

# New Service Pattern 2017

## Synopsis of Responses



### Index

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Process .....	2
3. Changes more likely to attract new worshippers.....	2/3
a) Style of service	
b) Breakfast and earlier worship times	
c) Music	
d) Children	
e) Technology	
f) Other	
4. Changes less likely to attract new worshippers.....	3/4
a) Style of service	
b) Breakfast and earlier worship times	
c) Music	
d) Children	
e) Technology	
f) Other	
5. Additional comments/ suggestions (unclassified).....	4/5
6. St Pauls.....	5
7. St Peters.....	5
8. Implementation/current position .....	5
9. Conclusion.....	5

# **New Service Pattern 2017**

## **SYNOPSIS of RESPONSES**

### **1. Introduction**

This paper gives a synopsis of the responses to the feedback forms and is being circulated initially to PCC members and subsequently available for general circulation to those who responded.

Clearly a synopsis of this kind cannot reflect every reply individually and some judgements have to be made as to what is included....but I sincerely hope that the end result is both accurate and representative.

### **2. Process**

Feedback forms were available for three weeks, in hard copy in all three churches and also on-line. There were 69 individual responses (St Mary's: 54, St Paul's 5, St Peter's 6, various: 4) incorporating over 330 individual comments. The majority of the respondents had been to several of the new services (range 1- 9). It should be noted that all views were matters of personal opinion with no measurable evidence offered in support of any statement.

In order to provide a composite analysis, the responses have been categorised according to topic in Sections 3 and 4, regardless of where they appeared in the response sheets. A number of additional personal views were also expressed which are similarly itemised in Section 5. As the majority of comments in Sections 3, 4 & 5 were made by those who worship at St Mary's, comments relating to St Peter's and St Paul's are dealt with separately in Sections 6 and 7. Section 8 addresses concerns regarding the current position. Numbers in brackets ( ) throughout indicate the overall comments made on an issue (not an exact science!).

### **3. Changes more likely to attract new worshippers**

The overall message in this section reflected a very supportive response to the changes and the view that they would certainly attract more worshippers.

#### *a) Style of service (42)*

The new service styles have been positively received by many in terms of informality, variety, being family friendly, engaging, 'less boring', welcoming, easier to follow and being more relevant to contemporary life. The lack of liturgy, fewer Holy Communion services, extemporary prayers and lack of clerical vestments were also seen as an advantage.

#### *b) Breakfast and earlier worship times (41)*

The provision of breakfast as an opportunity for more informal hospitality and fellowship attracted a large number of positive comments. Regular Sunday services at the same time, the earlier time and weekly Junior Church were very popular throughout, with people liking more time later in the day for other activities.

c) *Music (19)*

New styles of contemporary music with more modern songs were thought by many to be a key attraction, making music and singing less formal, brighter, and more uplifting. It was noted that singing is better when singers are looking up at the OHP. A mix of contemporary and traditional music also received support.

d) *Children (17)*

The effort to attract more children was warmly welcomed throughout and thought to be successful. Links such as Junior Church, Toast for Tots and groups where adults and children become familiar with the building was considered a good move. Regular Junior Church each week was thought good news but Messy Church in church received mixed reviews.

e) *Technology (4)*

Whilst recognising that the current technology needs a lot of improvement, it was popular in terms of not needing hymn books, service sheets and different pieces of informatio .

f) *Other*

- the warm welcome and general friendliness of everyone was much appreciated;
- a need for more advertising about the changes
- In 2 responses the writer could think of nothing positive to say in terms of encouraging new worshippers

#### **4.Changes less likely to encourage new worshippers.**

The overall message in this section reflected a view that too many changes had been made too quickly, without sufficient planning, explanation, advertising and effective communication. It was felt that this could have a negative effect on bringing new people in.

a) *Style of service (48)*

- The issues about the style of service included concerns about the effect of too narrow an evangelical message and too 'internal' a message. A need was expressed for a wider choice of service style and preacher, shorter, more focussed sermons, shorter services and more form to the service. There was a strongly expressed need for additional Holy Communion services. There was little support for 'messy church' in church which was considered distracting for all concerned. Poor time-keeping and overall organisation needed to be addressed as a priority.

b) *Breakfast and earlier worship times (5)*

A small number thought there was no need for breakfast before the service and that the earlier time would not appeal to all, particularly in the winter.

c) *Music (31)*

The loss of hymn books and organ music was mentioned frequently, together with a concern about 'Worship songs' as repetitive, banal and with a poverty of language. The

keyboard was considered to be too loud and obtrusive at times and the keyboard player 'playing too pre-eminent a part – focus should be Vicar and the Word of God'.

d) *Children (10)*

The provision of weekly Junior Church was warmly welcomed. Whilst supporting efforts to bring more children into church, there was concern expressed about some behaviours considered inappropriate, both during and after services.

e) *Technology (15)*

There were a number of concerns regarding the current 'amateur' nature of the technology. The screen is difficult for some to read, especially when there are a lot of worshippers and taller people in front. Glare and size of print were an issue and without hymn books and service sheets the service was difficult to follow. 'If people can't hear the Word they can't respond to it.' The changes are not supported by the website.

f) *Other (examples)*

- More liaison needed with those in supporting roles at services prior to implementation
- overall organisation is poor and needs sharpening up (7).
- advertising of the changes needs improvement, with explanations (6).
- lack of proper car park
- several could find 'no negatives'
- any out-dated traditions, including hard pews – little advance until these are removed.

## **5. Additional examples of comments from Section 3 and 4 (unclassified)**

- What are we being called by the Lord to do?
- 'We have some very unhappy people on the cusp of leaving St Mary's for good. Is this really what is wanted? We have to find a way of keeping them, whilst valuing and encouraging the (few) new worshippers – we are not doing this at the moment'.
- Keep up communications and prayer between members and wider community
- I really miss the Second Sunday services
- Congregation still in comfort zone – not many stepping out to show love and acceptance to visitors
- The follow up to 'Who Cares' initiative may give the church the insight and opportunity to reach out to the real needs in our community.
- Need a clear plan at the end of trial period as to where we go if expected outcomes don't work.
- Very sad to have some say 'new form of worship doesn't suit them, but they have nowhere else to go'.
- Important not to cause a big split in the church - where's the Love in that?

## **6. St Paul's**

The numbers responding from St Paul's were small and concentrated on problems with the start time and the 'chaos' at the start of the service with people not really knowing what to do whilst waiting and not getting into the right frame of mind for worship. Concern was expressed that some of the 'normal congregation will go elsewhere' if this pattern is continued. Despite the comments, warm support was expressed for Ben and his commitment (7).

## **7. St Peter's**

Similar concerns were expressed at St Peter's with positive suggestions regarding the service being taken by Bryony prior to Ben's arrival (5).

## **8. Implementation/current position**

Implementation of the changes has clearly been an issue for many in terms of their overall understanding of intent and direction of travel. A significant number of additional comments relate to the effect of the changes on those currently worshipping at St Mary's, where an apparent drop in numbers has been observed.<sup>1</sup> Much of the concern centres on the 'new' music and relates to the implementation of the changes and a significant lack of understanding regarding the changing nature of the role of the keyboard player,

## **9. Conclusion**

The consultation process has been a positive and worthwhile experience, with an excellent overall response. People have clearly given much prayerful thought to their replies. As expected, there have been a range of heartfelt views and comments: some very supportive and some expressing very genuine concerns. Whilst recognising that change can be hard for many, the speed, scale and nature of the changes have clearly been particularly hard for some.

This view is balanced by extremely strong support for Ben and a warm recognition of his commitment and desire to encourage new worshippers; pleasure in the increased involvement of children; and a wish to move forward positively in faith.

Maggy Wallace

Mjw August 2017

---

<sup>1</sup> A comparison of service numbers for roughly comparable services in May-July 2016 and May-July 2017 showed no significant difference. Full details are available in the 'raw data' analysis paper