

St Andrew's church was built over 900 years ago (about 1090 AD) for this tiny agricultural village by a crossing over the river. A porch was added in 1652, and the main part was rebuilt in 1840 and added to in 1890, but parts of the original Norman structure survive in the Victorian rebuild. A stone carving, perhaps from Abingdon Abbey, was hidden here during the Civil War (upside down, disguised as a tombstone in the graveyard) and rediscovered in the 18th century.



THE PARISH COMMUNION

St Andrew's Church
Sandford-on-Thames
10.0 a.m.



Welcome to visitors and new-comers.

This is what happens here at the main service each Sunday.

We meet to praise and thank God together for all God's gifts, to say sorry where necessary, and to pray for ourselves and others. And we do what Jesus did at the Last Supper on the eve of his crucifixion (Good Friday), to remember his life and death, and God's victory over death in the mystery of his Resurrection (Easter Sunday), where Jesus (in and with God) became a spiritual presence in the hearts and minds of his friends and followers.

To be a Christian is to respond with trust to God's love for the world by being a follower of Jesus and trying to base our lives on his example - caring for others, living simply and unselfishly, and listening to what God wants us to be and become. That is why we gather together week by week, to be strengthened by his presence, instructed by his word, and to share the joyful hope of a world healed and transformed by God's creative power of love.

The service falls into **two halves**.

We all stand as the choir come in and the traditional greeting ('Grace, mercy and peace ...') is said, then sit for the notices (including wedding banns).

A hymn is sung and we kneel for the **preparation** (being sorry for our faults and failures and accepting God's forgiveness, pronounced by the priest = vicar). We then usually stand to sing the Gloria (except in March-April = Lent, and early December = Advent, when we remain kneeling to sing 'Lord, have mercy'), and pray the collect prayer for the day, then sit for '**the word**' - Bible readings and sermon.



We then stand to say the **Creed** - repeating the story of what God has done, is doing, and will do, and associating ourselves with that. 'We believe' (in the Creed) means that we share as best we can the faith of the world-wide community, the Christian church. Calling God 'maker', or creator of heaven and earth, means that the whole world depends on this loving and caring reality that we are being taken up into by responding to the gospel message. The creed relates Jesus to this mysterious reality he has made known to us and does that in language nearly 2,000 years old. Other details are included - God's power or Spirit in the world, the church, baptism, forgiveness, and the future hope. In short, in having to do with Jesus, as Christians, we have to do with God.

Now come the **prayers** and sharing the **peace** of God by shaking hands with (or greeting) your neighbour standing by you. A **collection** is taken during the next hymn, as a symbol of all our goods being dedicated to God - a token of ourselves, our whole lives, being dedicated to God.



The **second half** of the service focuses on the **sacrament**, a word which means an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual meaning. It begins with **offering bread and wine** along with our gifts on the altar or Lord's table, and **blessing or thanking God** for food and drink and the work of all who contribute to our material well-being. Then the most solemn **prayer of thanksgiving and consecration** is introduced ('the Lord is here') and the 'Holy, holy, holy' sung, and the bread and wine are dedicated and consecrated to be for us Jesus himself, coming to us. We **remember his death and resurrection** and look forward to God's future.



Those who are prepared and confirmed receive the sacrament of **Holy Communion** by coming to the altar and kneeling there (or standing if unable to kneel, or have it brought to them in unable to walk up steps). Others, including children, come to receive a personal **blessing**, kneeling at the altar with everyone else. Sometimes a newborn baby is brought for this blessing. Those about to get married are invited to join the queue and come to the rail where they will soon be prayed for and blessed at their wedding. Those not receiving communion signal their wish for a blessing by **bowing their heads** or holding a book.

After a communion hymn which is sung kneeling, and prayers of **thanksgiving** for communion, and the blessing, we stand for the last hymn and exit ('Go in peace to love and serve the Lord') and kneel for a brief moment in silence after the choir have processed out to the vestry.

There is then coffee, etc. for those who can stay. Newcomers and visitors are especially invited to stay this extra five minutes (the service lasts an hour) to be welcomed and meet a few of their neighbours in Sandford.