

Worship at St Mary's

Over the last 18 months or so the focus groups that keep watch over our various worship services, traditional and contemporary, have been thinking about the guiding principles that underlie our approach to worship, taking as given that the reason we come together as a worshipping community is to sustain people in their following of Jesus Christ in the world and to introduce others to that journey. The focus groups recognised that all worship is about God (and our response to God), that worship lies at the heart of mission, discipleship and inclusion, and that worship will be experienced in many styles and varieties.

The focus groups agreed that through our worship we seek to ensure all will be welcomed, comforted, inspired and challenged. In addition that through our worship we will hear a balance of Old Testament and New Testament readings (regularly hearing a Gospel reading) and that our worship will provide a variety of ways to express praise, thanksgiving and penitence, to affirm our faith and to pray for the world and the church beyond Princes Risborough. In seeking to be welcoming and inclusive it is helpful to be aware of assumptions that people are familiar with words, tunes, postures and actions.

In thinking about these guiding principles the traditional worship focus group has spent time reviewing the current pattern of worship at the 8am and 9.30am services. Time has been spent listening to a range of views and thinking about the implications of the guiding principles. As a result the group has recommended some changes to be trialled at the 8am and 9.30am service. Several of these are minor and may go relatively unnoticed (for example making greater use of the flexibility of prayers and seasonal material already included in the service books, providing clearer announcements during the service). The main experimental change is the positioning of the altar: moving the altar to the top of the steps up to the chancel area (which follows the pattern of the Wednesday morning communion service) and receiving communion from the nave. Major festivals, for example Easter Sunday, would continue to use the altar in the Chancel.

The suggestions of the focus group have been considered by the Rector and clergy, and by the PCC, and it has been agreed to hold a trial starting from the first Sunday of Lent (10 March 2019). The trial will continue for Lent and after Easter up to the end of May. The focus group will review the trial in May and would appreciate comments and feedback as the trial proceeds.

The focus group members are: Revd Michael Hunt, Revd Nancy Wallace, Revd David Wallace, Heather Hardy, Stuart King, Tony Kerwood, Peter Cline and Jacqui Biddlecombe.