

Information about Osmotherley Methodist Church for Primary Schools

Website link: <http://www.osmotherleymethodistchurch.org.uk>

1. In order to understand the building you need a bit of history!
2. It wouldn't be here but for a man called John Wesley, a Church of England priest. He was born in June 1703 in Epworth, Lincolnshire. He was a clever child and went to a school in London and then on to Oxford University. In 1725 he decided to enter the Church and become a priest. His father was the Rector (a type of Anglican Priest) in Epworth.
3. In Oxford he formed a group of students who met regularly to read their Bibles, to pray and consider how they could spend their lives more usefully – helping the poor and the sick. They were jokingly known as 'Methodists' because of their methods of reading and study and their regular habits – John Wesley used to get up each day at 4am to pray and read his Bible – and sometimes to preach as well at, say 5am in the morning when the farm workers were going out to the fields.
4. After a brief spell in America, trying to work among the settlers there, he returned home to England. He had a very real experience of the presence of God in his life on 24th May 1738 which changed his life even more. He became an 'evangelical' preacher – someone who preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ.
5. England was in a sorry state..... So Wesley's preaching helped many and upset a fair few! Even the Church of England was in a poor state. Wesley started preaching out of doors and outside, as many of the Churches were closed to him because of the opposition of many of his seniors and the clergy – who were often rather lazy and quite happy living a good life without enthusiastic preachers coming and stirring things up!
6. Wesley travelled over 5,000 miles a year on horseback – we believe he wore out over 5 horses in his lifetime!
7. On 28th March 1745 a Franciscan (a Catholic monk) invited Mr Wesley to come and preach in Osmotherley – remember that there is a 'monastery' here in Osmotherley. Wesley came and paid his first visit here on the evening of 15th April 1745 – starting to preach at 11pm and going on till around midnight! He was up again early the next morning and preached again to the crowd, many of whom had sat up all night so they shouldn't fall asleep and miss the next sermon!
8. He made several further visits and this clearly encouraged the people to build their own meeting house – it wouldn't have been called a Chapel or a church in those days. The Methodists were a 'Society' and often they were Church of England members who wanted some more religious discipline in their lives. There were many others who felt they weren't getting what they wanted from the established Churches.

The building – and what it tells us about who met here and their faith

9. The chapel was built in 1754 around 9 years after John Wesley's first visit. It was usual in those days for the small Methodist Societies to find a meeting-house, but not many of them could afford to build a special building. This one was built by 3 brothers who had a bit of spare land behind their own property. It was legally given to the Methodist Society to use for as long as they needed it.
10. It would have been a simple rectangular building. Bare stone inside and out. No seats. Only candles for lighting. No heating. They would have gathered to read the Bible and pray together, to hear preachers and sing hymns. They wouldn't call that a 'Service' but a 'Meeting'. They were not a 'Church' at that time – they were expected to go to St Peter's here in Osmotherley for Communion and things like Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.
11. A stable was added at the back in 1834 – they didn't have cars then and the visiting preachers needed somewhere to leave their horses! (That part is now the kitchen / vestry)
12. It hasn't been in continuous use and a new chapel in North End replaced it for a while in 1864 because the population of the village had grown so big and the congregation could no longer fit into this building. This building was later used as a Schoolroom (for the chapel) where young and old would come and learn to read and write and study the Bible. Then in 1977 it was renovated to become what we see today.
13. Notice what is at the front – Question: describe what they see and comment on it.
i.e. The Pulpit/ Lectern; The Cross; the Communion Table (*not* an altar please!); The Organ; a small Font – what do they tell us about what went on here – and still does today?

Answers: Preaching using the Pulpit or Lectern; The Cross is a symbol of the death of Jesus Christ and what it has achieved for Christians; The Communion Table is where we place the Bread and 'Wine' (Methodists only use 'juice of the grape - non-alcoholic') which is given in small amounts to remember the death of Jesus, reminding us how Jesus gave his body and blood (symbolised by the Bread and Wine) as he died on the Cross; The Organ allows us to Sing – something that Methodists are renowned for (John and Charles Wesley wrote thousands of hymns between them); The Font is used for holding water for Baptisms.

14. After John Wesley died, the Methodist Societies had become so big and so determined in their work that they voted to leave the Church of England (they had never been very welcome) and they formed their own Church. Initially they became Wesleyan Methodists (after John and Charles Wesley). Their practice in Worship is very similar to the Church of England and they would have used the Book of Common Prayer and the King James Authorised Bible just like the Anglicans did. Gradually we have changed but more recently we have an agreement (Covenant) with the Church of England to work towards some form of Unity. There are very good relationships and close working between all of the Religious denominations in Osmotherley these days – Anglican, Catholic, Methodists & Quakers.