What is the proposal?
The proposal, brought by the Two Services Task Force and approved by the Board and Program Council, is to move to two Sunday morning services, at 9:00am and 11:00am:

- The 9:00am service will be a 45-minute long contemplative service, including a new Joys and Sorrows ritual, and more time for congregational meditation and singing.
- The 11:00am service will more closely resemble our current service, but with elements of the “Soulful Sunday” service that we proposed earlier in the process. These include using more music from outside our hymnals, projecting the announcements and order of service, and changing the order of some of the pieces of music.

The congregation is aiming for a start date of January 12, 2020.

Why now?
Last January, Oscar and other staff members started looking at our attendance trends over time. While we saw a small increase in attendance over 2017-18, our overall attendance has been consistent since 1961 (an average of 160 people per Sunday). Here’s what the UUA says about attendance numbers and capacity:

> Studies of congregational life show that when worship attendance reaches 75 to 80 percent of seating capacity, a congregation often experiences this plateau. Newcomers wonder if space even exists for them; when they do stay, others may leave, creating a revolving door phenomenon. Newcomers don’t know where they belong, and longtime members may feel they aren’t needed and thus stay home.¹

Our seating capacity in the sanctuary, as it has been set up since 1961, is 200 chairs. The stability in our median attendance numbers is consistent with the kind of plateau the literature describes.

This trend has continued in 2019. This fall, our median Sunday morning attendance has been 164, placing us at the top of what we can reasonably support with our space. If the congregation is to grow, then it is time to add capacity – either by adding services or space. Because a capital campaign to grow the Sanctuary will take several years, we decided to expand capacity by adding a second service as a first step.

Didn’t we do this before?
Yes, a committee initially proposed adding a second service in 1994, but it was not implemented until 1997. The two-service model lasted several years, before the congregation moved back to a

¹ https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/adding-service/reasons
single service. Based on lessons learned from that experience, we have identified at least two major pieces that we are doing differently.

When the second service was added in the 90s, it was done at the discretion of the interim ministers between Reverends Stephen and Hudson, without much direct congregational input. This time we have spent nearly a year on this proposal, including:

- At least eight open meetings or town halls
- A congregational survey that over half the congregation participated in, and
- Two month-long structured times for feedback.

This engagement with the congregation has shaped the new proposal for two services.

In the late 1990s, the primary service was at 11:00am, with a second service added at 9:00am. There was little incentive for members who had gone to church at 11:00am for ten or more years to switch. When Rev. Hudson eventually recommended reconsolidating to a single service, he recommended doing so at a 10:00am time as a temporary measure. The prevailing thought at the time was that this compromise would hold until the congregation revisited the idea of two services, at which point there would be less embedded preference for one time slot over the other.

Second, in addition to changing the times for both services, we are building them to be distinct experiences – based directly on the congregation’s feedback. If your spiritual practice is deeply meditative, you may want to try the 9:00am service. If you want to sing and clap along to guest musicians and more raucous singing, the 11:00am service is available. And if you like both, you are welcome to participate in both options.

**What does this cost?**

Less than we expected. A year ago, the congregation expanded its staff support for the music program, adding hours to the Music Director position and adding the Choir Director role. These changes were reflected in the 2019 budget, and were made in anticipation of a possible proposal to add a second service.

Additional budget impacts of having two services are reflected in slightly increased costs for guest speakers, guest musicians, and childcare. In total, the proposal for two services represents approximately $6,000 of the increase in the 2020 budget.

**I’m worried that this will split the congregation, that I won’t get to see my friends every week.**

Again, from the UUA:

> When more than one service is held, things do change. Sometimes members’ best friends (or their children’s best friends) end up going to another service. Sometimes when more people come to a service, longer-term members feel they don’t know anyone anymore. The losses are real, and it is best if the
congregation talks openly and honestly about them. This discussion needs to take place in an atmosphere where people can truly communicate their concerns. Immediately addressing the concerns and seeking quick solutions is tempting, but it can result in the need for long-term remedial work.

People’s concerns should not be overestimated, and many of them can be overcome. Often the “we know everyone here” feeling is more a sense of recognizing the faces rather than truly being one big, happy congregation where everyone knows everyone’s name. Talking about this reality can help alleviate concerns. Also, friends and families can check with one another about the services they will each attend, and they can plan to attend the same one to mitigate the sense of loss. The congregation can (and should) plan several all-congregation social events, where people from the various services can interact with one another. It may be possible to hold a joint social time between services, if parking space and timing allow. Communication must be heightened; with more than one service, things need to be said more than once, and in a variety of ways. Written communication may become paramount.²

Part of our strategy to mitigate this loss is having a single ‘middle hour’ social time in between the two services. This will operate as a shared coffee hour, in which attendees from the first service can linger and socialize with those coming to the second service. Because it is also the time when RE classes will need to be set up, staff members will not be able to support committee meetings during middle hour; however, this allows more opportunity for members to socialize informally with each other.

**What will happen with Religious Education (RE)?**

Based on feedback from our parents and the RE committee, our primary religious education programming will move to the 11:00am service, and retain its current structure regarding classrooms, curricula, and volunteers.

During the 9:00am service, the committee and RGL Director are planning to start a program called Chalice Connections. Here is Chelsea’s description of that program:

Chalice Connections is a focus on building relationships. Adults from our congregation will come and share something which is of interest to them and which also ties in with our UU principles and sources. Children then do an activity and read stories about the topic. For example: Chelsea does nature photography and will then talk about how this relates to our 7th principle: We believe in the interconnected web of life. Students read a book about nature and then go outside and get to take photos with Chelsea’s camera. Supported by one volunteer assistant per week until the group gets to be larger than an average of approximately 7 students and then we would need additional volunteers.

**What will happen to Third Thursday?**

Third Thursday will remain unchanged.

² [https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/adding-service/common-concerns](https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/adding-service/common-concerns)
What will happen to Sunday committee meetings?
As mentioned above, one of the challenges of having a joint ‘middle hour’ between the two services is that, during this time, the volunteer teachers need to set up their classrooms for the 11:00am programming. Committees will be able to meet on Sunday, following the 11:00am service.

How will we handle parking?
Given our proximity to Piux X High School, the number of parking spots needed on Sunday morning is not a limiting factor for us. The facilities cluster and staff will observe the first few months of this shift to determine if we need to add additional signage or procedures for the transitional time as folks leave after the 9:00am service and arrive for the 11:00am service.

What will happen to committees involved on Sunday morning (i.e., worship associates, ushers, etc.)?
Each committee or group of volunteers that is involved on Sunday morning should be, at this point, having conversations about how they are adjusting and that their needs are with this proposal. I (Oscar) am spending much of November and December visiting meetings, helping groups to think through these changes and what they need to function well. If you are on a committee and are worried about how you will function after January 12, please reach out! We have a full task force, program council, and myself ready to support you.

What other changes might I see?
One of the exciting possibilities in the coming months is that we will regain some flexibility in how we set up the sanctuary on Sunday morning. Currently, it is important that we have as many chairs as possible set up every Sunday morning at 10:00am. If we assume that we only need 150 chairs at the 9:00am and 11:00am services, it allows us to be more flexible is alternate arrangements, a potential dedicated children’s area, or other possibilities.

I am concerned that ___________ will not work the way we hope.
So am I! One of the joys in being a part of a covenantal community is that perfection is not the goal. Over the next few months, there will almost certainly be a few things that happen in unexpected ways, and there will be challenges that we have not thought of. This is also the case in any four month period of church life, regardless of whether major changes are underway or not!

The staff, Board, and Program Council will all be looking for those areas, and we will be evaluating what works and what doesn’t as we go along. If it becomes clear that our plan for [area of programming X] isn’t working, then we will change the plan. At the end of a year, we’ll look more formally at the transition to affirm whether it was a positive more for the congregation.