

Bethany UMC Sunday Morning Schedule Changes
Frequently Asked Questions
July 11, 2021
Version 1.1

Rationale for the Change

1. Why are we making the change?

The primary motivation for moving to one Sunday School hour is building momentum and excitement in student and kids ministry with a critical mass at one hour instead of spreading out the groups over two hours. In addition to this, we are excited that consolidating the Sunday morning schedule will simplify what we are offering and eliminate the conflicts that sometimes arise with worship and Sunday School preferences when they are scheduled on the same hour. It also creates a new opportunity to occasionally host church-wide Fellowship events during the Sunday School hour, which will be convenient for both worship services.

2. What research was done to ensure that this is the right thing to do?

We have contacted a number of other churches that have both traditional and contemporary worship services to understand what has worked well for other churches that are similar to us. Most of these were larger churches in our denomination. From these churches, we found that most of them have the traditional service at the early time and the contemporary service at the later time.

3. Who did we get input from before making the change?

The process for narrowing down options included getting input from many different parts of Bethany. We consulted with leaders for music ministry, café, Sunday school classes, Students, and Kids ministries to understand all the dynamics at play and come up with the best possible options for us to consider. After narrowing down the options, we conducted two hybrid town hall meetings on May 23rd and June 6th to gather feedback and allow members to share their thoughts about the schedule change. This helped us narrow down the options even further, and the Lead Team helped us take all of this information to make a final recommendation.

4. Is this happening because Pastor Sheri has been appointed to another church?

No. The schedule change is happening because we need to prioritize ministering to students and kids in a single Sunday school hour, and because a simpler schedule is preferable coming out of the pandemic. We were already planning a potential schedule change when we found out that Pastor Sheri was being reappointed to another church.

Worship Logistics

5. When will the schedule change happen?

The first Sunday for the new schedule will be August 15. This is an ideal time for us to make the change since it is the weekend between Leander ISD and Round Rock ISD beginning the new school year, so it is a natural “kick off” time period for the fall.

6. Will we revert back to the original schedule after the pandemic?

No. The plan is to continue with the new schedule for the foreseeable future. It is always possible that some day in the future we may need to consider other changes, but we will evaluate the situation at that future time.

7. What times will the worship services start?

The Traditional worship service will begin at 8:45am. The Contemporary worship service will begin at 11:15am. The Sunday School hour will happen at 10am for all adult, student, and kids' classes.

8. What about the Taizé-style Chapel service?

We are still considering when we will be able to restart the contemplative Taizé-style and the midweek chapel services in person. We hope to have a decision about this soon, and will let you know as soon as we have a date. We will continue to record and post these pre-recorded worship services until they return to in-person services. When it does return, the Taizé-style service will be at 11:15am.

9. Will we continue to livestream the services?

We will continue to livestream both service types, the 8:45am traditional service and the 11:15am contemporary service, as well as record the contemplative Taizé-style and midweek chapel services.

10. Will we resume outdoor worship on Sunday evenings?

Outdoor worship served a great purpose during the pandemic by providing a safe way for people to enjoy in-person worship and fellowship time when it was difficult to do so in our normal indoor space. We have not had the same need since it has become safer to gather indoors in our area, and so we do not plan to continue outdoor worship services with the same regularity as we did this past year. We are looking at ways that we can still hold an occasional outdoor worship service when it could be a useful means of gathering, especially to go along with larger outdoor events. We will make those decisions on a case by case basis when it makes sense to still hold an outdoor worship service.

11. What is happening with the Saturday night service?

We will be restarting the Saturday night service on August 14. This will happen at 5pm in the worship center from August 14 on.

Sunday School Class Logistics

12. When the schedule change happens, what time will my Sunday School class start?

Sunday School classes will all begin at 10:00am on Sunday mornings. Check with your class leader for more information as we get closer to August 15.

13. Where will my Sunday School class meet?

We are making plans to ensure that every class has adequate meeting space. Check with your class leader for more information as we get closer to August 15.

Kids-Specific Information

14. What if I only want to come for one hour with my kids?

We love it when families worship together. We also understand that sometimes kids lose interest, especially during the sermon. This summer, during the 9:30am service, we have been pilot testing a Kids Worship option for kids to worship together in their own space during the sermon. We are excited that beginning August 15, we will be able to offer this to kids at both the 8:45am and 11:15am services in the Cornerstone. Kids will be dismissed just before the sermon to have their own worship time with other kids, and they can be picked up by their parents afterward in the Cornerstone.

15. What is Kids' Worship? How does it compare to Kids' Sunday School?

Kid's Worship is a time of worship designed just for kids (Pre-K thru 5th grade) that happens during the sermon. This allows kids to begin worship with their families and then be dismissed to Kid's Worship in the Cornerstone before the sermon begins. Right now we are pilot testing this at the 9:30am service, but beginning August 15, we will do this at both the 8:45am traditional and 11:15am contemporary services. Kid's Sunday school currently happens at 11am for the entire hour. Beginning August 15 Kids' Sunday School will happen during the churchwide Sunday School hour at 10am. For more info about Kids' Worship and Kids' Sunday School, you can email our Director of Children's Ministry, Jodi Marfell, at jodi.marfell@bethany-umc.org