

# ELDERS PROPOSAL: ADDRESSING OUR SUNDAY ATTENDANCE CAPACITY

The purpose of this proposal is to help us think carefully and prayerfully about our current Sunday capacity constraints and to recommend a path forward that enables us to continue welcoming, discipling, and shepherding those the Lord is bringing to our church family.

This is not a crisis. It is, in many ways, a gift. But it is also a stewardship issue that requires clarity and action.

## 1. CURRENT REALITY

Our sanctuary seats approximately 280 people. With two Sunday morning services (9:00am and 10:45am), our theoretical maximum is around 560. For the past year (long weekends and summer-slow-down aside), we have regularly seen:

- 500–550 in attendance.
- Multiple Sundays near or beyond 600 people.
- Christmas Eve and Easter services that were near or beyond 700 people.
- The 9:00am service is especially full most weeks — recently hovering around 400 people.
- We're aware of instances where people leave due to lack of seating or parking.
- Our parking is spilling heavily into surrounding residential streets.

Fire code is not the issue. Functional capacity is. Coming out of COVID, attendance has steadily increased year over year. This is not a temporary spike. It has become our new baseline. We are now at a point where:

- New families can struggle to find seating.
- Visitors may feel there is “no room.”
- Parking creates strain for neighbours and frustration for attenders.
- Sunday mornings regularly feel compressed.

Children's ministry continues to function well, though space is consistently full (which makes running an overflow in the basement main hall difficult). At this stage, it is not the primary pressure point, but it does reflect the broader reality that our Sunday footprint is tight. These are great problems to have — but they are real.

## 2. THE CORE ISSUE

The issue is not simply attendance. The issue is shepherding capacity. We have reached the maximum number of people we can responsibly gather, welcome, and disciple within our current two-service structure. If we do nothing, we will likely continue to:

- Lose new families quietly.
- Limit our ability to share the good news of Jesus with our community.
- Increase congestion and strain.
- Signal, intentionally or not, that we are content being at capacity.
- Doing nothing is not neutral. It is functionally deciding that our current size is our ceiling.

### 3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

**1. Do Nothing** — Fuller services have been our reality for several years now and, apart from sending a core planting team to help launch Garden City Church, we've run with this option — which is becoming less viable.

*Strengths:*

- No added complexity.
- No additional strain on staff or volunteers.

*Challenges:*

- We will continue losing people.
- Missional momentum likely slows.
- Ongoing parking and space compression.
- Reduced flexibility for welcoming new families.

**2. Sell and Build Larger** — Not a serious option at this time. We have been rooted in this community for over 50 years and relocating would fundamentally alter our identity and witness.

**3. Church Plant Again** — Another plant in the near term would not significantly relieve pressure and would require immense energy and leadership focus.

**4. Continue Redirecting to 10:45am** — We already encourage this. However, 10:45am is frequently near capacity as well (averaging 200 people in 2026). This is no longer a sufficient solution.

**5. Add a Sunday Evening Service (Recommended)**

### 4. WHY A SUNDAY EVENING SERVICE MAKES SENSE

**Practical Strengths:**

- Increases our total weekly capacity without building expansion.
- Reduces morning parking strain.
- Creates additional space in our overall Sunday rhythm.
- Does not require additional sermon preparation (the same sermon from the morning).
- It would build upon the Sunday morning preparations without requiring staff to also lead a service on a Saturday. Essentially, it's easier to come back Sunday evening than to commit an extra day.
- Does not require livestream.
- Lower tech demands; potential training ground for developing volunteers.
- With the recent hire of another full-time pastor, the workload is manageable with thoughtful scheduling. Preaching calendar could be adjusted to ensure appropriate rest.

Children's ministry would not initially be offered in the evening. Children would be welcome to attend with their families, allowing this service to remain structurally simple at launch.

**Cultural & Ministry Opportunities:**

- Provide a more intimate and interactive environment while maintaining theological consistency.
- Serve those overwhelmed in larger crowds.
- Accommodate shift workers and those unable to attend mornings.

## 5. PRIMARY CHALLENGES

The most significant challenge is volunteer sustainability, especially within our worship and tech teams. However, after discussing this proposal with our Worship Committee, they are onside and have already begun creatively thinking about how we can add a third service without burning out volunteers.

Other volunteers (ushers, greeters, etc) would come from those committing to attend the evening service.

## 6. STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

With the addition of another full-time pastor:

- The preaching load can be distributed thoughtfully amongst our various staff and elder options.
- Rest rhythms can be intentionally protected (e.g., by not running the third service on Saturday).
- The evening service would not require additional sermon prep.
- Only the preaching pastor/elder would attend that service (with occasional exceptions).
- When scheduled, elders can 'host' an evening service to fill in segments that would otherwise be covered by CHBC staff in the morning (e.g., announcements, prayer, communion, benediction).
- This is feasible — but would require disciplined planning and communication (e.g., preaching rotation, elder support, worship leader involvement, coordination with other church activities).

## 7. PROPOSED TIMELINE

### 1. Seek the Counsel of Other Churches (who have faced similar challenges) — Fall 2025

### 2. Elder Prayer/Discussion and this Proposal put together — January/February 2026

### 3. Consultation Phase — March/April 2026

- Meet with Worship Committee (which includes worship leaders, tech reps, and lead pastor).
- Consult with other pastoral and ministry staff to assess workload, rhythms, and sustainability.
- Discuss with the Board to keep them aligned and informed.

### 4. Congregational Communication — May 2026

- Make this proposal available to membership two weeks prior to our May congregational meeting.
- Walk through our rationale at the meeting and take questions.
- A membership vote is not required on this because existing services (9:00am and 10:45am) are not being altered and (according to our Constitution & By-Laws) the Council of Elders and lead pastor are responsible for overseeing our Sunday worship services.
- Invite the congregation into a month of prayer to discern whether God is calling them to be a part of our launch team for this third service (with a commitment though the New Year). If we can not reach a minimum threshold of 50+ committed adults and teens, we will not launch.

### 5. Interest & Commitment Phase — June 2026

- Continue to invite people to consider joining the launch team (with table in foyer on Sundays).
- Host an information and prayer night midway through that month of discernment.
- If we reach the minimum threshold of 50+ committed adults and teens, we move to the next step.

## 6. Preparation for Third Service Launch — Summer 2026

- Confirm service details, such as time and launch date.
- Recruit and train volunteers — especially focusing on our group of committed adults and teens.
- Thoughtfully plan out the preaching schedule to ensure good rhythms of rest for staff and elders.
- Thoughtfully plan out the worship schedule to protect against volunteer burn-out and provide new opportunities for others to serve and grow in their gifting.
- Promote this new third service in advance of a September 2026 launch.

## 8. WHAT SUCCESS WOULD LOOK LIKE

- 50+ committed adults forming the core.
- Reduced congestion at 9:00am.
- Improved parking distribution across the day.
- Sustainable volunteer rhythms.
- A healthy, intimate gathering environment.
- Continued openness to new families on Sunday mornings.
- Greater opportunity to make Jesus known to our friends and neighbours.
- Creation of more opportunities for people across these three services to connect with each other.

When we reach the New Year, we can prayerfully re-evaluate the effectiveness of this third service and respond accordingly. Feedback from those who attend will be important in considering our next steps.

## 9. REQUESTED ACTION FROM THE ELDERS

1. Take time to prayerfully consider this proposal.
2. Plan to attend our May 2026 congregational meeting, at which time we will take questions and make space for discussion. Questions can also be directed to [questions@mychbc.ca](mailto:questions@mychbc.ca).
3. Prayerfully consider whether God is calling you to be a part of our launch team. And if you're not feeling called, that's fine, but be in prayer for others who are considering this opportunity. Or perhaps you might consider shifting your attendance to 10:45am to make room for families who need to attend the 9:00am service for its children's Sunday School program?
4. Pray for those who are leading this process — that God will bless the work of our hands.

## 10. CLOSING

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this proposal.

The Lord has been kind to entrust many people to our care. We did not manufacture this growth, but we are responsible to steward it wisely. We believe that adding a Sunday evening service is a faithful and practical next step in that stewardship.

To be clear, our motivation is not simply to become larger. Rather, we desire to remain open — continuing to welcome those the Lord is drawing, and making space for them to gather, worship, and be disciplined among us.

With gratitude for your prayerful consideration,

The Council of Elders