

New Sunday Schedule Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q. When will Children's Church happen?

A. Our plan is to conduct Children's Church during the 10:45 am worship service. The lesson that is taught during Sunday school will be expanded further during Children's Church.

Q. What is causing growth in other churches, for example the E Free church?

A. There are many reasons churches grow but the most frequently cited reason is that people invite their family and friends and they find a sense of belonging there. Churches grow when a culture of invitation exists where people invite others to be a part of their church family. Another reason churches grow is because they are structured to grow and they are intentional about receiving new people. We recently hired a Coordinator of Lay Ministries (COM) to develop an assimilation plan for newcomers that will help them get involved in the ministry of the church. People that get involved tend to stay. Growing a church the size of Otterbein (200 – 450 in worship) requires multiplying classes, groups, services and ministries. According to most experts, though, the key for growth at this size is improving the quality and effectiveness of all ministries to meet real needs of people inside and outside of the church.

Q. Do we have any data, or do we ask, why people leave Otterbein?

A. There is no hard data but there are many reasons people leave a church. Some people move out of the area, others pass away, still others fall out of the practice of regular worship. Some leave because of some event or interaction that left them with hurt feelings.

Q. How can we get young people in the traditional service? How will we attract young people?

A. Our most recent staff additions are Young adults (Generation Y). Their leadership will enable us to be more sensitive to the needs of young adults in our area. We are hopeful that, along with the core group that already exists at Otterbein, we will be able to reach new young families and singles for Christ.

Q. How can we continue to encourage and broaden the growing faith of the lay speakers, and their mentoring influence, that we have had at The Gathering?

A. We must continue to raise up people who are willing to preach and teach the Gospel and find opportunities for them to do so. Pastor Bruce will be meeting with our current lay speakers to develop ways to use their talents in preaching and in other settings.

Q. Why are we starting on Easter?

A. Easter provides an excellent launch window for a new schedule. Even nominally religious people consider going to church on Easter Sunday. Launching on Easter also provides an opportunity for members and regular attenders to invite friends and family to something new that the church is doing.

Q. Is The Gathering still going to be in the gym?

A. Yes. The relaxed and casual atmosphere is a big part of what makes The Gathering special. We don't want that to change.

Q. Pastor, What Is your vision for this change?

A. My vision is to connect with the congregation in both worship services every Sunday that I am on campus through preaching and leading in worship. Having the ability to be a part of the lives of the entire congregation each week will enable me to lead the entire congregation to the place God wants us to go. In addition, I can use the talents and gifts that God has given me in The Gathering on a weekly basis, not just once a month. I also believe, based on empirical data, that a later Sunday morning start time for a contemporary style service will be a draw to people in this community and help the service grow numerically.

Q. Isn't church attendance in a downward trend nationwide

A. Yes, especially in main-line denominations. Statistics indicate, however, that growth is possible and is happening in our larger churches (like Otterbein and larger).

Q. How will Soul Café work with the new schedule?

A. We are exploring options for Soul Café and will announce them soon.

Q. Do we have a plan of succession for the ushers and leaders of our Sanctuary Service?

A. One of the responsibilities of our new Coordinator of Lay Ministries is helping existing teams and ministries find new volunteers. We will assess the needs and recruit the people we need.

Q. Will the new schedule address the desire by some Gathering worshippers to have more pastoral presence.

A. Yes. Pastor Bruce will be present in The Gathering Service every Sunday he is scheduled to be on campus whether he is preaching or not.

Q. Will this affect the “training ground” we seem to have established through The Gathering Service to send people from Otterbein into pastoral ministry? (We recently sent 4 people into ministry because of lay speaker opportunities at Otterbein.)

A. One of the primary responsibilities of the pastor and SPRC is to raise up individuals for pastoral ministry. This must continue and both worship services can serve as training ground for this effort.

Q. Will we take time in the future to evaluate the change and see how things are going?

A. The Committees have all agreed to meet together again in the fall of 2019 to evaluate the change.

Q. Communication within our church is very important. What are the best ways to do that?

A. The Communications Committee is already working on ways to communicate the change in Sunday schedule as well as other important matters using the Sunday worship folder, Scrolling Slide Show in The Gathering and during Soul Café, bi-monthly newsletter, new weekly Otterbein Updates emails, and worship service announcements.

Q. Do we still plan to offer a combined service of Music on May 5th?

A. After careful thought and consultation, the Music Sunday service schedule for May 5th will be rescheduled for a later date.

Q. Will there be any changes to worship service locations?

A. There are no plans for moving any of our Sunday activities, only changing times.

Q. Why make changes now pending the Special General Conference decisions on A Way Forward?

A. In the last 13 years, the average weekly worship attendance at Otterbein Church has dropped by 149. Regardless of what the denomination does, we need to take action now to reverse this trend and get Otterbein into a growth cycle.

Q. If communication is key to everything, should we consider having meetings with the congregation to educate them?

A. After the initial wave of announcements (email and in worship), if meetings are needed, Pastor Bruce is prepared to host them.