

New Sunday Service Pattern launching soon

From the Feast of Pentecost, which celebrates the birth of the church, on 9 June, our new Sunday service pattern will be as follows and as detailed in the Table at the end of this note.

A 9am Holy Communion service. This service will last about 1 hour, and include (a minimum) 3 hymns and a sermon. It is hoped this service, accompanied by an organist, will provide a space for a more traditional expression of worship to flourish, including space for our choir to grow and develop.

A 10:45am Morning Worship service [the name may change], with a Holy Communion once a month. This service will also last around 60 minutes, and use technology to assist with the delivery of a more contemporary style service which will include, we hope and for example, high quality modern music and different ways of engaging with our Anglican tradition of Reason, Scripture, and Tradition. It is hoped this service will provide a space for a more contemporary expression of worship to flourish, including the formation of a music group in due course.

A 4pm afternoon service. This service “slot” will initially include a mix of traditional and contemporary styles. The latter being a mix of a young person spiritual community and Messy Church. The former being, initially, a traditional [Book of Common Prayer, BCP] evening prayer and contemplative communion services. It will intentionally be a more experimental space for developing spiritual communities for today, with the understanding that it may cease to exist unless it helps grow spiritual communities in the future.

There are, at least, two things which should be made clear about our new service pattern from the beginning. First, both our main morning services, at 9am and 10:45am, are intended to be spaces where all ages and people are welcome. The 10:45am service is not an exclusively young person service, just as the 9am service is not exclusively an older persons service. We hope the 10:45am will attract and give an opportunity to people for whom church is less familiar and perhaps seen as less relevant. While at the same time be a service that our regular community, and new members, will deeply value also. The same ethos applies to our 9am service.

Second, our main act of hospitality, that is tea, coffee, and biscuits, (initially in the parish hall) will be offered between the 9am and 10:45am services in order to give an opportunity for people from the different worshipping communities to meet; hence it will begin at about 10:05 and end around 11:00am.

You might ask why an earth are we doing this?

It's a good question and one we have sought to answer in detail elsewhere, as well as providing pastoral support to the worshipping community at this time of significant change. The very short answer is – we are doing this because our Sunday attendance has been in significant decline over the last 10 years, we are not connecting with about 80% of the demographic of the communities we serve, making our Sunday worship more accessible to younger people is shown to be important in developing a healthy church community, and other local and national service patterns suggest the pattern we are moving too will help develop a healthy church community.

That is we are making a change to our Sunday service pattern because we believe the above data points us in this direction. We are also making these changes because we believe it will better

enable us to participate in God’s mission as understood through the five marks of mission in future years.

These five marks of mission are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise, and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Is it the right thing for us to do?

The honest answer is we can’t say with 100% confidence it is. We can, however, say that we are making a sincere attempt to follow Jesus, and as Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us in his book “The Cost of Discipleship” - following Jesus means we will regularly be dragged from our relative security into a life of absolute insecurity (which is paradoxically a life of absolute security and safety in Christ), and this absolute insecurity is, in an important sense, void of all content.

This alone may give us great confidence for the future. For wherever this particular decision takes us - and we will review and respond appropriately in the months ahead to it, we can know that Christ is with us.

Please consider this the first, of many no doubt, personal invitations to share and get involved in our new service pattern so that we may better participate in what our Lord is already doing in this place, among us, and through us to the praise and Glory of our Lord.

With my love and prayers,

Stefan, Rector

Table 1: St James’ new Sunday Service Pattern post 9 June 2019

	1st Sunday	2nd Sunday	3rd Sunday	4th Sunday	5th Sunday
9:00am	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
10:45am	Morning Worship	Morning Worship with Holy Communion	Morning Worship	Morning Worship	Morning Worship
4:00pm	Young Person Service	Evening Prayer BCP	Messy Church (Parish Hall)	Contemplative Communion	Taizé Service