



WE ARE METHODISTS

**A short booklet to help us understand
more about Methodism**



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Introduction

How many times have we gone into a Church maybe for a Wedding, Baptism or Funeral and we felt embarrassed? We didn't know which books to use or which page numbers to turn to. The "regulars" seemed at ease with it all but we hadn't a clue.

This small booklet is to try to prevent any of us being ill at ease in a Methodist Church and, if we don't know which books, which pages, and which prayer from a few options to read from, at least we shall feel comfortable in asking people alongside us for help.

What follows is a series of questions and answers to some points about Methodism that may help us know a bit more about this Church tradition.

1. How did it all start

A man who was an ordained priest within the Church of England, named John Wesley, as an undergraduate at Oxford University, held a regular meeting there of friends with similar Christian views to himself. The group met for Bible Study, visited condemned prisoners and helped the poor people around the City.

After University Wesley recognised the value of what the group had achieved and he believed he could develop these practises in the wider society.

2. Why is it called Methodism?

The term Methodists was originally a nickname at Oxford University and not a friendly one, but it identified people who cared for each other and wished to know more about Christianity, its leader Jesus Christ and how to express their faith in practical ways in Society. Wesley's methodical approach to life became the vehicle by which the group learned about practical Christianity.

3. How did it grow?

John Wesley had a conversion experience in his life and this changed him, because after a rigid and formal childhood he knew for the first time that God really loved him, truly forgave his past mistakes (and he had made a few). This celebration day is called Aldersgate Sunday. He began open air preaching basically because he was banned from many Church of England churches and this formed a pattern for the remainder of his life. Travelling on horseback all over the country, he took his message to the working and dispossessed por. They came to believe in the saving power of Jesus Christ in their thousands. Thousands knew for the first time that God loved them.

4. What do Methodists believe?

Our faith has no pre-requisites, no demands but one "that we love the Lord Jesus Christ and seek to serve him." Even Holy Communion is offered to all who believe in Jesus Christ. No one is ever turned away. All are welcome to any Methodist Church.

5. Do Methodists allow other denominations to join them?

Most definitely yes. Whether you wish to join us for the occasional service or attend as you are able, we are glad to see you.

6. What happens in a Methodist Service?

Methodism has, from its beginnings, always placed importance on lay leadership. Today most Ministers have pastoral charge of more than one Church; congregation and services may be taken by an Ordained Minister or a Local Preacher.

Our latest Hymn Book is called "Singing the Faith". Other modern hymn books or PowerPoint projection are also used. There are usually Bible Readings which follow a pattern to provide a planned wealth of detail for us to know more of the life, message and way of Jesus Christ. To help us in this task an explanation usually follows called a sermon which gives us more detailed help in our daily lives and on our Christian journey.

Services of Worship usually include Jesus' Prayer called the Lord's Prayer which in some services has modern words. It begins "Our Father....."

7. Erasing past mistakes

A great many people quite wrongly believe that their past life, or experience make them “too bad” to ever be accepted by the Church or welcomed into Jesus’ family.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Church exists for sinners, people who have got it wrong time and again in their lives. The truth however is that Christians know they are loved and forgiven the past by Jesus because they truly want new life and only he in us can give it.

You don’t need to attend a Church to have this experience.

However, once you’ve had this experience being a member of a Church fellowship helps to support, encourage, and affirm you.

8. A Caring Church

When you join in with Methodist people, you are with folk who care about you. There are Pastoral Visitors, the Minister and ordinary people who will listen to your story, pray with you and for you, and generally take an interest in your concerns. Every Worship time has what are called Intercession Prayers—prayers for others and for the needs of the world. Often this will include a time of silence for our own prayers. At Dorridge there is a small Prayer Room reserved for private prayer.

JOY, HOPE AND CELEBRATION

Methodists have always had a sense of joy and optimism for the future, and this is reflected in our worship. We are well known for our enthusiastic hymn singings, a helpful “word to all” encouraging prayer time with all contributing to a sense of purpose and hope for the future. If we enter Church downhearted and pessimistic we should leave up beat and hopeful for the days and weeks to come. The special days in the Church year are celebrated and we take strength from them, but it is the way in which we are fed regularly that helps us grow in faith and new life in the love of Jesus Christ.

FINAL NOTE

No one has ever suggested that following Jesus exempts us from pain, tragedy and suffering. Christians believe we are given strength to bear the problems that beset us for we follow a crucified saviour, a servant King and wounded healer showing us God's way of living and dying. We hope that this little booklet has answered a few questions, but a bit like swimming, you have to dip in your toes and eventually take the plunge. We hope you will find joy and happiness in being part of this family of Christians at Dorridge and will be glad to say....

“WE ARE METHODISTS”



John Wesley 1703 -1791