

FAQs about the decision to have 10am services throughout 2026



1. Why has this decision been reached?

Because the impact of not having easy access to the church hall on Sundays was already going to mean that we needed to make adjustments to our services, but we also need to find ways to help our ministry team in this season where there is lower capacity. Sunday services are time intensive for everyone involved, and so having one morning service rather than two will help to reduce workload.

2. Why is there lower capacity at the moment?

Our ministry team is now less than half the size it was five years ago. Currently we have no employees working with children and young people, and our Associate Vicar is not yet back full-time following prolonged sick leave. Hazel Trapnell, our faithful Associate Minister is also moving away at the end of this year and will leave some big gaps. Overseeing the building works and coping with the disruption is also adding an extra load onto the Vicar and office team. Finally, Jema has been granted the opportunity to take a period of Extended Ministerial Development Leave (a Sabbatical) from May-July 2026 and so won't be working during those months.

3. Why weren't the church family consulted?

Primarily because this is a temporary, not a permanent, decision taken by the PCC as the elected leaders of the church. In addition, the time span between us realising we were ready to go ahead with the building work, and the actual start date, was less than six weeks, so there has been a LOT to do and get ready during that time to prepare for this season of transition.

4. Will this decision cause people to leave the church?

That's always a risk, but we are hopeful that people won't reach that decision. This is a time-limited change, and the ministry team will do their best to help everyone feel supported through it.

5. How will new people know what to expect?

We will make sure that all the information about the services styles is very clear on our website and noticeboards. We won't be able to change the wording on the fixed lychgate sign, but we will ensure that on the reverse we make it clear that there is a change to what is displayed. During the services, leaders can indicate verbally that we enjoy two distinct styles at St Mary's, with these alternating week by week during 2026.

6. How long will it last for?

This is a change that will last throughout 2026.

7. What happens at the end of the year?

In September 2026 the PCC will conduct a review of how things are going. There is a small chance that the new pattern might be going so well that there would be compelling reasons to continue with it beyond the end of the year. However, were that to be the case, we would ensure that a thorough consultation process happened, so that everyone in the church family had the opportunity to give their opinion prior to any longer lasting decisions being made.

8. What style will the services be?

Week A services will feel like our current 10.30am services, and will include SHINEonSundays groups for 0-14's. Week B services will feel like our current 9am services and will include the organ and the choir. Explore@4 (on Week B) will remain unchanged.

9. What about Communion?

There will be Communion included at every 10am service. This is because Church of England churches are required to offer a service of Holy Communion every Sunday. On Week A we will use the gluten free pittas. On Week B we will use the wafers.

10. How does this impact children and families?

Our younger families will be the least impacted by this change. The only differences will be that the Week A services begin at 10am, not 10.30am, and they will include Communion, whereas previously it has been Morning Worship on Week A. The services will also be slightly longer than a current Week A 10.30am service. Most of our families are already in the pattern of coming in the morning on Week A and in the afternoon (for Explore@4) on Week B, and we anticipate that this will continue, though of course anyone of any age is welcome at every type of service.

11. I like the blended 10am style that we have previously enjoyed during August and on other occasions. Will we ever have that style during 2026?

On special occasions, such as Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, Remembrance Sunday and during August, we would often have had a 10am service in the past, and the style would usually be a blend of the 9am and 10.30am traditions. During 2026 this will continue. For example, Easter Sunday in 2026 falls on Week B, but we would anticipate using the organ, choir and the band for different parts of the sung worship, so that everyone feels included. During the summer holidays when we won't be running SHINEonSundays groups, we will make even more of an effort to ensure that all the 10am services are accessible for all ages.

12. Will there still be refreshments at the 10am services?

Yes, we will routinely offer refreshments after the 10am services, in church each week. Hopefully this will continue to be an opportunity for us to build relationships with people we don't know well as yet.

13. If we can't use the main staircase, how will it work with SHINEonSundays on Week A?

At the appropriate point near to the start of the service, the children and young people will walk sensibly with the SHINEonSundays leaders out of the main doors of church and down Mariners Drive, entering the church rooms via the Hulbert Room lobby. They will return to church before Communion using the same route. If your child is unlikely to be able to walk sensibly with a leader, please accompany them down to the hall and then return to church once they are settled in their group. Parents/carers are reminded that they are responsible for their children at all times when at church, except for when they are supervised by another adult in their SHINEonSundays groups. Before and after the service they must not be unsupervised outside in the car park area, and they will also not have access to the hall to play in after services.

14. Will we still be doing Care Home Sundays in 2026?

Yes, Julie will continue lead the team of people going into one of our local Care Homes each month. These services begin at 11am on the dates below, and so the team can gather for the start of the 10am service and then be 'sent out' into this lovely missionary endeavour. 1 Feb, 1 Mar, 5 May, 7 June, 5 July, 6 Sept, 4 Oct, 1 Nov, 6 Dec.

15. If there are more people coming to services, will it be harder to park near the church?

In all likelihood, yes. The car park will be out of action whilst the builders are on site. Please allow a little more time for your journey to church. Walking or cycling if you can. If you need to drive, please park considerately and safely. Blue badge holders can use the Vicarage driveway, but please try not to block other vehicles in.