

REVIEWING OUR MINISTRY

Guidelines for Local Preachers' Meetings

The Formation of a Local Preacher

Becoming a local preacher involves a thorough process of formation under the oversight of the Local Preachers' Meeting. The Meeting seeks to discern whether the person on note or trial has a genuine call from God to preach. All members of the Local Preachers meeting have a role in contributing to the formation of a local preacher, and we continue to be accountable to each other throughout our ministry.

Formation is supported by a thorough course in theology to equip the person for ministry in the contemporary world. When the circuit is convinced that their call has been confirmed and training is complete, the local preacher is admitted onto full plan in the circuit. Their ministry is however recognised across the whole Methodist connexion.

Duties and Responsibilities

Being a local preacher is a privilege and a lifetime commitment. It also brings duties and responsibilities, which are detailed in Standing Order 563¹.

Regarding worship, these include commitments to lead worship and preach with knowledge, conviction and competence in accordance with Methodist doctrines, to make ourselves available for an appropriate number of appointments for each of which we take overall responsibility, and to work collaboratively with others in leading worship.

Regarding fellowship and training, we commit to attend the Local Preachers' Meeting, where we are part of a learning community, enjoying supportive fellowship and opportunities for training and development. We also commit to continuing development in our personal spiritual life, through regular attendance at Holy Communion and, if possible, participation in a class meeting or fellowship group. We seek to maintain our continuing growth in discipleship in order to remain faithful to our call.

The Methodist Conference of 2018 clarified this to include a responsibility to review regularly our ministry. As Local Preachers, it is essential that we continually review and reflect on our ministry, hold ourselves accountable for our continuing development, and fulfil the duties with which the Church has entrusted us. If we are not able to fulfil our duties – if for example our Local Preachers' Meeting provides no opportunities for continuing development - we should bring it to the attention of the Chair or Secretary of the meeting and offer suggestions for remedying the situation.

Recognising the value of seeking feedback from trusted colleagues, the 2018 Conference requires all local preachers to engage with a process of peer review. This is a practice already used in many circuits, and provides the opportunity to reflect on our worship and preaching and receive quality feedback from trusted colleagues. A Guidance Note explaining Peer Review is available.

Reporting Back

The Local Preachers' Meeting is a learning community as well as a business meeting, and we all have a responsibility to encourage and support each other in our ministry. Each Local Preacher should have an opportunity to contribute to their Local Preachers' Meeting, in particular bringing helpful insights from their own continuing development, and contributing to the development of the whole

¹ Current Standing Orders are published in "Constitutional Practice and Discipline" Volume 2, which may be downloaded at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/governance/cpd/>.

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community. It is helpful to establish a pattern to give each Local Preacher a specific opportunity to share their insights with the meeting.

To meet the minimum requirement stipulated by Conference, this should happen at least every three years. However, where feasible, an annual or biennial cycle is appropriate. This can be incorporated into a pattern of continuing development for all LPs in the meeting as insights and encouragement are shared.

The following questions are suggested as discussion starters, but can be adapted as required:

What has inspired you in your continuing development, worship and preaching over the previous period?

- An opportunity to share particular reflections on theology, worship and preaching, which may give rise to an item of continuing development for all present

What insights have you gained from your experience of peer review?

- No requirement to share the details of the conversations from your peer review, but an opportunity to share general reflections on the joys and challenges of preaching

What is your particular focus for continuing development over the next period?

- An opportunity to share some specific goals for continuing development, skills you want to develop or topics you wish to explore

Reaffirming our Call

The Methodist Conference of 2018 modified the Duties and Rights of Local Preachers to attend an annual Service of Reaffirmation of their call to preach. A liturgy suitable for this service is currently being prepared and should be available for use from the 2019-2020 Connexional Year.

This service, which can be held in the context of the Local Preachers' Meeting, or in the context of public worship (such as at a Circuit Service) will provide an opportunity for every Local Preacher to affirm that they seek to fulfil the call of God to preach and lead worship faithfully, and that they remain committed to the duties and responsibilities which the role brings. As such, it reaffirms the initial commitment made at the Local Preachers' Recognition Service.

Accountability

For Local Preachers who are unable or unwilling to fulfil the duties and responsibilities, Standing Order 567 (2A) applies. They will be marked either on the Circuit Plan (or on a separate list) as unavailable to take appointments, their status being regularly reviewed by the Local Preachers' Meeting.

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.