



Church Service in Bernice Puram

Questions

Do you think this is an old church or a modern church? Why do you think that?

How is this church the same as the church where you live? How is it different?

The pastor's clothes are different from your vicar's. How are they different and can you guess why they might be different? (Clue: temperature)

Background

The pastor (priest) at the Rottschaefter Memorial Church in Bernice Puram leads his congregation in singing a hymn. About 300 families attend this church regularly; many of them work in the local hospital. If you look closely at the photograph you will notice that nearly all the men are sitting on one side of the church and nearly all the women on the other. Men and women usually sit separately in most churches in South India – the children will sit with their mothers, although when this photograph was taken the children were in the Sunday School.

There are several things to notice about this church:

- You will see the noisy ceiling fans whirring away – they are an important feature in many modern Indian churches.
- The door is open to create a breeze, but also to make it easier for latecomers to come in. The door is also open so that other people in the village can see what is going on—perhaps they may want to listen and find out more about Christianity, or perhaps they may be suspicious of the Christians and want to check they are not doing anything strange or secret.
- The church has a balcony area where the young people like to sit on a Sunday
- The church has a loudspeaker system – you can see the microphone on the altar
- The wooden font is next to the altar. It has been placed here ready for the baptism which you can see in photograph 20.

As well as hymns, the service includes a sermon by the pastor, Bible readings, and prayers. You cannot see it in this photograph, but several people have brought gifts of food such as bananas or rice to church, and after the service these will be auctioned to raise money for the church.

If you are wondering about the name of this church (Rottschaefter Memorial), it is named after American missionaries who first brought Christianity to Bernice Puram a hundred years ago.



