

We're making a move!

MODERN WORSHIP IN SANCTUARY

Easter, Palm Sunday services first opportunity

We are pleased to announce that Northminster will offer two services in the Sanctuary this Palm Sunday and Easter! New this year, Modern Worship will move to the Sanctuary from the Well for its 9 a.m. services. Traditional Worship will occur as usual at 11. We are excited to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord in two distinct services in the most beautiful space in our church.

We realize that moving Modern Worship to the Sanctuary is a big move. It comes after God has answered our prayers: Sunday attendance at Modern Worship has been growing consistently with new families and children. But seating in the Well is limited on many Sundays.

It's often standing room only until the children are dismissed for Sunday School. Late arrivals sometimes have trouble finding seats together. On Christmas Eve, an overflow crowd was asked to sit in lawn chairs outside, next to

Why move? A voice from the community

Numbers prove the need, but at our heart, we want to make sure everyone feels welcome to worship the Lord with us. Harry Stone, long-time church member, relates this recent conversation:

"I was at Special Olympics Bowling tonight -- 18 lanes and a lot of folks. A lady I knew for years through my son Raymond sought me out. She had been at the Christmas Eve service, and she and her daughter were asked to sit outside. She did and felt forgotten and cold -- especially when the door was closed without a word. She was not happy not being allowed inside, even if she had to stand. Her daughter caught pneumonia that the lady attributed to this experience. Her question: 'Why couldn't we have moved the service into the Sanctuary?'"

This story adds to our belief that moving Modern Worship into the Sanctuary is our best move. Ultimately, it's about setting Northminster up for continued vibrancy and growth in the next 10 years and beyond. And we don't want to leave anyone out in the cold -- figuratively or literally.

a fire pit, watching the service being streamed on a monitor. Sadly, some left disappointed before the service even began.

We cannot risk turning anyone away on Easter and Palm Sunday -- the most sacred, joyous Sundays of the year.

The urgency of serving unusually large numbers of worshipers makes the move on those Sundays a logical decision. After carefully considering a dozen other options, we also

believe that moving Modern Worship permanently to the Sanctuary is the right move for our future.

But before that happens, we have more work to do. And we need your help and prayers.

As we work on a timeline for sharing the Sanctuary for good, we will lean into the congregation for input and guidance. We'll want to

Please turn page



From the front

preserve all that we value in Traditional Worship while imagining a space that also accommodates the unique elements of Modern Worship. We are confident that two Sunday services -- Modern at 9 and Traditional at 11 -- can co-exist in a Sanctuary loved by all.

To be sure, there were no perfect solutions to the overcrowding. There was not even a close second to sharing the Sanctuary. Our opportunity now is to remain unified in Christ, remembering our mission to build a legacy of faith for future generations.

Will there be bumps along the way? Probably. But we'll embrace any mess and work through it.

For now, we ask for your prayers. We also hope you share our excitement about the leaps in faith we're about to take. The first group of families worshiped 80 years ago in a basement on Compton Road in what would become Northminster.

We have boldly seized opportunities ever since: Building a sanctuary in 1966, adding a contemporary service in 2002, streaming worship online during the covid pandemic in 2020.

Now, let's reach for the next 80 years -- for our children, their children and their children.

Who decided this? And other Qs

Who decided to move Modern to the Sanctuary?

Elders appointed a team of church members in January to seek a long-term solution to overcrowding in the Well. The issue was identified in churchwide Mission 2026 meetings last fall. The Modern Worship Expansion Team met for more than 14 hours over nine weeks, carefully considering 13 options and variations, before recommending the move. Elders made the final decision, approving it March 12.

What were the other options?

They ranged from a multi-million-dollar capital campaign to enlarge the Well, to adding a second Modern service in the Well, to merging Modern and Traditional worship into one big, blended service. Sharing the Sanctuary was deemed the best option for families, excellent worship, use of beautiful available space, lessened disruption and good financial stewardship.

Just how crowded is the Well?

Capacity is 180 seats. Churches know that when attendance creeps up to 80% of capacity, people feel crowded and uncomfortable, risking they won't come back. That puts our limit at about 144 people; we've averaged 137 since January with a high of 161 in February. The Sanctuary seats about 500. Traditional Worship has been running about 110 each Sunday.

Will the look of the Sanctuary change?

Perhaps. But any design changes will be carefully made. We'll also have to make quick adjustments between the two Sunday services to keep the 9 and 11 a.m. times. But if the Super Bowl can put a halftime stage together in 8 minutes for an audience of 100 million, we can transform the Sanctuary in 15 minutes.

I have some thoughts about this. Who can I tell?

Please tell us! A suggestion box will soon be in the Commons for your use. Comments also can be left at northminsterchurch.org. Your feedback will be welcomed and carefully considered.

We'll see you in the Sanctuary!

Pastor Greg Kennedy

Elders: Mike Brooks, Ivan Byers, Lynda Caster, Karen Emig, Laura Engleman, Denny Fennema, Helen Haberstroh, Sean McCabe, Jim McGrath, Phil Roebuck, Chuck Schubert, Teri Spindler

Modern Worship Expansion Team: Chad Engleman, Lee Ann Hamilton, Laurie Laning, Sean McCabe, Teri Spindler, Mike Steel, Harry Stone



The Modern Worship Expansion Team considered 13 options and variations for alleviating overcrowding in the Well. Sharing space in the Sanctuary with Traditional Worship was deemed best for our future. Here's why:

BENEFIT	DETAIL
DOUBLES SPACE FOR MODERN WORSHIP	Provides room to grow into the next decade.
WORSHIP TIMES UNCHANGED	We keep Modern Worship at 9 a.m. and Traditional at 11 a.m. No one has to move or change schedules that work now.
KEEPS MODERN WORSHIPERS INTACT	Modern community isn't fractured into two potential groups, a risk if a second Modern service was added. We keep strong relationships that characterize 9 a.m. worship.
LIFE GROUPS CONTINUE UNCHANGED	Many Modern worshipers are members of small groups that meet between Sunday services. Those schedules stay intact.
MINIMAL IMPACT ON STAFF	Most demands on staff remain the same as now. And Jason Colemann, director of facilities, gets a break. He's relieved of time-consuming demands to reconfigure the Well for worship each week.
MINIMAL IMPACT ON VOLUNTEERS	Volunteer demands also unchanged. Especially important since we already need many more volunteers to work in children's wing, greet worshipers, serve coffee, etc.
MORE OF A 'ONE-CHURCH' FEEL	A shared Sanctuary fights perception that Northminster actually is two churches -- one for Modern worshipers, one for Traditional. No, we are one church, with two distinct services in the same space.
ENHANCES USE OF THE COMMONS	The Commons, close by the Sanctuary, becomes a more natural gathering space for us all.
OPENS THE WELL FOR OTHER USES	More space for growing kids' programming? Community gatherings?
REDUCES MAINTENANCE COSTS	Technology equipment is only needed for one space, leading to cost savings.
ELIMINATES CONSTRUCTION COSTS	Shared space eliminates need for capital campaign to raise \$5-\$7 million to knock down walls and remake the Well.
END RESULT: BEAUTIFUL SPACE THAT IMPROVES ON THE WELL	Worshipers will be able to exit out the back during a service rather than in front of everyone. Also, the Sanctuary's Narthex provides a "cry area" for babies; the Well does not.



Twelve other options and variations also were analyzed for pros and cons. They ultimately were rejected in favor of sharing the Sanctuary with our two distinct worship styles.

OPTION	ANALYSIS
Add 2nd Modern Service in Well	Every service would have a time change. But 9 a.m. is earliest for most families and 12:30 (after 11 a.m. Traditional) is too late. Fractures Modern community with no expectation that 9 a.m. will find relief. Increases staff time, volunteer needs and expenses for musicians. Disrupts Life Group meeting schedules.
1 Blended Service in Sanctuary (combines Modern and Traditional)	Outside of scope; not a solution for Modern worship. Loss of treasures in both styles; fails to protect what we value. Probable loss of growth as worshipers seek "pure" services elsewhere. No one is happy.
3 Services (1 Modern, 1 Blended, 1 Traditional)	Same difficulties as two options above.
Construct New Modern Space, Add onto Well	High cost (\$5-\$7 million). Fails to utilize beautiful space that already exists and meets anticipated needs. High impact on staff and worshipers. 1 year of noise, debris and disruption. Long-term loss of lawn or parking.
Bubble Building on the Lawn	Short-term solution doesn't meet long-range goal. Conflicts with outreach activities (Fall Fun Fest, Movies on the Lawn, Cross on the Lawn, etc.)
Move Modern Worship Downstairs	Experience shows it's a bad solution. Poorly constructed for excellent sound system and livestreaming. Ceiling too low and can't be raised. Conflicts with activities in choir room next door.
Lease Space (in a school gym, etc.)	Short-term solution. Loss of Northminster identity. Lacks all resources for running an excellent service.
Partner with Another Presbyterian Church	Admits defeat; we're no longer Northminster. Community is lost. Political conflicts with 2 separate ruling Sessions.
Move Entire Church	No longer Northminster. Community is gone. Couldn't afford new land.
Overflow Modern Service to Commons, Outside, Sanctuary	Short-term solution tried multiple times and failed. Outdoors works only if weather permits. Breaks up worship community.
Switching Spaces (Traditional to Well, Modern to Sanctuary)	Loss of organ for Traditional service. Costly to renovate both spaces for unique needs. Inadequate space for choir and bells.
Do Nothing	Doesn't address problem. Limits future growth in space already past comfortable capacity. Fire code constrains growth. Unwelcoming in space already crowded. We're already turning people away.



How the Modern Worship Expansion Team did its work

The team met weekly since Jan. 10 before reaching a consensus for sharing the Sanctuary and recommending the same to elders on March 12. Behind the scenes:

We defined the problem and decision to make:

To address spatial constraints faced by our Modern Worship service due to its rapid growth. The focus is on finding long-term strategic solutions to accommodate the expanding community's needs, without sacrificing what got us to this position.

We defined what success would look like:

- Increased capacity to accommodate the growing Modern Worship community.
- Positive feedback from the congregation regarding an improved worship experience.
- Timely execution of the project.

We developed team expectations:

- Regular attendance at both services: So we would fully understand the dynamics of each.
- Urgency: We needed full participation and commitment in our meetings and goals.
- Consensus building: We acknowledged there's no perfect solution, but that any ultimate decision had to be acceptable and supported by all.
- Clear rationale and transparency: We wanted to be clear on reasons for recommending a solution. The reason for any change must exceed the pain of the change.
- Confidentiality: Crucial to fostering trust and openness in discussions and preventing harm from premature release of potentially painful options.
- Humility: Recognizing we're charting new territory as part of a team with diverse perspectives requiring collaboration.

We developed guiding principles:

- To ask for God's guidance.
- To protect what's working.
- To maintain critical mass in worship services, essential for building community in comfortable spaces.

- To weigh staffing and volunteering needs.
- To seek a long-term solution, identified as 5-10 years out.

We identified the options:

After identifying 13 options (see pages 3-4), we looked for "showstoppers," elements that would make an option non-viable. Eventually, our list was narrowed to two: A shared sanctuary, and adding a second Modern service in the Well. More discussion ensued before a shared space emerged as the clear, unanimous choice.

Urgency increased:

Then suddenly, on a random Sunday in February, we had 161 worshipers in the Well, stretching capacity to its limits. And in just weeks, Palm Sunday and Easter would be upon us, with our biggest worship numbers of the year. Remembering Christmas Eve, we decided to ask Session to approve moving Modern into the Sanctuary for Easter and Palm Sunday. We also resolved to ask Session to approve a shared Sanctuary as our long-term plan. Elders agreed.

A call to action:

- We believe this move will lay the foundation for great years ahead at Northminster. In the meantime, we urge everyone to:
 - Stay unified in Christ. We're here not because of the color of the walls or whether we sit in pews or chairs. Rather, we're here to worship Christ, our Lord and Savior, who's guiding us.
 - Lean into flexibility and adaptability. Challenges may arise, but we've been embracing bold moves for 80 years. God is with us, and that will continue.
 - Live out the mission. We want to connect every day with people in our homes, our workplaces, our community. There's no better way to do that than by making a welcoming church for the worship of God.