



#### What is a Local Arrangement?

A Local Arrangement is a service of worship where there is no allocated Minister or Local Preacher available to take responsibility for leading worship. Such services have been a regular feature of life in many circuits for a while, and have become increasingly common in others.

This could be seen as a problem, or even a failure to produce a viable Preaching Plan. There are circuits who genuinely struggle to provide opportunities for quality worship in all the times and places they would wish. However, if approached positively and with appropriate support and encouragement, Local Arrangements are an opportunity for building up the congregation and releasing new gifts and creativity for the glory of God.



#### TRY THIS...

Are there people across the circuit who would like to explore worship leading? You could get a group together and use part of the Worship: Leading & Preaching (WLP) to inspire you. You could offer to lead a Local Arrangement as part of your exploration together.

#### Who is responsible for a Local Arrangement?

The Church Stewards are responsible for ensuring that worship takes place and they carry the responsibility for “arranging” a Local Arrangement service where one is shown on the Preaching Plan (SO 569(1)). They should therefore take the lead in identifying and inviting people to lead and take part. At least one of the Stewards should be present to take responsibility for the service, whether or not they have specific part to play in worship. The Steward doesn’t have to lead the service themselves.



#### TRY THIS...

Does your church have a home group, pastoral group or mission team who could be asked to lead worship? They might appreciate being asked and to share something of what they have been doing as a group.

#### Who can lead a Local Arrangement?

The Standing Order states that the service should be “...led by persons from the local congregation”. Hence this is an opportunity for people to be involved who wouldn’t normally volunteer. Groups who are part of the life of a church often appreciate being asked to lead a service - it can provide an opportunity for them to work together on something for the whole church, and to get to know people better. In a small chapel, a Local Arrangement can be an opportunity for everyone to bring something to contribute to their shared worship.



Local Preachers are not obliged to step in if there's a Local Arrangement – they will have already offered their availability for the Plan. Similarly, Supernumerary Ministers may like to be involved but aren't obliged to, so they should never be put under any pressure to be involved. Also, if you have one or more Worship Leaders at your church, don't assume that they will always be able to step in to lead every Local Arrangement.

Local Arrangements are not gaps in the preaching plan that local churches must fill by finding their own visiting preachers. Visiting preachers are of course welcome in Methodist Churches, but invitations should always be arranged through the Preaching Plan.

As the Circuit Superintendent has overall responsibility for worship across the circuit and for producing the Preaching Plan, they should be informed of who is responsible for each Local Arrangement service for their records.



#### TRY THIS...

Ask a few volunteers to answer some simple questions in the service, like:

- \* What will you be doing this time tomorrow?
- \* What challenges will you face?
- \* How can we pray for you?

The answers should be kept short and to the point. After someone has prayed with them, each person "interviewed" could ask the questions to the next person, perhaps with a well-chosen song in-between. This provides a great way to build a sense of community as you get to know each other better.<sup>1</sup>

### Who can be involved?

Those leading worship can ask others to be involved. If the responsibility is shared, then each person's contribution needn't be huge. Often simple contributions (e.g. someone choosing a hymn and giving a simple explanation of what it means to them) can be a profound contribution to worship. You may also discover hidden skills and gifts.

There may be someone in the congregation who would be thrilled to be asked to read or share something. Don't be afraid to ask, to listen to what the person would like to contribute, or to accept no for an answer. It may be that next time you ask, the answer will be different.



#### TRY THIS...

Listen carefully for what gifts, interests, talents people might be willing to bring to worship, and ask them to consider contributing. They may be surprised and honoured to be included.

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<sup>1</sup> This idea comes from LICC. For more info, see <https://licc.org.uk/resources/this-time-tomorrow/>.



Done well, Local Arrangements are a great opportunity for the whole congregation to participate and get involved. The word liturgy, which we often use for written words in Worship Book, means “work of the people”. Local Arrangements are genuine liturgy at work.

#### What can worship include?

It is good to remember that the primary purpose of worship is to give glory to God. If that is kept in view, a Local Arrangement can include a wide range of different items. Most services will include the following four basic elements<sup>2</sup>:

**Gathering** – bringing us into a deeper awareness of God’s presence.

**Hearing** – listening to God’s Word affirms the greatness and goodness of God

**Responding** – an opportunity to reflect on and deepen our relationship with God.

**Sending** - encouraging us to live out our discipleship in the world.

Within this framework, there is scope for a wide range of different creative possibilities. There should normally be one or more readings from the Bible and some opportunities for prayer, but there are many possibilities for how these are presented.

Music plays a big part in Methodist worship, but needn’t be confined to hymn-singing with an organ or piano. Consider using recorded music, or if you have musicians who don’t normally offer to be involved (perhaps because they don’t think their instrument or preferred musical style might fit), you could invite them to take part and to suggest what they’d like to contribute.

The **Worship: Foundations** booklet (downloadable [here](#)) provides a helpful introduction to preparing for worship, based on the four elements above.



#### TRY THIS...

In advance, ask everyone in the congregation to suggest themes or Bible readings they would like to explore and base a service around these. Or ask people to choose a piece of music and say something about how it connects to their faith.

#### What about preaching?

In 2017, the Faith & Order Committee noted<sup>3</sup> that...

*...historically, Methodism has always drawn a distinction between preaching, testimony and exhortation. It is appreciated that the boundaries may sometimes be unclear or indistinct,*

<sup>2</sup> Taken from Worship: Foundations, p.4. Click [here](#) to download Worship Foundations.

<sup>3</sup> From from 2017 Faith & Order Report.



## Local Arrangements: locally-led worship at its best

### GUIDANCE FOR CHURCH STEWARDS AND OTHERS FOR PLANNING, PREPARING AND LEADING

*but the difference is captured in the traditional phrase 'taking a text'. All are welcome, and encouraged, to share their personal experience of God's grace (testimony) and to make this a basis for urging others to respond to the Gospel (exhortation). Preaching often includes these features, but it goes further, by reflecting on and expounding 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 them; not all are called to preach.*

If a Local Preacher, Deacon or Supernumerary Minister (or other person authorised to preach) is involved, they can of course preach if they are willing and able to do so. Otherwise, a Local Arrangement shouldn't include preaching. However, there is nothing to prevent the inclusion of testimony, a reflection by someone on what a particular text means to them, or a conversation relating to faith, life and the Bible. There are many great examples of suitable reflections you can use or adapt – see the resources section below.



#### TRY THIS...

Instead of listening to a preacher, why not explore the Bible together in the service in small groups? A few simple, open questions can open up interesting conversation. You may be surprised how willing people are to participate, although you should always allow people to opt out – perhaps by providing a sheet with the questions and some prayers for people to use quietly themselves. And, keep to the plan - if you say 10 minutes for conversation, make sure you finish when the 10 minutes is up!

### What resources are available?

There are many resources available to help with Local Arrangements. Here are four of the most helpful:

- \* **The Methodist Worship Book** contains orders for Morning and Evening Prayer which can be used as a simple framework for a service. You can use other material to make the service relevant for your context
- \* **Singing the Faith Plus** has a range of resources for Local Arrangements, including a series of themed service outlines. You can find them here:  
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/leading-worship/resourcing-local-arrangements/>
- \* **The Vine** (provided by Worship Cloud / Twelve Baskets) provide a simple service plan for every Sunday of the year, based on the lectionary readings for the day. These include a thoughtful reflection on one of the readings that can be used as written or adapted for your context. Again, the service plan can be adapted to suit your needs. This is a subscription service, but Local Arrangements happen frequently in your circuit, getting a subscription for the circuit is worth considering.



- \* **Roots** is a wide-ranging resource normally associated with intergenerational worship. There is a rich treasury of ideas for prayers, activities, etc. and an archive of all the worship ideas for several years past. Again, a subscription service but your circuit may already have access to Roots – it's worth asking.

However, don't be tied to using words written by others. Someone once said that worship isn't worship unless we bring something of ourselves. There is wisdom and spiritual awareness amongst us, Local Arrangements are an opportunity to listen to the word of God in our midst.



#### TRY THIS...

Before jumping into the (excellent) ready-made resources available, gather a group together and think what you all most appreciate about godly worship. Then create an act of worship that you would like to attend yourselves.

### What about Safeguarding?

One of the reasons for the Church Steward remaining responsible for a Local Arrangement service, even if someone else (or a group) is leading it, is that there will definitely be someone present who has a current DBS check and has completed Safeguarding Foundation Training.

All Worship Leaders and Local Preachers need current DBS and Advanced Safeguarding Training. Churches with regular Local Arrangements should consider identifying those who will be present at the services – probably one or more of the Church Stewards – and encouraging them to complete Advanced Safeguarding training. In this way, there will be someone with appropriate safeguarding awareness present at all services. Similarly, if there is someone who regularly leads Local Arrangements, the Church Council should encourage them to undertake training so that they can be appointed as a Worship Leader.

The importance of Safeguarding can't be overstated. No training you have to do to ensure that your Local Arrangement are safe and welcoming places is ever wasted.

### What support and help is available?

The Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting (or Worship & Preaching Forum or Leaders of Worship & Preachers' Meeting) in the circuit is the focus for training in worship and preaching. This group is also responsible for providing a programme of Continuing Development, which should of course be open to all who are interested in worship and preaching.

The Worship: Foundations booklet (downloadable [here](#)) provides a helpful introduction to leading worship and could be used as the basis of a training session for the whole circuit.



In providing training and development, the aim should be to enable local churches to gain confidence in worship, and to provide better, more welcoming and accessible opportunities for people to encounter God.



#### TRY THIS...

Suggest that your Local Preachers' Meeting holds an open meeting for everyone in the circuit who would like to know more about worship. You could invite all the Church Stewards and the Leadership Team. You could use material from Worship: Leading & Preaching module 2.3 which explores what worship is and how to prepare for it.

### Standing Order

Here is the Standing Order from our Constitutional Practice and Discipline book that refers to Local Arrangements:

#### **SO 569 Services not led by a Presbyter or Local Preacher.**

(1) A service described on the preaching plan by the words 'Local Arrangements' or any similar expression shall be arranged by church stewards and led by persons from the local congregation and shall not normally include a preaching element. Local preachers and worship leaders may be invited to take part in such a service but are neither required nor expected to do so and are free to decline any request to participate.

(2) Those responsible for a local arrangements service by and for a particular group (such as children, young people, elderly people or those with special educational needs) shall receive encouragement and guidance from persons working with the group and an appropriate member of the Local Preachers' Meeting. The service should enable members of the group to discover and develop creative and culturally appropriate ways for them to meet with God in worship.

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