

STANDING ORDER SECTION 68 - Worship Leaders¹

A Worship Leader is a person appointed under this Section to take a leading and significant role in the conduct of worship within the life of a Local Church. The exact nature of that role is determined by the procedures set out in S.O. 680(1)(iv), S.O. 682 and S.O. 685.

See also S.O. 010 generally as to the circumstances in which persons are disqualified from appointment.

680 Initial procedures.

(1) Where the appointment of worship leaders is under consideration, the Church Council shall consult the Local Preachers' Meeting of the Circuit and follow Connexional Team guidelines as to the arrangements to be made by the council in relation to:

- (i) consideration of the suitability of would-be candidates;
- (ii) the training programme prescribed, or validated in advance, by the Methodist Council to be fulfilled by candidates;
- (iii) the responsibility of the Local Preachers' Meeting for the monitoring of candidates' progress in and completion of training and probation and the assessment of their suitability for appointment;
- (iv) the responsibilities of appointed worship leaders.

(2) Persons proposing the acceptance of others as candidates or offering themselves in that capacity shall ensure that the advice of the Local Preachers' Meeting as to their suitability as candidates is obtained for the Church Council.

681 Responsibilities of Worship Leaders.

(1) Worship leaders are called of God, to be worthy in character and to assist in leading God's people in worship. This places responsibilities on worship leaders.

(2) As to worship, it is the responsibility of worship leaders:

- (i) to help lead worship with knowledge, conviction and competence;
- (ii) to help lead worship in accordance with our doctrines (the term 'our doctrines' refers to those truths of salvation which are set forth in the Methodist doctrinal standards);
- (iii) to be available to help lead worship at times and places agreed with the Superintendent in accordance with Standing Order 683(4).

(3) As to fellowship and training, it is the responsibility of worship leaders:

- (i) to continue to develop in knowledge, conviction and competence;
- (ii) to attend a class, housegroup or similar fellowship group if possible.

(4) As to membership of the Local Church, it is the responsibility of worship leaders regularly to attend public worship in their Local Church, normally a Methodist church or an approved local ecumenical partnership, and to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

¹ From The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, Volume 2, 2023.

682 Candidates.

(1) Persons offering themselves, or being proposed, to the Church Council must be and remain members. They shall meet the Church's safeguarding requirements before acceptance as candidates.

(2) Before accepting a person as a candidate the council shall take the advice of the Local Preachers' Meeting as to the applicant's appropriateness for the work.

(3) Accepted candidates shall enter upon a probationary period, during which they shall follow a training programme approved in accordance with Standing Order 680(1).

They shall be required to make a firm commitment to training and study.

683 Appointment.

(1) Reports on the training and probation of candidates shall be made to the Local Preachers' Meeting which shall inform and advise the relevant Church Councils about candidates' progress using Connexional Team guidelines.

(2) Upon the satisfactory completion of training and probation of a candidate, the Local Preachers' Meeting shall inform the relevant Church Council. The Church Council involved may then appoint the successful candidate as a worship leader within the life of the Local Church for a three year period.

(3) The Church Councils involved shall make arrangements for newly appointed worship leaders to share in a service of commissioning.

(4) If it is appropriate for a worship leader to serve beyond his or her Local Church, then the appointment may be extended as agreed between the worship leader concerned and the Superintendent. If the extension involves service in another Local Church, the agreement of the Church Council of that church must be obtained. The Superintendent shall inform the Circuit Meeting and the Local Preachers' Meeting of agreements and any modifications to agreements.

(5) Appointment as a worship leader shall be subject to triennial review by the Local Preachers' Meeting which shall conduct the review by reference to the matters dealt with in Standing Order 681 and inform and advise any relevant Church Council. Upon receiving report of a satisfactory review, each such Church Council involved may then appoint the worship leader for a further three years.

684 Accountability.

(1) Worship leaders shall be held accountable to the Church Council for their ministry, their character, their fidelity to doctrine and their fitness for the work by reference to the responsibilities set out in Standing Order 681.

(2) If a question or concern is raised about the conduct of a worship leader, or if a complaint within the meaning of Part 11 is made, the provisions of that Part apply.

(3) Subject to clause (2) above, if a question or concern is raised about the fidelity to doctrine of a worship leader or his or her fitness for the work (including his or her calling, commitment to fulfil his or her responsibilities or his or her competence as a worship leader) the Church Council shall refer the case to the Local Preachers' Meeting which shall follow the guidelines for such circumstances produced by the Connexional Team. The guidelines shall include guidance on the circumstances in which Part 11 applies.



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(4) Questions or concerns about the fidelity to doctrine of a person in training or on probation as a worship leader (including the matters specified in clause (3) above) shall be addressed by the Local Preachers' Meeting as part of the training process.

685 Responsibility for an Act of Worship.

Worship leaders shall share in the leadership of worship in accordance with the arrangements made by the Church Council under Standing Order 680(1). At each service in which a worship leader shares the person appointed on the circuit plan of preaching appointments shall retain overall responsibility for the act of worship, but shall seek to work collaboratively with the worship leader appointed to share in that service by the Church Council.