

## TWO MORNING SERVICES

By Paul Grimmer (Updated June 04)

This brief paper is based on my experience at Otumoetai (1975-86) and Whangaparaoa (2000-05) Baptist Churches. At Otumoetai we needed to start two morning services because we had outgrown the building. Two services were started on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1981 and continued until 14<sup>th</sup> August 1983 when we moved to one service in a newly completed town hall in Tauranga called Baycourt. Whangaparaoa already had two morning services when I arrived.

### A. The Philosophical Question

**Same or different?** The first issue that has to be addressed is the philosophical question. Do we want two different styles of services to suit the varying tastes and desires and cater for a wider range of people, or do we want to keep them the same, as much as possible?

- **At Otumoetai we decided to keep the two services the same.** The same preacher, same worship leader, same songs, hymns and soloist, duet etc. Our reasoning at that time was that although there are always tensions with change, we felt it was important to try to keep the Church moving as much as possible together, and not allow the gap between 'traditionalists' and 'renewalists' to get any bigger. Although we decided to keep both morning services the same, we also felt it was important that the evening service was different and aimed at a different target audience.
- **At Whangaparaoa, the two services were already different** (Contemporary and Conventional) and I was asked to maintain the difference as they had become too similar in style. I didn't like the value judgement implied in the words "conventional" or "conservative", so we called them "am" and "fm". The wider spectrum of people covered by the different styles has been very positive. Although there is a definite gap in style and we aim to keep it that way, I never want the gap to get too big, so we don't allow the "am" style service to get too conservative. Nor do we want the gap to get too small. Both services are learning new music etc.

### B. The Pros and Cons

**Some of the advantages are –**

1. **The good use of buildings**, equipment, communion glasses, parking spaces etc. Buildings etc being used for only a few hours on a Sunday is not an efficient use of resources.
2. **Immediately provides more room for growth.** It gives half to two thirds as much room again. Not twice as much, because it's not easy to get the services the same size. (I now realise that you can influence the size of the services by adjusting the time, style and provision of other ministries such as children's programme.)
3. **The fact that people have a choice of time.** After two different times at Otumoetai, we settled on 9 am and 11 am. The first service had to be kept under 1½ hours or we would have trouble getting the people away and the next congregation in. Although the second service was the same in style, it would normally be a little shorter. We changed at Whangaparaoa settling on 8.45 am and 10.30 am. We tried to keep the first service, the am style one, to about an hour and five minutes, and the second service to an hour and twenty minutes.

4. **It forces the development of more ministries**, especially musicians, but also those welcoming on the door, worship leaders, ushers, communion preparers and stewards, sound technicians etc.

**Some of the disadvantages are –**

1. **The extra pressure on the Pastor.** Preaching the same sermon twice, the extra organisation, the long Sunday morning at the Church. (I was normally at the Church from around 7.30 am to about 1 pm) Although at Otumoetai we had decided on two services much earlier, I was reluctant to start them until we had adequate staffing.
2. **The Church doesn't all meet together.** This was really only a difficulty on special occasions such as sending out a Missionary, or commissioning a new Pastor. You had to do those things twice. At Otumoetai we had a combined "Family Service" once a term in a school hall to help bridge the two services. This last point is actually more of an advantage than a disadvantage, because as a church grows, it has to become multi-cell rather than a single cell, and the two services helps in that process.

**C. Further Comments**

1. **When to start two services.** I would now give careful consideration to this question. At Otumoetai we needed to start two services as soon as possible after our Associate Pastor commenced. However, in hindsight, May was not a good time of the year to start. Numbers tend to drop during the winter months. September or February would have been better.
2. **Our experience would suggest that it takes everyone six months to a year to recover from the "shock" of dividing.** It takes time to accept, adjust and continue to grow again. People will want to go back to one service especially given that the numbers appear smaller. If we hadn't continued to grow, there would have been more pressure to go back to one service, but that would certainly have stifled growth.
3. **A big consideration is Children's Ministries.**
  - At Otumoetai we were fortunate to be able to use four classrooms of a Primary School opposite the Church. We decided on Sunday School and crèche during the first service, and a small Children's Church and crèche during the second. This arrangement meant that most of the families with Sunday School aged children came to the first service. The second service had some families with children, but included more older people, single people and couples without children. The second service was the smaller of the two, because of the Sunday School situation.
  - At Whangaparaoa, we only had Kid's Church at the second service for some years. The second service was full to overflowing, so we decided to put a kid's church programme in the first service as well. At the point of writing, it was small but a few families had made the transition.  
If I was going into two services now, I would try if at all possible to have children's ministry at both services right from the start.
4. **The time between services** is an important consideration as you have to allow time for people to leave and car parks become available. Also time for musicians at the second service to set up, do sound checks etc. At Whangaparaoa we found we needed at least 35-40 minutes. No doubt that could be less if the services and musicians were the same, and there was plenty of parking.