



An **Orb and a White Cross** is the present symbol of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

METHODIST CHURCH (ALSO KNOWN AS METHODISM)

Methodism began in England in the 18th century as a revival movement within the Anglican Church and was led chiefly by John Wesley and his brother Charles. The *Christian Bible* is the key holy book of the Church, which shares the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity (described on page 16).

The Church has approximately 75 million members worldwide. The Methodist Church in Ireland extends throughout the island and has its own governance structure.

Methodist clergy are called ministers.

Summary of Essential Practice Points:

Please refer to the full text of the highlighted points related to the following summary points.

1 *Profile of the Methodist church in Ireland:*

Methodism is the sixth largest (stated) religious affiliation in the Irish State. Members are from Ireland, England and North America and recent growth has largely been from new communities including Africa.

2 *Religious contacts and religious practices:*

Most healthcare settings have a designated Methodist chaplaincy resource whose role assists in responding to the religious needs of Church members. The Methodist Church, relatively speaking, places less emphasis on religious ceremony and ritual.

3 *Death-related religious rituals:*

There is no formal death-related rite/ritual that needs to be performed. In the event of death the family may request that the person's minister or the chaplain be called, who will assist with prayers if requested.

4 *Cleaning and touching the body:*

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out on a deceased person.

5 *Initiation ritual/infant baptism:*

Most Methodists would wish to have an infant in danger of death baptised. It is preferable that this be conducted by a Methodist minister. In an emergency a lay person (a Christian) may follow the instructions under the theme *Initiation ritual/infant baptism*.

Profile of the Methodist Church in Ireland

Methodism has been practised in Ireland since the 18th century. Reverend John Wesley, whom followers consider as the most significant leader of early Methodism, had much contact with Ireland.

Essential Practice Point

1

Census 2006 indicated that the Methodist Church increased its membership by just over 20% between 2002 and 2006, registering 12,160 members in 2006. The Methodist Church is the sixth largest (stated) religious affiliation in the Irish State. Members are from Ireland, England and North America, and recent growth has largely been from new communities including Africa.

Care of the ill

Religious contacts and religious practices

Essential Practice Point

2

- Most healthcare settings have a designated Methodist chaplaincy resource whose role assists in responding to the religious needs of members. A person may wish to see a Methodist chaplain or indeed their own minister, hence a religious contact needs to be established.

- Some hospitals operate on-call rotas for members of a group of Christian churches including Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian, who provide appropriate pastoral care when requested. When a non-Methodist minister/chaplain is called the chaplain should be made aware of what is being requested and be agreeable to fulfilling the request. Additionally, where possible, the person should be notified that the chaplain being called is from another denomination.

- The Methodist Church, relatively speaking, places less emphasis on religious ceremony and ritual. Methodism recognises two sacraments common to some Christian churches, namely the *Sacrament of Baptism* (discussed below) and the *Sacrament of Holy Communion (or Eucharist)*. If a person wishes to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion a Methodist Minister should normally be called. Where this is not possible it may be acceptable for a chaplain/clergy from another Christian church to administer Holy Communion, for example the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian or Baptist. The family/patient should be asked if the arrangement is suitable to them.

Blood Transfusion and Organ Transplantation

There is no religious objection to these procedures.

Care of the Dying

Death-related religious rituals

Essential Practice Point

3

When death is imminent the family may request that the person's Minister or the Methodist chaplain be called to the hospital, while there is no formal rite/ritual that needs to be performed. The minister, on request, will lead prayers at the bedside.

- Often a short service may take place in the mortuary chapel prior to the deceased leaving the healthcare setting.

Customs to be observed at death

Methodists of Irish origin may find it helpful for a health or religious practitioner to sit with them in the moments following the loss of a loved one.

Cleaning and touching the body

Essential Practice Point

4

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

Postmortem requirements

There is no religious objection to postmortem.

Interment ritual

Both burial and cremation are acceptable generally.

Religious Icons and Symbols

Personal and religious items

Methodism is relatively free of religious symbols. Members may wear a plain cross and appreciate a copy of the *Christian Bible*. Any other jewellery or personal items are unlikely to have religious significance.

Use of religious symbols

- It is not appropriate to display a crucifix, images of Mary (the Mother of Jesus), saints or icons from other traditions in a mortuary area where a deceased Methodist is laid out.
- It is advised to check with family about the use of candles. If in doubt it is best to not use candles.

Additional Notes on Maternity and Paediatric Care

Initiation ritual/infant baptism

The sacrament of Baptism, the initiation ritual common in Christianity, normally takes place in infancy. Some Methodists prefer to let their children wait until they are old enough to make up their own mind. In the latter case there may be a dedication ceremony, without water.

Essential Practice Point

5

- Most Methodists would wish to have an infant in danger of death baptised. It is preferable that this be conducted by a Methodist minister. In an emergency the baptism can be conducted by a Minister or lay person of another Christian church. A midwife or other healthcare practitioner may therefore be asked to baptise a baby. Should this happen, the baptism may be performed by pouring a little water on the child's forehead three times, whilst saying the words "(child's name), I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen". The baptism is concluded by making the sign of the Cross on the child's forehead.
- In some situations, such as when a baby is very small and/or in an incubator, it may be more appropriate to anoint the baby's forehead once with the baptismal water, using the words above and the sign of the cross.
- Should a child die before the baptism is carried out, prayers can be said, but a baptism cannot be performed. A Methodist minister can perform a naming ceremony with the parents consent in these circumstances.

Foetal, infant and child death

- There are no specific religious requirements governing miscarriage and stillbirth. A Methodist chaplain/minister will be willing to perform a religious ritual or service that will be sensitive to the situation on request from the parents. It will be necessary to discern the parents' wishes in these cases and call the Methodist chaplain/minister as appropriate.
- Normally a service is held for deceased

infants and children, while the nature of the service depends on the age of the child and the parents' wishes. The chaplain will be a resource in these matters.

Memento of a deceased child

- Some families greatly appreciate mementos of their child, such as photographs, hand/foot-prints, a lock of hair, etc. It is appropriate to ask if families would find this helpful.

Developing a Methodist Church Contact

The designated Methodist chaplain serving particular healthcare settings is available at: www.irishmethodist.org/about/chaplains_hospital.php

Contributors

Two Methodist Church clergy jointly contributed to this section and approved the final content. They were Reverend Conrad Hicks, Hospital Chaplain and Superintendent of the Dublin North Methodist Circuit and Reverend Derek J Johnston, Lead Chaplain Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Convenor Methodist Church in Ireland Prison and Healthcare Chaplaincy Committee.