



TOPEKA FIRST

**United
Methodist**

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CITY

**2019-2020
Worship Schedule Report**

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Topeka First United Methodist Church’s mission is to make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Topeka First United Methodist Church lives out this mission as a community of Jesus followers who connect, grow, and serve for the good of the city.

Discipleship Pathway

Our Commitment to Growing Together

In late 2018 the Leadership Council adopted the Topeka First United Methodist Church Discipleship Pathway. This Pathway, developed by a Task Force of leadership, staff, and laity, seeks to be the frame work through which we live into our Mission.

Through the Discipleship Pathway we commit to five rhythms of life:

We commit to worship together to connect to God and our Community

We commit to engaging in group life where we grow closer to God and others

We commit to live as generous givers

We commit to live as servants of God

We commit to live as dedicated story-tellers

Worship	Group Life	Generous Givers	Servants	Story Tellers
Starting Point				
Attend worship once a month	Join an introductory Life Group	Give once a month as able	Serve quarterly in a ministry area	Learn what it means to share your story with others
Next Steps				
Attend worship three to four times a month	Attend a Life Group each semester	Make an annual pledge proportional to your income	Regularly serve in ministry areas	Use your story to invite someone to church each quarter
Going Deeper				
Be in worship unless you are out of town or sick	Facilitate a Life Group	Give annually at 10% of your income or more	Serve as a leader of a team or event in a ministry area	Regularly share your faith by telling your story to others

Project Overview

For the better part of three decades Topeka First UMC has worshiped within the same weekly schedule. There is nothing inherently wrong with the schedule through which this Church and the community attached to it has structured their lives. Increasingly though, there is a recognition among staff and leadership that we have not asked the question why.

Why do we worship the ways we do at the times and places that we do? Why is Sunday School at 9:30 a.m.? Why have we experienced decline? Why do we make people choose between growth and worship? Does what we do help make Disciples?

Why is an important question. In early 2018 a task force of Church leadership, staff, and laity began to ask and sought to answer these questions and others. In asking these questions others developed. In answering those questions more rabbit holes opened and more threads were followed. Through it all, the task force remained focused on building a system that better allows us as a congregation to live out our mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

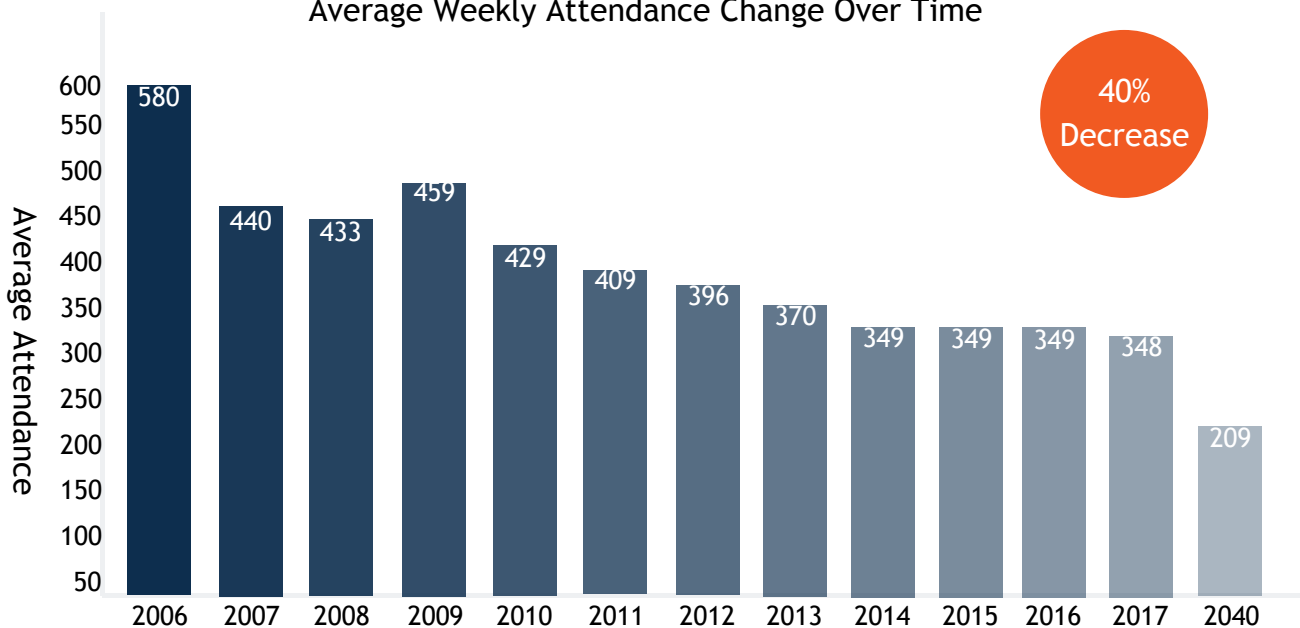
Current Schedule

8:15 a.m.
Worship Celebration

9:30 a.m.
Worship Celebration
Growth Hour

11:00 a.m.
Worship Celebration

Average Weekly Attendance Change Over Time



Project Details

Project Process and Background

In February of 2018, a task force was built with the goal of answering a question that Lead Pastor Jeff Clinger was asking himself and others. The goal of this group was to discern whether or not Topeka First UMC was operating within the ideal worship schedule. First, the task force identified that the goal of worship at Topeka First UMC was the fulfillment of our mission. Quickly, the task force recognized a lack of clarity around what it meant to be a disciple of Christ connected to Topeka First UMC. In order to provide that clarity, over the course of eight months, the task force built a discipleship pathway that Leadership Council approved in late 2018. The approved pathway identified five rhythms that Disciples connected to this congregation are invited to live in: Worship, Group Life, Generous Givers, Servants, and Story Tellers.

The original task force, at the direction of the Leadership Council, returned to the task of identifying the ideal worship schedule for Topeka First UMC while simultaneously developing a new Group Life system. The goal of the task force quickly became the separation of the Sunday growth hour and our three worship celebrations. The current schedule causes:

- Adults who worship at 9:30 a.m. to miss growth opportunities on Sundays
- 9:30 a.m. worship attendees to miss special events that are often held during that hour. (i.e. Summer Symposiums, trainings, and special presentations.)
- Children and Youth that go to Sunday School rarely attend worship. Research shows that kids who do not worship rarely return to church as adults.

To that end, the Worship and Group Life Task Force developed the Sunday morning schedule outlined in this packet. This schedule was built following months of reflection, thought, and prayer.

New Schedule Effective August 11, 2019

Sunday Morning

8:00 a.m.

Worship Celebration led by organ
Chapel, 45 Minutes

9:00 a.m.

Growth Hour

Children, Youth, & Adults, 1 Hour

10:15 a.m.

Worship Celebration led by Band
Chapel, 1 Hour

10:30 a.m.

Worship Celebration led by Choir
Sanctuary, 1 Hour

The new schedule seeks to live out the mission of Topeka First UMC by providing opportunities for individuals and families to worship and grow. By separating the worship and growth opportunities we have limited the choices people are forced to make when they chose to connect to this congregation.

Special Notes

Nursery care will continue to be available throughout the morning for children 6 weeks to 3 years old. Children's Sunday School will open check-in following the 8:00 a.m. worship and will begin at 9:15 a.m. This provides increased flexibility for families as they plan their Sunday mornings. Children will be supervised by volunteers and staff after check-in, allowing parents to attend classes during the 9:00 a.m. Growth Hour.

Donuts and drinks will continue to be served throughout the morning.

The Lead Pastor or their designee will continue to preach at all three services.

Key Stake Holders

Membership

The membership of Topeka First UMC is worth careful consideration. This group has chosen to make this congregation their home and deserve to be heard when decisions are made.

Community Members

Topeka First UMC is one of the anchors of the downtown community. As we seek to connect, grow, and serve for the good of the city we should keep in mind the needs of our communities and seek ways to serve them.

Children & Youth

Though we have established membership as a key group of stake holders in the process it is worth noting the importance of working to develop the congregation's children and youth as disciples of Christ. Developing and implementing a worship schedule that serves future generations of Christians should be a priority in our thought process.

Resources and Responsibilities

Volunteers

A change in worship schedule will change the volunteer needs of the Church on Sunday mornings. The current volunteer group leaders will continue to be responsible for the recruitment, training, and scheduling of volunteers.

Technology

Based on the new schedule there are technology needs to consider. Within the current schedule we live stream, record, and archive both the 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. worship celebrations. Our technology allows us to do this from one central location, the sound booth in the Sanctuary. If we stack worship as proposed we lose the capacity to live stream, record, and archive both celebrations. We do not have the capacity to run cameras and streams from both spaces at the same time in our current configuration. One option would be to stream only one celebration but both are watched by a nearly equal number of people weekly. Another option would be to rotate the streamed service every week. This creates an inconsistency in product and would likely lead to a reduction in our live stream numbers. The final option is to invest in the technology and equipment needed to stream simultaneously. The estimated cost of technology enhancements to do so has been quoted at \$75,000. This money would have to be raised outside of our annual budget. Trustees is the natural place in which decisions regarding technology needs would be placed though a special committee could be formed to address this question.

Other Considerations

Future Options

The task force also considered launching new worship celebrations:

- **Soul Food Cafe:**
Soul food Cafe is designed to be a casual worship experience that includes a meal and in our context would be a way to invite our neighbors to church in a meaningful way. Soul Food Cafe could be developed and launched at any time and could exist as either a morning or evening experience.
- **Evening or Week Day Worship Celebration:**
An evening worship would allow Topeka First UMC to reach out to members of our community and congregation who do not work the traditional 9 to 5 job Monday through Friday. Increasingly, people are unavailable on Sunday mornings and are looking for opportunities to worship during the evening or on other days throughout the week. An evening and or week day service could be developed and launched at any time.

Key Success Factors

Leadership and Congregational Buy In

For anything to work in the church, it needs the buy in and support of its leadership and members. Together we can change the way we structure our Sunday mornings in the hope that it will invite others to know the love and grace of God as we do. We understand that change can be difficult and anxiety producing but if we work with one another we can find new and exciting ways to connect, grow, and serve for the good of the city.

Communications

As we launch a new Sunday morning schedule, communicating the changes and their impacts will be of the utmost importance. Communications will need to be crafted for and shared with our congregation and our community.

Implementation and Planning

Planning is the key to success. As we continue to move forward in this process constructive conversations that seek to fill gaps in our vision are welcome. If we can effectively think through the changes and plan their implementation it will make the process much easier.

Flexibility

Even the best prepared plan faces challenges along the way. Throughout this process we will need to remain flexible and willing to change. As long as we focus on the ultimate goal of our work as a church, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, we can move forward confident that our efforts are being placed in the right direction.