



Two Full Services Committee Report: December 15, 2019¹

PREFACE

- **Formation:** On May 19, the members of the First UU Fellowship of Hunterdon County voted for the “Stay and Adapt” option of the Space Committee Plan, deciding to “...continue to use our existing buildings while attempting to increase capacity.” And so, on September 12, 2019, Holly Gordeuk, Board President convened the first meeting of the then named 2-Services Ad Hoc Committee. The Board decision to establish this committee and the rationale for its creation were presented and committee members questioned, commented, and agreed to go forward. At the subsequent meeting, October 3, 2019, committee members decided on a Chair, discussed purpose, agreed on an initial approach--video, survey, feedback meetings, plan, congregational meeting--and established a proposed timeline. Subsequent to this meeting, the committee renamed itself the New Two Full Services Ad Hoc Committee, shortened to the Two Full Services Committee.
- **Committee Members:** Sarah Ahrens, Emily Bengels, Rev. Seth Fisher, Frank Maneri, Valerie Marks, ex officio, Marion McCord, Frank Vowinkel
- **Process:** “The committee agreed that, with leadership firmly in the ‘two full services’ camp, it was important for congregants to understand this and learn the reasons why. But it was seen as equally important that congregants fully participate in the decision-making process about going to two full services through the introductory video, online and hard-copy survey, feedback meetings, published results, and sufficient time to make their decision. After reflection, the committee proposed moving the proposed date for a congregational vote to after the holidays to give everyone time to reflect and consider. The timeline for committee work continues largely the same: the congregational feedback and final plan was to be presented to the Board by December 17, for their final meeting of the year. The Board was to decide on the date for a congregational meeting to vote on the proposed two-full services plan.
- **Video:** Frank Vowinkel produced and edited three versions of a ‘leadership video’ with Holly Gordeuk, Rev. Seth Fisher, and DRE, Sarah Ahrens before the release date of October 31, 2019. This video was designed to serve as a clear introduction to the idea of moving to two full services and presented the rationale from the perspective of the Board, ministry, and religious exploration.
- **Survey:** Emily Bengels created the online New (Two Full) Services Insights survey; the entire committee reviewed, commented, and amended the survey to its current form. The

¹ On January 4, 2020, the Board met and decided to hold a congregational meeting to vote on the Two Full Services Plan on January 26, 2020. This report was revised to reflect the subsequent changes; see “Implementation and Timeline,” below.

survey was designed to derive information about congregational opinion and knowledge about the proposal to move to two full services. It was also designed to provide a discussion prompt for the four feedback meetings. There were 70 responses received to the survey.

- **Video and Survey Release:** The online New (Two Full) Services Insights survey and completed video were released via blastmail on October 31, 2019.
- **Feedback Meetings:** There were four feedback meetings held:
 - Tuesday, Nov. 5, 7:00 p.m., DH--4 attendees; 3 from leadership
 - Wednesday, Nov. 13, 7:00 p.m., OSC--0 attendees; 6 from leadership
 - Sunday, Nov. 17, 12:30 p.m., DH/OSC--20 attendees; 6 from leadership
 - Sunday, Nov. 24, 1:00 p.m., DH/OSC--5 attendees; 6 from leadership
- **Survey Outcomes:** Some of the questions raised in the survey that the committee decided should be answered were...

Do we really have that many people?

Yep. We have maxed out the attendance we can reasonably expect in a space our size. It doesn't feel crowded, but what seems cozy to us is intimidating to most visitors. If we want to be a welcoming congregation for newcomers we need to create a welcoming environment for them, and that means making room. This will also mean options for us in having two service times to choose from on Sunday mornings. And it's really the best possible problem for a congregation to have!

Why can't we use the balcony?

Good question. For safety reasons it would take a lot of time and money to make it usable. It would involve a new railing, installing a rear exit from the second floor, and possibly a rebuild of the stairs in addition to general restoration of the old pews and some of the flooring. In addition to all this, most of the balcony seating isn't practical because it was designed for a time when the church was configured very differently and the people sitting up there would miss a lot of what was going on in the service. So it's technically possible, but very impractical.

What will happen to Coffee Hour?

We will have time for coffee and conversation after each service, but that will require more volunteers. We're looking into ways to make volunteering for hospitality easier in order to attract more helpers. You could be one of them!

What about music?

Our music program has expanded in the last year, with the choir singing twice a month rather than once. We would like to have the choir alternating between the first and second services so that they will perform at each once a month. This way, everyone who attends one service regularly will get to hear the choir perform just as many songs as in years past.

Will there be Religious Exploration and childcare at each service?

Our RE program has shifted to a different model this year, and it's one that is much more adaptable to two services so our RE programs will remain much the same. We

have all ages together in the service for two Sundays each month. We also have our very successful new Community Connections program which can continue without any trouble, and the Super Sundays can simply take place during both the first and second services. There are some classes that need to happen in one group, but these are typically classes that would not be happening during the service anyway. So for the most part, RE can stay as-is with minimal disruption. Childcare will be available during both services. (There are more details about the RE program further down.)

Can we grow without splitting the congregation?

Without building a new building or moving to a larger facility, it's difficult to imagine a way to grow without moving to two full services. That said, this doesn't have to mean splitting the congregation. People already experience deep, personal connections with other members that they don't see at church each Sunday. We do this in our covenant groups, committee work, social events and other programs. In order to continue to foster community, we'll need to be sure to create even more opportunities for people to connect outside of Sunday morning services. Our new Community Connections events are a fun way for people of all ages to spend time together exploring our faith. Our Covenant Groups have always been a place for real connection, and we are expanding those groups. People attending the second service are encouraged to come early and grab some coffee with people who are getting out of the first service. And we can also add more general fellowship get-togethers; things like game nights and stargazing. With a little effort, we can continue to find ways to stay just as connected as ever, and hopefully make some new friends along the way.

Do we have the resources and staffing? Will this cost us more?

Obviously an important question. Our staff is up for the challenge and we anticipate being able to make the necessary adjustments to allow this to happen. There will be some increased costs from things like having the heat on longer and having guest speakers lead two services instead of one, but we don't anticipate any costs that will cause undue strain on the budget. Also, all of our income comes from members and growing our membership is one of our main goals. Choosing not to grow in the long run in order to save money in the short run wouldn't be wise.

Where are these new people going to come from?

We're already getting new visitors at most services. Making more room should make them more likely to come back, and we already have a great Membership Committee in place to help welcome them. But this isn't just a 'build it and they will come' plan. We will be coupling our expanded space with deliberate growth efforts like advertising and more high visibility community outreach. So we'll be making more room for people, reaching out to draw more people in, and welcoming them when they come.

What will success look like after we make this change?

The simplest answer is, if total attendance goes up it's working. Of course, it's a little more complicated than that. For one, a successful change is likely to result in an initial drop in attendance before it begins to rise again, so we'll need to make sure that we give it enough time to really test it out. We can evaluate how things are

going at the end of the congregational year and see where and whether we want to make adjustments. The main advantage of deciding to stay and adapt rather than build or move is that it gives us the most flexibility with the least risk. This move to two full services is a way to adapt to our needs and if we find that it isn't meeting our needs we can simply adapt again.

For a copy of the Survey Responses and Feedback Meeting Notes please email web@hunterdonuu.org

- **Survey Responses:** With 70 online and hard copy responses, the survey was well covered. Congregants responded to a series of questions designed to elicit current involvement, approval levels, and understanding of the move to two full services. The survey may be viewed at [\[REDACTED\]](#)
[\[REDACTED\]](#)
- This slide show depicts current survey data:
[\[REDACTED\]](#)
[\[REDACTED\]](#)
- A full set of responses may be found at [\[REDACTED\]](#)
- **Feedback Meetings:** With 29 members of the congregation (excluding those from the Two Full Services Committee and the Board) attending, the feedback sessions provided a good exchange of ideas regarding the questions congregants shared through the survey. It was felt that perhaps those with the strongest doubts about moving to two full services had made the effort to attend at least one of the feedback sessions. The overall feeling after each of the meetings was that congregants were willing to attempt the change even though some retain doubts based in large part upon negative experiences from the last experiment with two full services. Questions regarding volunteer levels, desire to maintain community, and the need for a membership drive along with the move to two services, fueled the misgivings of some. However, when congregants listened to REC, Sunday Services, Music, and Hospitality plans to implement the change, most were willing to engage in the shift so as to grow toward sustaining the Fellowship into the twenty-first century. All notes from the feedback meetings can be viewed at [\[REDACTED\]](#)
- **Conclusions:** While many in the meetings shared their misgivings about going to two full services to alleviate crowding issues, leadership has firmly reminded us that the move to two services is not an issue of crowding, but instead a way to provide the opportunity for more in the wider community to engage with our Unitarian Universalist principles and values. With the expansion two full services will bring, we can become the church for the 'unchurched.' It is a matter of making the space for others to fill. And, as one leader reminded congregants, "...it isn't a question of whether we should go to two services, but rather that we cannot afford not to." The implication of her comment being that without creating the room for more to find our congregation, without engaging more in the wider community, we cannot maintain our historic building, grow in programming to support our mission and vision, nor can we meet the needs of the evolving religious and spiritual community.



PLAN FOR GOING TO TWO FULL SERVICES:

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

- The two multigenerational services are crafted to be easily duplicated to multiple services at whatever times are agreed upon. No additional time for volunteers would be required. Additional Sunday hours for DRE would be required (currently 2.5 hrs Sun morning is typical. This would need to extend to 4 hrs to cover additional service times).
- The Super Sundays are also crafted to be duplicated to multiple services at agreed upon times. Since we are not using RE volunteers, but rather RE Committee members to plan and support Super Sundays, this makes having enough volunteers not an issue. The only potential concern is not having a larger group of children/youth all together at one time, but the programming can be duplicated without any issues.
- The Community Connections events are planned and implemented by the RE Committee and DRE. Depending on the events scheduled, there may be several possibilities for timing:
 - They could run twice on a Sunday, one for each service. (EX: for the Meals on Wheels event happening in Dodd, we could easily expand that to run at two different service times since it's on campus).
 - They could run over a longer time window where folks could attend at any time that works for them. (EX: in Sept we picked produce at a local farm to donate to a food pantry. This could be done over a several hour window, like 9am - 12pm, so that folks could theoretically come to one service and attend a Community Connections event also if they chose).
 - There may be some instances where there is only ONE time available for a Community Connections event. (EX: if we are visiting another house of worship, they may only have one time available for service that we could attend, like 10am. In that case, only one offering of Community Connections would be available that day.)
- Childcare is already established to make any changes to two full services as we determine.
- The focus of the RE Committee has already shifted from planning and implementing curriculum, recruiting volunteers, et cetera, to a focus on planning and implementing Super Sundays and Community Connections events. The REC is also working on other projects this year that support our move to a more multigenerational-focused faith fellowship.

- The DRE will have to adjust somewhat in responsibilities in order to add the additional hours required to cover two services without adding any budgeted hours. The DRE will review the job description with Rev. Seth (and Board) in order to determine in what ways we can use current resources (like RE Committee) to cover the necessary RE duties across the board. The RE Committee will likely take on some of these tasks, but the responsibilities on the whole for the RE Committee members will still be fewer than in prior years.
- Programs like Coming of Age and OWL (Elementary or Junior High) would have to run *only once*, and that time would need to be determined and maintained. Classes can't be duplicated over two services, but having two services allows for more room in Dodd for classes during one of the service times as needed. Programs like COA or Youth Group may likely opt for a time that is not on a Sunday morning anyway. All of this provides enough flexibility for both RE and Hospitality to share the space in Dodd Hall as needed.
- Certain types of services, such as Coming of Age and RE Sunday, can *only be done once on a Sunday*. Consider calling these particular types of services "Celebration Sundays" where we only have one service that day. If adopted, Celebration Sundays would be few, possibly including the Water and Flower Communion. Maintaining consistency is seen as a goal by the Two Full Services Committee.

HOSPITALITY

- As we move toward two full services, we plan to have 'coffee hour' twice on Sunday--after the early service and after the late service.
- The hospitality between the first and second services can be set up before the beginning of the first service; and congregants attending the second service may wish to arrive thirty minutes early in order to share a cup of coffee and a snack with those attending the first service.
- We can make adjustments to 'coffee hour' after we move to two full services without too much trouble if it is not working out.
- It will be important for additional volunteers to come forward for clean-up, especially after the second coffee hour.
- Baked goods and healthy snacks are welcome contributions, but store-bought supplies will provide back-up and readily available provisions

SUNDAY SERVICES

- Overall not much will change with the move to two full services. Our Sunday services will remain the same except that there will be two of them. Let's look at our current Sunday service offerings:
 - **Existing Services:** In terms of Sunday services, there are two different services provided each month--a *traditional service* and a *multigenerational service*. They are defined as follows:

- **Traditional Service**--This is our standard service. In this service, Seth or a guest minister or lay speaker provides the sermon. The sermon is about twenty minutes in length and there are 5-7 minutes of discussion. There is music but not always performed by the choir. Traditional services are held twice a month. Within the traditional service there are two formats:
 - **Super Sunday**--The children are in Dodd Hall working on a lesson or project through the RE program. This is the format for Sundays when we have a guest minister or lay-speaker.
 - **Community Connections**--This activity is an alternative to attending the traditional worship service on that day and is held once a month. It serves as an opportunity for folks from all generations to encounter our mission of “Nurturing Spiritual Journeys and Expanding Social Justice.” We engage with opportunities for spiritual growth, social justice, and community-building both on and offsite. *This is in addition to, not replacing,* the service or sermon on that Sunday.
- **Multigenerational Service**--The multigenerational service is what it’s name suggests. During this service, children join their parents/guardians from beginning to end. There’s still music but not necessarily performed by the choir. There’s a “Time for All Ages” or a “Wisdom Story,” and the sermon, and even the service itself, is more interactive. The children will be more involved in service elements such as the chalice lighting, lighting candles for Milestones, and maybe even collecting the Offering.
- **Changes:** With the move to two full services, things will change in the following ways:
 - Each Sunday of the month there will be two full services, one at 9:30 a.m. and one at 11 a.m.
 - During each service volunteers will be needed for roles such as the Chalice Lighter, Greeter, lighting votives during Milestones, and collecting the Offering. (Greeting and collecting the Offering have been roles the Board performed; votive lighting during Milestones has been a role of the Pastoral Care Associates; Chalice Lighters vary depending on the topic of the service; these roles may expand to include others including youth, committees, covenant groups, and others.)
 - Currently, Sunday Services Committee members are responsible for the Welcome reading. The committee is in the process of expanding and this will provide more readers for the Welcome.
 - Sunday Services Committee has created and is responsible for an online Google document--the Sunday Service Schedule--which includes who is doing what on a given Sunday from Greeting, to the Welcome, to collecting the Offering. Pastoral Care Associates, the Minister, the Director of Religious Exploration (DRE), and the Music Director also enter information into the document; this helps streamline

communications about services and will provide a source for additional outreach PR.

- Guest ministers and lay-speakers will be hired to provide two services instead of one service as they are now. This will have little to no impact on the Sunday Services Committee budget as preparations were made in advance.
- Each month we will still have two traditional services and two multigenerational services as we do now, including one Sunday with a Community Connections option that will encompass both services. That will not change as we move forward.
- Sunday Services Committee and the Two Full Services Ad Hoc Committee believe the Community Connections option is a great way for members who may attend different services to connect and catch up while engendering goodwill within the greater community.

MUSIC

- The choir will continue to perform twice a month, but they will perform once at the earlier service and once at the later one. They will perform the same three songs or so at both services.
- For other services, the Music Director will play the music or will find people to play music as in the past.
- The Music Director will also make an effort to create events to bring the community together through music and artistic expression at non-service times, to encourage cohesiveness and fellowship. Examples include Community Coffeehouse, Carol Sing-along, trips to nursing homes, et cetera.
- Musicians will perform/share their art twice on “Music Sunday.”

IMPLEMENTATION AND TIMELINE:

As may be observed from the outline above, the implementation of the plan to move to two full services is already in preparation. As Sunday Services, RE, Music, and Hospitality Committees need to plan well in advance of their programming, the need to have an outline in place was clear. So, if the congregation approves the move to two full services, each component will be largely in place. It is thought that if a congregational vote is held on January 5², or thereabouts, the move to two full services could be launched on March 1, or thereabouts. One other major concern that has emerged during the consideration process, is the need for a concerted membership campaign in combination with coordinated publicity outreach, so we will be coupling our expanded space with congregational efforts at achieving numerical growth, advertising, and more high visibility

² On January 4, 2020, the Board met and decided to hold a congregational meeting to vote on the Two Full Services Plan on **January 26, 2020**. It was also decided that as near as possible to January 6, 2020, a ‘blastmail’ should be emailed to congregants of this report, and on January 12 and (optionally) January 19, 2020, a short recap of the plan would be presented following the 10:30 a.m. service.

community outreach. The Membership and Communication Committees, as well as many other groups and committees within the Fellowship should be involved.

EVALUATION:

Evaluation of the shift to two full services is a necessary component of the plan, but the committee feels that while *ongoing monitoring and adjustment* must be performed by the various committees and groups within the congregation, a full evaluation should be performed only after a significant trial—together with expected adjustments—has taken place. For that reason, it is proposed that a full evaluation be undertaken only at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 church calendar June-July 2021.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD:

- The Two Full Services Committee recommends that, beginning in early 2020, the First Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hunterdon County offer two full services in the sanctuary at 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. each Sunday during the fall and winter/spring calendar (summer services will continue to be held at 10:30 a.m. only in Dodd Hall) and continuing through the fall and winter/spring of 2020-2021. The plan for intermingling and accommodation between Sunday Services, RE, Music, and Hospitality programming is outlined above.
- Furthermore, the Two Full Services Committee recommends that formal membership and publicity outreach efforts be initiated in combination with the move to two full services.
- In addition, the Two Full Services Committee recommends that a formal evaluation of the change to two full services be conducted following a fair trial period, for example from June to July 2021, at the end of the 2020-2021 church calendar.

Respectfully submitted to the FUUFHC Executive Board on December 15, 2019,

Marion McCord, Chair

Sarah Ahrens, DRE

Emily Bengels, Music Director

Rev. Seth Fisher, Minister

Frank Manieri, Hospitality Chair

Frank Vowinkel, Sunday Services Chair

Val Marks, Board Liaison, ex officio