

# GUIDANCE

## CANDIDATING FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY G.6

### Criteria for Candidates for Ordained Ministry in the British Methodist Church - Standing Order 710(5)

(As approved by the Conference 2024)

The 2017 Conference accepted selection criteria for candidates for ministry. These were reviewed in 2024 to reflect the impact of various Conference decisions and the priorities of the Church in recent years, notably the Justice Dignity and Solidarity strategy, Changing Patterns of Ministry and the Review of Candidating, and recommended changes to the Council. The Ministries Team also checked that safeguarding was appropriately included. Further consultations have also been held with the Queen's Foundation and the Methodist Diaconal Order. The criteria have been adapted as a result and are now referred to as 'discernment criteria' to reflect the emphasis in the current candidating processes. They form part of the suite of competencies all of which were adapted in 2024.

Differentiation between capacity/potential and ability is significant. Where 'ability' is stated, candidates should be able to provide evidence that they are already fulfilling this criterion in some way and are willing and able to continue to develop in this area. Where 'capacity' or 'potential' is stated, candidates should be able to provide evidence that their current ministry could (with training and formation) develop into public and representative leadership.

#### 1: Vocation (call and commitment)

##### Introduction

The starting point of Christian ministry is the call of Christ to follow him; the call to ordained ministry is a specific development of the vocation to discipleship which is shared by all members of the Church. As the Deed of Union says, "It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of Christian ministry depends upon the call of God." More than any of the other criteria, this is necessary but not by itself sufficient. However competent s/he may appear or be proven to be in meeting the other criteria, a candidate will not be accepted unless those who explore the questions with her/him discern that s/he has a distinct call to be a presbyter or deacon.

We hear God speaking to us both through the personal life of prayer and through the encouragement of others (though the balance between the two varies for each of us). The criteria make it clear that candidates must be able to articulate a call that is both personal (as a personal

	assurance and conviction which is still also open to testing) and corporate (being heard through the witness of others and affirmed in and through the Church's testing of not just calling but also gifts and graces, which involves recognition of the needs of the Church). This requires a high level of self-awareness which informs and is informed by a disciplined spiritual life and a deep commitment to the life of the Church.
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An inner sense of call that is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. confirmed by others;</li> <li>ii. obedient, based on an understanding of the demands of ordained ministry in terms of training, deployment and sacrifice and the candidate's capacity to be a servant in a community of servants;</li> <li>iii. realistic in terms of the candidate's capacity to meet the expected competencies for reception into Full Connexion and ordination after a period of training and probation;</li> <li>iv. informed by a clear understanding of the representative nature of ordained ministry and the discipline of the Methodist Church;</li> <li>v. transformative, in that the candidate is being changed by this sense of call and is willing to continue to be changed;</li> <li>vi. persistent rather than passing.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Ability to articulate clearly this sense of call to a particular order of ministry and its development: <p>for presbyters, consonant with the <i>Ordination of Presbyters</i> (MWB p. 298) and <i>What is a Presbyter?</i>;</p> <p>for deacons, consonant with the <i>Ordination of Deacons</i> (MWB p. 313) and <i>The Theology and Ecclesiology of the Diaconate</i>.</p> </li> <li>3. Ability to narrate their Christian experience and growth within it.</li> <li>4. For diaconal candidates only: Commitment to membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order as a religious order.</li> </ol>

## 2: Vocation – Ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain

Introduction	Candidates for the diaconal or presbyteral ministries in the Methodist Church offer in the understanding that we ordain “not to a denomination, but to the presbyterate and diaconate of the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church” (Methodist Worship Book p 298). As part of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Methodist Church receives its ordinands into Full Connexion which demands a willingness to exercise ministry within and as a representative of the Methodist Church in Britain.
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	The British Methodist Church rejoices in its ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and recognises that it is important to balance the variety of expressions of Methodism with the common identity of the Church as a whole. Candidates are asked to explore how their call fits with Methodism's self-understanding (as it is expressed in, for example, Called to Love and Praise and A Catechism for the Use of the People Called Methodists) and how their particular experience of Methodism has shaped their sense of call.
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fidelity to the Methodist doctrinal standards Deed of Union, Clause 4.</li> <li>2. Be a member in good standing of the Methodist Church in Britain for at least one year.</li> <li>3. Knowledge and understanding of the Methodist Church in Britain.</li> <li>4. Demonstrable and enthusiastic commitment to and desire to serve the Methodist Church in Britain.</li> <li>5. Understanding of ministry within the Methodist Church in Britain including the distinctiveness of the two orders of ministry and commitment to, and understanding of, lay vocations and ministries.</li> <li>6. For diaconal candidates: Knowledge and understanding of the diaconate as an order of ministry and religious order.</li> <li>7. Willingness to work with diversity within the Methodist Church in Britain.</li> </ol>

### 3: Relationship with God

Introduction	God "bestows the gifts of the Spirit the grace and fruit which indicate those whom He has chosen" (The Deed of Union clause 4). The remaining criteria are designed to evidence the gifts of the Spirit, although the development of those gifts may still be at an embryonic stage.
Competencies and Criteria	<p>A relationship with God that is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Child-like and mature with the capacity to grow.</li> <li>2. Grounded in an understanding of God's loving acceptance and a personal commitment to Christ.</li> <li>3. Nourished by a commitment to individual and corporate prayer and worship and engagement with the means of grace.</li> <li>4. A means of sustenance and encouragement in the candidate's daily life and in his or her relationships with others and the wider world.</li> <li>5. Seeking to grow and develop through appropriate means, for example, 'A Methodist Way of Life'.</li> <li>6. For diaconal candidates: knowledge of and a willingness to live by the Methodist Diaconal Order Rule of Life.</li> </ol>

#### 4: Personality and Character

Introduction	<p>“This ministry will make great demands upon you.” (Methodist Worship Book p302/317). Those demands are spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical, and therefore those who offer for ministry as presbyter or deacon need to be able to demonstrate the resources necessary to cope with the stresses and strains that we anticipate they will face in training and in active ministry. They also need to exhibit a willingness to be challenged and changed by the process of formation and to show that they understand their own vulnerability. Candidates should be able to show that they can care for themselves and that they have the capacity to engage with, and to work on, areas of perceived weakness.</p>
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Self-awareness and self-acceptance grounded in God’s loving acceptance.</li><li>2. Emotional stability.</li><li>3. Maturity, honesty and integrity.</li><li>4. Appropriate self-confidence and humility including awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.</li><li>5. An awareness of boundaries and also of the need for self-discipline in vocation/life balance.</li><li>6. Stamina, robustness and resilience.</li><li>7. Potential for self-development and growth.</li><li>8. Can demonstrate the capacity for a public representative role, in order to promote the glory of God.</li></ol>

#### 5: Being in relationship with others

Introduction	<p>All ministry is relational. A candidate needs to be able to demonstrate his or her understanding of the gift of human love in all its manifestations and her or his recognition of and ability to honour appropriate boundaries. Candidates are asked to talk about their own relationships as a secure basis from which ministry can be offered and to show the capacity to engage with a wide range of other people appropriately as a representative of the Church.</p>
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The ability to see God in others and recognise the equality of all people before God.</li><li>2. Ability to relate respectfully to a variety of people with an awareness of their own unconscious bias.</li><li>3. Capacity and willingness to develop open and healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships across all diversities.</li></ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Capacity to relate to the same people in a number of different roles without confusion and with generosity.</li> <li>5. Potential to exercise effective pastoral care.</li> <li>6. Evidence of an ability to work collaboratively.</li> <li>7. Acceptance of the discipline of the Church and respect for the diversity of views within Methodism.</li> <li>8. Commitment to the Methodist Church's strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity.</li> </ol>
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## 6: The Church's ministry in God's world

Introduction	<p>The Church and the world beyond the doors of the church have changed rapidly and greatly in recent years and are changing still. Candidates should be able to articulate an understanding of social holiness that is appropriate to their contemporary context. This means that candidates need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the mission of the Church within God's world, the priorities that the Methodist Church has identified as it plays its part in God's mission, and the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives and asks to be used in fulfilling that mission. Candidates will need to demonstrate proven ability and further capacity to exercise appropriate gifts in serving God's mission and a coherent (if as yet undeveloped) theological understanding of mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century including an appreciation of, and a preparedness to engage with, the multiplicity of ecclesial forms the Church takes in serving God's mission.</p>
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An ability to articulate an understanding of 'Our Calling' and the Priorities of the Methodist Church.</li> <li>2. Knowledge and understanding of mission and evangelism, including the variety of approaches within the Methodist Church.</li> <li>3. Personal commitment to mission and evangelism and the Methodist Church as its vehicle.</li> <li>4. Out of engagement with the world of work and contemporary culture in a multicultural society, the ability to make connections imaginatively between today's world and the gospel.</li> <li>5. Ability to work for change, with particular attention to people who are marginalised.</li> <li>6. Potential to engage with mission-based practices including listening for mission, outreach, and apologetics.</li> <li>7. Commitment to and compliance with the Church's safeguarding requirements.</li> <li>8. A desire to nurture, encourage and build community.</li> </ol>

## 7: Leadership and Collaboration

Introduction	<p>The call to Presbyteral ministry is a call to “a principal and directing part in [the] great duties [of the Church]” (Deed of Union clause 4); the call to the diaconate is to “represent the servanthood of Christ, exercising a formal role of leadership in the Church” (‘What is a Deacon# 7.3) .</p> <p>Candidates therefore need to demonstrate an ability to work with others in a variety of ways, exhibiting a willingness to collaborate, to delegate, and to take responsibility as appropriate. Candidates should be able to recognise, to nurture and to cherish the gifts of others. Candidates should demonstrate an appropriate degree of both humility and confidence in the way in which leadership is discussed and be able to give examples of how they are already exercising leadership within and outside the Church.</p>
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ability or potential for leading God’s people in worship.</li><li>2. Ability to exercise appropriate leadership in the Church community and beyond.</li><li>3. Capacity to offer an example of faith, discipleship and humble service.</li><li>4. Ability to inspire, enable and empower others.</li><li>5. Potential for creative leadership.</li><li>6. Willingness and ability to work collaboratively and capacity to exercise appropriate authority.</li><li>7. Willingness to receive supervision.</li><li>8. Organisational and administrative skills or the ability to develop them.</li><li>9. Flexibility, adaptability and willingness to take risks.</li></ol>

## 8. Learning and Understanding

Introduction	<p>Presbyters and deacons are required to undertake duties on behalf of the Church in which it is essential that they can explicitly and lucidly articulate the Christian faith to those who have received the gospel and to those who are yet to receive it. Their practice of ministry must be informed by an understanding of the doctrines of the Church and an ability to use a wide range of resources creatively in order to reflect theologically. For that reason, initial formation for ministry almost always takes place at least in part within an academic setting and candidates need to be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to benefit from the programme of learning that will be offered to them by already having some theological understanding and by having the gifts that are needed to engage with a multi-disciplinary programme of study. Within this understanding, the Church is committed to welcoming candidates from a range of academic backgrounds and to treating particular educational needs with sensitivity.</p>
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. An expressed desire to grow in understanding of the Christian faith.</li><li>2. Ability to learn and to benefit from theological study.</li><li>3. Enthusiasm for lifelong learning and formation.</li><li>4. Curiosity and flexibility of mind.</li></ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Capacity to use a range of ways of thinking and models of reflection and to select the most appropriate for each situation.</li> <li>6. Openness to receive and reflect on feedback.</li> <li>7. Appreciation of the significance of theology to the Church.</li> <li>8. Commitment to ongoing and appropriate training in safeguarding.</li> </ol>
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<b>9. Communication</b>	
Introduction	To articulate the truths of the Christian faith demands the skills of communication. Whilst some of these can be taught, candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of what makes communication effective in a variety of media and with a multiplicity of conversation partners. Particularly because not all have English as their first language, candidates are encouraged to express themselves and to be heard in ways that are culturally appropriate both to their own background and to the ministry for which they are offering. Candidates are also expected to be able to communicate effectively in the wider Church with cognizance of 21 <sup>st</sup> century Methodism's cultural diversity.
Competencies and Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ability to express faith naturally and effectively in ways that are appropriate, accessible and sensitive to the situation, using biblical and theological understanding.</li> <li>2. Ability to select and use the most appropriate media and approach for the context.</li> <li>3. Careful and appropriate use of language.</li> <li>4. Understanding and appropriate use of symbols, gestures and space.</li> <li>5. Effective communication skills for mission and evangelism.</li> </ol>