

Café Church: West End Baptist Church, Westbury, Wilts.

For the past three years or so we have run a Café Church Service on the first Sunday morning of several months during the year: normally February, April; July; October and a Christmas Special in December. These services last for about 90 minutes, which include a 10-15 minute coffee break in the middle. Thematically based, with the chapel set out in a café style with people sitting around tables, each service include elements of a normal service, i.e. a couple of familiar hymns / songs, bible reading, intercessory prayer, presentation of Truth, etc. The service will also include film clips (mainly comedy), a quiz, testimony, discussion, drama, etc, with a short epilogue drawing the elements of the service together. In terms of academic level, we tend to waiver between Daily Mirror and Daily Mail depending on the subject. Over the years we have tackled subjects such as Harry Potter, Debt, Suffering, Halloween, Da Vinci Code, Singleness, Romance, bullying, identity, etc.



1. Why did this project seem right for your church and community?

With the removal of the Church pews and the purchase of a Church Laptop computer and Data Projector, we began to explore ways of being more creative with the use of our premises (typical early 19th Century Non-Conformist Chapel) and the resources that we had. A seminar at a Ministerial Refresher Conference about the possibility of using the Sunday morning Service slot

as an occasional Café Church seemed to be the natural way ahead for us as a Church – having previously dabbled with ‘seeker services’ as an ecumenical project.

2. How long did the planning process take?

Before we began the bi-monthly services, we sent two couples from the Church to experience Café Church at the Church whose minister had led the seminar. At the same time we had a trial run one Sunday morning to which we did not send out any invitations. The Service concluded with a questionnaire that everyone present filled in before they left the Chapel. With the feedback from the visit and the questionnaire plus our own reflections, it took us several months before we felt that we were at the place where we could begin in earnest.

3. How many people were involved, and what were their roles?

We have appointed a couple as “Café Church Managers”. Their role is to make sure that the publicity is prepared in time, that the Church is set out a couple of days before the Service, that sufficient people are scheduled for making drinks, etc (these are served prior, during and after the service). Needless to say, evangelistically and prayerfully, the services require the whole church to be involved in the event.



Café Church

Come and be refreshed.

**“Why is there so much SUFFERING
in the World?”**

**West End Baptist Church: 10.20am
6th July 2008**

4. How much time did they need to give?

Setting out can now be done within three quarters of an hour; with about half that time after the service for putting everything back to how the church is normally set out. The preparation for the Order of Service takes on average about 24 hours: discussing the format and content of the service with those involved, praying over and reflecting upon the theme, gathering together suitable film-clips, creating a relevant quiz, setting up the PowerPoint slide show, liaising with other relevant people, etc.

5. What resources were needed, and where did you find them?

For the setting out of the Church itself, the ability to use PowerPoint is essential, as are small tables around which people can sit. Each table is covered with a table cloth and has a plate of biscuits (inc. Kat Kats) and sugar sachets already on the tables for when people arrive at the church. Originally we served drinks from the Kitchen area but have felt that it is more suitable to serve the drinks in the Church itself.

Regarding resources for the programme itself, as well as tapping into the ideas of the Church themselves (each service is planned by three people: minister and two others), two very valuable websites for film clips are: sermon spice [www.sermonspice.com] and wing-clips [www.wingclips.com/].

6. Did you encounter any statutory requirements (eg planning permission, food safety, events licence) and how did you fulfil them?

No.

7. What was the biggest challenge you faced?

The biggest challenge is motivating the congregation to engage in the challenge of inviting people to the services. Unfortunately some of the congregation still see it as Christian entertainment - for themselves rather than the opportunity to invite their non-Church-attending friends along to. We still get some who say, "Café Church, I don't get much out of it" – thereby demonstrating that they have not grasped the concept behind the services.

8. What were the expected and final costs?

Difficult to say really as all of the equipment used for the Café Church services is also used elsewhere in our church programme. In terms of downloaded / purchased items for the PowerPoint slide show, I suppose we spend approx. £10 per service – plus the cost of 5 or 6 packets of Kit Kats.

9. What were/ are the most successful aspects of the project?

Being able to present Christian Truth in an alternative form from the normal Sunday morning service. Also, the engagement of most of the congregation in the Café Church concept. Although only a few, there are a group of friends and relatives of Church members who have become regular attendees of the Café Church Services. They come because they appreciate the informality of the service.

The inclusion of 'Table Talk' is also valuable. For this an open question is suggested for the folk on the table to engage in. Depending on the opportunity and bravery of the believers on the table, some serious discussions have occurred at this point in the service.


10. What would you do differently next time?

Attempt to see whether the concept could work midweek as well as on a Sunday morning.

11. What has changed or is changing in your church and community as a result?

Mission is not something that we just talk about, but we have built into our Church programme the opportunity to invite people along to hear something of the life-changing aspect of the Gospel but in a relaxed, friendly, non-threatening way.


Our next

	<h1>Café Church</h1>
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Please book the date:

Sunday 6th July
@ 10.20am
(for 10.30 start)

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SUFFERING
in the World?**



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