

# Distant but United

## St Martin's Parish Church



August, 2020

It's good to write to you again after a welcome summer break. I think everyone has needed a rest, and a change of pace can do us such good.

At church, we have had to take a long break from many of the traditional aspects of worship: singing, fellowship, our children's groups, sharing the peace... the list goes on and on. Much of this has not been at all welcome, and I think we have all felt a profound sense of loss.

These last months have also been a time when we as a Church Council and leadership team have been able to pause and reflect, and make plans for the future. Two of our guiding principles have been, '*how do we strengthen the unity of our church family*' and '*how do we reach the fullest breadth of our community with the Good News of God's love*'.

On the issue of unity, we noticed over the last months (and during the lockdown) that relationships have been growing within our church family across the two Sunday congregations. For many years it seems that the '8.15ers' and the '10.30ers' just hadn't had much opportunity to get to know each other, despite worshipping at the same church.

This was one of the main reasons why the Church Council has decided to keep the main morning Sunday service at 9.30am, as it has been for July and August, and to reintroduce the early morning service at 8am.

The plan is that (in time) we will build opportunities for prayer and fellowship between the morning services now that they're closer together, and so deepen the bonds within our own church family. But this is not the only reason.

We also want to reach deeper into the parish community around us.

The demographics of St Martin are changing, and as well as our well-established population, there are an increasing number of younger families moving back into the parish. Through S'Marteenies and our strong links with the school, we are building relationships with these families, and in time we hope to be able to welcome them into our worshipping life as well.

Research from the Church of England (and my own experience) suggests that an earlier start time to services can be an encouragement to younger families. As well as wanting to make the most of children's energy levels, parents often have a number of competing demands on their Sundays, and so are careful about how they use their time. Church growth is a 'long-game', but we feel this is one important piece of the puzzle.

As a further act of mission, we also wanted to establish a time of worship that reflected the growth in quiet contemplation and prayer that seems to have matured during this pandemic. The new monthly evening service at 7.30pm will offer a space for peace, meditation, and wholeness, particularly for those who need a respite from the stresses of weekday life.

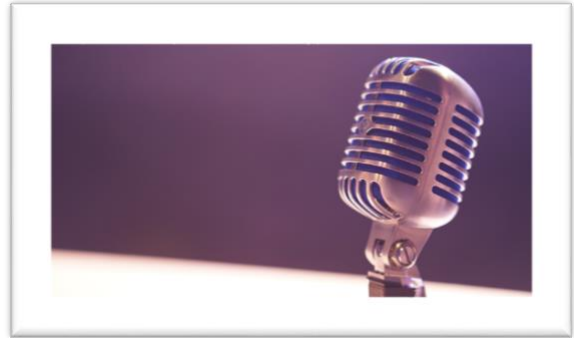
Thank you for taking the time to listen - and please do speak to the Rector if you have any questions. We hope that you can now see some of the broader vision of our mission, as we work to share God's love in St Martin.

Rev Jonny

## Worship from Home

Even as our patterns of worship begin to resume at church, we completely understand that not everyone is willing or able to return. For the time-being, we will continue to send out a weekly worship sheet by post or email.

The podcasts have been widely appreciated during the Lockdown, however, we feel the time is right for these now to come to an end. In the meantime, we are exploring options for recording the services in church, so they can be shared at home. Watch this space!

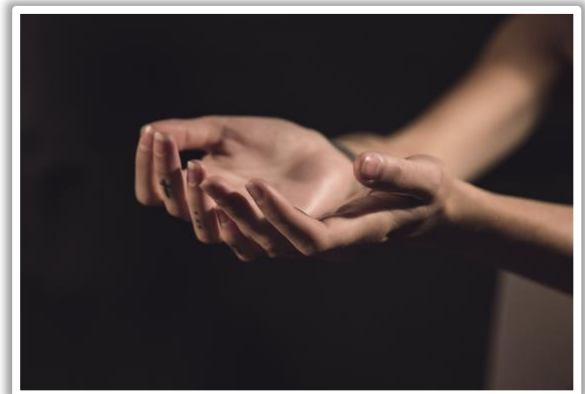


## Healing Service

Our weekly Wednesday Healing Service will resume from the 2<sup>nd</sup> September at 10.30am.

This group has been growing in strength and depth over the last year, and those who come value the sense of peace, fellowship and wholeness which it cultivates. If you haven't come before, you may appreciate exploring this opportunity to worship and share together as we pray for ourselves, one another, and the world.

Normally we rotate between a service of Holy Communion, a service of prayers, and a time of peace and silence. Sadly, we will not be able to offer the usual tea, coffee and biscuits following the service - but I believe plans are afoot to take that fellowship up to the Village Green Café for those who wish.



## Evening Service

From the 4<sup>th</sup> October, we will be introducing a monthly evening service at 7.30pm on the first Sunday of the month.

During the Lockdown, many people reflected upon a newfound sense of peace and contemplation, as the usual busyness of life dropped away. This will be an opportunity for stillness, reflection and calm in God's presence - a spiritual 'deep breath' before the working week begins again.

The service will draw on music and prayers from the Celtic traditions, with inspiration from the Taizé Community as well.



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