

# Renewing Our Worship

Worship Patterns at St Joseph's  
A report from the DCC January 2009



## The Story so Far....

You may know that the DCC have been discussing our current worship patterns for a number of months. As a DCC coporately, in the action group who oversee our services, and in particular in a number of one-to-one conversations, we have sought to evaluate the worship life of the church, and to ask one key question. **In what ways do our current service patterns both facilitate and perhaps hinder the ministry and mission of St Jo's?**

At the November 2008 meeting we discussed a long discussion paper (available on the website [www.saintjosephs.co.uk](http://www.saintjosephs.co.uk) or on paper by request) which made four observations:

- (1) We rejoice that there has been numerical growth at the 10:30 service over recent years. However statistics and experience suggest that it is unlikely this will continue as the congregation is over 80% full.
- (2) We are committed to having weekly Sunday services expressing a range of worship styles, from more "traditional" and "established" patterns to more "informal" and "contemporary" models. This may happen best in thriving but different services on a Sunday morning.
- (3) Patterns of Sunday worship are changing across the UK, and we may need to respond to this.
- (4) We need to create room for growth in our worship life for "fresh expressions" of church.

After our discussions in November the DCC were charged to continue talking to different people in the church, and to exercise their task to be representative of the church as a whole.

## A challenge laid down and a decision made...

Many of us were at the Archdeacon's "Going for Growth" visit in early January 2009. Alongside great encouragement over what is going on at St Jo's, Bob Jackson left us with a stark challenge in regard to the 10:30 service. One option was to buy a large signboard outside saying "Church Full, Go to the Methodists..." The other option was to find ways to re-order our worship pattern which would lead to sustained growth amongst different congregations.

Thus you can imagine at the DCC meeting seven days later our mind was focussed on the need to respond to this challenge! As a group we talked about many different options, reflected on the experience of other churches, and sought to balance the needs of our present worshippers in different congregations alongside those who don't yet worship with us but might in the future. Whilst – of course – trying to honour God at the same time!

After much discussion I'm delighted that we reached a *unanimous decision* to re-order our worship pattern for a trial six months. This will begin in May 2009, and will be as follows:

Week	09:00 Service	10:30 service	6:30 Service	Midweek Service
<b>First Sunday</b>	Holy Communion with a more traditional style	Morning Service with a more contemporary style (+ Kids Church)	Youth Congregation (aimed at 10s – 15s)	
<b>Second Sunday</b>	Morning Service with a more traditional style	Holy Communion with a more contemporary style (+ Kids Church)	Prayer Focus – an evening service where all from St Jo's can come to worship and pray	Midweek Wednesday Holy Communion (2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday)
<b>Third Sunday</b>	Holy Communion with a more traditional style	Morning Service with a more contemporary style (+ Kids Church)	Presence – an evening service with a more contemporary style	
<b>Fourth Sunday</b>	Morning Service with a more traditional style	Morning Service with a more contemporary style (+ Kids Church)	Holy Communion – an evening service with a more traditional style	Midweek Wednesday Holy Communion (4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday)
<b>Fifth Sunday</b>	Holy Communion with a more traditional style	Morning Service with a more contemporary style (+ Kids Church)	Service of Prayer & Remembrance?	

## Unpacking the new patterns....

As we met as a DCC we were aware that making changes to longstanding worship patterns is never easy! Seeking to balance the four observations as above requires understanding, grace, bold faith and compromise.

Let me make some observations as we seek to move forward together:

- **We continue our commitment to an earlier-morning Sunday morning service with a more traditional style.** Although the 8am *fortnightly* service of BCP Holy Communion will no longer take place, we are now going to have a *weekly* traditional service at 9am. Thus we have added two 9am services a month with a more structured and liturgical feel alongside the fortnightly 9am Holy Communion which is clearly an important element to people's worship pattern.
- **We recognise the need to create room for the 10:30 service to grow.** We are aware of the enormous grace a number of the 10:30 congregation demonstrate at present, attending a style of service which seeks to hold together a contemporary / child-friendly feel alongside the desire for something more traditional. Our hope is that those seeking something more structured and liturgical will worship at the 9am congregation. This will then create room for growth both at the 9am service and the 10:30 congregation, as has been the case at St Philip's Bradmore.
- **We maintain a weekly act of evening worship, whilst recognising variety and diversity.** This new pattern seeks to sustain and encourage evening worship, but at the same time recognising that current worship patterns in the church and across the UK are declining at 6:30pm. We continue the monthly evening Holy Communion on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, which was better attended than other services and means there is a service of Holy Communion every week at St Jo's. The "Prayer Focus" will seek to call all in the church together to pray, particularly for those committed to praying for the different action groups. Presence will continue, albeit with the need for new focus and a team to continue it. And – very importantly – there will be space for a monthly youth congregation. We are incredibly blessed to have regular contact with about fifty young people aged 10-15 or so. We rightly put enormous energy into the NOISE for 0s-11s, but we want to create a monthly youth event which is even better, and where young people can explore for themselves how to be and do church in their own generation.

## What happens next?

We are proposing these new structures begin in May 2009. Thus the AGM Sunday – 26<sup>th</sup> April 2009 – will be the last Sunday in our present patterns and rotas, and the new patterns beginning on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2009. It goes without saying that these patterns will be under regular review, with formal opportunities to review after three months and then again after six months. It will be the task of the DCC to evaluate all comments and feedback before deciding a more long-term way ahead.

In the meantime there are many practical considerations to be thought through. The "Deepening Prayer and Worship" group – led ably by Pam Teece and Martin Fox – will be thinking through a number of these, along with me, the wardens, and all those involved currently in leading and preaching at St Jo's. These issues include:

- increasing the pool of people to be involved in welcome, reading, prayers, music, Communion administration, stewards, coffee etc in all of the new services....
- how to foster community and points of mutual contact between the 9am and 10:30 congregations, and to what extent people need to commit themselves to one or other of the new morning congregations....
- how to develop a structure and liturgy for worship for the more traditional services, and to what extent the teaching and preaching programme is the same across the services...
- how to increase ownership and participation in the more varied structures of evening worship...
- how to effectively monitor feedback and make subsequent changes to the new patterns...
- how to publicise these new patterns, which after all are part of a strategy for growth at St Jo's...

## What can I do?

1. **Pray....** The DCC have sought to make these proposals as carefully and prayerfully as we can. We invite you to pray with us and for us. Pray for all those who are part of the church. And all those who – when these services grow and bear fruit – will be part of the worshipping life of the church in the future.
2. **Look out...** We want to be communicating as often and as well as we can. The "Deepening Prayer and Worship" group will be issuing regular news about how we make this transition really well into the new structures. In particular this will give everyone an opportunity to commit to serving and assisting in each of the services in some way. If we are really serious about growing the church and the different services at St Jo's, this is a wonderful opportunity for all to be involved.
3. **Speak up...** Making changes to worship patterns is never easy! If you are unsure of the proposed changes, or would like to speak to someone further, then please speak to someone on the leadership of the Church. The list of DCC members is on the noticeboard in the church lobby. In particular Pam Teece and Martin Fox oversee the "Deepening Prayer & Worship" Action Group. Or do please come and speak to me or one of the wardens.