread around other areas in the buildings. The bits and pieces left went to the dump.

What were the initial reactions to the decision to remove the pews?

Change is scary. Some people had their favourite pew.

How are people feeling about the removal of the pews today?

They love the chairs now. Some people now have their favourite chair. No negative comments received in the office. Congregation are not as supportive of other configurations.

Looking back, would you do anything differently?

Not sure we asked this question specifically. There was a sense that they felt good about the process and the results. They thought through each step of the way.

Additional Comments

The cost was not their biggest roadblock. – Not sure they said what was.

Chairs are set-up to look like comfortable pews.

Worked with a hired interior decorator to choose colours, design – they did not want the renovations to look “dated” in a few years. Choose neutral colours that complement the other changes made in the sanctuary and the chancel.

They have never considered using tables and chairs.

They gave us a set-up checklist for rentals.

Ad Hoc Seating Committee

Church Consultation

Harcourt Memorial United Church has formed a Committee to consider replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. One of the tasks of the Committee is to talk with churches that have made such a change.

Date: March 7, 2019

Church: **Riverside United Church**

What led your church to remove the pews for chairs?

- Two years of renovation planning

How long have chairs been in place?

- 5 years

What have you experienced from making the change (e.g., has the way in which worship takes place changed?)

- Some changes. Sometimes baptism occurs in the middle of the sanctuary. More informal groups meeting with the chairs in a circle. More changes in concert seating than in worship seating.

Have you any regrets having made the decision?

- No, should have done it sooner.

Did replacing the pews result in changes in how the space is used? What events are held in the space? Did the change bring in new outside users?

- Baptism, concerts, weddings, funerals

What kinds of configurations are used? How long does it take to reconfigure the space (time, number of people required)?

- All kinds. About 20 people

How often are the chairs reconfigured or re-arranged?

- Every week but not necessarily for worship.

What are the rental fees for the space? What are the related costs for set-up, custodial costs, tech fees?

Were there regulations that had to be followed when using the chairs?

- No

Where are they stored?

- Next door

Did the seating capacity change?

- No (surprised by this answer)

What other large meeting rooms do you have, if any?

- Multi-purpose room, board room, 2 or 3 others

What kind of chair did you purchase? Why? From where were they purchased? What was the cost to purchase the chairs? What did you do with the pews?

- ChairTex – Infinity Collection

How did you fund the costs involved in making the change? (e.g., cost of chairs, any renovations undertaken in addition to purchasing the chairs)

- Bought in 2014
- 280 chairs model 665 @ \$33.45 with pocket
- \$60.95 with rack underneath the chairs
- No armrests

What were the initial reactions to the decision to remove the pews?

- A few of “reserved opinion”

How are people feeling about the removal of the pews today?

- Not an issue

Looking back, would you do anything differently?

- No, nothing

Additional Comments

- Very little other change in the sanctuary. They kept pews in the balcony. Base cement floor has not been covered (can still see black paint over the places where the screws were removed. Riverside also added rooms at the same time which included room for storage of chairs and tables.
- Very comfortable even if someone sits on the “crack” between the chairs. No complaints about difficulty in standing up.
- Appointed committee decided to go with chairs rather than having the congregation vote.
- The church used to house the offices of London Presbytery who have moved.
- We were surprised that the neighbours had complained about the commercial use of the church

Friday, January 18th, 2019.

Westminster United Church, 247 Broadway, Orangeville

Q: What led your church to remove the pews for chairs?

A: #1 reason: flexibility. The sanctuary floor used to be sloped toward the front in a theatre style; was raised 42". An elevator was installed 5-7 years ago (passenger only). They have a building with LOTS of stairs.

Q: How long have chairs been in place?

A: since October 2016

Q: What have you experienced from making the change?

A: being able to use the space differently; they can accommodate a 75 voice choir and orchestra, bell choir etc. Choir still uses pews at the side of the space and those who still prefer pews can sit opposite the choir on the other side with slanted floor. Some were happy to maintain that "historical" feature

Q: Have you any regrets having made the decision?

A: "No".

Q: How do you use the space? What kinds of configuration are used?

Is there a fee to set up chairs? Where are they stored?

A: The front of the sanctuary now has four levels above the main floor to improve line of sight. There are two screens and a video camera system so that people can watch what's going on using the screens.

They have community concerts (e.g. Sounds of Westminster, Music of the night, community brass band, music festival in the spring, choirs rent the space and there have been a few book readings

The original plan could allow three different "layouts"; however only one layout has so far been used. Therefore, no fees have been charged

And no storage space has been required. They ordered 200 chairs and 6 have arms. They are stacking chairs but they can only store four chairs. (I'm not surprised since I lifted one. Yikes, they're heavy oak chairs).

Q: What kind of chairs did you purchase? Why? From where were they purchased? What was the cost to purchase the chairs? What did you do with the pews?

A: New Holland (American company). Contact in Hamilton: Andrew Gale 866 813-8515. Made in Pennsylvania. Red oak. Cost: \$46,000 for 200 chairs; \$230.00 each. The contractor helped to customize the pews, catering to members who wanted to "buy" one for personal use. He thinks they may have been sold or by donation.

Big renovation: \$500,000. \$45,000. US for just the chairs

Q:What were the initial reactions to the decision to remove the pews?

A: very supportive; 2 sets of pews remained seating 80 people on slanted floor to satisfy those who value pews for historical value.

Q: How are people feeling about the removal of the pews today?

Positive. They had made decisions following committee time.

Q: How did they pay for the renovations?

A: There was a major capital campaign. They got a \$190,00 grant from the United Church of Canada and they had to pay for the rest. They also used money that had been invested from the sale of the manse.

Personal reflection:

John Lemke was very generous with his time. We spent about an hour together. I took some photos. Although the sanctuary space is quite lovely, I am not recommending that others visit this particular site. (My personal opinion). The chairs area HEAVY red oak chairs which seem to serve their purposes at least for now. They are all connected to one another. There is no designated space for children and, although flexibility was identified as their number one priority, those chairs aren't going anywhere soon. They still have pews on the slanted floor for choir and traditionalists. I did, however, tell John that we have heated concrete floors and he gave me a sample of their carpet tile as a souvenir. I will happily share this on Thursday for show and tell.

Ad Hoc Seating Committee

Church Consultation

Harcourt Memorial United Church has formed a Committee to consider replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. One of the tasks of the Committee is to talk with churches that have made such a change.

Date: Feb. 15, 2019

Church: **Three Willows**

What led your church to remove the pews for chairs?

- Initial part of church built in 1987
- Sanctuary added in 1993

How long have chairs been in place?

- Chairs have been in sanctuary since the beginning

What have you experienced from making the change (e.g., has the way in which worship takes place changed?)

- Pulpit moved forward off the platform area
- Chairs can be arranged in any configuration
- Cafe style in worship – tables and chairs – sit at tables for worship with coffee
- Can create a sense of intimacy with smaller groups
- Seasonal changes – lent and advent – for different effect
- Labyrinth on the floor – 3 to 4 times per year
- People can sit in back of sanctuary on couch and comfortable chairs if wish to do so – also can act as meeting space (e.g., TT meet there)

Have you any regrets having made the decision?

- Not know anything other than chairs
- Many former Chalmers members became members of Three Willows
- They came from Chalmers which had pews
- Chairs did not present a problem for them – haven't missed pews
- Would not go back to pews
- Creative use of space – set up space in any way want to – “priceless”

- Those with disabilities can be accommodated easily
- There are a few chairs with arms
- Space more open, more welcoming

Did replacing the pews result in changes in how the space is used? What events are held in the space? Did the change bring in new outside users?

- Sanctuary space used by many groups
- Sharp Transportation used to use the space for meetings with bus drivers – had meeting catered – large group
- “Body, mind and soul” evening – night of spiritual practices – TT, Reikki
- A number of groups rehearse in Sanctuary – Chamber Choir, New Horizon’s Band, Long and McQuade
- Concerts held in space
- Talent show
- Chalmers Harvest Bowl event – tables and chairs throughout sanctuary
- A church is not just for Sundays

What are the rental fees for the space? What are the related costs for set-up, custodial costs, tech fees?

- No set-up costs for groups
- Groups responsible for their own set-up and return room to original configuration
- Pictures available showing how room should be configured
- Occasionally left in a messy state
- There is an individual who oversees set-up but mostly done by asking for volunteers for a particular event
- Space reconfigured average of 1 – 2 times per month

Were there regulations that had to be followed when using the chairs?

- No issues with fire department – not mention issue with chairs
- Chairs were originally attached together – many years ago
- Very seldom are chairs attached currently

Where are they stored?

- Chairs are stored along the outside walls

Did the seating capacity change?

- Occupancy numbers are confusing – roughly 220 but varies
- Numbers change according to whether there are only chairs, chairs and tables, activity involved (dancing, standing room only)
- Numbers don't make sense

What other large meeting rooms do you have, if any?

- There is the Willow Grove Room
- Rented out quite frequently – smaller than sanctuary

What kind of chair did you purchase? Why? From where were they purchased? What was the cost to purchase the chairs? What did you do with the pews?

- Wooden chairs were purchased long time ago
- Difficult to stack, quite heavy
- Expand and contract according to the weather
- Chairs are not very comfortable – if had money would change chairs

How did you fund the costs involved in making the change? (e.g., cost of chairs, any renovations undertaken in addition to purchasing the chairs)

- Part of construction of the sanctuary

What were the initial reactions to the decision to remove the pews?

- Never had pews
- Never go back

How are people feeling about the removal of the pews today?

- Some people don't like configurations at times
- Told that any changes in seating not last forever
- Congregation rather diverse – used to changes in seating from time to time

Looking back, would you do anything differently?

- Purchase different kind of chair

Additional Comments

- Floor seems to be a particular kind of vinyl floor – scratch resistant, easily maintained and quiet when chairs moved around

Church: Avondale United Church, Stratford

Meet with the Music Director and office Administrator.

Central United and St. John's United amalgamated to become Avondale united. They spent 1.2 Million in renovations. They installed the stained glass windows in the present church from the other church. I saw the invoice for the chairs from 2016. They were from the Chairtex collection so you probably recognize the style from other churches. They paid \$71.00 each. No negative comments were reported. The stage was set for an upcoming concert by the Stratford Symphony. They had to extend the stage temporarily to accommodate all the musicians. According to the music director, the sound has improved if anything, regardless of the upholstered chairs. The Stratford concert Band performs. They host Kiwanis and a Carol Festival. The ONLY negative to the design in the sanctuary is the absence of a ramp to access the stage. People have to be able to manage steps. They have removed enough chairs to allow for a labyrinth. For Maunday Thursday and Good Friday and services where fewer attend, they appreciate being able to rearrange the chairs to create more intimacy. They sold all the pews. Some went to the High School and some woodworkers bought pews and made furniture. Cheese boards and cutting boards were made and sold. Others bought the pews from the congregation. The balcony pews have remained. People were given an opportunity to buy a chair(s) or sponsor the purchase of chairs. Their names were recorded and kept separately. No name plates etc. Are visible. For rental purposes, the chairs can be numbered for ticket sales. They have a crew of volunteers who move the chairs when needed. They charge \$200.00 to "clear" the stage. When asked about the Fire Department, they had nothing to report other than the Music Director thought that the chairs with arms could NOT be at the end of the row.

Church: St. James Anglican, Guelph

I phoned and spoke to Emily in the office yesterday. I drove over this morning to take pictures of the sanctuary and met Trudy, the clergy person/priest. Emily thought she was as well versed in the process as anyone. Although Trudy was very gracious and generous with her time, I'm not sure that another visit is worthwhile. The best time suggested was Tuesday morning for a more in-depth conversation and Q&A. Based on their current attendees, she cannot imagine converting any more pews for now. She said these chairs were \$75.00. I hadn't been inside the sanctuary since I attended a series offered by April Burrows and Uncommon Ground. The back pews have been returned and the chairs are now at the front. The little rug space is for children and the pews were removed to allow for a few children to engage in the sanctuary. According to Trudy, the fire marshal has never expressed concern about the need for these chairs to be attached and Trudy is well aware of the fire hazards in that particular church with ALL the wood. Although people have commented on the comfort of the chairs, there are no plans to proceed. I was struck by how DARK the sanctuary is, even with the lights on.

Trudy actually mentioned a little church in Fergus. I believe it's St. James. Apparently, they have JUST replaced their pews with chairs and she suggested that I consider inquiring about their space.

APPENDIX #3

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FORM

Ad Hoc Seating Committee

Community Consultation

Harcourt Memorial United Church has formed a Committee to consider replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. One of the tasks of this Committee is to talk with community groups to determine how they might want to/could use this space with the pews removed.

Date:

Community Group:

Contact Person:

If the pews were removed and replaced with chairs, how might you see yourselves using this space?

Would you use the space on a regular basis, at a particular time of the year, for a particular event? (e.g., summer, pd days, holidays, presentation etc.)

Additional Comments

APPENDIX #4

RENTAL CONSULTATION FORM

Ad Hoc Seating Committee

Rental Consultation

Harcourt Memorial United Church has formed a Committee to consider replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. One of the tasks of the Committee is to talk with those who rent or use the sanctuary at Harcourt for their activities.

Date:

Group/Individual:

Contact Person:

Current Users of the Sanctuary

If the pews were removed in the sanctuary and replaced with chairs, how would it impact your current activities in the sanctuary?

If the pews were removed, how might you use the space differently?

Potential Users of the Sanctuary

If you do not currently use/rent the sanctuary for your activities, but use other rooms or space at Harcourt, how might you see yourself using the space in the sanctuary if the pews were removed?

Additional Comments

APPENDIX #5

MINISTERS FEEDBACK

From Jim Ball

In general, we are prepared to use the build form the congregation provides us. If pews, we'll continue to work with them, the limitations notwithstanding. If chairs, we'll begin to explore and work with the greater flexibility, understanding that this will be an experimenting and learning journey. With chairs, there is an additional need for people power to move and store them. Which also means a capacity to store them. Lastly, Harcourt has various groups and services. The gatherings organized into rows tend to be shrinking. The gatherings organized into circles seem to be vital, and, in some cases, growing.

From Miriam Flynn

Overview

As worship leaders, we work within the perimeters of the physical configuration of space *and* the customs, gifts, sensibilities and receptivity to exploration of the worshipping community.

Over the long term, chairs offer increased flexibility to configure seating in ways that may enhance the variety and form of worship, contemplative practice and special services held within the space. If planned in conjunction with changes to the gathering area, they offer the potential to make our church a more open, welcoming and hospitable centre for worship and community life.

10:30 Sanctuary Service

In the short term, those attending the 10:30 sanctuary service might not find much change in their form of worship, as a result of replacing pews with chairs. It would not surprise me if, most Sundays, the chairs continue to be set up for that service in traditional rows. However, chairs would present the following immediate advantages for the 10:30 service:

1. The back of the sanctuary can be more open, allowing those who prefer to be present but remain on the periphery (ie. kids colouring and new moms in rocking chairs) a casual, hospitable transition point in and out of the worship space;
2. Greater intimacy could be established on those Sundays that traditionally see a lower attendance, by removing chairs or reconfiguring the arrangement of chairs (a more beautiful means of contracting the seating than roping off the back pews); the capacity to re-configure would allow for some seasonal adaptation.
3. On occasion, you might offer an alternative "coffee house" style of worship during which people sit at tables. This facilitates small group

discussion and alternative music options. Other options are also immediately available, depending, once again, on the needs, gifts and sensibilities of the worshipping group.

4. Increased creative potential to “do differently” those services that are already in place and intended to offer alternative experiences – such as Blessing of the Animals Sunday, Affirming Sunday, Picnic Sunday etc.

Constituencies Likely to See Immediate Benefit

I think the constituencies within Harcourt who will find the greatest, immediate benefit to reconfiguration of the sanctuary space are:

1. MANNA;
2. Spiritual Life Committee and others who lead contemplative prayer and worship experiences;
3. Renters.

Given the growth of MANNA over the past year and the relative youth of the MANNA demographic, attention to the needs and potential of this group could be key to ensuring the future and vitality of the Harcourt congregation.

Given the broad interest in spirituality and spiritual practices within Harcourt, that often extends across congregational and denominational boundaries (and, indeed, includes those who are not traditional churchgoers) attention to the needs and potential of this group could be key to ensuring the future and vitality of the Harcourt congregation.

I leave it to your committee, whom I understand has consulted broadly, to assess the potential benefit to the Harcourt congregation of increased flexibility afforded to renters.

Conclusion

I would like to note that the preponderance of my own, personal experience as an adult worshipper in the United Church took place in a church that was built in 1990 and had flexible space from the very beginning. I think that’s important to state because, as pastor to the Harcourt community, I recognize there are many who feel a strong sense of emotional connection to a traditional sanctuary configuration that I may not share, but do appreciate. For some, pews say “church.” For some, pews make them feel at home in the space. As a worship leader, this is a significant, if intangible, consideration that impacts our capacity to evoke meaningful spiritual experience for some within our worshipping community. Acknowledging this, I would conclude by reiterating that Jim and I are committed to using the build form that the Harcourt congregation provides. Worship is, and must be, after all, “the work of the people.”

May our ongoing life of worship at Harcourt, continue to be blessed!