



What do Worship Leaders do?

Worship in Methodist Churches has always included participation from a wide variety of people. People are encouraged to take part by reading scripture, leading prayers, sharing testimony, playing music and in countless other ways. For some people are called to take an active role in shaping and leading worship.

Standing Orders (Section 68) define a Worship Leader as ***“a person appointed...to take a significant role in the conduct of worship within the life of a Local Church.”***

This Guidance Note looks at the role and responsibilities of Worship Leaders, the opportunities for formation and training, and how a local church appoints and reviews the ministry of a Worship Leader.

Other Guidance Notes about Worship Leaders can be found on the Methodist website at www.methodist.org.uk/wl. Number 4 in the series contains the Standing Orders for Worship Leaders, from which the quote above is taken. Reading these can be helpful when working out whether appointing a worship leader would be appropriate for a local church seeking to develop its worship and mission.

What are the responsibilities of a Worship Leader?

At the centre of the life of any Methodist Church is regular worship. For many people, worship is the way they encounter church and the way they discover faith – at its best, worship offers an encounter with the living God and an opportunity to respond to God’s love in Christ. Our regular services are public and all are welcome, and it’s important that the worship is led well, by people who are competent and committed.

We might expect most people who come to worship to be regular attenders, but we never know who might come through the door. We want all newcomers and visitors to feel welcome and included, and for them to experience the best that our worship offers. It may be that this is for them a moment when they can meet with God, and we don’t want to get in the way of that encounter.

Worship Leaders are appointed by their Church Council to serve for three years, during which time they commit to lead worship with knowledge, commitment, competence in accordance with Methodist doctrines. They also commit to regular worship in their local church, including attendance at Communion and membership of a small group where possible. Continuing development is important, and participation in development opportunities offered by the Local Preachers’ Meeting is encouraged.

How is a Worship Leader Appointed?

Worship Leaders are appointed by the Church Council for service in a particular Church. However, the expertise in formation and training of those who lead worship often resides in the circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting. Church Councils should seek the advice and guidance of the Local Preachers’ Meeting when discussing with prospective Worship Leaders the appropriate training and assessment arrangements.



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Typically, before training commences, the following will happen:

1. The Minister (or Superintendent) meets with the prospective worship leader. The conversation will include the contribution they could make to worship, their existing skills, gifts and experience. Also the time commitment for service preparation and training.
2. The Minister contacts the Local Preachers' Meeting to ascertain what training arrangements can be offered for the worship leader, e.g. is there a Tutor Group they could join, or could a new group be established with an invitation to others to join in?
3. A Mentor is identified for the worship leader. Ideally, this will be a Local Preacher or Worship Leader in the same church but doesn't have to be. The primary role of the Mentor is to support and encourage the new worship leader and to be available for advice and guidance.
4. The Local Preachers' Secretary advises the Local Preachers' office so that the Worship Leader can be enrolled on Worship: Leading & Preaching and receive their Worship: Foundations workbook.
5. The worship leader enters a probationary period during which they complete the study that has been agreed, and gain experience leading worship with the guidance of their mentor.

What can a Worship Leader do?

Worship leaders can plan and lead any aspect of worship with the exception of preaching. They will work in close co-operation with the preacher who is planned for a particular service, noting that working together requires patience and time, and that we all have different ways of approaching the planning of worship. When two people are involved in shaping and leading worship, it can contribute hugely to the richness and variety of worship.

Where a service is shared with a local preacher or minister, the latter retains overall responsibility for the act of worship, but they should seek to work collaboratively with the worship leader. The worship leader can provide helpful insight into the local church to inform the worship and preaching. Planning ahead is vital and early contact between preacher and worship leader is strongly recommended.

Recognition as a Worship Leader

Once the specified training is complete, and the Church Council is satisfied that the Worship Leader has gained sufficient experience during their formation, they can appoint the Worship Leader. A commissioning service should be held to celebrate the milestone, and offer support to the new worship leader. This can be done as part of worship either in the local church or at a Circuit service, perhaps one celebrating the role played by local preachers and other dedicated volunteers.

Review and Re-appointment of a Worship Leader

Worship Leaders are appointed by their Church Council for a three year period. Local preachers, are responsible for "reviewing their ministry" at least every three years, including giving an account of their calling to the Local Preachers' Meeting. In a similar way, worship leaders are encouraged to keep reflecting on their calling. Standing Order 683 refers to a "triennial review" by the Local



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Preachers' Meeting. This should take the form of a simple, informal conversation in the meeting, in which the worship leader can reflect on aspects such as:

1. How has my call to lead worship developed over the past three years?
2. What feedback have I received from others about my leading of worship and what have I learned from this?
3. What opportunities have I taken to continue developing my competence and understanding of the role, and how can I contribute to encouraging the worship life of the congregation.

Following this "triennial review" the Local Preachers' Meeting will report back to the Church Council. If the report is positive, the Council is free to re-appoint the worship leader for a further period of three years.

More Information

The Worship Leaders' page on the Methodist Church website at www.methodist.org.uk/wl contains more information about Worship Leaders.

For any further information, please contact the Local Preachers' Office at localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk or ring 0207 467 3774.