

# St Matthew's Church

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Dear All

We are on the eve of the second lockdown, hopefully with some useful experience of what worked and didn't work first time round, both in terms of our personal lives and church life. But we are now in a very different season.

In terms of our services 1<sup>st</sup> November marked something of a shift in practice, which proved to be rather short lived! We had introduced more music into the 9am service and held Children's groups in our 10.30 service for the first time. These were both welcome signs of normality ruling and it is hoped that we will be able to take up where we left off, once we are back in church again.

However during this next four weeks (and hopefully no longer) we have decided to try something different for our Sunday worship together. There will be a short service at 9.30 (which we will try streaming through YouTube). We will aim for this to be about 20 minutes long and focused for children and young people. It will be followed at 10.30 by a more formal Holy Communion service livestreamed in the usual way through Facebook and available from our website. This pattern will allow us the opportunity to connect with the younger members of the church more effectively and permit us to continue our sermon series 'Seven Whole Days in a time of Covid and . . .' at 10.30am. In addition, our THiS Team Daily Worship will continue as before.

Whilst our churches are only allowed to be open to broadcast worship, they can also be open for private individual prayer. We have decided therefore from Monday 9 November to try to open the church Monday – Saturday between 8.30am – 2pm. The church will not be manned or cleaned on a regular basis so it will be up to individuals to ensure they sanitise their hands, touch as few things as possible, wear a face covering, don't enter the building with symptoms and fill out their details for track and trace. We hope that an open church will offer sanctuary for those out on their daily exercise, local workers, parents dropping off their children at school and for any others in our community who would welcome the quiet and peace of our beautiful building. Social distancing must continue to be observed at all times.

We hope that this combination of measures will ensure that (in line with the request of the Archbishops) we maintain a focus on prayer during this November and offer support to our community. I can do no better than to repeat their final exhortation:

*'In one of the climactic passages of the New Testament, Paul says to those who follow Christ that their "love must be genuine, that they hate what is evil and hold fast to what is good." He asks them to "serve the lord", exhorting them to "rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." (See Romans 12.9-12.) None of this is easy. Especially not at the moment. But it is our calling.'*

Yours in Christ,

Rev Helen Hancock