

Resourcing Local Arrangements in the Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Introduction

‘Local Arrangements’ – services led by members of a particular congregation – are now a regular feature in the majority of circuits. Currently, in this Circuit, each church has 1 or 2 ‘LAs’ on each 3-month Plan. They have always been a feature of the Plan but we now have fewer preachers available so there are unfilled dates. We want to use the opportunities that LAs bring to encourage churches to participate more fully in local worship provision. Included on the Plan request sheet is a request for churches to offer dates for LAs. These cannot be guaranteed, but we will do our best to accommodate them and this should enable forward planning.

Local Arrangement services can be opportunities for churches because they offer a chance for the wider membership, or groups within the life of the church to lead worship. This fosters a culture of worship being owned and actively engaged in by the congregation. It also fosters the Methodist understanding that ‘Worship is the work of the whole people of God: a congregation is not an audience or a group of spectators.’¹ Many who become ministers and local preachers were drawn into these vocations as we participated in leading Local Arrangement services. These services offer churches the freedom not to replicate what ministers and Local Preachers do but to bring local perspectives and voices to worship and to encourage new and unexpected people to risk joining in.

Methodism has always drawn a distinction between preaching, testimony and exhortation - ‘though the boundaries between them doesn’t always seem clear. We are all encouraged to share our personal experience of God’s grace (testimony) and to use this as a basis for urging others to respond to the Gospel (exhortation). Preaching may include these features, but its purpose is to reflect on and expound Scripture in the light of the faith of the Church and the needs of the world. All Christians are called to bear witness to the hope that is in us. Not all are called to preach.

Responsibility for Local Arrangements

It is the responsibility of the Church Stewards / Church Leadership Team to ensure that arrangements are made for LAs. However, this does not mean that they lead them all, so local churches should agree about how they will be arranged and these are likely to be different in each church. Some of the possibilities are as follows:

- Where churches have Worship Leaders, some are happy to lead LAs and organise them.

¹ Methodist Worship Book (MWB), Preface, p. vii

- Where there are no Worship Leaders, or the Worship Leaders are already well used or do not wish to take full responsibility, a team of people might be created.
- Alternatively, one person might be designated, for a period of time.

It would be helpful if the Church Council is made aware of the arrangements.

It is not appropriate, to ask the Local Preachers who are members of a local church to lead LAs since, during the Plan-making process, they are asked if they are willing / able to take additional appointments to fill gaps in the Plan. Local Preachers can advise, or support a group if they so wish, but this should not be assumed. We do not encourage the use of preachers from other denominations. Those preaching in the Methodist Church regularly should be accredited or have affirmed that they are preaching 'nothing at variance with our doctrines'.

Planning Local Arrangements

Worship has a 'natural' shape and it is helpful to plan using this. This shape can also be found in the first and second orders of service in the Methodist Worship Book (pages 26-59). On the Methodist Website there is a planning section including a planning sheet.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/leading-worship/your-guide-to-preparing-for-worship/>

You will find an adapted version of this this on our website -

<https://www.wermethodistcircuit.org.uk/worship/worship-resources.html>

Methodist Resources

Local Church Resources

- House groups
- Church groups e.g. a mission group might create services to promote the local and global organisations you are supporting and a speaker from the agency could be invited to lead part of the service.
- Children and young people's groups
- Musicians to lead Songs of Praise
- Prayer group to lead a prayer and praise service

Circuit Resources

- The Service at Home worship sheet
- Services live streamed by another Circuit church (the list is in the Plan).

Methodist Resources

- The Methodist Worship Book has two orders of service providing a variety of prayers and seasonal resources.
- The Methodist Prayer Handbook provides prayers for each day and some general ones on the theme of the year at the beginning.
- The Methodist website has many resources. This provides the link to the main resources <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/>
There is a link on this page to Singing the Faith plus where there are suggestions for hymns related to the set lectionary readings
- This link takes you to resources for Local Arrangements <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/leading-worship/resourcing-local-arrangements/>
There is a step to step guide to organising them and lots of ideas for services based on themes as well as services based around some of the pictures in the Methodist Art Collection. It is updated regularly and has links to other organisations.

Other resources

There is a vast array of possible resources. Churches might like to create a local collection of resources you find particularly helpful. There will be a tab on the Circuit website - <https://www.wermethodistcircuit.org.uk/worship/worship-resources.html> - where some are listed. There will also be advice on copyright issues there.

Advice from Worship Leaders and Church Stewards in the Circuit

- Think out of the box about what to do and who to involve
- Try to encourage participation - ask people specifically rather than issue general invitations
- Don't involve too many people so the service doesn't become too disjointed
- Keep it simple
- Phone another steward or Worship Leader in the Circuit (see the Circuit Directory)