



FAQs: Worship Design Change

Why are we making changes to our Worship Services?

In 2019, Woodlake UMC completed the Next Level Innovations (NLI) review and identified several areas for recommended improvements, including the worship experience. The congregation voted in favor of those recommendations in October 2019 (251 in favor, 13 against). Specific objectives to enhance the worship experience included:

- Evaluate worship styles and times in light of community needs
- Evaluate music and preaching content in light of community connection and needs
- Evaluate worship team, volunteer recruitment in light of community connection and needs
- Evaluate hospitality for services
- Assess the four worship services and styles for staff and resources alignment

[CLICK HERE](#) for the full Next Level Innovations Report.

Who decided what changes to make?

The NLI Report included a recommendation to create a team focused on redesigning the weekend worship experience and bringing a proposal to the Church Leadership Council (CLC). Following the NLI Report, the Church established the Woodlake Innovations Implementation Team, which included Innovation Teams for the 5 areas identified for improvement. Each Team is comprised of a combination of lay and staff people. In total, there have been 50 lay people and 9 staff involved in the teams. The Worship Design Team was established to focus on the worship innovation.

Who is on the Worship Design Team?

LAY: Nikki Karnes and Kevin Kinkead (Lay Co-Chairs), Greg Chapman, Taylor Collins, Bob Eastep, Trina Estes, Barbara Robinson and ET Thompson

STAFF: Pastor Gordon Pruitt (Staff Chair), Michael Berkley, Diana Foster, Jill Perrin and Darren Raley

How did we decide what changes should be made?

The Worship Design Team's recommendation is based on 17 months of prayer and study that included congregational input through surveys and focus group discussions, guidance from our Church Leadership Council, conversations with external worship experts, and a study of other large churches throughout the US, particularly those churches who are growing in membership. Learning what they do and how they do it, then aligning those concepts with feedback from

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our congregation to determine the most beneficial improvements we can make for the church and for the staff worship team impacted the recommendations. Your input was an important part of this process!

Our Church Leadership Council has been actively involved throughout this process and approved the Worship Design Team's recommendation on June 22, 2021.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a link to the most recent Woodlake UMC Survey results.

What is changing?

As we return to in-person worship, we will offer 2 services on Sunday morning – the 9:30am service which will be a modern style and the 11:00am service which will be a traditional style. The Saturday 5:30am and Sunday 8:00am services will not resume.

The 9:30 service will be a modern style with current worship music, led by a band and incorporating a few Methodist traditions like the Lord's Prayer. This service will engage people in worship, create community, and deepen our UMC heritage.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see a comparison of the Modern Order of Worship before March 2020 and the proposed sample.

The 11:00 service will be focused on the traditional style with a choir, hymns and congregational prayers which will provide a classic United Methodist worship experience.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see a comparison of the Traditional Order of Worship before March 2020 and the proposed sample.

Music styles will be unique to each service.

Why did you choose the 9:30 and 11:00 services and not the 5:30 and 8:00 services?

The Worship Design Team selected the 9:30 and 11:00 Sunday morning services based on the worship services chosen by a strong majority of the congregation (pre-Covid attendance). 77% of the congregation preferred these two services.

- Saturday 5:30 pm: 13%
- Sunday 8:00 am: 10%
- Sunday 9:30 am: 42%
- Sunday 11:00 am: 35%

In addition, we hope that the Gathering Space will provide a greater sense of community as those leaving the 9:30 service have an opportunity to mingle with those arriving for the 11:00 service.

How do two services, rather than four, improve worship?

Before Covid, each of the four worship services was unique and had different music, musicians, liturgists, and service elements, which added a lot of complexity for the staff. We have a great worship team that has been time- and focus-constrained because of needed preparation for four unique services. This reduction in the number of services provides opportunities for creativity and development of enhanced worship experiences.

A separate NLI Innovation was to work to create a healthy staff culture. The Saturday service required the Worship and NextGen Leadership and the preaching Pastor to work all weekend and not have a weekend day to spend with their families. Releasing the Saturday service helps to restore a healthy work/life balance for these individuals and enables them to better focus on making our worship services excellent.

We understand that these changes may be difficult for some. We are here to support you. We hope that you will continue to participate in our worship services and experience the changes in-person. We believe these changes will improve the overall worship experience for you and the congregation as a whole.

What does Modern mean?

A Modern worship experience makes the love of Jesus accessible by creating a welcoming space for people to comfortably engage in worship. This type of worship service connects us with God in a reverent, yet more informal, atmosphere and features popular worship music you may have heard on Christian radio stations. The songs are simple with easy-to-pick-up melodies with simple arrangements. This musical style utilizes a worship band and incorporates the use of technology with screens, stage lighting, and video.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see a comparison of the Modern Order of Worship before March 2020 and the proposed sample.

What does Traditional mean?

A Traditional worship experience provides a more formal feel and makes the love of Jesus accessible by providing a classic experience for those who love the heritage of the church. This service includes traditional hymns featuring a full choir and classical instruments. The music will be hymn-based, which engages our rich theological history and relays the timeless truths of the Gospel in song.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see a comparison of the Traditional Order of Worship before March 2020 and the proposed sample.

Will there be any staffing changes as a result from these changes?

The cessation of the two services does not materially impact the day-to-day workload associated with normal Church operations, internal and external ministries, or other services

(e.g., weddings, funerals, pastoral needs, etc.). The reduction in the number of services and the consolidation into two specific styles will enable the worship staff to focus their efforts on those two services, which will result in higher quality. If we reduce staff, we would continue to have the same time and resource constraints that we have today and be unable to make the desired improvements to worship and to our staff culture. We do not anticipate any staffing reductions as a result of the worship service changes.

What will happen with our online service? Will it be Modern or Traditional? Prerecorded or a taped version of the 9:30 service?

The Sunday 9:30 service (Modern) will be available online each week and available as it had been before March 2020. We also hope to offer the 11:00 traditional service online in the future.

When will the changes happen?

The changes will be implemented in the late summer/early fall of 2021.

Who do I contact if I have more questions or concerns that have not been addressed?

If you have any concerns or questions that have not been addressed, you can email worshipInnovation@woodlakeumc.org or reach out to a staff member. Staff email addresses can be found [here](#).