

Preparing for What's Next, Asking the Big Questions Tool Worship

The following questions and reflections can help you and your teams keep a wide lens turned toward the considerations for how you make choices about avenues for engagement. These are most useful if the sacred partners of clergy, senior staff, and lay leaders can consider them together. Perhaps even doing some thinking with vocal members of your community might assist in the learning together.

Shifting the Conversation

What do people mean when they say they want to get back to the building? Let us ask more questions about why they want to be back. Is it possible that finally being able to pray together in person symbolize something greater? What are people sharing about their lives and experiences that will help us plan meaningful worship? Some questions to consider asking your people:

- Do you want to pray in the sanctuary specifically, and if so, why?
- Why do people want to connect in person?
- How might we create meaningful community inside and outside the building, and more broadly than the Shabbat and Holy Day worship times?
- How might we acknowledge the longing people have to be physically proximate as well as the memory they have of sacred spaces, and at the same time think broadly about how we design meaningful worship experiences for a community of diverse needs and access points?

If one of the things we've learned is the value of relationship, community, and feeling a sense of "seeing" and "being seen", how can our worship choices be viewed through the lens of making that possible? How can we move to a language of "multi-access" as opposed to "hybrid"? For more thinking about this transition to "multi-access", read [Don't Call it Hybrid: Multi-Access is the Future for Jewish Communities](#).

Questions for a Team

Who are your "publics"? What factors are driving your decisions and how can you think about the ways everyone might access your moments of meaning and belonging?

A few publics/audiences might be:

- *a small group of regulars who attended in person pre-pandemic*
- *people who came occasionally before they could access remotely but attended more when they could do so from home*
- *families who found the flexibility and engaging prayer meaningful for their families*
- *individuals who found your community, or live far away, who may not ever come to the building, but engage remotely*



What “spaces” could provide touch points and communal gathering in new ways? What might it look like for content to be offered asynchronously (not at the same time) in multiple “spaces”?

Instead of sanctuary vs home:

- chapel or smaller room to create more intimacy
- library or lobby
- outdoors on the property or somewhere public
- homes for shabbat dinner, outside gatherings, inside convenings

What is the WHY of belonging to your community? How can we think differently about the ways people can find belonging?

Unpacking

What were some of the most meaningful moments over the last year? What moments (even before the pandemic!) transcended the expected. From someone sharing something in a Shabbat breakout oneg group, to a video of a youth choir – what stands out? Perhaps your team can work through them:

- Each person name one moment that stands out, from during the pandemic or before
- What were the elements of that experience (who, why, when, how)?
- Why did it matter so much? (To the person who shared it and/or to the people who participated/bore witness)
- How did the community respond, how did you define yourselves in those moments?

Listing the elements and why they mattered, what would it take to dream of a worship experience (even a single service or gathering) whose focus was those things? Could that translate into more manageable thinking about all the choices? Perhaps that learning can help you find a bit of the answer for yourselves about why you gather.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Cantor Rosalie Will, rwill@urj.org

