

PEER REVIEW FOR LOCAL PREACHERS

Guidelines for Local Preachers' Meetings

Why Peer Review?

As Local Preachers, we are called to lead God's people in worship and to preach the gospel.¹ We are also called to engage in continuing development and to regularly review our ministry.

The Methodist Conference of 2018 modified the Duties and Responsibilities of Local Preachers in Standing Order 563 and accepted a recommendation that "all preachers should undertake peer review of their ministry every three years"².

As members of the Local Preachers' Meeting, we are part of a learning community which should provide us with fellowship, encouragement, support and oversight. The ministry of a preacher can be a solitary one and companionship is essential to our wellbeing and flourishing.

What is Peer Review?

All of us need to reflect prayerfully on our development and practice as preachers, and conversation with critical friends provides a good setting for this. Such conversation can cover ground that might not necessarily be appropriate in a larger meeting. This conversation is the basis for peer review.

The suggested process for peer review involves each local preacher asking another who has present in an act of worship they have led to reflect with them in conversation after the service. This conversation is informal and unrecorded and can cover whatever ground the participants are comfortable with. The aim is to support and encourage, and provide an opportunity for articulating the joys and challenges of our ministry.

No one is expected to report back on the details of the conversations they have held. However, Local Preachers' meetings should provide opportunity on a regular basis (at least every three years) for each local preacher to report back on insights they have gained from their peer reviews and their priorities for continuing development. The process for doing this is described in the accompanying Guidance Note on Reviewing Our Ministry.

Making Arrangements

The Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting will need to make arrangements for Peer Review. These should reflect local needs and can be adjusted as experience grows. Some circuits have found that encouraging preachers to form review groups of three people (or more) works well. Where review groups consist of just two people, it is good practice to swap the groups regularly, to give the opportunity for each local preacher to receive a variety of feedback.

Scheduling opportunities to attend worship led by someone else can be a challenge for busy preachers, especially when they are also involved with mentoring or listening to local preachers on trial. It is good to get dates in your diary early and to agree with your partners the services where you intend to be present. Circuits could consider scheduling these opportunities as part of the process of making the preaching plan. Consider sharing leadership of a service with your review partner(s) to enable you to reflect on your different approaches to worship and preaching.

Peer review is not the same as the formal feedback process required of preachers during initial training. There are no forms to fill in, although you may choose to use a Service Evaluation Form to

¹ Standing Order 563(1).

² Ministries Committee report to Methodist Conference 2018, Part 3, clause 1.3.

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express your feedback or ask others who are present to complete Congregation Feedback forms. Both of these are available at www.methodist.org.uk/wlp.

Opening a Conversation

After the service, meet with your review group or partner for a conversation. This is the opportunity to reflect on the experience of preparing and leading the service, and on how the service came across from the point of view of someone in the congregation.

Reflection doesn't always come naturally. Here are some questions you could reflect on, and use to start your conversation. Don't be restricted by them though, they are only ideas:

When in the service were you particularly aware of the presence of God?

- Was there a "wow" moment?
- How did you feel the congregation engaged in worship and praise of God?
- Did you feel able to communicate the gospel in your preaching?

Did you feel that the congregation engaged well with your worship-leading and preaching?

- Did the service seem relevant to the people present?
- How did you feel your message was received?
- What would you like to think people took away from the service?

Is there anything you would do differently next time?

- What worked well and gave you encouragement?
- Are there things you would do differently?
- Are there areas of your worship leading and preaching that you would like to develop and what training and support would be helpful?

Remember that all participants in the conversation have a voice, and all can learn from the reflective opportunity. The intention is not to provide a critique of the service under discussion, but to encourage thoughtful reflection and stimulate growth and development in ministry.

Peer Review – Outcomes

Standing Orders require each Local Preacher to review their ministry at least every three years. However, we recommend that Peer Review becomes part of an ongoing practice of learning and development alongside participation in a small group and in the continuing development opportunities offered by the Local Preachers' Meeting.

As part of such a pattern of learning and development, each local preacher could aim to undertake peer review each year. The benefits could be renewed encouragement and vision for the ministry to which God has called us.

Other Guidance Notes

This Guidance Note is available at www.methodist.org.uk/lp, where you will find other information to support the ministry of local preachers.