

**Service Material for February 2024 (11th – 18th)**

**Objectives:**

* To remind Irish Methodists that they are part of a world Methodist family.
* To highlight our shared identity as Methodists.
* To create interest in what Methodists are doing in other countries.
* To show how World Mission Partnership helps Irish Methodists to support our church family, and to learn from them.

**Please read this document before planning your service, to see what resources are available and what suits your context best.**

**If you have any questions or need any help, contact David Nesbitt (WMP Coordinator) on:**

* **028 9076 7957**
* **david.nesbitt@irishmethodist.org**

**What resources are available and how to use them:**

WMP will provide you with everything you need for your World Mission Service.

Resources include:

**1) Physical packs**

You should receive these in mid-January. **If you haven’t received your pack by 29th January, please contact david.nesbitt@irishmethodist.org**

The pack contains:

a) Annual Reports b) Offering envelopes

It is important that these resources get into people’s hands.

Please DO NOT distribute them the week before the service, because it’s hard for people to give financially until they understand what they are giving to.

**The report contains a prayer to be used during the WMP service, so please distribute Reports and Offering Envelopes on the day of your WMP service.**

**2) Downloadable resources**

These are available from January 29th via the WMP website:

a) Sermon video b) Sermon/service notes (below)

c) All-age talk d) Accompanying PowerPoints

**Recommendation for the actual sermon:**

**We recommend using the short video sermon with integrated videos and images. This means all the hard work has been done for you!**

**Service Material**

Below is an overview of this year’s World Mission Service. This includes suggestions for readings and prayers.

**Text in green: alternatives for those meeting face to face but without access to video facilities.**

**Overview**

Introduction and Welcome

Call to Worship

Reading

All-Age Talk

Reading

Sermon

Intercessory Prayer

Blessing

**SERVICE NOTES**

**Theme: In All Places**

PPT SLIDE 1 – Title slide

**Introduction and welcome**

*“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can,* ***in all the places you can****, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”*

John Wesley may not have used these exact words, but they capture the heart of the Methodist movement he founded. That movement began with a small group of students in Oxford, and grew into a Methodist family across one hundred and thirty eight countries.

Irish Methodists are members of that international church family, which has more than 80 million members. Today we celebrate our world Methodist family – In All Places.

PPT SLIDE 2 – Call to worship

**Call to Worship**

*“I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.* *And they cried out in a loud voice:*

*“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”*

Revelation 7: 9-10

Father, we come before you today as brothers and sisters in your world church family. Together, we declare that Salvation belongs to you. You are the hope of all the earth; the desire of every nation; the joy of every longing heart.

PPT SLIDES 3 & 4– Reading

John 6: 25-35

PPT SLIDE 5 - Reading

James 2: 14-18

PPT SLIDES (x5) – See separate All-age talk slides

**All Age Talk**

See separate download with accompanying PPT slides.

**At this point in the service, we highly recommend that you choose the option of the video sermon which integrates all stories and explanation with good quality video and photo material.**

**If you would prefer to do the talk yourself, you can use the Sermon notes below.**

PPT SLIDE 6– Title slide

**Sermon notes (if required):**

Let’s take a moment to close our eyes, and picture something. Let’s picture the typical Methodist.

What does he or she look like? How old are they? What colour is their skin? What language do they speak?

And what about their church? What does the building look like it? What kind of music do they play? How long does the service last?

Whatever you’re picturing, you’re almost certainly wrong! That’s because there is no such thing as a “typical Methodist.” In a church of more than eighty million people, spread across more than one hundred countries, there is a huge range of variety.

Methodists live in very different places. They speak different languages, they have different cultures, and sometimes even different beliefs.

When we have so many differences, what unites us? What makes us all “Methodists”?

To answer that question, let’s look at Methodist churches in very different places and see what they have in common.

PPT SLIDE 7– David Turtle in Namibia

Last summer, MCI President David Turtle visited Namibia.

The Methodist Church in Namibia is small, with around four thousand members and only six ordained ministers. The church is spread across huge distances: Namibia is ten times the size of Ireland, but has less than half our population. Some societies are more than a thousand kilometres apart, and financial resources are spread almost as thinly.

Despite these challenges, Namibian Methodists are committed to two things: 1) serving the community around them, 2) helping people to grow closer to God.

Osire [*pronounced “Oss-eeray”*] refugee camp in Namibia is a good example of how Methodists focus on both of these aims. In Osire, The Methodist Church in Namibia has a ministry with asylum seekers and refugees from countries across Africa and further afield. Most of the refugees at Osire come from war zones in Angola and Congo.

The church is served by an Evangelist, Malanda Boniface Kassander, himself a refugee who lives in the camp. The congregation of around 30 people meets in a simple mud-brick, tin-roofed church. Services last around two hours, and are filled with singing, dancing and giving thanks to God for the gift of life and for what He provides.

The Methodist Church also has a practical ministry amongst the refugees, and church currently runs two Kindergartens in the camp because they have identified preschool education as an area of particular need.

PPT SLIDE 8– Bishop Christopher Gaya

Rev Christopher Gaya, Bishop of the Methodist Church in Namibia, describes the church’s role in Osire as being both spiritual and practical. Methodists in the camp “share scripture and sacraments, but they also lift up the people around them through education and capacity building.”

That’s a great summary of Methodist Church: sharing scripture and sacraments, but they also lifting up the people around them through education and capacity building.

As James asked in our second reading, what good is it to bless someone with words without also meeting their needs? That’s why the Namibian church provides food and fuel for refugees in Osire. It’s why they provide education through pre-schools for the children who live in the camp.

But by themselves, those things are not enough. Any charity can offer help in the here and now, but only God can meet our spiritual needs. That’s why the congregation in Osire also gather on Sunday mornings, to worship together and find hope in the good news of Jesus.

You can see that the church in Namibia witnesses to God’s love by meeting people’s practical needs, *and* their spiritual needs. Being Methodist means serving both – the two cannot be separated.

Through World Mission Partnership, Methodists in Ireland support our Namibian brothers and sisters with that same combination of practical and spiritual support.

We listen to stories from our world church family, so we know how to pray for them. That’s important spiritual support.

PPT SLIDE 9 – Rev Everestu

We also provide practical support. When David Turtle visited Namibia, he met Rev. Everestu Kameya [*“Everestoo Kam-ey-ah”*]. Rev. Everestu was a refugee from Congo who previously lived in Osire Refugee camp. He is now a minister with the Methodist Church in Namibia, overseeing six churches – some of which are more than one hundred miles apart.

Because of the long distances between societies, internet access is an essential to Everestu’s work. Through World Mission Partnership and the World Mission Fund, Irish Methodists have helped to provide him with a computer and WiFi connection.

That’s the Methodist model in action again: combining the spiritual with the practical.

You can find that same model in Methodist churches all over the world. In Ireland, in Namibia – and in Germany too.

PPT SLIDE 10 – Metzingen

In October 2023, World Mission Partnership took a group of Irish Methodists to Germany. They went to learn from the German church, to see what they’re doing differently and consider how we might use those lessons to grow the church here in Ireland.

The group visited three Methodist churches, each of them radically different from anything here in Ireland – but also radically different from each other.

The first church visited was in Metzingen. Twenty years ago, this was a pretty normal church. It certainly had all the problems of a normal church; the kind we often face here in Ireland: an ageing congregation, shrinking numbers, a shortfall in the budget. Eventually, those problems overwhelmed the church and it had to close.

PPT SLIDE 11 – Bernd Schwenkschuster

A few years later, Pastor Bernd Schwenkschuster was sent to plant a new Methodist congregation in Metzingen. And that’s what he did - but not in the old church building.

Instead, the new congregation met in pubs and restaurants. They prayed and worshipped in public where everyone could see them, and anyone could join in. And people did join in: today, the Methodist church in Metzingen has grown into a thriving congregation. But what about the old church building?

PPT SLIDE 12 – Climbing Hall

Well, they decided to use the old building in a new way, by converting it into a community climbing hall staffed by volunteers. A place where anyone could come to climb and be part of a community built around a shared passion.

Meeting in restaurants? Turning churches into climbing halls? On the face of it, those things might not sound very Methodist. But when you look closer, you’ll find the same principles we saw in Namibia.

The first principle is serving practical needs. In Osire, people needed food. In Metzingen, they have plenty of food – but something they lack is community. The climbing hall is a way of meeting that need, and a very effective one too. Barely a decade ago, this church didn’t have enough people to keep the doors open: since being reborn as a climbing hall, more than **ten thousand** people use it every year.

The second principle is meeting the spiritual needs of the community, in a way that works for the community. People in Metzingnen wouldn’t come to the church building, but they would come to a restaurant - so that’s where the church had to go too.

Of course, that isn’t the only way of meeting spiritual needs, and the church visited next had a very different approach.

PPT SLIDE 13 – JesusCentrum / Bike Kitchen

A few hours northwest of Metzingen, in Nurnberg, the congregation in JesusCentrum do meet in a church building: and not just any church building, but a purpose-built space that’s set up to host modern worship services.

The church in Nurnberg deliberately caters for a younger audience, with a coffee bar and contemporary music. The emphasis on meeting spiritual needs here is clear. But even in a congregation built around worship and Christian fellowship, there is still a clear focus on serving practical needs too.

The church runs a bike kitchen project, designed to help people to do their own repairs and provide bikes for those who can’t afford one of their own.

And just like in Osire, access to good quality pre-schools is an issue in Nurnberg. That’s why the congregation built a Kindergarten right beside their church.

It’s the same model: a joint emphasis on the spiritual and practical, and on being a church that does both.

PPT SLIDE 14 – INSPIRE / Barry and Gillian Sloan

The last church visited was the INSPIRE project in Chemnitz, which is run by Irish Methodist Mission Partners Gillian and Barry Sloan and an organising team.

INSPIRE might be in the same country as Metzingen and Nurnberg, and even part of the same denomination, but it operates in a completely different way.

As in Nurnberg, music is a big part of INSPIRE - but instead of having worship songs on a Sunday morning, they host secular singer-songwriters on a Monday evening.

Instead of a Bible study on a Wednesday night, they have an improv comedy group. There’s also a depression support group, a café for Ukrainian refugees, and a team of social workers reaching out to children in the local neighbourhood.

All this happens because INSPIRE recognised that the biggest practical need in Chemnitz was meaningful connection between people. And like any other Methodist Church, they committed themselves to meeting that need.

And what about the spiritual needs of the community? Well, you won’t find a pulpit in INSPIRE, but if that’s what you’re looking for, then you’re missing the point.

PPT SLIDE 15 – Berlin Wall

Chemnitz is in East Germany. During the Cold War, it was under the rule of a Communist Government that wanted to take Christianity completely out of German life.

Even today, thirty years after the Berlin Wall came down, most people in Chemnitz are atheists. Traditional church has no place in their lives, and many have no interest in being part of anything that looks or sounds like a normal church.

But they still have spiritual needs, and the question for INSPIRE is how to meet those needs. That’s what Barry and Gillian are doing: looking for ways to reach people who need Jesus, but who don’t want church.

PPT SLIDE 16 – Barry speaking

One Sunday each month, they invite the community to come together and explore spiritual themes. People don’t come to hear three-point sermons, they come to explore their own spirituality in a safe place.

That might not be the right approach in Nurnberg, or Namibia, or Newtownabbey. But it’s a been an effective one in Chemnitz.

It might look very different to the Methodist church that you’re used to. But if you scratch beneath the surface, you’ll find the same kind of Methodism in Chemnitz as in Nurnberg, Metzingen or Namibia: one that’s serving God wholeheartedly, transforming the world by loving people, and meeting their practical and spiritual needs.

And that’s what we have in common: that’s what makes us a Methodist family, *in all places*.

PPT SLIDE 17 – WMP

World Mission Partnership is the part of the Methodist Church in Ireland which helps connect Irish Methodists with our world church family.

World Mission Partnership help you to support that family by sending people, and prayers and money to churches who are doing the things we’ve just talked about. Your prayers, your giving, your time all help the world church to share the good news of Jesus with those who haven’t heard it, and to demonstrate his love to those in need.

World Mission Partnership also look for ways that our church family could help us to meet practical or spiritual needs here in Ireland.

PPT SLIDE 18 – MEET Team in Germany

That includes learning from them, like the team which visited Germany. Maybe the model for volunteering in Chemnitz, could be equally effective for Urban Junction in Blackrock? Perhaps the approach to innovation in Metzingen, could be useful for Seymour Street in Lisburn? Would the relationship-first approach to community outreach, work well for Ballynafeigh in Belfast?

And how much of the German church’s approach to big challenges like ageing congregations, or disused church buildings, could be helpful for the wider Methodist Church in Ireland?

World Mission Partnership believes that it’s worth finding out, and that’s why they brought Methodists from Ireland to visit Germany and experience these approaches first-hand.

As Christians we’re all responsible for growing God’s church – in Ireland, Germany, Namibia and beyond. The most effective way to do that, is by working together with our world church family.

So, thank you for supporting that work through World Mission Partnership. And if WMP can make just one request of you this year, it’s this: please keep in touch with us. Visit the World Mission Partnership website, sign up for our email newsletter, join our WhatsApp group – you’ll find a signup code for WhatsApp on the back of our Annual Report. Those things are all free, and they’re great ways to find out more about how you can be an active member of our World Methodist family.

Thank you.

**Intercessory Prayer**

Direct congregation to **Page 7 of the WMP Annual Report** for their responses.

PPT Slide 19 – Blessing

**Blessing from the Methodist Church in Singapore**

May God’s love strengthen you, as together we seek to love God by loving our neighbours.
Amen.

PPT Slide 20 - End of service, WhatsApp signup