



# **St Mary's Church, Thorpe**

## **Church Approach, Egham, Surrey, TW20 8TQ**

Vicar: The Revd. Damian Stewart Harrison-Miles, BTh  
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11 July 2020

Dear friends in faith,

I write as lock-down has been eased and we enter a new period in our life together. The Bishop of Guildford, the Rt Revd. Andrew Watson has filmed a lovely thank you message for Churches (If you have internet access you can view the video with this link at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2coq0\\_9ZYA&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2coq0_9ZYA&feature=youtu.be) )

I very much share with Bishop Andrew a deep sense of thanksgiving for all that has been good in the past few months, while recognising the immense sacrifices of so many and the loss of people to the virus also. I am sure like me; you are praying that we are past the worst this dreadful virus can do. As I reflect upon this past 15 weeks, I give thanks for the generosity of many, their gifts of time, love and support for neighbours and this community of Thorpe, Runnymede - local and gathered. I am thankful for gifts of money which are helping to keep the wolves from the door, for the brilliant team at St Mary's who have worked exceptionally hard behind the scenes to look after our beautiful building and grounds and develop our plan to open, albeit with reduced capacity (30 per service) and for many more reasons, I begin this update with a heart-felt thank you.

Not being able to gather for so long has been exceedingly difficult, indeed painful, especially for those without internet access and therefore unable to join in with online worship. Prayer is essential for the Christian life and I give thanks for your personal ministry of prayer at home, upholding your church and Thorpe before God. We must continue in our commitment to walk with the Lord Jesus, the Lord of life in prayer every day, keeping all in need upon our hearts. For those who have mastered a computer in these strange times, thank you also for your faithfulness, not least in coping with our dodgy internet and plugging away at online worship.

I am pleased to say that following a trial run, St Mary's Church is now open again for worship with a congregation present, four times a week: Sunday 8am Said Eucharist, 7pm Said Compline, Wednesday 10am said Eucharist and Saturday 10am Said Eucharist. All our other services, our Sunday 10am Sung Eucharist, Morning Prayer 10am Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday and Wednesday 7pm Compline remain online for the time being. Covid-19 has not gone away, and the challenge for all of us is to stay safe, well, and healthy in our changed world. If you are able to come to one of our services in church a warm welcome awaits you, but please arrive early, follow the one-way system around our buildings, wash your hands, sign in (if you are able, please wear a face mask) and keep 2 meters from others, sitting at least 2/3 chairs apart from another person/family group.

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As I reflect on the past 6 months, I am very aware of the suffering that many have faced, from illness either directly related to Covid-19 or the associated challenges of healthcare during lock down, to those who have been isolated and felt so alone, distanced from family, friends, loved ones, and of course many who have been separated from their church family too, some without access to the internet. I am so sorry that for months now we have not been permitted to bring communion to people at home, something which is changing, and the ministry team will be in touch very soon to re-establish visits. And of course, those families bereaved at this time - my love is with you especially. Please know you are in our prayers.

Our Parochial Church Council meets on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July and will review the past few months and look forward to the Autumn. There are four areas for immediate consideration:

1. Keeping people safe in church and staffing services with a new rota from Sunday 16th August – end September. What to do about our annual meeting, postponed from March?
2. Review of online/internet services. Should we keep Sunday 10am online with singing until October and then review? (Alternatively, would have to be a said, shorter service).
3. Families and children – how to move engagement forward?
4. Church finances and making-up our deficit for March-July 20. Encouraging giving monthly by standing order to help the PCC budget for the rest of this year and in 2021.

Your feedback and ideas would be most welcome. You can leave an answerphone message at the Vicarage on 01932 565986 or if you have access to email, you can contact our PCC Secretary Allison Kelly at [allison.kelly94@gmail.com](mailto:allison.kelly94@gmail.com) – we would really value your input.

I have enclosed a few resources with this letter which I hope will keep you up to date with life at St Mary's Church. If you can attend one of our said Eucharistic services, please bring the enclosed service sheet with you and keep hold of it – it is yours! May God continue to bless you and those whom you love and care for and thank you for being you and for being part of the life of our wonderful church family and I look forward to us all being reunited soon,

Yours in Christ,

Revd. Damian Stewart Harrison-Miles.  
Vicar of Thorpe