

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43.19)*

## **Pattern of Worship from 1st January 2022**

Dear Friends

I am writing to explain to you the pattern of worship that will apply to both our churches from the beginning of next year.

The pandemic has hit us hard as individuals and as church communities. Too many of our number have died, or their health has deteriorated faster than anyone would wish. Our church communities are smaller and weaker than they were 18 months ago. The ministerial resources we have available to us to lead worship are growing older and in some cases more fragile.

At the same time, All Saints and St Godwald's have grown closer together, in part through our online worship and in part by worshipping together in person in our respective churches. The strength to withstand the challenges of this age, and the wisdom to discover this strength together, are God-given spiritual gifts that will help see us through to happier times ahead.

The pattern of worship that has emerged for 2022 has echoes of our previous worship patterns but is also quite distinctive. I hope you will understand the reasoning for it, even if you don't agree with all the outcomes.

For **All Saints**, the main change is that on the first Sunday of the month – as has been the pattern for some months - there will be no main Sunday morning service on the first Sunday. Instead, St Joseph's are being given the opportunity to worship in church and hall from 9am-3.30pm. This will help their church family to thrive in what continue to be challenging circumstances for the south Indian community throughout the Midlands. Our generosity gives them strength and hope. Thank you for continuing to provide them hospitality.

At **St Godwald's**, the decision, taken some months ago, to integrate the 9am and 10.30am congregations continues. However, we are not going to continue with the 9.45am time for a joint service. Instead, the old timings will reappear, albeit with fewer services overall and a different pattern to which we all need to adjust.

On two Sundays a month, choir members from one church will rehearse and join the choir of the other church. On the first Sunday of the month, All Saints choir and their organist Julian, will come to St Godwald's for a **joint** service of Holy Communion. On the third Sunday of the month, members of St Godwald's choir will join All Saints for their service.

Here is a summary of the new pattern, week by week:

**1st Sunday in month:**

8.00am Holy Communion at All Saints'.

9.00am Morning Prayer at St. Godwald's.

10.30am Joint Service of Holy Communion CW with All Saints at St. Godwald's.

**2nd Sunday in month:**

10.30am Family Worship at St. Godwald's.

10.30am Holy Communion CW at All Saints'.

**3rd Sunday in month:**

8.00am Holy Communion at All Saints.

10.30am Holy Communion CW at St Godwald's.

10.30am Morning Worship at All Saints.

**4th Sunday in month:**

9.00am Holy Communion BCP at St. Godwald's

10.30am Holy Communion CW at All Saints'.

**5th Sunday in month:**

10.00am Team Service in various churches.

In this pattern I have tried to ensure that the eucharistic traditions of both churches are sustained whilst giving space for less formal worship too. The St Godwald's pattern ensures that the distinct traditions of the old 9am and 10.30am congregations are preserved as well. Finally, the worship is balanced in such a way that it is possible on occasion for me, as the minister responsible for our Readers and ALMs, to worship under their leadership.

In addition to these services, evening services will continue on zoom (and sometimes in church), Wednesday morning services continue at St Godwald's (10am – all welcome!) and new child and family focused services will be developed for other times in the week.

Finally, a word about those new forms of child and family focused worship.

I recognise change is difficult and that many of you look to the church for continuity, stability and familiarity. My responsibility is to somehow meet that need whilst at the same time reach out afresh to every new generation. It is impossible to do that without making adjustments, for otherwise there are unlimited demands on already very stretched ministerial and support resources.

How to develop new forms of worship that appeal to new generations of believers is a challenge that all churches face. Two truths are emerging for me: (1) that Sunday morning is no longer the time in the week when we should expect new generations of believers to be available for church, and (2) developing worship styles that simultaneously meet the needs of traditional and new believers is simply seeking the impossible.

As a result, Sunday morning worship will, in the main, remain fairly traditional. However, new worship initiatives at other times will begin to emerge and I invite you to welcome and support them.

There are occasions when modern worship styles and music don't always sit easily with me. As I search inwardly for the grace to welcome innovation, I try to remember that once I was the youthful voice that needed to see the presence of other young people in the church for me to feel that I had a place here too. My place was assured only because of visionary adults prepared to welcome young people by doing things differently. We need to be those visionary adults for the next generation.

Thank you for reading this far! None of this is easy; but we step forwards in faith knowing that God can do amazing things with all our attempts to spread his Word through love, prayer and worship.

As always, be assured of my love and prayers:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Ford', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

David Ford, Rector

01527 873831

revdavidford@googlemail.com