

How to Plan, Local Arrangement in Sunday Worship?

A Simple Guide for the Chelmsford Methodist Churches

The Purpose of Local Arrangements

The purpose of a Local Arrangement is not just to fill a gap in the preaching plan, but to:

1. **Encourage:** Invite members of the congregation to take an active part in worship.
2. **Equip:** Provide support and opportunities for people to lead and share their gifts confidently.
3. **Engage:** Build fellowship and shared learning as we grow together in faith and understanding.
4. **Embrace:** Celebrate and make space for the rich variety of talents and graces within the church family.

Hoping the Four E's of Local Arrangements are remembered and lived out, as we Encourage, Equip, Engage, and Embrace, involving everyone in worship and growing together in faith.

Step-by-Step Guide to Organising a Local Arrangement

1. Appoint a Coordinator or Small Team

- Prayerfully, identify a person or small group to oversee local arrangements.
- This could be a Worship Leader, Steward, or simply someone with good organisational skills.
- Their role is to encourage, inspire, plan, support volunteers, and ensure everything comes together smoothly and joyfully, even if things don't go perfectly. Don't worry; there's always a next time to grow and improve. Urge everyone to pray every day for this service, sharers and staging.

2. Choose a Theme or Focus

- Select a clear and meaningful theme, perhaps from the lectionary readings, church calendar (e.g. Lent, Harvest), or something relevant to the life of the church. Kindly involve everyone in deciding.
- You can also consider themes like "Justice", "Community", "Hope", "Love of God", or "Gratitude".

3. Invite Participation

Encourage a wide range of people to take part, make it more inclusive, intergenerational and intercultural:

- **Readers** for Scripture, prayers, or reflections.
- **Musicians** to lead singing or offer instrumental pieces.
- **Intercessors** to lead prayers for others.
- **Testimonies** invite someone to share how their faith has grown.
- **Dramas or Creative Pieces** especially good for intergenerational worship.

Tip: Prayerfully and purely, involve people of all ages and backgrounds, children, young people, long-standing members, and newcomers.

4. Plan the Service Together

- Hold a planning meeting (in person or online) 2–3 weeks before the service.
- Use a basic worship outline:
Welcome – Praise – Confession – Bible Reading – Reflection – Prayers – Hymns – Blessing

- Distribute responsibilities clearly so everyone knows what they are doing.
- Agree who will lead the service (a Worship Leader, Steward, or rotating leader).

5. Prepare and Practise

- Offer help to anyone preparing a reading, prayer or reflection.
- Rehearse any music or group elements like dramas.
- Ensure someone is ready to lead the whole service smoothly.

6. Hold the Service

- Begin on time, with a warm welcome.
- Keep a relaxed, supportive tone, encourage participation and be open to the Spirit.
- Celebrate each person's contribution, however small.

7. Reflect Afterwards (compulsory)

- Take a few minutes after the thanksgiving prayer as a team to reflect gracefully after the service:
 - What went well?
 - What could be improved?
 - Who might be encouraged to lead more often?

Encouraging Involvement in Local Arrangements

1. Always Start Small

- Invite individuals to do something simple: read a Bible passage, lead a prayer, light a candle.
- As confidence grows, people may offer reflections, testimonies or even lead whole services.

2. Offer Support and Training

- Pair less experienced people with those more confident.
- Offer mini workshops on reading aloud, writing prayers, or choosing hymns.
- Use resources from the Methodist Church such as Worship: Leading and Preaching or The Vine worship material or Roots material.

3. Affirm and Appreciate

- Thank everyone who takes part, both privately and publicly.
- Celebrate people's gifts, this builds confidence and encourages others.

4. Establish a Culture of Shared Worship

- Speak often of worship as something we all do together, not something we attend.
- Encourage different voices to be heard, not just preachers but also those who serve in quieter ways.

Legal and Policy Basis for Local Arrangements in the Methodist Church (Britain)

The Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) of the Methodist Church in Britain does refer to Local Arrangements, although not extensively but excitingly. The relevant standing order is;

Standing Order 780(2): Preaching Plan and the Local Arrangements

“Where no preacher is appointed for a particular service on the plan, it shall be designated a ‘Local Arrangement’ and it shall be the responsibility of the Church Council to make such provision for the conduct of worship as it may think fit.” (*CPD, Book II, Standing Orders*)

What this means in practice:

- A Local Arrangement occurs when no presbyter, local preacher, or other authorised person is available to lead the service.
- It is the Church Council’s responsibility to ensure that worship still takes place. This could involve:
 - Appointing a Worship Leader
 - Organising a members-led service
 - Inviting someone from within the circuit
- There is freedom and flexibility in how the service is arranged, as long as it aligns with Methodist doctrine and practice.

Helpful Resources for Local Arrangements

While the CPD gives the basic legal framework, the practical and spiritual guidance often comes from other sources such as:

- **The Methodist Worship Book:** Provides structured liturgies and worship patterns rooted in Methodist tradition.
- **Worship: Leading & Preaching:** Training materials designed to equip lay people and local preachers to lead and shape worship confidently.
- **ROOTS:** Weekly ecumenical worship and learning materials for all ages, offering Bible-based content, prayers, reflections, and ideas for inclusive worship.
- **Circuit Plans and Policies:** Local arrangements should align with the preaching plan and any circuit-wide guidance or expectations.
- **Local Church and Circuit Guidelines:** Practical advice developed to help maintain consistency and quality in worship planning.
- **Established Best Practices:** Draw on what has worked well in other churches, circuits: collaborative leadership, creativity, intergenerational involvement, and Spirit-led preparation.

Theology and Practice:

The Methodist Church holds a strong theological emphasis on:

- **The Priesthood of All Believers:** The belief that every Christian is called to worship, serve, and lead in various ways.
- **Shared ministry:** Where ordained, lay, and local members contribute according to their gifts and callings.
- **Empowerment of the local church:** particularly in circuits where ordained leadership is limited or spread thinly.

Conclusion:

A Local Arrangement is a gift, a chance to grow in faith, serve together, and discover the richness of the Body of Christ. As we prayerfully, open up space for the Spirit to make us compatible to this age and to move among us, equipping, encouraging, and uniting us by the grace and love of God.

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