



## Update from the PCC – October 2017 Changes to the pattern of morning services

The PCC have now had chance to digest all the responses from the 6-months-on review of our new pattern of Sunday services. Thank you to everyone who filled in one of the questionnaires. Overall, over 75% people wanted us to continue with the pattern.

**The PCC have decided to continue with the 9am and 10.30am services, but know that we must do more as a congregation to support the musicians and tech teams who have felt the practical impact of these changes the most.**

Here are some of the comments people made:

### ***I appreciate the 9am service because ...***

“The smaller size – easier to talk to people afterwards”  
 “Quieter and more reflective. When dealing with major life crises this service is an easier option.”  
 “Rediscovering some of the older hymns”  
 “Meeting the 10.30 congregation”  
 “Less busy, more personal. Easier to listen to sermon”  
 “I like the fact that you can go to either service in the same place, depending on your inclination that day, and that people from the two services interact”



### ***I appreciate the new 10.30am service because ...***

“The extended time of worship”  
 “Love the way the children are respected and incorporated into the worship. Excellent, such a blessing, I praise God every time I think of it. It's precious.”

“More time and perhaps there is more freedom to follow up the leading of the Holy Spirit”

“Mix of ages and feeling of community”

“The mingling over coffee from 10am is excellent as it enables those who have changed services to meet their friends who have not”

“The flow of the service is generally much better than it was”

### ***I miss from the old pattern of services ...***

“Kneeling to take communion (at the old 8.30am service)”

“The opportunity to attend a 10.30am service on Superstars Sundays”

“Many of our age group have moved to the other service”

### ***Suggestions for improvements ...***

“More time between the services”

“More corporate silence built in to the 9am service – to help us ponder on the word given and allow one's heart to respond. Prayer ministry at all services”

“Don't have a question every week at the 10.30am service”

“The 9am service is so well organised, so well prepared and peaceful. Sincerely nothing needs changing”

### ***And finally ...***

“Thank you everyone who made the new arrangements possible. No doubt things will continue to evolve. It'd be good to remember that it's God's church, not ours”  
 “Just a big thank you to all behind the scenes people”

### ***What have been the advantages of the new pattern?***

When we launched the new pattern of services, we had a number of hopes for what would happen. Our review reflected on those aims:

#### ***Hope 1: That the more traditional service would become more sustainable***

Attendance at the new 9am service is more than triple what it was at the old 8.30am service, with a much wider age range. This is good, because there will be more people to care for older members when they become more dependent on others. This new service also has much more momentum to it – meaning that we have seen some people join this congregation who weren't previously worshipping with us at all.

#### ***Hope 2: That the 10.30am service would have more space to welcome newcomers***

The new 10.30am service typically has 30 fewer adults attending than in the same period last year. Research shows that when a church building feels 80% full, the congregation stops growing. Before we made the changes, the 10.30am service often felt full – but now we have made room for more people to begin coming.

**Hope 3: that the new service pattern would be less dependent on clergy**

We have fewer clergy serving regularly in St James' by the Park in comparison to a few years ago. Our new pattern is indeed less dependent overall on clergy (meaning they can give more time to other parts of their roles). It also means there is more room for other members of the congregation to be involved.

**Hope 4: that the new pattern would help ease some of the pressures on the old 10.30am service**

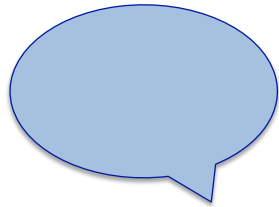
In trying to be all things to all people, the old 10.30am service was struggling to please anyone! In general, families are appreciating the warmth of welcome given to children at the new 10.30am service – and other people are appreciating the quietness of the 9am service. No service pattern is going to be ideal for everyone – but that's ok, because part of the point of church is that it's one of God's ways of teaching us how to love people from different backgrounds.

**Hope 5: that having both congregations on one site with a shared coffee time would give us a greater sense of being one church family**

The shared coffee time has given people chance to catch up with old friends who now go to the 'other' service – and it has helped those from the old 8.30am congregation feel part of the wider church family. It's had the added bonus that the 10.30am service now starts with more of a sense of expectancy and fellowship, which has been a real plus.

**What about the worship musicians and tech teams?**

There was a separate questionnaire to gather comments from those involved in helping put on the services. Most of the teams (refreshments, prayer ministry, service leaders, welcomers, junior church) were overwhelmingly in favour of continuing with this pattern. But the worship musicians and tech teams weren't convinced. Here are some of their comments:



"I love serving in any capacity; however, serving for 5 hours on a Sunday (my day of rest) is becoming less rewarding and more of a chore"

"The 8am set-up is a challenge even with the midweek practice. It can feel rushed and stressful when the 9am congregation begin to come in."

"Expecting musicians and sound guys to arrive at 8am (or before) and stay until 12.30pm (or later) is a big ask"

"The breakfast works well and it would be really good if all band members including tech crew could invest in this time together in order to grow pastorally and encourage team building including much needed banter"

"I'm quite tired for the rest of the day when I've been playing. Early starts, etc. Someone else to organise band breakfasts would be nice ☺"

The PCC think there's more we can do as a whole congregation to help support and encourage our worship musicians and tech teams – so that Sunday mornings becomes more manageable for them.

- Could you make a point of encouraging them and thanking them, week by week?
- Could you volunteer to help (eg with the computer screens) – the more volunteers there are, the more bearable the load is
- Could you volunteer to prepare breakfast for the musicians and tech teams (9am in the Parish Hall) once every month or two?

**Why isn't there a 10.30am service on Superstars Sundays?**

On those 9 Sundays a year where so many people are involved at Superstars (including clergy), we don't feel able to resource a good 10.30am service. Part of turning our church community inside out means that we have to sacrifice some things that would suit us, in order to reach out to others. On average, Superstars attracts well over double the number of children each month than we get at 10.30am services. The survey suggested that of the adults without children, most go to the 9am service instead on those Sundays; some go to another church or to New Song Café in the evening; an equal number don't go to church anywhere.

**Conclusion**

No pattern of services is going to suit everyone. What we had in the past certainly wasn't working very well. We are very grateful to God that overall the switch to the new pattern has gone smoothly – a real answer to prayer. Many were sceptical in advance, but have been pleasantly surprised. We would like to thank everyone who has worked hard to make this change happen. We would also like to honour the former 8.30am congregation, many of whom had worshipped at St John's for decades, and have graciously made the transition up to St James' by the Park.

The PCC are confident that with some further work by the whole congregation, the new pattern can be positive for the worship musicians and tech teams as well.