

Name: — Sanctuary Study Group

The Sanctuary Study Group is an intentionally small research collective (currently four of us) drawn from congregation membership. We share a strong interest in evaluating the current needs, uses, and users of the sanctuary. We will examine what works well, what is limiting—naming those aspects of a sacred space which elevate worship into a transforming experience.

Purpose: To explore the needs and dreams of diverse users of our sanctuary space, now and in the imagined future. The way users see this space, and its seating options, can evolve to better serve those needs and dreams.

- This is a time of *great change* – impacting us physically, spiritually— influencing how we worship and how we relate to each other in a community of faith.
- We recognize, therefore, that this is also a time of *great opportunity* to explore those changes, to listen to voices both old and new, and to propose a means to put in place new ways to come together in our physical sanctuary space.
- We will conduct this exploration with current facility use guidelines and policies in mind.

Goals:

1. To identify all uses of the Sanctuary, and its characteristic architectural environments which might be adapted to best suit each use—for music, spoken word, singing, visual arts, pageant, and so many more.
2. To engage the congregation membership in looking at sanctuary seating alternatives: types of flexible seating and seating configurations for *all* the uses of the Sanctuary.
3. To identify a range options and budget costs for replacement of worn, spring-upholstered pew seats along with replacing fabric-covered pew backs.

Status/Standing: Informal status, known to Council & Boards.

Background: Upgrading Sanctuary seating was set aside by the Imagine Campaign for future consideration and funding.

Some Current Functions and Constraints— practical & liturgical aspects

- Capacity to seat up to 450 to 500 occupants
- Accommodates families, side-by-side; provides cushioned comfort and warm fabric
- Upholstered pews absorb sound when unoccupied; reduces sound system feedback problems (pew back padding stops reflections returning to open microphones)
- Provides a reassuring visual appearance (for some) of traditional church seating—something akin to old New England’s Congregational wood-pew churches
- Constrains liturgical flexibility along formal and traditional lines; cannot be rearranged easily to support other uses; limits new ways of experiencing worship
 - Seating conforms with traditional symbolic orientation in worship, in music and in theatrical performance: pulpit sermons, liturgical arts (dance, visual arts, & drama), voices of the choir and other musicians, organ console visibility, sight-lines toward lectern speaker(s), guides movement in processions and pageants.

- Projection system and screen aligned with viewing along the main axis, only
- Audio infrastructure is not adapted easily to the multiple uses of the sanctuary

Coordination & Outreach:

- The Sanctuary Study Group is being held by the Worship and Music Board, which will review and comment on our work and findings, and report progress regularly to Council.
- One Group member is a representative from the Facilities & Equipment Board, another from the Creativity Council for Liturgical Arts. Both will share our Group's concerns, designs, and progress with their respective Boards and Councils.
- Hosting conversations with membership: to invite wider viewpoints and share concerns, at regular intervals, with announcements published in advance.
- Liaison with pastoral staff member.

Next Steps: **(a)** Margaret Stine will be our regular convenor (via online meeting software). Need to select chair, or co-chairs. **(b)** Identify two new participants representing interests not yet in this group (youth & family, accessibility, or other interests), to reach a working and workable size of six. **(c)** Update draft report for Council records. **(d)** Identify deliverables and preferred visual communication methods for outreach and council presentations.

Participants - February 5th and 9th meetings— Convenor: Betty Spieth-Croll; Members: Margaret Stine, Dennis Noson, Nadine Santo Pietro, and Royce Morrison

Timelines

- Immediate Reports & Actions —
 - Submit report to Council for its February 17th meeting
 - Third meeting of the Sanctuary Study Group, February 25th
 - Provide updates at the next meetings of Facilities and Equipment (2/10 & 3/10) – Music and Worship (3/10), and Creativity Council (date to be determined)