

Changes recommended or implemented with the intent of improving Joys and Sorrows

1. Complaints about length, content, overuse by some members. 1. Added wording in order of service stressing purpose of ritual and doing brief sharings. 2. Script used by Service Assistants revised to provide wording to reinforce time limit, content. 3. Decreased number of available candles. 4. Added a separate element to the service where people may light a candle in silence and/or hang a card on the ema stand.
2. At the time we held the town meetings and revamped j&s we did a re-education campaign about the purpose of j&s and about what was appropriate to be shared. We changed it so that the minister actually lights the candle while the person shares. We asked people to state their name when they begin sharing. We asked people to line up when j&s is announced rather than waiting until the previous person sharing has been seated. We asked people to pause between sharing to give the congregation time to hold the person in their thoughts. We encouraged our minister to counsel people who have a pattern of inappropriate sharing.
3. We went from an open microphone to the inclusion of silent candles and an EMA stand.
4. We have made it very clear that this time is to share "significant joys and concerns", no political statements and please try to respect the sanctity of candles of sharing by limiting the trivial comments. We have also added the silent candles and the Ema stand.
5. Significant conflict led to a "Quaker-style" conflict resolution process where each person in the (very full) room spoke for 1 minute max about their own feelings about J&C. All I messages. Very effective. Led to keeping J&C, adding silent candles, adding the Shinto stand, and placing strong wording in the Order of Service to limit the sharing to significant milestones and to make it brief. It got MUCH better but is also still abused.
6. MOved to closer to the end of the service in order to ensure that the worship leader has the time she/he needs. Pass a hand-held microphone (with a "runner" delivering it).
7. We used to only have spoken J&S, now we have silently lighting in addition to or sometimes instead of spoken J & S
8. Moved it to the end of the service instead of beginning. Applied time constraints. Occasionally it would get out of hand time-wise, distract from the theme of the service, make visitors feel excluded (in my opinion).
9. We instituted silent candle lighting - which significantly reduced the number of people sharing verbally and the number who light candles is amazing, and helps others know they are not alone.
10. Changes have been discussed, but we're waiting for the new minister to decide what is to be done differently, if anything
11. We moved joys and concerns to after the sermon. This has had the effect of keeping individual sharing to an appropriate more length of time. People make an effort to keep things more brief than they did under the other structure.
12. The service is divided into The Gathering ; The Worship Service and Going Forth. I moved it out of the worship service and into the Gathering with the welcome and announcements so that one day the Gathering might begin 15 minutes before the service.
13. Separating silent lighting of candles from spoken joys and sorrows. In part, in order to get a better sense which parts are more important to people in the congregation and in part to make the process more effective.
14. When I arrived as Interim Minister, I reshaped the block of elements so that the reading of the book of concerns and joys came first. The lighting of the candles later was to give some recognition to the concerns and joys that the congregants had heard about. Before, it seemed backwards to me.
15. Added time of silent prayer and meditation and a meditation hymn. The soft, short hymn is particularly effective and appreciated.
16. Time limits. Whole congregation went through a self study about Candles and overwhelmingly wanted to keep Candles of Sharing with some adjustments. One problem that keeps popping up over a period of time is the same group of people (our emotionally neediest) start sharing every Sunday. Then we

16. speak to them, and it's okay for a while, and then they repeat their behavior.

17. We don't have joys and sorrows.
18. we used to have "open mic" and now we have a Js and Cs book the minister reads. People who wrote in it stand as their piece is read if they want to. There is a little melancholy about losing the face-to-face, losing the individuality of the open mic, but more relief at the controlled length, the editing, and the speed of it now.
19. We used to have individuals light candles for each Joy or Concern. Now the minister or service leader lights a beginning and ending candle. At one time people recited their Joys and Concerns from their seats--now they go to a microphone at the front of the hall.
20. We placed it near the end of the service. When people are ready to go home this has shortened it and insures that the sermon has had its full allotted time. Also we tell people to briefly share their joy or concern there will be time to share the details at coffee hour. People get more attention at coffee hour because the issue is fresh in people's minds. This has increased the pastoral aspect of J&C.
21. Joys and sorrows had been near the beginning of the service. We have moved it to right after the sermon and the meaning of this community sharing is linked to the message of the sermon -- that seems to be an effective application of the sermon and links joys and sorrows as an important part of our service. Then, after the joys and sorrows, we all stand together to sing the closing hymn, do chalice extinguishing and go for social hour -- so what people has shared is very recent, and others can express their support of the person who shared the joy or sorrow.
22. added a fountain with shells and river stones for silent sharing. moved the placement towards the end of the service so I (the minister) do not feel like people will walk out during the sermon. worship committee has supported these changes. People have given their input and we don't ever cut Joys and sorrows on a Sunday. We don't have it during Christmas Eve, Thanksgiving or Everyday Spirituality.
23. About six years ago, we moved from spoken to silent Joys & Concerns -- both connected to lighting of candles
24. Very minor changes - introducing comments prior to asking people to be brief.
25. pastoral prayer added by interim minister
26. Some attempt in the last year to limit j & c but this was not well received at all.
27. We have added a card for expression of significant milestones or concerns.
28. Went to having them in the Service Order and in the newsletter
29. We eliminated candles in favor of pebbles in a fishbowl (takes less time and is safer). Minister or service leader introduction includes instructions to keep it brief and personal (not social concerns). Board approved service going longer than an hour to accommodate joys and concerns (we stopped using the word "sorrows"), and we have also shortened time for announcements.
30. See number 17 above
31. The small change I've made is to try to emphasize that things shared be truly important (and yet someone got up just Sunday and lit a candle for the joy of wearing cotton socks) and that the speaking is brief -- and invitation to further sharing following the service. Previous wording (that I inherited) had been to share whatever one would like.
32. Dropped J&Cs to once a month (after complaints); experienced serious backlash; handled well by COM; WC increased to 2x a month after congregational conversations...seems ok at the moment. Still open to changes in future.
33. Five years ago we added the silent candles and that decreased the number sharing; last year we started asking people to form lines to share and that both makes it move faster and seemed to limit the number; also we added pastoral follow up which makes it more meaningful.
34. We use candles (we call it Candles of Community). This takes away the "open mike" feeling. We emphasize that it is for major personal joys and concerns.
35. We added candle lighting and began calling it "Candles of Community". This added a more sacred element to the time and cut down on some inappropriate sharings such as, "My joy is that I'm having a yard sale."

36. We began including the lighting of candles and have been emphasizing the sacred nature of the sharing of joys and concerns. We discourage announcements and political statements. Previously, some members used the time as an opportunity to make announcements or express political statements which were divisive.
37. Used to be open mike only--got really bad with announcements, inappropriate political statements and the like. After much soul-searching, we went to one mike a month, the rest of the time written.
38. It was about 4-5 years ago that we stopped doing open mike J&C. It is still fresh in the minds of many people. A number of people had expressed discomfort with J&C prior to that. On a regular, but not constant basis, people would use J&C to make announcements or political speeches or to make comments on congregational issues. On one Sunday there was a political comment made followed by another congregant calling the prior commenter a name. The Worship committee suspended J&C and we went through a process of town meetings and discussions. The congregation was split with the larger number of people speaking at town meetings favoring keeping the open mike, but a large number saying J&C made them very uncomfortable, and another large number not heard from. The Worship Comm made the change to the above format. Most people seem to like it, but some still feel disenfranchised. It is noteworthy that on the open mike days, a large number of people still use the written method of participating or silently light a candle.
39. The weekly open microphone was changed to its limited use and the intecessory sharing begun. The lay ministers give people the candle for the lighting so people know who they are and use those forms to respond to people more systematically.
40. We changed to our current system when new Minister came 4 years ago. We had "open mic" before that.
41. We left open mics behind and moved to the new system.
42. Constant emphasis of appropriateness of the items to be shared with congregation
43. Our change was more than 3 years ago, but was precipitated by abuse of the open mic method for politcs/announcements/same people speaking week after week.
44. With the arrival of the first full-time minister (me), we have begun to fram joys and concern verbally and in the order of service. And, the minister now hands the microphone and stands near the person speaking.
45. The silent candles is new with the hope of providing a the opportunity to recognize something of import without having to discuss it publically. I have the sense it has been very well received. Personally, I appreciate the time during the service that is reflective with an accompaniment of quiet music. As to question 20. we have some members who are frustrated by what they perceive as trival milestones to share, but we also have those who appreciate whatever anyone wants to share and are tolerant of those who go on too long occasionally.
46. People lit candles and spoke their own joy or sorrow. Now they pass them forward written, during the offering, and the minister or worship leader reads them during a prayerful time.
47. The congregation used to use the "traditional" method where individuals came to the front, lit a candle and spoke. The size of our congregation made this very difficult--it took as much as 15 minutes. So, with the new minister these were changed to our present format (silent candles; minister relating these joys & concerns as members request)
48. We no longer do joys and concerns at the same time. We were able to have an interim minister for one year, and he initiated the change. Unfortunatley, our congregation decided they didn't like him, and wanted to go back to lay leadership, very disappointing. It was so nice to have a leader for a change.
49. Introduced with reverence as life "milestones." Prayer always follows.
50. The interim minister separated joys and concerns. Some like that, some don't. We also have an ongoing controversy about whether or not to include children during this time.
51. Changed to answer in #17 from a roudy topsy turvy "Joys and Concerns"
52. silent candles lit before candles lit with comment. To facilitate while comments are made a designated member lights a candle. Announcements have been placed after the benediction which has cut down on the announcements to the point of having very few, also if one wishes to get an announcement out they use the newsletter or listserv or written announcements in the Order of Services.

53. We've asked that people not use it as a political platform or spot to make frivolous comments. We've also separated out and had all the "concerns" first and then the joys.
54. We initiated the silent lighting of candles for those who might not feel comfortable speaking. we now use microphones so that people can be heard. we suggested that people line up on the side in hopes that the line would control the length of time. Sometimes it does get long.
55. We begin with those who wish to just light a candle (silent joys and concerns). Music is played and this has become a silent meditative time. Then for spoken joys and concerns, we have some who hands the person the microphone already turned on and who lights the candle as the person shares their J/C. We have also asked that those wanting to share their J/C "line-up." This reduces the amount of time in waiting for everyone to come to the front. These changes seem to have made J/C shorter.
56. already mentioned: we added the opporutnity for people to lighth a candle for an unspoken joy or concern; piano music is played--often the music for what will be the closing hymn; also, we have a designated candle lighter; this cuts down the time and distraction of people trying to get a candle to light; usually it seems to make the exercise of candle-lighting feel more gracious and worshipful. we encourage people who want to offer a spoken joy or concern to 'line up' to the side so that we don't waste a lot of time with people coming up and sitting down. The focus thus is on what is being shared, not on watching people come forward and struggle to get a candle to light and so forth
57. minister holds mike; minister sets tone with introduction that sets the tone and the boundaries; minister lights candles; minister calls people out on abuses of J&S on Monday morning.
58. We moved the placement of the "Joys and Concerns." We used to have it early in the service before the children left for RE. We have changed the order of service so that the sermon is in the middle -- followed by the offertory, joys and concerns, prayer, closing song, extinguishing chalice and benediction. Folks are much less likely to share -- just to be sharing; and they are more concise. It's also allowed me not to feel pressure to cut my sermon short, etc.