

*The Rector writes:*

## **‘THE TIMES THEY ARE A’CHANGIN’**

In 1963 Bob Dylan wrote the lyrics to what has since been described as ‘the archetypal protest song’ reflecting on his views of the social injustices of his day, and his sense of the American government’s unhelpful attitude towards change. The song was quickly outdated by the very changes that it had predicted actually happening, and so it became out of date almost as soon as it was released on the album of the same name in 1964. Yet the song has been covered so many times since then by such diverse artistes as The Byrds, Cher, The Hollies, Josephine Baker, Billy Joel, Phil Collins, Joan Baez and Bruce Springsteen and cover recordings have been released in every decade since its composition.

The song has been quoted in other areas too: Steve Jobs used it at the 1984 Apple shareholders meeting when the first Macintosh computer was unveiled, Coopers and Lybrand used it to advertise their services following major changes in auditing law in 1994, and it has featured in the soundtrack of several feature films. The song it seems has transcended the political preoccupations of its time, and become an anthem for change – drawing not just on the world situation, but also on biblical themes (Ecclesiastes 3, Matthew 10:31).

And now they appear in a Rector’s letter at St Martin’s!

When I applied for the post as your new incumbent I noted that one of the things that you asked for in your new Rector was that they be someone ‘who will lead us forward into new patterns and forms of worship, where and when appropriate’. In my first two years I have largely kept to the patterns of worship that have been familiar and have served you well over many years. But times are changing – congregations are aging and declining, our parish is very small and the nature of ministry is also changing. These factors have meant that we have had to reconsider what our future worship patterns should be so that we can maintain a sustainable balance between ‘valuing our BCP heritage and the importance of the Sacraments’ and ‘developing our ministry with children, young people and their families’. Discussions have been held in Forum and with the PCC, and a decision has been taken to change the pattern and times of our Sunday worship as shown in the table that follows this article.

You will see that this provides for only one mid-morning service at 10.00am, which will be aimed at the whole church family. There will be BCP at 8.00am as now, and we have incorporated a choral BCP Eucharist into one of the evening slots. I know that much of the pain of change (and I do recognise that change is not easy to bear) is being borne by the current 11.00am congregation. I hope they might be able to come to an earlier or later prayer book service, or perhaps try family worship.

You will see that there is no place for sung Mattins (I will miss this too!), and I have tried to ensure that there is a Communion service in the benefice each Sunday. To compensate a little I hope we might sing a BCP Eucharist on mid-week feast days (Ash Wednesday, Ascension etc).

It is proposed to introduce the new pattern on Advent Sunday (27<sup>th</sup> November). The new patterns will also make it easier to arrange cover when the Rector is away (the covering clergy pool is dwindling too), and will also free up time to explore ways to develop other aspects of Mission & Ministry. I will write again about these things as they evolve.

So there it is, changing times for ‘changing times’ – not an easy nor a hasty decision, and one that will need your prayerful support as we move into the future together. We aim to ensure that St Martin’s remains as a welcoming place of worship to all, as it has always been; but more importantly a place where the love and glory of God is encountered and experienced by all – ‘old and young’, ‘traditional and modern’, ‘churched and unchurched’.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend John, your Rector.

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

### Current Pattern

WEEK→ ↓TIME	1	2	3	4	5
8.00	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP
9.45	Family Worship	Family Communion	Family Worship	Family Worship	
Well Hill		Morning Prayer		Holy Communion	10.00 Family Communion
11.00	Sung Eucharist BCP	Mattins	Sung Eucharist BCP	Mattins	
12.30/3.00	<i>Available for Baptism or Interment of Ashes</i>				
6.30	Evensong	Evensong	Evensong	Evensong	Evensong

### New Pattern

WEEK→ ↓TIME	1	2	3	4	5
8.00	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP	Holy Communion BCP
10.00	Family Communion	Family Worship	Family Communion	Family Worship	Sung Eucharist
Well Hill		Morning Prayer		Holy Communion	
11.30/12.30	<i>Available for Baptism or Interment of Ashes</i>				
6.30	Evensong	Choral Eucharist BCP	Evensong	Evensong	Evening Worship