

Benington Methodist Church

Notes about the church for local preachers – February 2009

GENERAL POINTS

Congregation

Numbers average 15 but can be up to 20 particularly on the first Sunday of the month. Unfortunately there are no young couples with children but very occasionally a child or children may come with an adult. Only a few of the congregation actually live in Benington. I think it would be fair to say we are a friendly congregation and appreciative of the local preachers who minister to us week by week.

Music

We have two hymn books: Methodist Hymns and Psalms and Complete Mission Praise (2005). The latter is under used and we would welcome more hymns from Mission Praise. There are two couples that were former Baptists who probably know many of the more popular hymns and choruses from Mission Praise. Large print books are available for both versions.

Organists

Gordon Tipper, our main organist, has taken on the role in the last year and knows the Methodists hymns well but would welcome advance notice of anything new or not so well known. Gordon is retired and visits friends and relatives fairly frequently and is therefore not always at church.

Margaret Bowyer is an experienced organist who plays for us occasionally. Margaret has attended a Baptist church in Stevenage and now plays at the Methodist Church at Watton at Stone.

Lloyd Jones does not attend the church on a regular basis, but plays the organist for us occasionally. He is the son of a former organist of the church and is familiar with Methodist hymns.

Readers

We have a team of about 6 readers all of whom welcome advance notice of a reading. One or two are very reluctant to be given notice of a reading just prior to a service. Ideally, we would normally only read two of the three weekly readings.

Local Ecumenical Partnership

The churches in Benington (Anglican and Methodist) and Walkern (Anglican and URC) (plus some Roman Catholics although there is no RC church in either village) are working closely together in an ecumenical partnership, but at the present time this is on hold pending the appointment of a new Anglican minister for 4 parishes including Benington and Walkern and the arrival of the new Methodist minister for Benington.

Otherwise, our involvement in Benington affairs is limited to the Christmas fair and the Summer fair. The Anglicans are more active than us with weekly coffee mornings, monthly lunches, children activities and a monthly toddlers group. A few of our members are involved in these activities. It does not help that most of the Methodist congregation do not live in Benington.

PRIOR TO A SERVICE

Please telephone Brian Burgess, Senior Steward (01438 237748) with hymns and readings on Thursday at the latest before the service you will be taking.

Brian can also tell you about any special items for prayer.

SUNDAY SERVICE

Arrival

The church is situated on Whempstead Road near the firm of agricultural engineers called Ernest Doe. There are plenty of parking spaces behind the church. There is a side door, which leads into the vestry. All services are now morning services (unless otherwise stated) and start at 10.30 a.m.

Before the Service

Some local preachers greet the congregation before the service, which is always appreciated.

It would be useful to have copies of the order of service to give to the senior steward for the hymn board, and for the readers.

There is a wireless microphone/loudspeaker system and the preacher will need to fasten a small microphone to his or her clothes. The microphone has an on/off button. The loudspeaker system is switched on when the preacher and steward enter the main body of the church. There is a lectern for the notices and readings which has its own microphone which can be turned on or off as required.

The steward will read a prayer from the vestry prayer book just prior to the commencement of the service.

The Service

A steward welcomes the congregation and preacher, reading out the usually brief notices before the start of the service.

We are used to a more traditional form of service but I do not think there would be any objections to anything a little different from time to time. We do not use an overhead projector for hymns or for talks but the Anglicans have this equipment and we could probably borrow it if required

The collection can be taken at any time during the service and one of the stewards is responsible for this or a member of the congregation. There is brass plate for the preacher to use to receive the collection bag. There is no obligation to use the plate if you prefer not to.

After the Service

Most preachers will try and speak to each member of the congregation after the service.

Tea and coffee is served after the service on the first and third Sundays of the month.

The congregation like to stay and chat after the service and catch up with each other's news.

Thank you to all preachers who conduct services for us. All your hard work is very much appreciated.