

Minister's Musings – November 2019

Dear Friends,

I've been musing recently over the worship attendance figures at Oakham Methodist Church for the past five years which are presented each year at our Ministries Teams meeting. These are faithfully recorded each week by our Church Stewards and are a helpful guide both in unearthing trends which may be emerging but also to prevent any of us saying: "There's more /less here than last Sunday/last year or whenever! It's notoriously difficult to guess the size of the congregation even from the front of church so I'm very grateful to those who count it from the back!

The figures for what might be called "ordinary Sundays" have varied very little- although an increase of three at our morning services from 2014 to an average of sixty-five and the evening congregation remaining exactly the same at sixteen might in some churches be considered a success in these days of declining numbers at Sunday worship in UK – but not by us of course lest we rest on our laurels!

The "occasional" services however provide much food for thought. These include the morning services on Easter Day and Harvest Festival Sunday which over the period have averaged ninety one and eighty six respectively, the Carol Service with an average of ninety-three, the Thanksgiving and Remembering Service numbering seventy-five (almost doubling since 2014) and the United Services twice yearly with All Saints which average out at forty and which a reliable source tells me is more than when the two congregations worship separately! What then do I conclude? First – and it's obvious I know – that our congregations increase considerably on high days and holidays. It seems that those who worship regularly make a special point of coming and that others join us to mark these occasions of joy or sadness. Well if that's the case then the welcome we offer both in the foyer before and after our services as well in the pews becomes more and more important. The task of keeping track of who is coming to worship more or less often and who is a visitor or a new-comer is never easy but each of us can help by feeding back to stewards or pastoral visitors those who we've spoken to for the first time or for whom we are concerned lest any should slip away un-noticed or un-missed. Second that whilst numbers are important people are always more important! During these past five years there have been those who haven't been able to worship as regularly as they once did through age, illness or personal circumstances but that does not mean that they cease to be a special part of our Church Family! So, whilst we continue to give thanks for our preachers who lead worship week by week, we should be thankful too for those who visit, pray, or take tapes or Holy Communion to the house or home bound. These are all a reminder of the profound words of the hymn-writer; -

"Jesus, where'er thy people meet, there they behold Thy mercy seat
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found, and every place is hallowed ground."

So, in this month of remembering whether in pew or by fire-side let each know that they are precious to God and precious to us.

With love and prayers, Leo.