

Announcing New Worship Times!

Dear Family of Faith,

Happy (almost) Summer! As we move through the Easter season to Pentecost, I have good news to share with you.

This summer, beginning on the Day of Pentecost (Sunday, May 24) we will be changing the time of our Sunday worship together, and experimenting with a new format that will include:

- “Prayer and Praise” led by the Revive Band with Frank Jackson including a time of intercessory prayer, personal prayer requests, and joys and concerns.
- Expanded congregational singing of both traditional and new hymns.
- A return of “Passing the Peace.”
- A return of “Time With the Children.”
- Preludes and postludes with our outstanding organist, Cody Soska..

The Summer 2026 schedule will be:

9 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Coffee with the Pastor – Join Pastor Susan in the McMillan Room for coffee, conversation, prayer, and a space to breathe. Occasionally articles or Scripture will be discussed, but mostly we’ll be talking about how we’ve seen God at work in the world.

10 a.m. – “Prayer and Praise” (in the Sanctuary)

10:30 a.m. – Announcement Time (in the Sanctuary)

10:35 a.m. – Worship continues (in the Sanctuary)

11:30 a.m. – Fellowship (Galbraith/Fellowship Hall)

Frequently Asked Questions

I like worship just the way it is. Why are we changing it now?

Since I arrived at Bethel nearly 6 months ago, some common themes have emerged in my conversations with members, and from my own observations

- The early worship time of 9:30 is difficult for some older members or those with significant physical limitations to attend regularly.
- While some folks who attend the Classic service enjoy the format and style of Revive (and vice versa), the fact that the two services are at separate times forces folks to choose one or the other. Many people appreciate our occasional combined services which draw us together as a single, united congregation.
- The current Classic schedule (45 minutes) results in limited congregational singing, shorter prayers/liturgy, no passing of the peace, no children’s time, and limited time for Scripture reading or other liturgy elements (affirmations of faith, responsive readings, etc.) Not all elements have to be included in every service, but the current time element restricts what can be comfortably offered in worship.

- If Classic service runs long, it cuts the time available for Adult Education and fellowship. Both are practices that are important for the vitality of our congregation.

What about Sunday School?

Traditionally, the adult and children's Sunday schools do not meet in the summer months. This summer, Pastor Susan will be hosting a time for conversation from 9 a.m. – 9:45 a.m in the McMillan Room for anyone who would like to have a dedicated space to talk with the Pastor and with each other. Susan will occasionally bring in topics, Scripture passages, articles, questions, etc. – but the primary purpose is to have a time to get together and talk about God's presence in the world and in our lives. Topics will largely be driven by who shows up! It will be a wonderful way to get to know one another better.

Beginning on September 13 (Rally Day) Christian Education classes for adults and children will resume each Sunday from 9 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. in the usual classrooms. Occasionally, Pastor Susan will teach a class in addition to the regular offerings.

Is this new schedule going to be permanent?

No, not necessarily. The Session and Pastor will be holding "Talk Back" sessions throughout the summer during Fellowship Hour to hear how you are experiencing the new schedule, the new worship format, and what you'd like to see changed/improved. In October, the Session will consider all the input received from YOU, and determine how we will go forward.

What about choir/bells/organ/Revive Band?

When the choir/bells return in September, they will be part of the service. Cody and The Revive Band will be part of worship through the summer.

What will be the difference between Praise and Prayer and the Revive service?

The order for the first 30 minutes of worship beginning at 10:00 a.m. will be similar to the current Revive service. It will also include an expanded time of prayer such as requests that come in to the pastor, staff and leadership during the week, spoken prayer requests from the congregation, as well as special prayers as needed for our community, country and world.

In September, when the choir and bells resume their schedule, the service will become more blended.

I still have questions.

That's great! Reach out to me anytime – by phone, email, or stop by the office.

To end this very long letter to you –

One of the best books I've ever read on worship is "A Royal Waste of Time" by Marva Dawn. In it, she says:

In the midst of our post-Christian culture, the true churches...gather together in worship to speak our language, to read our narratives of God at work, to sing authentic hymns of the faith in all kinds of styles, to chant and pour out our prayers until we know the truth so well that we can go out to the world around us and invite that world to share this truth with us. In our worship, we are formed by biblical narratives that tell a different story from that of the surrounding culture...our worship must equip us for that mission with a deep vision of the extravagant splendor of God.

"A deep vision of the extravagant splendor of God," is, indeed, a wonderful thing to experience in worship. As we transition to a new vision of worshipping together, may we trust that God will be powerfully present with us in all that we sing, proclaim, pray, and share together.

Blessings and much love,
Pastor Susan