

Holy Trinity Platt

“Lord you have been our dwelling-place throughout all generations” (Psalm 90)

So here we are and September is in view! As you know, we've been holding in-person evening services through the summer. These have been really helpful in planning for what comes next. They have been well attended and numbers have been increasing.

So I want to talk about the plan for the next phase of our church life together.

What is happening with Sunday worship?

Here's the headline: we are aiming to move to **three in-person services from Sun 13 Sept**. Here's the reason: we're aiming to maximise the number of people who can attend church in-person if they would like to. So these will be **three roughly identical services**, so you only need to come to one of them.

But we also know many folk won't be able to, or aren't ready to come in person, so **one of those services will continue to be live-streamed**.

As you'll know, under current restrictions, we have limited capacity based on the size of our building; track and trace is required; as are face coverings (apart from those with exemptions); people need to be socially distanced; there's a one-way system; socialising can only happen outside. All those sorts of things.

Then, the next part of the jigsaw puzzle for Sundays is our

children's work:

What is happening with children's groups at Sunday services?

We are aiming to restart groups for primary age children (Minis/Jets/Explorers) as soon as possible, after the first 2-3 weeks. These have to be:

- Stable groups/bubbles of no more than 15.
- With fixed leaders for each group.
- Creches are not allowed at all as yet. (But you can of course have babies/toddlers with you.)

Given the number of children we have, we can't fit all our children into just one service. It means we are planning for those primary age children's groups to be available at **both morning services**.

How will it work?

For this to work, we are going to need to distribute ourselves as evenly as we can across these services - including ensuring our children are balanced across the morning children's groups.

The services will be a maximum of 1 hour long. The times of those services are new:

- 9am (arrive 8:45am)
- 11am (arrive 10:45am)
- 6pm (arrive 5:45pm)

To make this work, we're going to need a booking/registration system. Of course, it'll need some room for those visitors or newcomers who just turn up.

One of the things we're asking is, **which of those services might be your preference?** And, indeed, were we to need a fourth service (perhaps at 4pm) would that be one you could attend.

You can fill in the preference form here

What about midweek groups/events at church?

Here the guidance is clear. Midweek events can only happen

where they are organised like worship services described above. So: everyone facing the same way, face coverings, socially distanced, limited social interaction with those not in your household and so on.

- This does mean for midweek groups that no small discussion, study or prayer groups can meet at church where they would usually be groups facing one another to talk.
- Positively, it does mean Platt-ypus, Pathfinders and Plattform can begin to meet midweek very soon, because we can organise them along those lines.

Again:

- They will be in stable bubbles of no more than 15.
- They will need fixed leaders.
- They will do as much as possible outside.
- They may need to meet on different days.

How can we play our part?

Something I have said at our evening services in the summer, is to be aware of our emotions in all of this. It feels like church, but not like church. It feels like Platt, but not like Platt. And so let's be really honest, this will be costly. For example, we may not all be able to come to the service we would most like. Being willing to attend at a different time may be a sacrificial thing to do. But it's also part of how we love one another.

There may be ways we'll need to serve too:

- We are going to need more welcomers and stewards on Sundays. The task is going to be different - more like being an airline steward or stewardess - "there primarily for people's safety as well as their comfort", as they say.
- We may need more Youth and Children's leaders for Sundays and for midweek.
- We'll need more people to join the live-stream technical crew for Sunday services.

We have learned a lot during lockdown. Some of us who previously had "much" have had to realise what it is to have "lost" things. This may have been good for us: we perhaps have begun to appreciate what others, with "less", have as their normal experience.

Meanwhile, others have been able to join services by watching

online, having been unable to before. And many of us have really enjoyed getting to know people of different ages and stages that previously we were separate from.

Psalm 90 reminds us that, above all, *God* is our dwelling place. As we seek to return to church, let's pray that we can keep what we have learned, prepare for what needs to be new, and be ready to serve in ways we may not have done before.

In Christ,
Paul



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