

**HARCOURT MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH
AD HOC SEATING COMMITTEE
REPORT**

April 2019

PURPOSE

In September 2018, Council received a Request for Action submitted by seven Harcourt members. The task as outlined in the request is to formally address the issue of replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs/flexible seating.

At the September Council meeting, the following motion was approved: *In response to the Request for Action presented to Council on September 19, 2018 (that documents Harcourt's historical discussion), Council will begin a process of consultation, with leadership by an ad hoc group, not to exceed six months, to replace the pews with flexible seating, and to present a recommendation to the congregation for approval of an implementation plan.*

BACKGROUND

The idea of replacing the pews was initially raised in 2006 and has subsequently been raised without it being formally addressed and no decision having been made. The history is as follows:

2006 – First raised as part of the design for the sanctuary renovations but not implemented despite the architect emphasizing the need for flexibility to address/accommodate future planning and use of space. The pews for the choir were removed allowing for the stage area to be used for plays, musicals, pageants, orchestras, large choirs etc. Cost and the recent refurbishing of the pews were reasons for not proceeding.

2007 – Removing the pews was a recommendation as part of the final report of the JNAC submitted in May 2007. No action to implement was taken.

2016 – The issue of “reconfiguring” the sanctuary to include flexible seating was identified as an issue in the JNAC 2016 report but no recommendation was made.

PROCESS/TASKS

Following the approval of Council's motion, the Chair of Council began recruiting members for an “Ad Hoc Leadership Team” to examine and evaluate the idea of replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. The first step involved twelve people attending an initial discussion, on October 25, 2018. The group viewed the video “Places of Worship”. Fred Graham, who created the video, attended the meeting and participated in the discussion. He has been a liaison to the

former United Church Standing Committee on Architecture and has consulted with many churches.

On November 30, 2018, the “Ad Hoc Seating Committee” was formed and met for the first time as a committee. The following people agreed to be members of the committee: Alison MacNeill, Dave Hume, Sandy Middleton, Lynn Hancock, Roz Stevenson, Elizabeth Bone, Carolyn Davidson and Steve Pierce (Chair). The Committee met for a total of 10 meetings.

The members of the committee agreed that the consultation process would involve several approaches. The consultation process began with an invitation for people to attend a viewing of the video “Places of Worship” on January 20, 2019 following the 10:30 worship service. Consultation sessions involving the congregation included focus groups for discussion and conversation. Three focus groups were scheduled. One had to be cancelled because of bad weather. A survey was made available electronically and in paper copy for those who wished to respond in this manner. Committee members were always available to receive responses. Stan Bunston, who was not a committee member and is a Spiritual Companion at Harcourt, was available as a resource for people who might wish to have some support during this process.

Elizabeth Bone created a wonderful **model** of the sanctuary that included moveable chairs. The purpose of creating a model was to offer people a visual presentation of what the sanctuary might look like with chairs in different configurations. People were encouraged to experiment with the chairs by moving them around within the model.

The committee agreed that the consultation process would include visiting churches which have made the switch to chairs, to get information about their experiences. Current users/renters of the sanctuary were contacted to get feedback regarding any impact this change might have regarding their use of the space. Contact was also made with the community to ask how they might see themselves using the sanctuary with chairs instead of pews.

The Ministers were specifically asked for feedback as well.

A small number of articles were also referenced.

The committee decided to gather information to address such issues as type of chair, the cost of the chairs, costs related to pew removal and any additional operational costs. Items such as flooring and storage would also be considered.

FINDINGS

The forms and questions which were used to gather information during the consultations can be found in the appendix, along with the raw data upon which the findings have been summarized. Given the format and questions, it is not possible to quantify the findings but certain themes and issues were raised by those who appear to be in favour of chairs and those who are not interested in a change. There were also some people whose responses can be considered more neutral in nature. The comments below can be grouped within the following themes: worship/sacred

space, appearance, comfort and fit, flexibility, acoustics, stewardship of space/use of space, rental income, flooring, logistics, cost and emotional responses.

CONGREGATION CONSULTATIONS

Video Presentation

Approximately 60 people attended the presentation to view “Places of Worship”. Following the video, those who attended were asked to respond to a couple of short questions.

There were generally favourable reviews for the video even though it was somewhat dated. It showed the changes that have taken place over the years with forms of worship and the buildings within which they have taken place. It was a historical overview of how church architecture reflects theological thinking. Reference was made to the phrase: “Form follows function follows faith.” There were questions about how worship would change at Harcourt with chairs in the sanctuary. How do chairs reflect our faith? Given the sense of evolution of worship and church architecture presented in the video, it prompted thoughtful reflection about future changes which is considered to be inevitable by some.

Others were disappointed in the video, particularly by those who were hoping for more information or emphasis on having chairs in the sanctuary as opposed to pews.

The second question was more specific to the idea of having chairs in the sanctuary instead of pews at Harcourt. There were many comments about the benefits of flexibility, not only for Harcourt but for the community. The changes need to be meaningful to an ever changing environment. The chairs need to be comfortable and accommodate multi-uses of the space. Worship can be offered in different ways, including the position of the choir. Chairs will allow an integration of Manna in the space and promotes contact and interaction among those present.

Some people stated they understand the benefits of chairs but aren’t persuaded yet or feel torn. The cost of purchasing chairs was raised a number of times, along with concerns about storage, flooring, time and cost of reconfiguring the chairs and what to do with the pews.

There were those who were definitely in favour, others were opposed and there were those who hadn’t made up their minds yet.

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were scheduled. One of the focus groups had to be cancelled because of bad weather. Unfortunately, the attendance at the sessions was poor.

The following summary is a sample of the comments and questions made during these groups. For a complete list of responses, please refer to the appendix.

For those who seem to favour chairs, the following comments were emphasized:

- Chairs are more comfortable
- Pews are formal, dated and not attractive to younger people
- Those who experienced chairs in other churches were positively influenced
- Examples were given on how other churches are experiencing worship with chairs
- Better use of space – flexibility
- Community use of space – wonderful atmosphere for concerts, lectures, films and similar events
- Excitement created by the idea
- Choir uses chairs and stage has allowed for performances, large choirs
- Different configurations have been tried in the chapel
- Chairs allow for experimentation – circles facilitate interaction – labyrinth painted on floor
- Experience of joining hands in a big circle in sanctuary – pews get in the way
- Activities currently held in gym may be more effective in sanctuary
- If build a church today, not include pews
- Sacredness of space not determined by what sitting on but can be shared in other ways
- Sunday morning worship currently spread out – chairs can provide for smaller space for people to sit

For those who prefer to keep the pews, the main responses are:

- If space is not used differently, it is not worth the change
- Groups will not use space because they cannot afford the rental fees
- Cost is too much – maintenance costs for church will be increasing
- Chairs will interfere with contemplative nature of sanctuary
- Pews have their own flexibility – e.g., can accommodate people of various shapes and sizes
- Chairs don't fit everyone

There were those who seem to be neutral and not have strong feelings:

- Attend worship not on the basis of what sit on
- Some are neutral about the idea but are concerned about costs
- It doesn't matter what sit on - but aware of possibilities chairs offer
- Chairs need to be comfortable and durable
- Not sure how affect experience since only know pews
- Rental income will depend on what is charged and if Harcourt actively promotes space

There were many questions:

- What would be the effect on acoustics?
- What about flooring?
- How would Manna use the space?
- Where would the chairs be stored?
- Why do other churches not use the chairs differently?
- What happens to the pews?
- Will pews remain in the balcony?

- What will worship look like at Harcourt?
- Who would be responsible for moving the chairs?
- Would the capacity change?
- How would chairs affect families with children?
- Can there be a combination of pews and chairs?
- What do we do about hymn books?
- If chairs are reconfigured, how does that affect use of the screens, technology?
- What makes Harcourt more than just another community centre?

Surveys

Many of the responses on the surveys reflect the responses above. An attempt has been made to include a sample of additional comments. A total of 42 surveys were completed.

For those who seem to favour chairs, the following comments were made:

- Comfortable chairs would help me focus more on worship
- With chairs, hope to worship “in the round” and could include movement and interaction
- More configurations allow for different experiences – more personal than sitting in rows looking at the back of peoples’ heads
- One’s faith can be experienced or expressed in different ways other than pews screwed to floor
- Chairs would allow easier social/coffee time
- Great idea, long overdue, wonderful idea, been around for a long time
- Expand sense of worship
- Space would be seen as more friendly and welcoming – less institutional and traditional
- Weekly cafe for neighbourhood?
- Present a more contemporary space
- It will be our next step into the future
- 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)
- Allows for enhancing community and connectedness
- The openness and opportunity to move into small groups etc, would be very inviting
- Promote community-building, sharing, active involvement in worship
- Good stewardship of valuable space
- 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
- “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.
- 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 all this to happen

For those who prefer to keep the pews, the responses are:

- There is a calmness that pews provide
- Chairs are noisy when being moved
- Do not like idea
- Pews are part of the atmosphere of a church – church will lose church feeling without pews
- I am against it – can't afford it
- Do not see this as a necessity
- Attended services in other churches with chairs and chairs always in the same position
- Concerned about financial burden
- I think it might look sloppy and lose some of the elegance it currently has
- Chairs are designed for individuals; pews are designed for families, couples, friends, groups – let's keep us together
- I would likely stop attending
- Restrictive amount of room for my body and for things 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.
- The sanctuary is a place of worship first and a community centre second. Jesus cast out the money lenders for that very reason.
- Opposed. Unnecessary and expensive.
- 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.
- Why does someone think this is necessary?

There were those who seem to be neutral:

- Experience would probably be the same
- What "theology of sacred space" informs our decision
- Designated storage space needed – stacks are messy and unsafe
- Can the choir move to the sides or be dispersed among the congregation and come together for the anthem?
- Back of chairs need to be filled in so can use a pillow to support back
- Size of seat needs to be wide enough for those who need more space
- Questions need to be answered before I can really make a decision.
- Initially I would not be in favour but I am not a regular attendee so my opinion is less valid.
- Logistics will be challenging. Best wishes and blessings.
- Neutral about the actual furniture change. Very concerned about the cost and what that might do to other request for money for other projects.
- We would have to think long and hard about whether the environment helped facilitate a spiritual experience for us
- Church is about community for me, so I want to be aware of my community visually as well.
- I am not aware of what the benefits would be.

- 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, careful consideration of the style of chair and practical considerations.

Additional Questions:

- How will different seating arrangement accommodate persons who use hearing assisted devices?
- How can we support people who need to worship in benches?
- If this is rejected, will there be hard feelings to contend with from the dissension?

Ad Hoc Greeting Area Committee

This committee has decided to wait on making any definite plans until a decision is made regarding chairs in the sanctuary. However, it is apparent that the “greeting area” and the sanctuary are linked in how the two spaces are used. For example, if chairs were used in the sanctuary, it could free up space in the rear of the sanctuary for social time/occasions of various kinds.

Harcourt Ministers

In response to the committee's request for feedback, the ministers expressed their preparedness to accept and work with whatever the congregation decides. Having said that, however, each expressed their individual perspectives on the advantages/disadvantages of pews vs. chairs, which in effect reflected the comments received from the congregation. The ministers' comments are included in appendix #5.

MANNA

MANNA was mentioned numerous times during the consultations. Currently, MANNA is not able to use the sanctuary as the pews are not appropriate for its style of worship. Those who attend MANNA do not sit in rows. MANNA is informal in its style and is interactive. People sit in small circles at times and the children are often doing crafts at tables. Services vary from week to week making a flexible space a necessity. MANNA is currently growing and if the growth continues, space will become a problem. The gym is not a suitable space for MANNA.

CHURCH CONSULTATIONS

The committee visited 8 churches that have made the change from pews to chairs. Committee members met with contact people at each church and a series of questions were asked during the visits. The eight churches visited are: Three Willows United, Guelph, Westminster United, Orangeville, St. John's United, Georgetown, Eglinton-St. George's United, Toronto, St. David's United, Woodstock, Riverside United, London, Avondale United, Stratford, St. James Anglican, Guelph.

Every church visited made the change to chairs during renovations of their sanctuaries. One church never had pews following the construction of a sanctuary space. Chairs have been in place in these churches since as early as 1993 to as recently as 2016.

The experiences of these churches vary having made the change to chairs. The frequency of changes to configurations is different from church to church. One church will change the configuration weekly for community activities like concerts. At another church it will be once or twice a month. The configurations for worship tend to change seasonally (Easter/lent, Christmas etc) or for certain ceremonies like baptism, weddings, funerals etc. For worship, there are variations on theatre seating like a herring bone style. The pulpit can be moved forward. Some have a “service in the round”. There can be circles and semi-circles. A labyrinth is placed on the floor in one church. There are comfortable chairs/couches in the back of another church. One church has experimented with tables and chairs in worship like cafe style. Coffee time is often held in the sanctuary. Again, this varies. Churches also vary as to their willingness to experiment. Community activities in the sanctuary include concerts, music groups, talent nights, jazz concerts, banquets, recitals, small groups, dances etc.

All of the churches stated they have no regrets having made the change. Some said they would never go back and that they should have done it sooner. One person stated that “a church is not just for Sundays”. The beauty according to one person is that the chairs can be set up any way you want. There is always flexibility.

Many of the churches have other meeting rooms differing in sizes and purpose. There are gyms, multi-purpose rooms and board rooms. One church is an exception in that they have a wellness centre complete with a massage table and a yoga room with a bamboo floor.

For some churches, the capacity of the space was reduced. We are not sure by how much. One church has sliding glass doors which increase the space into the greeting area.

For most of the churches, storage of the chairs was not an issue. Added space for chair storage was sometimes part of the renovations. Chairs are sometimes stored along the sides of the sanctuary and in various other locations where there is space.

The re-configuring of the space was completed differently amongst the churches. Volunteer teams often re-configured the space. The responsibility for re-configuring the chairs in one church was given to the “sexton”. This church did include a charge in the rental fee for re-configuring the chairs and the stage area which included a fee for moving the piano up and down from the stage area. One church allowed the renters to change the configuration and expected them to put the chairs back the way they were. Many of the churches did not include an additional fee for re-configuring the chairs. One church drew up a diagram to help guide the positioning of the chairs.

During one of the church visits, there was an opportunity to talk with a group of community college students who were filming in the sanctuary. They were overwhelming supportive of the chairs commenting that “They presented a much more friendly and less daunting atmosphere to the sanctuary.” Pews spoke to their stereotypical view of “church” with all the negative connotations that they engendered.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The community consultation process was limited but is significantly impacted by the work of Sonya Wu-Winter involvement on the “Short-Term Community Support Development” project. During her time with the project, Sonya explored possibilities and models of community engagement. One of her contacts was with “10C” in downtown Guelph. “10C” is a community hub for a number of agencies in Guelph. The need for space is something that comes to the fore many times. “10C” was interested in knowing about Harcourt’s potential seating change in the sanctuary. It was mentioned that Harcourt’s availability of parking is an asset. Connections were also made with the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition.

This project led to the approval at the AGM of a Community Engagement Animator who will continue to connect with the community to discover opportunities for partnership and mutual engagement. The Food Truck experiment is an example of reaching out to the community. Harcourt’s stewardship of its space can offer opportunities to the community to use it for different purposes.

Ideas were also heard at a conference regarding “reimagining” new ways of being ‘church’ in neighbourhoods as well as developing neighbourhood hospitality. Space plays a role in developing a “gathering place” for the neighbourhood and other groups.

Space was also identified as a need at a meeting with community services in October 2016 as part of the strategic planning process at Harcourt.

Contact was also made with the Old University Neighbourhood Resident’s Association (OUNRA). There was no “official” view about a seating change in the sanctuary but a personal pro-chair view was expressed. There was no particular change identified for using the sanctuary with chairs.

RENTAL CONSULTATION

Those who rent space in the sanctuary were contacted to ask how having chairs in the sanctuary may impact their use of that space. For some, the impact would be minimal. Others indicated a preference for the pews but understood our interest in having more flexible use of the space. The reservation had to do with the experience of the space as well as questioning whether the acoustics would be affected. A representative from the K-W Symphony indicated that they would probably look at other venues if there was a change to chairs. Pews are preferred in churches by organizations such as the K-W Symphony. It apparently gives a more “communal vibe” and cuts down significantly on set up and tear down. There was also a concern about reduced capacity. The Guelph Concert Band also preferred pews.

The Artistic Director for the Guelph Youth Singers thought such a change was a good idea and could produce creative ideas for using the space. However, given the size of their concerts, theatre seating was probably the only practical configuration. Smaller concerts would allow greater creativity.

Feedback was received from an opera group who held their first performance at Harcourt. They have since booked three more. They are in favour of replacing the pews with chairs. They liked the flexibility it would offer for their practices and performances.

Some creative ideas were received from the now former Artistic Director of the Guelph Chamber Choir (GCC): choirs could be on the “stage”; workshops could be conducted on the main floor with the choir in various formations; the space would be an ideal rehearsal venue especially with the good acoustics; there are concerts held where the audience faces the back of the room and the balcony provides a different place from which to sing; fundraisers could be held with tables, food and drink where singers could perform in different locations around the room and facing away from the windows provides another backdrop for a performance space.

The conductor of the University of Guelph choirs echoed many of the thoughts above. Additionally, the UG Choirs are looking at lots of collaborations with other departments that will involve other ways of performing, including workshops, installations and audience interaction. Harcourt’s idea is timely in this regard. Any disadvantages might include the type of chair (current choir chairs are heavy) and not wanting to dampen the acoustics.

Articles

The following articles were referenced:

- B. Allen, (2019). *From sacred to secular: Canada set to lose 9,000 churches, warns national heritage group* [Online]. Available: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/Canada/losing-churches-canada-1.5046812> [Mar 2019].
- D. Schaper, (2018). *5 do’s and don’ts for using your church building well* [Online]. Available: <https://www.juniperformation.org/.../article> [Nov 2018].
- G. Brekke, (2019). *Houses of worship are not just for worship anymore* [Online]. Available: <https://religionnews.com/2019/03/08/houses-of-worship-are-not-just-for-worship-anymore> [Mar 2019].
- J. Levitz, (2013). *Churches take a Stand on Pews, Replacing Them With Chairs* [Online]. Available: <https://www.wsj.com/articles> [Nov 2018].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Many questions were asked during the congregation consultation. The Committee provides the following information to help answer these questions. This information is subject to specific decisions being made.

Type of Chairs

The church consultations revealed there were two types of chairs being used. The chairs were either wood or metal. The wooden chairs are sturdy but heavy. Metal chairs are lighter, more easily moved and easier to stack. Depending on the quality, both types of chairs can be comfortable. The seats of the chairs come in different widths. The metal chairs are similar to the ones in the chapel. Wooden chairs can look more “pew-like”.

Not all churches have chairs with arms. Some churches have no chairs with arms and some have a few available or ones strategically placed. The churches with chairs without arms say they have not received any complaints or negative comments.

Cost of Chairs

An estimate was received for 356 metal chairs. The quote includes loop ganging, so the chairs can be hooked together, a rear book rack with a holder for communion glasses. There is a 25 year warranty on seats, backs and foam. Each chair costs \$66.45. The cost of chairs with other fees (e.g., shipping) and taxes would likely be around \$30,000. Chairs with arms would cost more. There is also a premium level chair which costs about \$20 more per chair and has a lifetime warranty.

Wooden chairs are more expensive and can cost around \$200 or more each. No estimate has been obtained. One church had the chairs custom made.

Flooring

A variety of flooring material was used in the churches visited. Flooring included hardwood, rug and sheet vinyl flooring. One church left the cement floor exposed and patched the screw holes. The cost of flooring for Harcourt would be approximately \$18,000 - \$20,000 for the sheet vinyl flooring. There are a number of advantages with this flooring including wear, maintenance and contributes to less noise when moving chairs,

Operational Costs

Information from other churches about reconfiguring the space differs. Some churches rely on volunteers to reconfigure the space. Other churches have staff do the reconfiguring. One church has the renters reconfigure the space and then return the chairs to their original configuration. Some churches charge renters for reconfiguring space and others do not. The time it takes to reconfigure the space depends on the size and what is required to change the configuration. One church quoted 2-3 hrs depending on what is required,

Capacity

Preliminary information is that the capacity will not be reduced.

Storage

A number of people have raised the issue of storage. This issue needs further consideration and discussion. How often and how many chairs would need to be stored? For example, it would be highly unlikely, or rare, for all the chairs to be removed from the sanctuary. One person has suggested stacking chairs behind moveable "screens" either in the sanctuary or in another location, for example the gym.

Removal of Pews

The chances of selling the pews are not great, although one church was able to sell their pews to another church. One church donated their pews to a church in another country. There are opportunities for the wood to be repurposed and these can be explored.

Change in Use of Space

Some people want to be sure that if chairs are chosen, the chairs will not remain in rows all the time for worship and that community use and rentals will increase. It is not possible to provide guarantees. Much will depend on Harcourt's own initiative and desire to use the space differently.

Funding

In order to cover the costs, there are the following options: fundraising campaigns, fundraising events and activities; individuals purchase chairs; possible grant applications.

CONCLUSION

Following Council's mandate, the Committee has, to the best of its ability, investigated the issues surrounding replacing the pews in the sanctuary with chairs. The Committee has gathered information both from within Harcourt and from broader sources. The information from the broader sources emphasizes the advantages of chairs over keeping the pews. However, not everyone at Harcourt is interested in having chairs in the sanctuary. The Committee knows achieving unanimous agreement on an issue such as this is not realistic.

The Committee is left with making a decision regarding a recommendation. While it is not possible to quantify the results of the consultations, the Committee has found that there is sufficient support for making a recommendation to replace the pews with chairs, both from within Harcourt and from broader consultations. A majority of Committee members support this statement but it is not supported unanimously. The main reasons for supporting this statement are described below.

Why should Harcourt consider this change? How the 'church' is 'seen' and the position and role it plays in society and our culture today is not what it has been in the past. The video aptly describes the evolution of worship and the accompanying changes to church architecture. Fred Graham shared that a rich worship allows for a variety of experiences in one space. A multi-purpose space is a feature of good stewardship. Fred asked us to remember these four words: intimacy, utility, flexibility, and hospitality. Harcourt's 'vision' for the future is critical. As the one article predicts, Canada can be expected to lose 9,000 churches in the next decade.

Harcourt, over the years, has made changes to its building to keep pace with the ever changing environment around it. As the sanctuary is primarily a place of worship, the primary focus of the Committee was on how possible changes to seating in the sanctuary would affect the worship experience. How does the sanctuary space reflect Harcourt's community of faith? More specifically, how do chairs reflect our faith? As one church put it: Is our "faith nailed to the floor"? Are having chairs in the sanctuary, first discussed 13 years ago, the next step into Harcourt's future? Chairs allow for varied worship experiences, are more contemporary and welcoming than traditional pews. If pews remain, it will limit Harcourt's ability to develop alternative forms of worship. MANNA services would be one example of this.

In addition, how can Harcourt use its building to expand its ministry to the community? Why can't the sanctuary be used all week long and not just on Sundays? As one of the articles

explains, houses of worship are not just for worship anymore. Many churches are finding creative ways to serve others and extend their mission in their existing buildings. Harcourt's motive for opening the space to the community is to engage with the community more. The purpose is to offer an asset to the community whereby we can establish a relationship. Many creative ideas have been expressed during the consultations about how the sanctuary space may be used to meet community needs and reflect a sense of a "gathering place" for all who wish to "come in and sit down".

Most revealing was the outcome of our visits to the churches that have already made that decision. In all cases their experience has been positive. Each church indicated that their new flexibility has enhanced the worship experience of their members while, at the same time providing attractive space for community use. That experience is reinforced by the current literature which shows that the prevailing trend in church architecture is to towards flexibility in sanctuary space, and has been so for some time.

Harcourt needs to consider and understand the perceptions of the younger generation. Younger generations have certain perceptions of "the church" and might see a space with chairs and what happens there as being less formal. The upcoming generation is experientially and visually oriented. To them, churches are not necessarily friendly places. Opening up the space with chairs can help take down barriers and sow the seeds of hospitality.

While it might be considered minor in nature, the issue of comfort that chairs can offer was emphasized many times.

At the same time, there are disadvantages to making a change to chairs. Change is difficult. While the Committee is supporting the advantages of chairs in the sanctuary, it is also sensitive to the position of those who are not interested in that happening. The Committee recognizes that two of their main concerns are the costs involved (capital, operational), and how "church" is experienced with pews, which they feel would be lost. The Committee appreciates the challenge the cost of the chairs presents; however, it also understands there can be a cost in not making the change.

If the position of the Committee is supported by Council and the congregation, much consideration must be given to how care and support can be provided to those, not in favour of chairs, during a transition period and beyond. Likewise, if the position of the Committee is not supported, the same response needs to be offered to those who experience a lost opportunity. Stan Bunston, Spiritual Companion, who has been available during the consultation process to anyone wanting support, has expressed his interest in continuing to be available following a decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ad Hoc Seating Committee recommends that Council accept its report and support the position that Harcourt replace the pews in the sanctuary with chairs and that only the pews in the balcony remain.

MOTION: If Council accepts the Ad Hoc Seating Committee's report, it move swiftly to seek the congregation's approval and if approval is achieved, establish an implementation committee with responsibility for the following tasks:

- Undertake a process to choose the number and type of chair to be purchased
- Determine the cost of the chairs
- Address the need and cost for new flooring
- Determine the need, size and location of any storage space for the chairs
- Determine the best way to repurpose/recycle/reuse the pews
- Establish a timeline for the completion of the various tasks

MOTION: If congregational approval is achieved, Council establish a fundraising committee to determine and implement ways in which funding can be achieved to cover the cost of the chairs and subsequent costs associated with purchasing chairs.