

# Temporary Service Patterns for the next few weeks at St Andrew's

## A paper for PCC for Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May

The last couple of weeks, we have been virtually full at St Andrew's – last Sunday we had 46 adults and some had to stand outside until the children went out. The next 2 Sundays (16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May) we have 2 evening 'DEEPER specials' (6-7pm) for the Thy Kingdom Come Sundays, but now we face the question of what we do beyond that when more want to come back? Having talked to quite a few people, many will soon be 3 weeks past their 2<sup>nd</sup> jab and will be ready to return again, and I'm keen to encourage people to return to in-person worship, whilst still providing online provision for those who don't feel ready.

Until at least 21<sup>st</sup> June we are still restricted to 2m (1m+) social distancing. After that, the suggestion is that social distancing will probably no longer be a requirement, but we may still have to wear masks, may or may not be allowed to sing, and may also be required to have to manage 'pinch points' i.e. people coming in and out, ideally have one ways systems (not easy with St Andrew's). On top of this, I suspect that many will be quite anxious about gathering in large congregations in church again and this will take some time to adjust too – will 2 smaller congregations be better than one larger one? And who knows what the Autumn months will bring and whether this will really be the end!

We are committed to continue an online presence of some form. Currently we record the traditional service at the midweek noon service on a Thursday and are beginning to record the contemporary pre-recorded service on a Friday late afternoon together – although this is extremely demanding and not sustainable long term. We continue to explore live streaming which pushes us to the limits of broadband capacity and is also more complicated to integrate with Easy worship for the contemporary service. An alternative in the future if we can't live-stream would be to record the Sunday service in the morning and then make that available as soon as we can on the Sunday afternoon.

### So where do we go from here?

Before the pandemic we were already in discussions about what to do with the 10:45 service which was already at close to maximum capacity, and I think what we have in the next few weeks (months?) is actually a gift of an opportunity to experiment with some different formats which might help this issue in the longer term.

I think there is still too much uncertainty to be thinking that after June 21<sup>st</sup> we go back to a long term pattern (whether that is old or new) and I think we need to see this next season as a continued **'transition' period** and take the pressure off us feeling we need to work out a long term solution by June 21<sup>st</sup>!

So, with the ethos of an **'experimental transition period'** I would like us to take some time at PCC to pray and reflect on what pattern we might put in for the next few weeks/months. This might be until the end of July/August or might go on into the Autumn term - we just cannot predict.

### Some Principles to be guided by

- We want to be led by God and not our own ideas, our own preferences or our past history.
- We want to ensure safety and minimise any continued risk, and make it as easy as possible for those who are most anxious to return (I suspect that even when social distancing is no longer required, many will feel anxious about returning to a full church).
- We want to encourage people to return, reconnect and come back to being united in worship together.
- We want to get back to intergenerational worship (worship with our children and youth) which we have missed in recent months.
- We want to put in place a pattern which will give us the chance to 'experiment' for the long term – to see how people respond and what God does – rather than things which might just work for this summer.
- We want to shift back to making in-person the priority, rather than online as the majority return and access in person not online services.
- We want to maintain an online presence, but one that is sustainable for the long-term (producing 3 online services each week is not sustainable) and one which does not limit flexibility and openness to the Spirit in our in-person worship.
- We want to continue to explore how a pattern might integrate the new that God has been leading us in – especially Early Birds
- We need to move towards a pattern which fits in with the whole team and produces a variety of services across that team.

In the light of the principles above, I'd like us to discuss and reflect on some specific options for the coming weeks (which we are still discerning whether we are able to resource).

In addition to the options below I propose that we...

- Continue with the Early Birds Service (9am on Sundays) for young families in person or on ZOOM.... Probably continued weekly for now.
- Continue for now with the midweek service on Thursdays which where possible we can record and make available on Sundays. But maybe change the time to earlier?
- All Saints will be continuing with the single 10am 'blended' communion service into the Autumn at least which will be live-streamed or recorded and uploaded in the afternoon.

### Some options:

- 1) Put a repeated contemporary service on, on a Sunday – 2 sittings (9am and 11am?) ... We could even record the first and put that out for the online contemporary service by 11am?
- 2) Put on a 9am Service which is a more reflective & quieter 'blended' service (mix of hymns and contemporary with a bit of liturgy, but the same preach, communion every other week) in addition to the current contemporary service (at 11am)?
- 3) Put a morning contemporary service on at 10:30am and a 6pm? Evening service on (to match the youth times?)... as an experiment to see who comes and how this might develop. This might particularly work for those who will be visiting friends/family on Sundays in the coming weeks.
- 4) Continue with one Sunday service and rotate who is allowed to come.
- 5) Have outside church and get a marquee in?
- 6) Other?

### Online Services

We cannot sustain extra in-person services and pre-recorded services long term, so need to have a tipping point soon where we reduce the pre-recorded/online input to make it manageable for everyone. That timing of that seems appropriate to be when social distancing is lifted which is when we hope more will watch in person than online.

### Proposal:

- To continue to provide a pre-recorded contemporary service that goes out Sunday morning, until June 21<sup>st</sup> (or when social distancing ceases) or until we can livestream. After this, we agree to either livestream if we can, or record the service and then upload it as soon as we can after the service for those at home to watch (but this would not be available on a Sunday morning if it was uploading the 10:30 service).
- That we stop recording the Thursday service after June 21<sup>st</sup> and reduce our online provision across the team to a blended 10am at All Saints and a contemporary service from St Andrew's. This then reduces the set up and resourcing needed for the midweek service – could potentially do it from books/paper and make it a simpler service.

Please do pray about these things before PCC and come prepared to share your thoughts and ideas and we'll take an individual poll of these options after breakout group discussions.

Dave Bruce  
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