

The Rev'd Daniel Valentine

Priest-in-Charge

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ST MATTHEW WITH ST MARY

CRUMPSALL

14th July 2020

Dear Friends,

Reopening St Matthew's Church for Public Worship

This is going to be a little bit long... please be patient and keep reading!

There is a fair bit to share with you as we plan for the reopening our church buildings in a safe, phased and managed way. It needs to be different for all kinds of reasons. We will explain as we go along but the headline news (for those who might not make it to the end) looks like this:

St Matthew's Church will commence Sunday worship from Sunday 19th July 2020 with a service of said Holy Communion starting at 9.30 am.

Over the past few weeks the standing committee and leaders of our sister churches across Blackley, Moston and New Moston have been discussing how we can make our churches as safe as possible to return to, how we manage without some key members of the team who are not planning to return just yet, a remodelling of how we deploy our ministry team and how we make the experience right to equip and sustain us for the challenges we will face as disciples of Jesus in this 'new normal' everyone is talking about.

Safety

In line with guidance from the government and the diocese we have carried out a detailed risk assessment. We are legally required to put in place measures to ensure appropriate social distancing of at least 1 metre (preferably 2 metres) distance when people return as well as all the other obvious things like the availability of hand sanitisers, signage, entrance and exit arrangements. A separate document will be shared with everyone, aimed at making coming to church as safe as possible and we will be urging everyone to read that very carefully.

There will be lots of subtle changes required to the way we share Communion and involve people in worship to minimise movement and contact with surfaces. There can be no singing and following the service at least for the time being, there will be no refreshments. Worship will look and feel very different and we will be asking people to be gentle and patient with each other as we learn how to be gathered church and cope with everyone's different approach and attitude to risk.

Whilst we are desperate to be gathered as a family again, we do want to care for everyone and so we are not expecting anyone in the higher risk categories (those



North
Manchester
Mission Unit

www.crumpsallchurch.co.uk



*St Matthew's with St Mary's is a friendly Church of England (Anglican) parish church in Crumpsall, North Manchester.
We welcome all who come. We are inclusive and reflect the diversity of our community.
We serve our area in Christ's name.*

classed as extremely vulnerable) to be returning to church just yet. Of course, it is also important that anyone who suspects they may have symptoms not attend either.

Capacity

There are many people across the North Manchester area who have told us that that they would prefer to not return to church just yet. This includes several key church leaders, and means it is more important than ever that the churches across Crumpsall, Blackley, Moston and New Moston (the new proposed North Manchester Mission Unit) work together. The Bishop of Manchester has been clear that he expects us (in addition to reopening churches) to continue to minister to those who (for whatever reason) are not able to attend church physically by continuing to provide the online services that we have developed during lockdown.

The Mission Unit online service will continue to be broadcast from 10.45 each Sunday. It is simply impossible for me to continue to support and lead this service, and to lead a service at 10.30 am at St Matthew's as has traditionally been the case. I am afraid that, with the best will in the world, I am unable to be in more than one place at a time. This is why the service has been moved for a trial period to 9.30 am.

This change in time will initially be for a trial period, until such time as the Covid restrictions are completely lifted. Time changes are always unpopular with people for all kinds of really good reasons. If these are going to inconvenience you or if you want me to explain more than is contained in this note, then please pick up the phone. I know some of these changes are less than ideal, but I also know that you appreciate the scale of the challenge we face.

The changes that are outlined in this letter have been discussed with and are generally supported by the standing committee made up of the Churchwardens and Church Officers. If a change in service time is implemented permanently, this will be implemented in discussion with and by agreement with the PCC.

If you read something in the following paragraphs and are disappointed with what you read, then please know that I and my colleagues across neighbouring churches have spent many hours on these plans. The decisions we have arrived at pastorally, prayerfully and (at times) painfully. It is time for us to step out in faith. If anyone wants to discuss this in more detail, again please pick up the phone.

In truth, this change in service time would have been very much on the cards even without the additional strains of lockdown because the plan has always been that I take on responsibility for an additional local church, and will be required to conduct two services in different churches on a Sunday morning.

Experience

Across North Manchester, we think that what we might be doing is more like replanting church for a very different world rather than simply reopening church simply as it was before. Apart from the smaller numbers we are expecting when we go back to church, we know that we are worshipping and witnessing in a community which has been hit by the anxiety created by this pandemic.

Studies show that 65% of people with mental health issues have experienced a worsening of symptoms in this time. People have not just suffered the loss of loved ones but have had a difficult time grieving. People have been furloughed and lost jobs.

Others have been locked in homes with all kinds of challenges and dangers presenting themselves.

The disciples of Jesus here in North Manchester are doing mission in a different way to the way they left behind in March. At St Matthew with St Mary Crumpsall we **MUST** make what we do on Sundays relevant to that. We **MUST** leave space for God to show us new things and new places to go and new needs to meet. So, as the months go by, we **MUST** encourage one another to create the kind of church which is responsive to the promptings of the Spirit.

I, and the leaders of our sister churches across North Manchester will make no apologies for the fact that things are and must be 'different' because very little is as it was except the fact that we can always count on the fact that, "God can do immeasurably more than all we can imagine" (Eph 3:20)

With every prayer, and every blessing.

In His service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D'.

The Rev'd Daniel Valentine