

Revised and updated edition
2024

Ministers' Handbook

A guide for
Ministers in
the Methodist
Church



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Foreword

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Those of us called to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church offer for a way of living and being that can be hugely challenging but greatly rewarding. Part of both the challenge and the reward is the range of tasks and responsibilities that we find ourselves asked to undertake. Each of those tasks and responsibilities, for which we have been trained in our initial formation and in which we continue to develop, will require a level of knowledge and skill.

I am pleased, therefore, to introduce this handbook for ministers which aims to bring together material that supports those in circuit ministry in that range of tasks. Much of what is contained here will already be familiar to you and is now presented in one handy volume for ease of reference and reminder.

The tasks and responsibilities of ministry serve the Church's share in God's mission to the whole world. Through them, we face the challenges of our ever-changing context and reaffirm our God-given calling. This handbook is here to provide or to point to the resources that will support ministers as we seek to proclaim the love of God in Christ.

This information here is offered within the understanding that we are first and foremost presbyters and deacons, called by God and stationed by the Conference. The last of the appendices reminds us of the covenant relationship with which we do that and the commitments that are ours. I hope and pray that this handbook might become a useful tool to help you to be faithful in your calling.

The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler
Secretary of the Methodist Conference

Being Prepared

The Methodist Church's understanding of ordained ministry is rooted in and flows from its affirmation of the ministry of the whole people of God. As its understanding of ministry begins with the calling of the whole people of God, then ordained ministry exists as representative of the total ministry of the Church. In order to help the Church fulfil its calling, some are set apart through ordination to ensure that the Church fulfils this purpose. Ministers are a sign of the presence and ministry of Christ. The Methodist Church has two orders of ministry: presbyters and deacons. Presbyters are ordained to a ministry of Word and Sacrament, and deacons are ordained to a ministry of Witness and Service. All deacons in the Methodist Church also belong to the Methodist Diaconal Order.

(‘Ministry in the Methodist Church’, Methodist Conference 2020, part b: executive summary)

God calls a wide range of people into different forms of ordained vocation and every person's ministry is unique. This handbook is intended to bring together material to assist and support you as you carry out your ministry as a deacon or presbyter.

It provides support for experienced ministers and for those starting out as probationer deacons and presbyters. It is intended as a reference guide to call on when needed but should not be regarded as a replacement to CPD.

Our Calling

Our Calling, first adopted by the Methodist Conference in 2000, provides a structure and reference point for the whole life and purpose of the Methodist Church.

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. It does this through

- Worship
- Learning and Caring
- Service
- Evangelism.

The Church exists to:

- increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love (Worship)
- help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care (Learning and Caring)
- be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice (Service)
- make more followers of Jesus Christ (Evangelism).

Along with the rest of the Church, ministers keep Our Calling at the forefront of their minds in all their work – pastoral, reflective, visionary and administrative. It is about living out your own discipleship in God's world and finding ways for the local church to live out God's love in the wider world.

A Methodist Way of Life

A Methodist Way of Life (MWoL) is a way of living our lives in response to God's love, made known in Jesus. At its heart is a series of twelve practices based on Our Calling and building on the original class meetings set up by John Wesley.

A Methodist Way of Life is a useful way to support one another and so all ministers are encouraged to use MWoL, and the accompanying accountability questions, regularly in personal devotional life, in staff meetings with ordained and lay colleagues and in fellowship groups in church and circuit (Appendix 1).

A series of support resources and further information can be found here:

methodist.org.uk/MWOL

The Diaconal Rule of Life

The Methodist Diaconal Order Rule is life affirming and a means by which deacons might be liberated to find a sense of wholeness in the rhythm of life. The desire and hope is that, freely followed and adapted to personal needs and circumstances, the Rule will enrich the life of the individual, the life of the Order, and the life of God's world.

Methodist.org.uk/DiaconalOrder

CPD and Conference reports

The *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD)* is crucial for your ministry and work. Volume 2 contains the Standing Orders relating to church and circuit life and is updated annually after Methodist Conference. Amendments will appear in bold italic type.

methodist.org.uk/CPD

There are a number of key Conference reports that are important to read and be aware of. These can be found at methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/ministry-reports

Signpost for Ministry

The Signpost for Ministry page on the Methodist Church website is for ordained ministers and probationers in active ministry. It provides you with up-to-date information about resources and developments in the life of the Church and includes the option to sign up for email updates.

methodist.org.uk/SignpostForMinistry

Covenant Relationship

The Methodist Conference of 2022 adopted 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers: Commitments and Expectations' (parts 1, 2 and 3) reflecting the strong covenant relationship that shapes ordained ministry within Methodism. To enable that relationship to flourish, the report builds on the Competencies for Ministry and draws together from existing reports, guidance and resolutions of the Conference, a series of commitments and expectations for both ministers and those who relate to them in the life of the Church.

The nine Competencies for Ministry areas are:

- Vocation (Call and Commitment)
- Vocation (ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain)
- Relationship with God
- Personality and Character
- Being in Relationship with Others
- The Church's ministry in God's World
- Leadership and Collaboration
- Learning and Understanding
- Communication

In your ministry you are encouraged to reflect on and use the commitments and expectations, in many ways, to enable your ministry and the church to flourish.

You may choose to reflect on one or more of the competencies as part of your vocational discernment, particularly in your Ministerial Development Review or to take something relating to the competencies to supervision.

As the expectations are for you and for those you relate to, it is important to find ways of exploring the competencies together. This could be by exploring 'The Church's ministry in God's World' as part of a local church mission planning group, by looking at 'Leadership and Collaboration' with a group of church or circuit stewards, or by asking what the expectations in 'Relationship with God' mean for all preachers in the circuit as part of the Local Preachers' meeting.

Full details of the Covenant can be found in Book IV part 6 of CPD or Appendix 7 and the full Conference report at methodist.org.uk/ConferenceReports under 'Conference reports 2022', report 19.

Shared Leadership

The Methodist Church has an understanding of shared leadership as we “all contribute to and participate in the ministry of the whole people of God.” (‘Ministry in the Methodist Church’, Methodist Conference 2018, para. 4.3.2). As a result, leadership is expressed in a variety of ways.

Within this shared leadership those who are presbyters “have a principal and directing part in these great duties but they hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to all the Lord’s people” (CPD Book II Deed of Union Section 2.4 Doctrine).

All circuit ministers are called upon to lead churches in ministry and mission. The way that you do this is dependent on your own nature and style, the context in which you find yourself, and how you discern God’s will, together with others, in local churches and ministry teams. At the heart of all ministry and leadership is collaboration.

In a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP), it is important to note that ecumenical partners have different understandings of ministry, so leadership takes different forms. As a leadership team, it will be important to work out how your role fits within the context of the LEP.

For further guidance on leadership resources and training please contact mvw@methodistchurch.org.uk

Leadership alongside others

Shared leadership within the church and circuit will be exercised with the Superintendent, other circuit ministers and supernumeraries. It should also include the following.

Local lay-pastor is a new, authorised lay office in the life of the Church, working under the oversight of the minister to undertake specific pastoral work, to exercise leadership in relation to other office-holders who are exercising pastoral care and to share pastoral responsibility with the minister.

Local lay-pastors are not (by virtue of this office) authorised to preach or lead worship, and do not normally have an authorisation to preside at the Lord’s Supper or administer baptism (SO Section 56A).

methodist.org.uk/LocalLayPastors

Church stewards are appointed by the General Church Meeting and are corporately responsible, with the presbyter in pastoral charge, for providing leadership and support over the whole range of the local church’s life and activity (SO 633).

methodist.org.uk/ChurchStewards

Local preachers are appointed by the circuit and responsible for leading worship and preaching around the circuit as required by the circuit plan (SO Section 56).

Worship leaders are appointed by the Church Council for a three-year term, following completion of training which the council deems appropriate for their role, in accordance with Connexional guidelines (SO Section 68).

methodist.org.uk/LPWL

Pastoral secretary will hold the list of the church community members and adherents and can tell you which people are in immediate need of a pastoral visit and care (SO 644).

methodist.org.uk/PastoralCare

Safeguarding officers are appointed in each church and work alongside the Circuit Safeguarding Officer and District Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

methodist.org.uk/Safeguarding

Pioneers develop new forms of ministry among those not currently involved in traditional churches. Pioneers can be either lay or ordained.

methodist.org.uk/CalledtoPioneer

Circuit stewards are appointed by the Circuit Meeting to offer leadership to the circuit. They are responsible, with the Superintendent and other ministers appointed to the circuit, for the spiritual and material well-being of the circuit and for upholding and acting on the decisions of the Circuit Meeting. They have particular responsibilities in the stationing processes and in the support and care of presbyters and deacons (SO 531).

methodist.org.uk/CircuitStewards

Lay employees are employed on a full or part-time contract to carry out particular functions in one or more churches or across the circuit. If you are involved in the supervision of a lay employee it is important to make sure they have a nominated line manager. Training for line managers is a requirement and is available through the Learning Network in your region (SO 570).

methodist.org.uk/ChurchEmployees

Supernumerary Ministers live in circuit and are often active in leading worship, mentoring and training local preachers, convening committees and taking on office within the district. See the website for a good practice guide to working alongside supernumeraries.

methodist.org.uk/Supernumerary-Ministers

Positive Working Together

Positive Working Together (PWT) guidelines were produced to assist districts, circuits and local churches in promoting good working relationships, managing conflict and dealing with bullying and harassment within the Church. The latter often occurs when issues of conflict arise and are not resolved. The PWT guidance provides information and resources about conflict management and the promotion of positive working.

The intention is to provide help with informal resolution while recognising that in some cases it is appropriate to resolve matters formally through recognised Church procedures. A key focus of the work is advice and regular training for District Reconciliation Groups (DRGs). However, working together positively is the job of everybody in the Church.

methodist.org.uk/PWT

Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP)

Shared leadership could also take place in a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). LEPs are created when Christian denominations work together under a formal agreement. This may be by setting up a single congregation, sharing a church building or by co-operating in chaplaincy. Support and information for LEPs can be found at cte.org.uk/working-together/local

Mission

God for All

The Methodist Church in Britain is committed to being an inclusive, growing, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church where new people become disciples of Jesus Christ, faith deepens for everyone and diverse communities and churches experience transformation. This vision is described in God for All, the Church-wide strategy for evangelism and growth: methodist.org.uk/Evangelism

God for All invites circuits and churches into prayerful and decisive action, names intentional and concrete steps and sets out key programmes and resources to help take these steps.

However, the God for All strategy is not a tick-list that every individual, church and circuit must work through and complete! Instead you are encouraged to reflect on your context and calling, read the information and choose one or two areas of focus to engage with prayerfully and meaningfully. Your next step is not necessarily about doing more: it's about making reflective decisions to spend your time, energy and resources on the most important and life-giving activities for you and for the local church.

The God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal (2025-2032) was approved by the 2024 Conference.

The strategy proposes that, for the sake of simplicity and effective communication, there are four core areas of focus:

- New Places for New People/Church at the Margins
- Evangelism
- Missional Growth and Leadership
- Discipleship/Methodist Way of Life

The commitments for each of these key areas are outlined below:

New Places for New People/ Church at the Margins

- Beginning new and sustaining existing NPNP/CAM communities
- Embedding a culture of Faith Rooted Community Organising that joins justice and evangelism
- Training, equipping and learning for pioneering and planting development

Evangelism

- Training, equipping and learning for evangelism
- Expanding our evangelistic presence at festivals and major events
- Developing tools for exploring faith online
- Resourcing the Church digitally and for digital mission and ministry

Missional Growth and Leadership

- Training, equipping and learning for missional growth and leadership
- Expanding provision for coaching
- Strengthening a Christian presence in rural communities
- Encouraging the strategic use of property for mission

Discipleship

- Embedding 'A Methodist Way of Life' across the Connexion
- Strategically communicating the Church's mission and ministry related to God For All and MWOL
- Exploring the renewal of worship
- Training, equipping and learning for discipleship
- Enabling a movement of young adults through initiatives and programmes that support the development of a culture of flourishing discipleship, evangelism, justice-seeking and vocational exploration

Current information about the God For All 2025-32 strategy, can be found here:

methodist.org.uk/for-churches/evangelism-growth/explore-the-god-for-all-strategy

Contact details

Trey Hall, Director of Evangelism and Growth hallt@methodistchurch.org.uk

Children, youth and families

The Children, Youth and Family team (CYF) support, resource and equip ministry to and with children, young people, families and young adults creating communities where all ages pray, listen, notice, discuss and explore what God is calling them to together.

Supporting work with children and young people includes supporting and recognising those who work with them. The commissioning service for children's and youth leaders in the *Methodist Worship Book* is one way of the whole church acknowledging and praying for these leaders and volunteers.

Involving children and young people in decision making and mission

3Generate, the children's and youth assembly of the Methodist Church, aims to create space for the prophetic voice of children and young people to be heard. Children and young people are encouraged to speak courageously, to listen to God, to listen to each other and to have an impact in their local church.

methodist.org.uk/3Generate

As a minister it is important that you work with children's and youth leaders to provide opportunities for children and young people to fully participate in church life all year round. In all churches, and particularly where there are few children and young people, supporting them in an intergenerational setting and providing opportunities to meet with others is key. A good resource to enable adult and children's participation can be found here methodist.org.uk/VoiceActivated

Resources to enable children and young people to explore what it means to be a disciple and the next steps on their faith journey can be found at methodist.org.uk/CYFDiscipleship

Families and intergenerational ministry

CYF produces and signposts to resources to support discipleship and faith at home, family faith exploration and intergenerational ministry. methodist.org.uk/FamiliesandHouseholds

Equipping and supporting volunteers and workers

The Well Learning Hub provides resourcing, learning, and training opportunities for anyone working with children, young people and families. Encourage the children's and youth leaders in your churches to sign-up to this and subscribe yourself to keep informed on developments in children's and youth ministry. methodist.org.uk/TheWell

Contact details

Children, Youth and Families childrenandyouth@methodistchurch.org.uk

Methodist schools

The Methodist Church is engaged in education with state-funded and independent schools as part of its Christian mission in the world. Methodist schools seek to reflect a Methodist ethos and contribute to diversity in education. A school is counted in the allocation of circuit staffing in order to provide chaplaincy for the whole school family. As with community schools, it is not advisable for you to be a governor and a chaplain in the same school as there can be a conflict of interest. methodistschools.org.uk

Global relationships

The Global Relationships team support and facilitate enriching relationships between Partner Churches throughout the world and the Methodist Church in Britain. Providing this partnership in mission includes sharing stories and worship experiences from partners across the world, celebrating when representatives from Partner Churches are with us and supporting and being supported by the wider Church. One way for your church to take part in the global Methodist community is to explore some of the Global Relationships worship resources. methodist.org.uk/Global-Relationships

Global Relationships also publishes *Rainbow*, the children's magazine that tells stories of our global Methodist community. Through this, as part of Junior Mission for All, children learn about, and raise money for, the Church's mission activities. methodist.org.uk/JMA

Worship

Worship can vary enormously across a circuit and in the local church. There may be creative expressions of worship both within the church building and in external venues; there may be worship focused on particular groups within the community and that which is intergenerational and invites all; there will be worship happening on a Sunday and all through the week; there will be worship influenced by a range of cultural and ecumenical factors.

As you arrive in a new appointment the stewards in the churches will be able to tell you about their usual pattern of worship so far. A sensitivity and understanding of each church's traditions is important as you look to lead worship in your style and encourage the church to explore other ways of worshipping together.

Being named as the minister leading worship does not mean that you have to take every element of that service, but it is your responsibility to oversee the worship, encourage creativity and variety in worship and ensure that it is held according to Methodist doctrinal standards.

Churches may have worship groups, organists, worship leaders, readers and those who either regularly lead certain sections of the worship or are happy to be involved. Worship planning also includes those not at the front – the sound and projection people, Junior Church leaders, stewards and others. Planning worship is an opportunity to collaborate with others and share in leading worship together. As you seek to develop worship, also consider how you develop and support those involved in leading worship.

Children in worship

Worship with children and young people present allows you to explore a number of creative possibilities. Resources to support you in this and encouragement to think about what an intergenerational congregation could look like can be found here:

methodist.org.uk/IntergenerationalMinistry

Local arrangements

Local arrangements can sometimes feel like a burden for the local congregations but should not be seen as a way of 'filling the plan'. Instead they are an opportunity for the local congregations to be equipped to resource their own services. Support your church by enabling a small group to gather to plan each local arrangement and encourage those who do not usually lead worship to be involved in some way. Worship Foundations provides a good starting point to work through with a local planning group.

methodist.org.uk/WF

In addition, please read the *New Guidelines for Local Arrangements* document. This contains important information and is extremely helpful to share with congregations and those responsible for Local Arrangements: methodist.org.uk/LocalPreacherSecretaries

Resources

The Resource Hub is a new online space which collates all Methodist worship and devotional resources in one place. This includes *Singing the Faith Plus*, Bible studies (Word in Time) and prayers. The *Singing the Faith Plus* Resource Group and Ministries Team are working to grow this resource in scope, so please do contact us to make suggestions as to how this can be developed.

methodist.org.uk/Resources

Methodist Worship Book (MWB) is the most recent authorised service book and contains a rich resource of liturgies, prayers and services for special occasions. At the back of the book are the lectionary readings. Many of its services and additional liturgies are available online.

methodist.org.uk/STFPlus/MWB

Methodist Prayer Handbook contains prayers that explore how we should live out *Our Calling*, as we respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ through discipleship, worship and mission.

methodist.org.uk/PrayerHandbook

Bible Month an annual campaign that celebrates scripture by inviting the whole Methodist Connexion to focus on one particular book of the Bible together.

methodist.org.uk/BibleMonth

ROOTS is a resource providing worship material and material for children and young people, based on the lectionary.

rootsontheweb.com

The Vine is an online resource producing weekly, lectionary based, ready to use acts of worship for congregations leading each other in worship.

TheVinebytheworshipcloud.com/view/written/Thevine

The Well Learning Hub is an online resource which includes ideas for creative worship with children, young people and families.

methodist.org.uk/TheWell

Annual Covenant Service

An annual Covenant Service, including the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, will normally be held in every local church early in January using the liturgy provided in the *Methodist Worship Book* or at methodist.org.uk/CovenantService

In churches where it is not possible to arrange for the service to be held on a Sunday early in the new year, the service can be held on a weeknight or held at one location where the members of two or more churches join together. In some churches the Covenant Service is held on the first Sunday in September, allowing a new start to the connexional year and also allowing for a focus on Epiphany in January.

The Local Preachers' meeting

The quarterly Local Preachers' meeting is a key place for all those who preach in the circuit to meet (SO 560). This includes ministers, ministerial probationers, student ministers, persons authorised to serve the Church as ministers (under SO 733) and accredited local preachers who are members in the circuit. Many circuits invite worship leaders to be part of the meeting.

It is a key time to support worship across the circuit; encourage those who are leading worship and on note or on trial; explore different models of worship and make decisions. Creative ideas for the Local Preachers' meeting can be found at methodist.org.uk/ContinuingDevelopmentLPWL

The Preaching Plan

It is the superintendent's responsibility to produce the plan each quarter. When asked to submit your dates, you will need to indicate when you would like to preach in the churches where you are in pastoral charge; which of these services are to be Holy Communion, all-age, or other forms of worship (this can be decided in conjunction with the stewards and leaders of the churches). It is important to be clear which Sundays you have elected as holiday or if you have been invited to preach elsewhere – early planning of holiday dates will ensure you get the holidays needed and the church and circuit can respond to and accommodate these.

Fellowship groups

Methodists from around the world come to the UK at different times and for different lengths of time. There are now several national fellowships in Britain who work to encourage and support Methodists from a particular national background, and particularly to help them to become involved in the life of the British Methodist Church. Some have formal structures and chaplains; others operate in less formal structures.

Non-Methodist Christian churches and congregations using the building for worship

The consent of the Methodist Council is required if the managing trustees (Church Council) want to permit another Christian church or congregation to use Methodist property for non-Methodist public religious meetings which are separate to the Methodist congregation. This permission is obtained by submitting a completed form [Schedule 14a](#) to the [Connexional Ecumenical Officers](#).

The permission can allow regular but part-time, non-exclusive use under a licence of any duration or exclusive use under lease which should adhere to the [policy guidelines](#) adopted by the Methodist Council in January 2022.

The [Sharing of Buildings](#) on the Methodist website and [Use under Model Trust 14\(2A\) Guidance](#) on the TMCP website provide details and ensure that the required permissions and approved legal documentation is in place.

Standard documents for use of premises under Model Trust 14(2A) are available on the TMCP website ([Worship Booking Form](#) and [Worship Licence for Use](#)) (SO 920 and Model Trust 14).

Copyright

Projecting material, reproducing material in paper form, playing recorded music in public or sharing material in online worship all requires you to first check the copyright. There are several types of Copyright License including Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) and One License which relate to different materials. Many churches will need a Performing Rights Licence (PRS or PPL) to allow them to show film clips or put on a live music performance. The relevant licence number needs to be quoted on any material produced and you will need to submit an annual report on the use of material.

Further information including information on the type of licence needed can be found here: methodist.org.uk/Copyright

If the church is using hard copy word or music editions of *Singing the Faith* a licence is not required, as this is included in the purchase price of each book. However, if the words are printed or projected, a licence is required.

Holy Communion

The Methodist Church in Britain has an open Holy Communion table, recognising that all people are made in the image of God and all are equally welcome. All who are baptised are invited to receive bread and wine, including children. Usually a church will make sure that parents or carers have the opportunity to talk with their children about Holy Communion before they receive it, or that a special session of Junior Church is held on the subject.

As you preside at Holy Communion you will be sharing with the Communion stewards. They will prepare the table and invite people to come forward to receive. A clear and open invitation to all should be made at every Holy Communion service. Some ministers also offer a blessing for those people who do not wish to receive the elements. If this is the practice, you should indicate clearly how the blessing might be received. If the church is in a Local Ecumenical Partnership, you may find that alternative methods of administering Holy Communion are used.

Increasingly churches are using a gluten-free loaf so that everyone is able to share in the one bread. In most Methodist churches non-alcoholic wine is served in small individual glasses, though many will also have a chalice available. It is important to let people know that the wine does not contain alcohol as this may be a barrier to some. Churches have developed their own safe ways of sharing Holy Communion in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic of which you need to be aware. It is good practice for those distributing Holy Communion to use hand sanitiser beforehand.

The 2021 Conference adopted a three-year period of discernment for celebrations of Holy Communion in which some, or all of, the worshippers gather together through electronic means. This period of discernment ends on 31 August 2024. Guidance is available here: methodist.org.uk/Holy-Communion-and-Online-Worship

Extended Communion

Presbyters, deacons and others authorised to preside at Holy Communion under SO 011 may lead acts of worship in homes (including nursing and retirement homes), hospitals and hospices. It is not our discipline to include Extended Communion in the regular public worship of the church.

In addition, a Church Council may annually appoint lay people to lead Extended Communion (SO 609(2)). Those appointed by the Church Council should be instructed by the superintendent or by a presbyter they appoint and the form of service to be used for 'Extended Communion' authorised by the Conference (*MWB* p. 229-234).

Those who are lay and authorised to preside at Extended Communion will share elements set aside at a previous celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Baptism (SO 010A)

When you receive a request for baptism, you should consider this as an opportunity to discuss God's grace with the individual, and in the case of the baptism of a child – the family. We want them to experience the love and hospitality of God through the Church. It also enables the local church to maintain contact with the family. Where possible, include the Baptismal Roll Secretary in these conversations and in any correspondence following the baptism.

The *Methodist Worship Book* contains different liturgies for when the person being baptised is able to answer for themselves and when they are not (see pages 62, 76 and 88 in *MWB*). An additional liturgy for the baptism of young children is available at methodist.org.uk/AdditionalMethodistLiturgies

If an adult asks for baptism this is usually followed immediately by confirmation and reception into church membership, before which membership classes should be offered (see page 76 in *MWB*).

A small booklet called *All this for you* is a useful guide to the meaning of baptism in the Methodist Church. methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/marriage-and-baptism

Marriage (SO 011A and 011B)

In Britain, presbyters and deacons can act as Authorised Persons (AP) to conduct marriages. Some churches choose to authorise certain lay people as well as, or instead of, the presbyter or deacon. The authorisation is a legal process which enables the authorised person to carry out the legal elements of the marriage. When you arrive, or even before you arrive, your Church Council is likely to have passed a resolution on who should be the authorised person and you will then need to complete a form, which you can find [here](#), or at gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-for-authorised-persons .

The Conference of 2021 agreed the proposals found in a wide-ranging report on human relating, called 'God in Love Unites Us'. Among other decisions was the

agreement that same-sex marriages may take place in Methodist churches and led by Methodist ministers or alternative APs. Further details can be found here: methodist.org.uk/MarriageandRelationships. It is up to individual church councils to decide if they register for marriages – either of one man and one woman only or between any two people. It is the personal conviction of the minister to decide if they register to be the AP for same-sex marriages. If a minister does not, for reasons of conscience, wish to conduct a same-sex marriage, but the church is authorised to, then the minister must refer this to the District Chair in order to find an appropriate AP to officiate at the marriage. If a minister does not, for reasons of conscience, wish to conduct a mixed-sex marriage (eg if one of the couple is divorced), but the church is authorised to, then the minister must refer this to a colleague in order to find an appropriate AP to officiate at the marriage.

When you are asked to take a marriage, there are two key areas to consider: the legal and the pastoral.

Pastoral

If a couple approach you for marriage, arrange a series of meetings to help them prepare. In these guide them through the legalities and help them to articulate why a Christian marriage is important to them.

Together you can then create a ceremony which reflects the couple. As the Methodist Church affirms two understandings of marriage there are authorised liturgies for the marriage and blessing of a marriage for one man and one woman (*MWB* p. 367-398) and for the marriage and blessing of a marriage of any two persons, methodist.org.uk/Same-Sex-Marriage-Resources

In different regions of the United Kingdom various wording is required to be said in law. For example in England and Wales, a wedding has to include the wording of the legal declarations, and the contracting words (*"I AB take you CD to be my wedded wife/ husband"*). It is also helpful to use the prologue wording, as this marks out a church wedding from a civil ceremony.

Couples may wish to find ways to include their family, especially if they already have children. Some may also want the opportunity to remember those who cannot attend the wedding – especially family members who have died. This can be difficult to merge into a wedding celebration, but lighting a candle to 'symbolize those who have lit up our lives, and whose light lives on in our hearts' can be helpful.

In addition to the above, it will also be your responsibility to help the Church Council to set the fees –including any charges for the minister, church, stewarding team, musician/organist, flowers. There are no statutory charges to be considered, but being clear about how much a wedding will cost is important to share with a couple when they approach you for marriage.

Legal

When a couple approach the church for a marriage, there are a number of legalities which need to be completed.

England and Wales

The couple will need to book an appointment for a notice of marriage with their local Registrar (usually where they pay council tax). They will need to take two forms of identity and, where appropriate, proof of divorce or proof of their immigration status. The Registrar will undertake all the legal checks to ensure the couple are able to be married and will issue a marriage schedule (note that there is a cost to the couple for this).

The marriage schedule is the document which is signed during the wedding ceremony by witnesses. It is usual to have two witnesses but is possible to have up to six people.

It is the AP's responsibility to make sure that all the details on the Marriage Schedule are accurate. It is also the responsibility of the AP to ensure that the schedule is returned to the Registrar of the District in which the church is located – this could be different from the issuing Registrar. You have 21 days to return the schedule, otherwise a significant fine could be issued. The couple will need to contact the Registrar after three weeks, in order for their certificates to be issued.

There should only be one copy of the marriage schedule so you may want to consider how you keep evidence of marriages, at least until the certificates have been issued. Methodist Publishing produce a Record of Marriage Services that can support this. methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/marriage-and-baptism

When you meet with a couple to discuss this process with them, it is helpful to highlight that they will be asked if they want any parental details on their marriage certificate. They are able to have step-parents listed, or to leave this section blank. This can be an emotive thing for people to consider, so calling attention to this can help couples be prepared.

Scotland

The Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 is the main legislation regulating marriage, with The Marriage (Scotland) Act 2002 extending the availability of civil marriages to 'approved places' in addition to Register Offices and any other place used in exceptional circumstances. Religious marriages in Scotland have never been restricted by location. Marriages can either be conducted by authorised celebrants – usually, but not always, a minister of religion – or by an authorised Registrar. 'Minister of religion' in this context means any recognised church leader authorised to conduct a wedding, not necessarily an ordained minister.

The couple will need to complete a marriage notice form, between three months and one month before the wedding, and collect the marriage schedule. They then need to return the signed marriage schedule within three days of the marriage.

mygov.scot/getting-married

Things to remember when filling out and filing the Marriage Schedule:

Space 1: Check the church details and the date.

Spaces 2-7: Check with the couple that the details are correct and accurately spelt.

Space 8: "in the parish of..." you should strike out 'parish' and insert 'district' above and add the appropriate council on the dotted line afterwards.

"According to the rites and ceremonies of/usages of" – you should strike out 'usages of' and add 'The Methodist Church'.

The designation is 'Authorised Person'.

Space 9: The signature of couple is recorded, print their signature in the margin in pencil. Each person should sign in the box under their details.

Space 10: The names of witnesses should be written in full (eg Jane SMITH not J SMITH), as well as their signatures.

Space 11: The designation is 'Authorised Person'.

MARRIAGE SCHEDULE		Date / Time
Marriage schedule issued by _____ (name) _____ (designation) in the registration district of _____ in the _____ (administrative area) on _____		System no. _____
The issue of this schedule has not been forbidden by any person authorised to forbid the issue thereof. The waiting period in respect of both notices of marriage has expired, or has been reduced on the authority of the Registrar General. The marriage must be solemnized on or before _____		
1. Date and place of marriage		
2. Name and Surname		
3. Date of birth		
4. Condition		
5. Occupation		
6. Residence at time of marriage		
7. Mother/Father/Parent name (surname and occupation)		
8. Marriage solemnized according to the rites and ceremonies of/usages of " _____ in the parish of" _____ by schedule by me _____ (signature) _____ (designation) <i>delete as appropriate</i> _____ (name) _____ (designation)		
9. Signature of parties married		
10. Name and signature of witnesses		
11. Signature of person authorised to sign the schedule		

Funerals

Each time you begin ministry in a particular area it is important to make contact with the funeral directors, to visit the local crematoria and to talk with the staff there and to find out about local cemeteries.

You may be asked to lead a funeral for someone you know well, for someone you have been supporting through a difficult end of life journey or for someone who has requested a Christian funeral but is unknown to the church. If you have not had prior contact with the family, the first contact usually comes through the funeral director. However you know the deceased, it is important to spend time with the bereaved family or next of kin, if possible, so that the service reflects the person who has died.

Funerals vary, often depending on the cultural background of the person who has died. The cultural background will also determine whether there is viewing during the service and whether the mourners fill the grave in at the end of a burial.

A checklist to support funeral visits is included in Appendix 4.

Members

Church members

Every church has a list of members (SO 050) and those on the community roll (others connected to the church) which, with support of the pastoral secretary, you must keep updated. People become members through confirmation and reception into membership and can also transfer their membership between churches. In this case, a letter of transfer will be sent.

It is good practice to offer membership classes on a regular basis either in one church or across a number of churches. There are various published resources available that can be used as a stand-alone course or alongside material from various sources. Ask colleagues about the material they use as many ministers create their own membership classes. The booklet **Called by Name** provides an introduction for those preparing for membership (available from methodistpublishing.org.uk).

Each year your circuit will give you enough membership cards for each member of the churches you are responsible for. Churches may have their own membership cards, especially if in an LEP. Your role is to add the name of each member, sign them and to pray for each by name. The pastoral secretary will also sign the card. These are then given to the pastoral visitor for each pastoral group and they take the cards to the members. One possibility is to do this during the Covenant service, which can be a good time to rededicate the pastoral visitors (*MWB* p. 344).

Members should only be taken off the list when following the procedure laid out in SO 054(8) and (11) and Clause 10 of the Deed of Union. If a member chooses to resign their membership, the procedures laid out in SO 057 should be followed.

Minimum size of a church

In order to release ministry for mission, if the church membership falls below 12 for four successive quarters, the church will cease to be a church in its own right and its members will need to be transferred to another church (SO 605A).

If there are fewer than seven Church Council members in a church willing and able to act, the Circuit Meeting will need to appoint extra Church Council members from other churches in the circuit (SO 612).

Statistics for Mission

Every year, between September and December, each church should gather various statistics about the church, and community. S054 requires that each superintendent reports these to the Synod Secretary and so to the chair. This is now done through the online suite of applications. There is more information and guidance here: methodist.org.uk/Statistics.

It is worth looking at the guidance well in advance so that you know what information will be required.

Login details will be given to you, if not please ask your superintendent about them. Some ministers take responsibility for completing this information, but this can be delegated to someone else in the church.

Meetings

The structures of meetings and decision-making groups across the local church are key to the mission and ministry of that church. They are the places where questions can be asked, where the voices of people across the church can be heard and where the will of God is discerned. Good meetings and good administration enable good ministry and you play a key role in facilitating this.

Church Council

Local churches are required to meet in Church Council (SO 502, 603, 610). Details of the constitution of a Church Council can be found in SO 610. In advance of each meeting spend some time with the stewards and the Church Council secretary to plan the agenda. In that way you can enable the Church Council to focus on the areas of particular importance at any one time. Book VII of *CPD* gives guidance for Church Council agendas and a sample outline structured around Our Calling can be found at Appendix 6.

There must be a minimum of two Church Councils each year (SO 613(1)), these normally occur in September or October and February or March. Additional meetings can be held at other times and often take place in June/July to allow for an extended discussion of church life. If extra (non-emergency) meetings are needed, 14 days' notice is required (SO 502(7)). This is given by the chair of the meeting, who is usually the minister in pastoral charge.

The Church Council has authority over and oversight of the whole ministry of the local church, including the management of its property. In many cases, it will appoint committees for particular areas to coordinate the work done and to report back to the Church Council. There may be groups focusing on pastoral care, worship, fellowship, learning, opportunities for service, use of the building and good stewardship of finances. The church may cooperate with other agencies and/or ecumenically in this. However, any groups that are created still remain accountable to the Church Council.

Property and finance, stewards, mission, worship consultations and other meetings do not all need to be chaired by you as minister. Others in church life can be encouraged to chair these meetings, which may leave you better able to contribute to the discussion.

All members of the Church Council perform the role of managing and charity trustees for the local church, with responsibilities under the Charities Act. To enable Church Council members to understand this role and responsibility, information can be found at methodist.org.uk/ManagingTrustees

In smaller churches, where the membership does not exceed 49, the Church Council can agree that all members who are willing and able to serve as trustees can be allowed to sit on the Church Council (SO 610(1)(x)). This should be reviewed annually (SO 610(2)).

General Church Meeting

The General Church Meeting (GCM) meets annually (unless SO 622(2) applies), but can meet more frequently. It has a responsibility to consider the whole ministry of the church. This includes its financial affairs, the election of church stewards and representatives, and any other purposes – which may have been directed by Conference.

If in a particular year there are no elections to be made and the Church Council feels it can carry out the GCM responsibilities, then the GCM doesn't need to meet. In this case the Church Council must ensure there is adequate opportunity for fellowship and consultation for everyone on the community roll.

For the General Church Meeting to work well, it requires a proper representation of everyone in the local church, including those who are newcomers.

Pastoral committee

Church councils appoint a secretary of the pastoral committee and a team of class leaders or pastoral visitors (SO 630 and 631). These people share the pastoral care of the congregation, including church members and those on the community roll. You will meet with the pastoral visitors at least once a year as part of the pastoral committee (SO 644) to review the membership of the church, any pastoral needs and to provide support for the pastoral visitors.

Local churches which have fewer than 49 members may choose not to have a separate pastoral committee but instead the Church Council itself carries out its work.

Church leadership team

Many local churches have a leadership team or stewards' meeting where all stewards, the minister and any lay employees gather for fellowship and to discuss the mission and ministry of the church. Decisions and ideas from this meeting can then be taken to the Church Council.

Meeting online

During the lockdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic, online meetings had to be the way the business of the Methodist Church was held. The 2021 Conference put a temporary resolution in place enabling meetings for the general conduct of the business of the Methodist Church to be conducted electronically or in hybrid form.

In this period churches discovered there are benefits to meeting online, there are benefits to meeting in person and there are benefits to meeting in a hybrid way. SO 008 was amended at the 2023 Conference to permit online meetings – with some exceptions. As you consider how best to support the church in its decision making also consider how best to meet for all involved.

Circuit staff meeting

The circuit staff meeting is a key place for you to meet with all ministers stationed in the circuit (SO 523(1)) for prayer, Bible study and pastoral support. The staff meeting is a place for all to watch over one another in love, and to:

- take counsel together respecting the affairs of the circuit (SO 523)
- discuss how the circuit may maintain doctrinal preaching (SO 524)
- confer, encourage and be accountable (SO 742)

A good working pattern for staff meetings is to meet weekly with a changing focus such as:

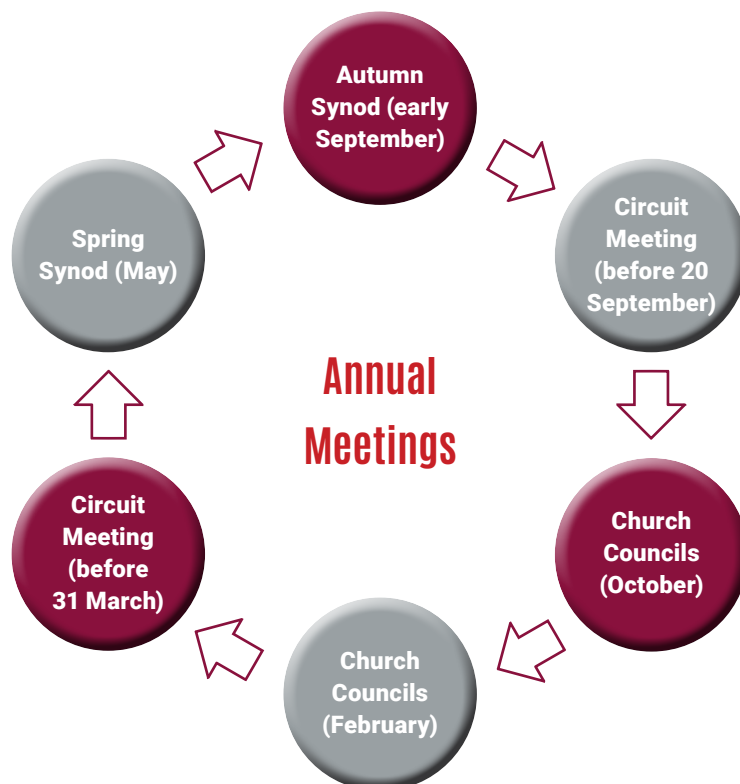
- Week 1: Prayer and business
- Week 2: Bible study
- Week 3: Prayer and taking counsel. Ask 'Where are you flourishing? Where are you struggling?'
- Week 4: Accountability – A Methodist Way of Life has a set of accountability questions which ministers are encouraged to explore together as they meet so enabling them to grow together (see Appendix 1)

Circuit Leadership Team (CLT)

CLTs are formed by and report to the Circuit Meeting (SO 515 (2)) and CLT meetings are a place where you can pray together and seek the work of God in the circuit. Discussions here should include future staffing needs, changes in pastoral responsibility, sabbatical arrangements, strategies to implement Circuit Meeting decisions and welcoming incoming ministers. The CLT meeting is also a place to invite conversation partners to focus on specific areas such as children and young people, property or safeguarding.

The Circuit Meeting

As the focal point for the circuit business with a wide-ranging agenda – including pastoral and evangelism work, training needs, approval for those ready for admission as local preachers and the appointment of circuit stewards (SO 510) – this meets a minimum of twice per year. An additional meeting can take place allowing for more extended discussion of circuit life and an additional opportunity for churches to bring property approval requests.



Rules of debate

It is essential that you understand the rules of debate as you lead and contribute to meetings (SO 517 and 413(5) to (7) and (10) to (25)).

Safeguarding

The Methodist Church affirms that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry. This means we will:

- **promote** the welfare of children, young people and adults
- work to **prevent** abuse from occurring
- seek to **protect** and respond well to those that have been abused

All of this is supported with consistent policies promoting good practice across the whole Church. The 2021 Methodist Conference adopted the report on 'The Theology of Safeguarding' which explores the importance of and need for safeguarding in a faith context.

methodist.org.uk/Safeguarding/the-theology-of-safeguarding-and-spiritual-abuse

Methodist safeguarding procedures can be found here:

methodist.org.uk/Safeguarding/Policies

Throughout the Church there is a strong commitment to supporting survivors of abuse of any kind and especially abuse that occurred within a church context. The Survivors' Advisory group works to help the Church reflect on what needs to change in its culture in order to make it a safer space for all.

It is important when you ask someone to take on a voluntary role or when you appoint paid staff that you select, train and support all those with any responsibility within the local church in line with Safer Recruitment principles. This is more than the undertaking of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. It is about promoting and exercising a safe culture, including the supervision and oversight of those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. More information can be found at:

methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/safer-recruitment

This page also contains details on the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme relevant to Methodist Churches in Scotland.

All ministers are required to keep up to date with their safeguarding training. Foundation Module promotes awareness of possible safeguarding concerns and equips all volunteers and paid workers to be confident in sharing safeguarding concerns with the appropriate person. Advanced Module enables you and other key leaders in the church to gain a deeper understanding of your role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, and to develop confidence in fulfilling these. You will renew your Advanced Module training every four years, either in face-to-face training or online.

As well as keeping up to date with your training it is important to encourage those in your church who require training to attend.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are needed for many roles in the life of the church, including all ministers. It is likely that you will act as a verifier for DBS checks, which involves checking people's documents and completing an online form. If you are not already registered for this role your circuit safeguarding officer will arrange this. You can also nominate other people to act as verifiers.

When you start a new appointment, speak to the church or circuit safeguarding officer, the District Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and your superintendent about any safeguarding matters that you should be aware of. Establish if there are any Safeguarding Contracts in place (*CPD* Book VI Part 4) and ensure you are aware of the arrangements made under this and the Monitoring and Support group set up alongside (SO 692 (3)).

If you need to arrange a Safeguarding Contract the District Safeguarding Officer will support you in doing this.

Record keeping

Pastoral conversations are confidential. However, all presbyters and deacons are encouraged to keep a record of their visits. It is helpful to keep a notebook or database for this purpose and note the date, time, name and address of the person visited, a brief summary of the conversation and sign this. If you are keeping paper records, there should be a separate record for each person visited and these should be kept in a locked container. Records kept electronically should be password protected. At the end of an appointment records relating to safeguarding concerns should be passed on appropriately to the next minister.

Contact details

The Connexional Safeguarding team safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk
Tel: 020 7467 5189

Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

In 2021 Methodist Conference adopted the 'Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity', which is our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work.

As a church we aim:

- to celebrate the rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church
- to eradicate all discrimination, to treat all people justly and with dignity across the breadth of the Methodist Church
- for a profound change in the culture, practices and attitudes of the Methodist Church so that all Methodists are able to be full participants in the Church's life.

Our vision is to be a church which:

- is free of all forms of discrimination celebrates the rich diversity of humanity and recognises that *all* people are made in the image of God
- has structures and processes which allow everyone to participate fully
- has a leadership which reflects the diversity of our membership
- offers safe spaces for the general public, and for members, to meet with a diversity of people, while still being honestly themselves
- ensures that its leaders are trained to understand issues of diversity and exclusion
- listens to, takes seriously, and acts upon any reports of discrimination or prejudice.

methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-mc-strategy

The report includes actions for local churches, circuits, districts and the Methodist Council to enable us to live with a culture of justice and respect for all people.

Celebration

The Strategy begins with celebration of the diversity of human life. The way we recognise, affirm and encourage the potential of all people will make a difference to the effectiveness of the church's ministry and mission. We believe in a God for all.

Ideas for this celebration can be found here: methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-Church

In every district there is an EDI Officer to encourage and support you with ideas for joining in with this work of God.

Training

Ministers are required to complete three aspects of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training:

- Unconscious bias training
- An EDI Foundation Module
- Further annual learning, to be reviewed at each MDR conversation.

methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-Church/Training

Equality Impact Assessment

Across the Church we are asked to consider how the way we do things impacts on people's ability to participate equally. The Methodist Equality Impact Assessment encourages us to ask questions and then think about and how we might do things differently in the future.

It is not possible to make all our work equally accessible to everyone but it is important to be aware of the impact of our processes on varieties of people. Then, it is vital that we do our best to change so that God's wonderfully diverse people can all be part of the church's life.

methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-Church/EIA

Positive language

The use of careful and positive language is key to effective ministry and mission. The Inclusive Language Guide helps with this whilst recognising that different ways of talking are an important part of human cultures and that diversity adds to the richness of life.

Please use the guide to support and encourage conversations locally.

methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-Language

Discrimination

Discrimination cannot be part of church life, we are all equally made in the image of God.

Please challenge discrimination carefully (the EDI training provides support with this). A Discrimination and Abuse Response Service is available in some districts, as a pilot, and if you need support or advice please contact equality&diversity@methodistchurch.org.uk

Church agendas

Justice, Dignity and Solidarity should be included as an agenda item on every Methodist meeting asking if our mission and ministry reflect our commitment to being a fully inclusive Methodist Church. This is one way of enabling us to think together about how we progress this work in our own ways and local contexts.

Contact details

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team equality&diversity@methodistchurch.org.uk

Community

Methodist churches are located in communities and seek to serve them. Probationer ministers complete an orientation project and a 'gospel in context' project looking at their context at that time and reflecting on it theologically. These are useful disciplines for any minister to follow in a new appointment.

Schools

Within your local community there may be the opportunity to connect with schools and inspire your churches to recognise that God is present and at work in their local schools. Resources to support school chaplaincy, assemblies and specific areas – including exam stress – can be found by following the various links on methodist.org.uk/Chaplaincy/Resources

It's important to note that if you are a chaplain at a local school, it is not advisable to also be a governor in the school and vice versa.

Chaplaincy

There may be opportunity within your role to act as a chaplain to workplaces, shopping centres, rural areas, colleges or other places in your local area. Chaplains try to show God's love through offering care and support, and by representing Christian values and beliefs beyond the Church. In our diverse society, chaplaincy has to show the greatest sensitivity and respect and often chaplains will work in ecumenical teams or alongside colleagues from other faiths.

methodist.org.uk/Chaplaincy/Explore

Ecumenical relations

As a minister in the Methodist Church you will work closely with other denominations in a variety of local ecumenical partnerships through shared mission, Churches Together groups or a regular clergy meeting.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) takes forward the churches' ecumenical agenda across the four nations. It works closely with Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS), Churches Together in Wales (CYTŪN), Churches Together in England (CTE) and the Irish Council of Churches (ICC).

The Methodist Church is in a formal covenant relationship with the Church of England. Information on this and other covenants and partnerships with denominations and in different nations can be found at

methodist.org.uk/BuildingRelationships/Covenants

Inter-faith relations

Inter-faith connections and opportunities will vary depending on the area you are in. Many inter-faith relationships lead to strong support and collaboration on local issues, demonstrating a clear message of dialogue in the local area. It is not possible for Methodist premises to be used by other faiths for the purpose of worship but this does not prevent buildings being hired for other purposes, eg hosting meetings that do not constitute worship. Resources and guidelines for inter-faith work can be found at methodist.org.uk/Interfaith

Property

Property and mission

After people, our properties are one of the biggest assets to enabling mission. A Methodist building that is welcoming, eye-catching and acts as a focal point for community engagement can speak powerfully of God's love. Utilising a property, either by redeveloping it for ministry and social purposes or incorporating a range of social uses into an existing building, can be as much a part of a mission plan as preaching, worship or community evangelism. Drawing on the successes and lessons learned from the previous Property Strategy, new guidance sets out key priorities to enable effective use of property for mission across the Connexion. The current Connexional Property Strategy can be found at methodist.org.uk/Property/Mission

Property projects

If a church is already involved in a property project or is thinking of embarking on one the Property Development Pathway will provide support, guidance and signposting. The pathway has a core path with a common set of steps to follow for all projects. There are then supplementary pathways for Conservation and Listed Buildings, Net Zero Carbon projects and projects that involve a Partnership.

methodist.org.uk/Property/Pathways

Ideas from other church projects can be found at methodist.org.uk/Property/Inspiration and information about grants at methodist.org.uk/Property/Grants

Property consent

Property schemes requiring consent (SO 930) include all sales and purchases, leases, rentals and building works but not furnishing or the execution of non-structural repairs. If your property is a listed building or in a conservation area you will need to notify the Connexional Conservation Officer of all works, no matter how minor, irrespective of whether a project needs to be logged on the Property Consents website.

The [Consents Flow Chart](#) was created by District Property Secretaries as a useful tool for ascertaining if consent is needed. However, it is also worth checking with your District Property Secretary.

Quinquennial inspections

Quinquennial inspections are to be completed for church buildings and manses (including closed church buildings) every five years and it is the responsibility of the circuit to arrange and pay for these. The inspections are designed to identify any immediate defects and help prepare for potential issues in the future. It is suggested that a quinquennial manse inspection takes place early in the final year of a minister's appointment to help to inform works to be carried out before a new minister begins their appointment. It is regarded as good practice to share the Quinquennial Inspection with a Minister living in the manse.

Further guidance and templates can be found at methodist.org.uk/Property/Qi

Property schedules

There is an annual property schedule which needs to be completed online for each church, this task can be delegated to a property steward or other member of the church leadership team. The property schedule is part of the same suite of applications as the annual statistics for mission and you will receive log in details when you start your first appointment.

methodist.org.uk>ReturnsFAQs

Responding to the climate crisis

As churches and circuits look to respond to the climate emergency, a set of practical steps and recommendations has been created to help churches reduce energy usage and associated carbon emissions. The guidance has been divided up into four steps that churches can work through at their own pace, recognising that Step 4 may not be possible for every church.

Full details of the 4 steps including a case study of how one church moved through all four can be found at methodist.org.uk/Property/NetZero

Lettings

If the churches under your pastoral charge are hiring premises, details of lettings can be found at tmcp.org.uk/property/letting-property-and-third-party-use

Property Matters

Property Matters is an online monthly newsletter with updates on property-related guidance and legalisation, information and links to related subjects. To subscribe and view previous editions go to methodist.org.uk/Property/PropertyMatters

Property support

Support for all issues relating to property including information on quinquennial inspections, maintenance matters, risk assessments, guidance for manses and listed buildings can be found on the Property section of the website. Keep referring back as new and updated information is added over the year.

methodist.org.uk/Property

The Connexional Property team are available to support you, contact details are below. Specific guidance for property matters in Scotland can be found at

tmcp.org.uk/property/scottish-property

Contact details

General property queries – Property Support Officer
property@methodistchurch.org.uk, 020 7467 5228

Project and Development Queries – Director of Property Support
hetheringtons@methodistchurch.org.uk

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas – Conservation Officer
conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk, 0161 235 6739

Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes tmcp.org.uk
legal@tmcp.org.uk or finance@tmcp.org.uk, 0161 235 6770

Finance and Stewardship

Church finance

The Church Council, as Managing Trustees, must take steps to make sure the church's money is safe, properly used and accounted for. Every trustee has to do this. Even if the church has an expert to manage its finances or fill the role of treasurer, each trustee is still responsible for overseeing the church's resources. These resources include all property, funds, investments and contents held on the Model Trust. The funds will include a general fund and may also include benevolence funds and/or money received for a specific purpose.

Where funds are set up for specific purposes it is good practice to state what happens in the event that the funds cannot be used for the main purpose, or there are excess funds. This may avoid the need to return funds to donors if circumstances change.

The churches in your pastoral charge should have an appointed church treasurer (SO 635). Where there is no person able or willing to hold the role, churches frequently employ or contract with an accountant, but there still needs to be a church member to present the accounts and the budget to the Church Council.

Stewardship: Reducing the risk of fraud

Local Methodist churches, circuits and districts are sadly not immune from fraud. Fraud is dishonesty, involving:

- false representation, for example identity fraud
- failure to disclose information
- abuse of position to make a gain or cause loss to another.

Fraud not only results in financial loss and police action, but reputational damage to the Methodist Church, a loss of morale in the local church and circuit, potential regulatory action by the Charity Commission and an impact on future funding eg grant applications.

Responsibility for local church finances

The church treasurer has a duty to ensure that the systems and procedures that support the financial administration keep the possibility of fraud to a minimum.

Steps to minimise fraud

The trustees (Church Council) have a legal duty to take adequate steps to protect and detect bribery, fraud, financial abuse and other irregularities. It is important to implement and monitor sound financial controls and procedures.

The potential for fraud can be minimised by taking the following steps.

Managing the bank accounts

- In accordance with SO 012(1), ensure that Methodist money is held in properly established and official bank accounts; not in personal accounts.
- All payments must be agreed by at least two trustees.
- A minimum panel of four signatories should normally be available to sign cheques or other payment instructions. Blank cheques must never be signed nor should the payees ever sign the same cheque for which they are receiving payment.
- Each cheque or payment instruction requires two signatures in accordance with SO 012(1).
- No cheque should be signed or countersigned without the signatories having adequate supporting evidence of the authenticity of the payment.
- All spoilt cheques should be retained and made available to the auditor/independent examiner (IE).
- Online banking payments should only be made using software which provides the facility for dual authorisation by personnel approved by the Church Council.
- In some circumstances a supplementary list of payments made should be subsequently countersigned by a trustee.
- The investment of any surplus funds must be approved by the Church Council.
- Any transfers of investments should also be authorised by the Church Council.

Keeping records

- The Church Council must ensure there is supporting documentation for all transactions. These should include, offerings journal, offerings record for treasurer, cash receipts record, invoices and receipts, bank statements, expenses claim form and cash analysis book.
- Planned-giving receipts should be recorded on a control sheet, which can then be reconciled with a register of donors committed to supporting the church financially on a regular basis.

Bank statements

- Arrange for your bank to send a copy of the bank statement to you and a senior steward each month.
- Bank statements should be checked by someone in addition to the church treasurer (the person checking should not have a personal or close relationship to the church treasurer).
- If you are able to view your account online, consider having read-only access to the bank account.

Bank mandate

The Church Council or Circuit Meeting should annually confirm the names on the bank mandate and ensure that there is occasional change.

Cash

- All financial transactions must be recorded gross, which includes all money received and paid out.
- Loose cash from collections should always be counted by two people.
- A Collection Record Sheet should be completed and signed by those counting cash.
- Cash should be banked promptly and intact without any deductions for expense payments.
- Expense-reimbursement claims should be paid by cheque or bank transfer.
- If small expenses are paid in cash, then a separate small expenses account should be kept and all payments recorded and supporting vouchers/receipts filed. These payments should then be signed off by a trustee each time the cash float is topped up.

Year-end procedure

- The superintendent minister (or other nominated minister) or senior steward should examine the year-end statements from the bank, Central Finance Board (CFB) and the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP).
- If there has been a long delay in the presentation of the year-end financial statements, the council or Circuit Meeting should carry out an investigation quickly.
- A senior steward or minister should accompany the treasurer at the signoff meeting with the auditor/independent examiner.

Appointment of auditor or independent examiner (IE)

- An auditor or IE should be appointed for compliance with SO 012 and the requirements of the Charity Commission, depending on the level of income. For further information, see the Charity Commission's webpages on gov.uk especially gov.uk/government/publications/independent-examination-of-charity-accounts-examiners-cc32
- Independent examiners should be appointed by the Church Council, not just the treasurer and should not be related to, or a close friend of, the treasurer.
- The appointment should be by the Church Council or Circuit Meeting and confirmed by the secretary of the meeting sending a letter of appointment direct to the auditor/IE each year.

Money laundering

Whilst the opportunity for money laundering in a church setting may seem slim, it is important to ensure the church does not accept significant donations without knowing the source of the funds. Nor should a church accept a donation that has conditions attached that may benefit the donor. For example, accepting a donation from a local builder, and then giving that same builder the contract for a church extension. Similarly, Church Councils should not be putting in place complex financial arrangements that are only understood by one or two people.

Division of responsibilities

Wherever possible a concentration of financial responsibility into one or two people should be avoided. Ideally, have different people as treasurer, Gift Aid secretary, counters of the offertories and controllers of the envelope scheme.

What to do if you suspect fraud has taken place

Where there is initial evidence that fraud may have occurred, this must be reported immediately to the superintendent minister. If your local church or circuit has been the victim of attempted or actual fraud, report this to Action Fraud at: actionfraud.police.uk or phone 0300 123 2040.

Inform the Conference Office at Methodist Church House: conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk

A serious incident report should be made to the Charity Commission, stating the allegations or concerns that have been raised. The email should be sent to: RSI@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

For further information, go to: gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity

Resources

You will find the Charity Commission at gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission

For more information on managing your local churches' resources responsibly, review section 7 of The Essential Trustee (CC3). gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3.

Other helpful resources include:

- Compliance Toolkit Chapter 3: Fraud and Financial Crime gov.uk/government/collections/protecting-charities-from-harm-compliance-toolkit
- Internal financial controls for charities gov.uk/government/publications/internal-financial-controls-for-charities-cc8
- Charities and Risk Management (CC26) gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-risk-management-cc26

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Confidentiality

The Methodist Church has a clear policy regarding confidentiality. 'With Integrity and Skill' is a report that offers guidance for good practice in matters of confidentiality for anyone who exercises a pastoral role (lay, ordained, paid or voluntary) on behalf of the Methodist Church. A full set of guidelines on confidentiality can be found at methodist.org.uk/Confidentiality

Data protection

The use and storage of data can be a cause of concern for ministers and churches. TMCP have produced guidance which can be found here: tmcp.org.uk/about/data-protection

Digital communication

The Connexional Team has produced guidance on how to make the most of the potential that digital communication has for the church, including the use of social media. methodist.org.uk/Digital

Stationing (SO Section 78)

Deacons

Deacons are always directly stationed as this is part of what it means to belong to a religious order. All deacons are stationed by the Conference in consultation with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee.

Presbyters

Most presbyteral appointments that are in the control of the local church are stationed by the Conference following the recommendations of the Stationing Matching process. A series of meetings are held between the Chair of District, a lay stationing representative in the district and members of each circuit seeking a new minister or with each minister seeking a new appointment. These lead to the creating of a profile published, for all involved, in October each year.

The Stationing Matching Group (SMG) comprises all of the Chairs of District (or the lay stationing representative if the Chair is not available) and some Connexional Team officers and administrators and meets three times each year.

When a match has been agreed, the presbyter is invited to visit the circuit within two weeks of the match being made. The visit will result in the circuit declining or making an invitation to the minister and the minister accepting or declining that offer. Both report the outcome to their respective Chair of District.

From February to June each year the Stationing Action Group (SAG) meets in virtual form each month in order to continue the stationing process. The SAG membership includes Chairs of District representing each stationing region.

Stationing Advisory Committee (SAC)

Panels from this committee meet ministers throughout the year when they are contemplating making a change that is outside the usual pattern of circuit appointments or outside the control of the church. The SAC can give ministers permission to apply for appointments outside the control of the Church, to retire early or to go without appointment. You should only ask to see the SAC if you have a particular proposal in mind. If you need to reflect more generally on your ministry then it is best to take that into supervision, or to a conversation with your Minister in Oversight.

Stationing developments

In the next few years it is expected that ministers' profiles will be live online all the time so that it is a straightforward process to enter into stationing. It also means that ministers' profiles can be seen by SMG even if they are not due to be in stationing in any particular year. This does not mean that all ministers should fear SMG every year. Whenever a minister is asked to consider an appointment in a year when they do not expect to move, great care is taken and it will only be done after prayer and consultation. Online

stationing profiles will also enable information relating to CDIM and supervision to be retained securely.

Currently, the Stationing Review Group is undertaking a full review of the stationing process, and is in a period of consultation around its recommendations; these will be brought before the 2025 Conference.

Re-invitation

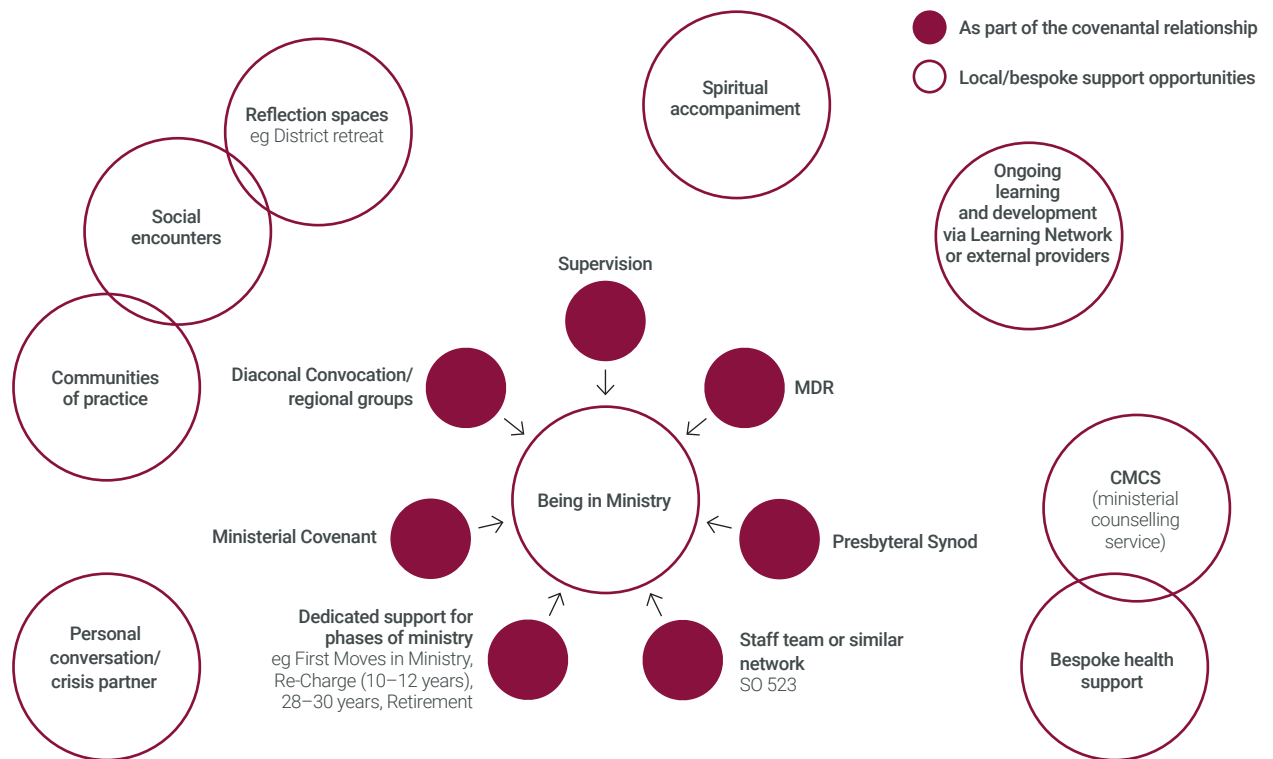
Re-invitations can be made, following appropriate consultations, at the September Circuit Meeting in the last year of the current period of invitation and may be extended for a specific number of years not exceeding five years (SO 545 (presbyters) SO 546 (deacons)).

Leaving circuit

As you prepare to leave one appointment and move on to the next, it is important that you feel you have left well. In the last 12 months of your appointment you are encouraged to have a conversation in which you identify what has been good and positive, the areas that have been a challenge and the things that need to be passed on to the next minister.

When you leave an appointment, there is an accepted protocol that ministers do not return to the circuit for at least one year. There is no problem in maintaining personal contact with people, however, you do need to have clear boundaries in place. While people from your old church community may contact you with pastoral enquiries or to carry out occasional offices (baptisms, marriages or funerals), there is always a risk that you might undermine your successor – this this will not enable them to become established and to develop their own relationships with that church community. However, it might be appropriate for you to share in parts of a particular service – if this was thought to be pastorally appropriate.

Support, Accountability and Well-being



Minister in oversight

All ministers have a minister in oversight. This will be the superintendent for most circuit ministers – though in large circuits, another minister may hold this role. The minister in oversight for superintendents is the Chair of the District. Your minister in oversight will watch over you and your ministry to ensure you are flourishing in your role.

Spiritual director

All deacons have a spiritual director who they identify themselves – though there is guidance provided by the Methodist Diaconal Order if required. Many presbyters also find it helpful to have someone they can reflect with regularly regarding their life of faith and vocation.

The Methodist Retreat and Spirituality Network can make suggestions of ways to identify a spiritual director.

[The Methodist Retreat and Spirituality Network \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)

Supervision

In the Methodist Church in Britain, all ministers are required to be in reflective supervision to reflect on their vocation and practice. The purpose of supervision is to support effective mission and ministry as part of a culture of prayer, accountability, support and safety for all who minister and for those amongst whom they work.

Your supervisor is a named and trained person, appointed by the district (if you are a circuit minister) and may have a dual role with you, such as also being your

superintendent. These roles are clearly identified at the start of the supervisory relationship, which begins with agreeing a covenant. Being supervised by your minister in oversight can often be helpful, however you have the right under the policy not to be supervised by them. If you wish to change supervisor, speak to the keeper of your District Supervision Implementation Plan.

Supervision consists of six sessions of 90 minutes or nine sessions of one hour each year. Agreed records are kept of each meeting which are shared with your minister in oversight.

methodist.org.uk/Supervision

Ministerial Development Review (MDR)

In this annual process you are required to identify an area of ministry on which to reflect, with the support of a trained lay contributor and an ordained contributor. Together you will identify the people whose feedback you would like to receive. These can be members of congregations, other ordained ministers, circuit officers, ecumenical colleagues or other people who have a connection with that part of your work. The lay contributor contacts the identified people and receives their feedback. The three of you will then meet again to consider the feedback and identify areas of development as a result.

methodist.org.uk/MDR

Continuing development in ministry

Each ordained minister is encouraged to continue equipping, renewing and resourcing themselves continually throughout their ministry and to find times for rest, personal discovery and time with God.

There are a wide range of courses run by the Learning Network and partner institutions, both online and in person and you are entitled to take time out for training when properly negotiated with the rest of the staff team. Details of continuing development in ministry, the Learning Network and grants available to support ministers can be found here:

methodist.org.uk/Our-work/Learning-and-development

Support plan

As part of the Methodist Conferences' commitment to ministerial flourishing, the Ministries Committee is inviting each minister to develop a support plan, a living document, which can become a covenant with those providing support.

This support plan is an invitation for you to intentionally take some time, away from crisis times, to name the people, systems and disciplines which provide you with day-to-day support as well as where to go in an emergency situation.

Once you have made a support plan you are encouraged to share it with friends, stewards and your minister in oversight naming what you might need generally and letting them know what might be helpful for them to offer to you in difficult times.

A suggested outline structure for a support plan can be found in Appendix 2.

Capacity conversations

As a minister saying 'no' is never easy, nor is it easy to hear as a member of the church. However, before agreeing to do something new, every minister and church member is asked to consider what they might lay down to allow time for the new work to flourish.

All ministers are encouraged to consider the impact of taking on new work – on themselves and on the local church – and to, where appropriate, consult with family, the church and circuit leadership team. A series of questions to aid your reflection can be found in Appendix 3.

Sabbaticals (SO 744)

Each presbyter and deacon is expected to take a sabbatical of three consecutive months in every seventh year of their ministry. This period has to be arranged in negotiation with your circuit. As it is not always helpful to take a sabbatical in the first or last year of an appointment, there is flexibility with the timing.

The District sabbaticals committee will ask you about your intentions for your sabbatical and they have to approve your plans. You will need to appoint a support group to help you to plan your sabbatical and to arrange for suitable care for the churches and your other responsibilities while you are absent. Ministers in the Connexional Team follow a similar process which is coordinated by HR.

methodist.org.uk/Sabbaticals

Reflection and conversation spaces

There is a recognition that particular issues may arise at certain stages of ministry such as at the end of your first appointment, when you might first be appointed as a superintendent, when you have completed a certain number of years of ministry or when you are approaching retirement. The Church offers guided opportunities of reflection at these times.

The Ministries team is also developing connections between ministers who have a range of shared experiences so that they can develop support for one another.

methodist.org.uk/Ministry/ReflectionSpaces

Active and rest days

Ministry is a way of life not a job and so it is more accurate to talk about active ministry and rest time rather than working hours and days off. Ministers are required to take a rest day (24 hours) in each week. These days need to be identified alongside other colleagues in the circuit to make sure there is some time in the week when all ministers are able to meet together.

All full-time appointments involve a 12 session week – a session being morning, afternoon or evening. This might equate to six days of two sessions a week, or fewer days if the three sessions have been used in the work of ministry on one day. A conversation could take place among ministers in circuit and with the circuit stewards to use the flexibility built into the system to enable the flourishing of the Church and those serving it.

Holidays (CPD VII Guidance Part 3)

Every presbyter and deacon is entitled to 35 days holiday each year (full-time) plus the equivalent of statutory public holidays. This holiday amount includes five Sundays, two of which should be consecutive. Holiday dates should be set well in advance and be done so in consultation with your minister in oversight to ensure adequate ordained ministerial cover in the circuit and to be built into the preaching plan and other arrangements.

Quarter days

In addition to the holiday entitlement, all presbyters and deacons are entitled to three consecutive quarter days in each three months. These are for study, retreat or reflection, preferably away from the manse. Again these should be arranged in advance and in consultation with your superintendent.

Contact details

Ministries team mvw@methodistchurch.org.uk

Personal Finance

Stipend

Ministry in the Methodist Church is a way of life and not a form of paid employment. A stipend is given to enable ministers to be set free in order to minister. This allows each minister to discover, in each new appointment, what to focus on and how best to use their time.

Ministerial grants

Benevolent grants are available to ministers from a variety of funds. If a minister finds themselves in financial distress, support is available. To view further details and application forms, please visit : methodist.org.uk/Finance/Ministerial-grants

Fees

If you conduct any marriage or funeral you are able to charge a fee. Circuits should have a policy to set these fees for yourself and for the organist, stewards and others involved and to arrange for payment. There is a standard fee for the leader of a funeral at the crematorium. Often when the marriage or funeral is of a church member, circuit policy will state that some fees are waived. All of your fees must be declared for tax, so it is important to keep clear records.

Pension

All Methodist ministers are part of the Methodist Ministers Pension Scheme, details of which can be found here: methodist.org.uk/MMPS

Tax

The Government requires ministers to complete a tax return each year to declare income which is additional to stipend eg funeral fees. In such cases ministers need to complete a special form **Self Assessment: ministers of religion (SA102M)**. The Tax Directory provides some help with the taxable status of different items methodist.org.uk/TaxationDirectory. Various things can be claimed against tax, such as use of the manse for meetings and hospitality, books, clerical clothing and worship resources.

There are accountancy firms which specialise in clergy tax affairs or you can choose to complete your tax return yourself. gov.uk/register-for-self-assessment

Expenses

The Circuit should reimburse you for reasonable expenses incurred in the leading of worship and the carrying out of your ministry. It is important to establish the circuit's expenses policy on what can and cannot be claimed for and to keep notes of all expenses with receipts. Also keep a note of the number of miles for each journey on circuit and church business as well as the purpose of the journey. You have to be able to account for each claim you make for expenses.

Manse

Ministers are required to live in the manse provided for them unless they have been given specific permission to live in their own home. Living in manses is part of the ministerial

covenant, your manse is the home given to you and your family for the duration of the appointment.

A circuit steward (or other nominated person) will be appointed to be your first point of contact for any issues relating to your manse. Circuits know that they should respect that this is your home, but circuit stewards will, on occasions, need access if there is necessary maintenance or an inspection which needs to be carried out in order to maintain the quality of your home. methodist.org.uk/Property/Inspections Many presbyters and deacons choose to use the manse for some church meetings, perhaps particularly the sorts of meetings that are held for consultation, Bible study or fellowship. However, you are not required to use the manse for these purposes as such meetings can happen in churches.

Furniture

Manses in the Methodist Church in Britain have to be provided with carpets or other floor covering, curtains, lamp shades and light fittings, fixed fires (where fitted), study furniture, cooker and kitchen cupboards, and with a lawn mower (SO 803)

Council tax

Circuits pay the council tax for all presbyters and deacons and you will not have to take any action.

Utilities

You are responsible for paying for gas and electricity supplies in the manse, but water is paid for by the circuit. Please ask the circuit stewards for advice about gas and electricity suppliers. As part of the Methodist Church's pledge to become net carbon zero, it is recommended to use a renewable energy provider when possible.

Insurance

The manse itself is insured by the circuit. You will need to set up contents insurance to cover your personal possessions.

Telephone and broadband

Circuit stewards will liaise with you over the setting up of the telephone and broadband. The circuit pay for these facilities and there will be an arrangement for you to make a contribution for your personal calls and personal use of broadband.

If you require a mobile phone in order to carry out your ministry, your circuit may have an arrangement for you to reclaim some of the costs of this. Guidelines for ministerial well-being when using emails and social media can be found in Appendix 5

Email address

An email address is provided for all presbyters and deacons. See: methodist.org.uk/Webmail for information on how to set this up.

Ministers on the Move

Moving house

The Conference has agreed a Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers which sets out what those moving into a manse can reasonably expect (CPD VII Guidance Part 1).

Any manse that is changing over occupancy must be ready in good time to be a place of welcome for the incoming minister. The charter outlines the condition in which you are expected to leave a manse to enable the circuit to have it ready for the next minister.

At the end of an appointment, the receiving circuit will pay your removal expenses. You need to negotiate these with the circuit and it is likely that you will need to provide three different estimates. When you move manses, you are also entitled to claim a relocation grant, speak to the circuit treasurer in the circuit you are moving to, to arrange this.

Passing on information

When a minister is on the move, there are decisions to be made on what information should be left for the next incumbent and how. Some information and resources will be passed on as a matter of good practice, others will relate to legal and safeguarding requirements. It is important that a minister is clear what should be retained, transferred to someone else or destroyed. Leaving every folder, 'just in case', doesn't help the next minister.

Below is a reminder of guidelines and policies relating to this.

- Be mindful of the confidentiality guidance in 'Guidelines for good practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care' (CPD VII Part 14).
- Look at the 'Charter for outgoing and incoming ministers' (CPD VII Guidance Part 1).
- Store paper files in locked filing cabinets or in the safe depending on the sensitivity of the materials. It is vital that safeguarding records should be stored in a locked cabinet and the key should be handed to the appropriate person. This is particularly important if manses are being decorated or work is carried out during the transition period.
- Electronic files should be password protected and transferred in a secure manner.

Superintendent ministers

Further guidance including a checklist for handing over to a colleague is offered to superintendents in the methodist.org.uk/SuperintendentsHandbook

Supervisors

Clear details are given to Supervisors and third parties with regards to [handling supervisory files](#) which includes covenant forms, agreed records and notes. It should be noted that retention periods are different for ordained colleagues and lay employees.

Safeguarding

At the end of an appointment records relating to safeguarding concerns should be passed on appropriately to the next minister. Guidance on information sharing is contained in section 5 of the Methodist Church's [Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance](#).

Appendix 1

A Methodist Way of Life accountability questions

A Methodist Way of Life encourages us to grow together. Make time to discuss these questions regularly with others.

Worship

- What is the pattern of your prayer life?
- How easy or hard do you find it to pray?
- What has spoken to you recently in worship or in the Bible?
- When, lately, have you felt close to God or distant from God?

Learning and caring

- How have you practiced generosity since we last met?
- How have you shown hospitality to others recently?
- How are you caring for yourself?
- How and what are you learning now?

Service

- How are you seeking to serve others in your communities and beyond?
- What has helped or hindered you in your service of others?
- How are you caring for God's creation?
- How are you using God's gifts (including your financial resources)?
- What issues of injustice are you currently concerned about?
- What are you doing in response?

Evangelism

- When was the last time you were able to talk about God?
- What opportunities to share your faith have there been since we last met?
- How have you responded to opportunities to share your faith?
- Is there anyone you might invite to consider Christian faith?
- How can we support each other in our Methodist Way of Life commitments?

Appendix 2

Support plan

An invitation to you at a time when you can say of ministry 'the world is as it should be':

1. Set aside some time for prayer, paying attention to the Holy Spirit's promptings. Do this in whatever way makes sense for you, for example, reflecting on a Bible passage that speaks to you of your vocation, listening to music, silence, following liturgy etc.
2. Jot down your responses to the questions below and others they might trigger.
 - What is God doing in you through good times?
 - How do you feel?
 - What activities and ways of being, direct your focus outside and beyond yourself?
 - In what places and while doing what activities do you find purpose, satisfaction and wholeness?
 - How can you give yourself permission to engage with these especially in the tough times?
 - How does God's presence feel in this place and at this time?
 - Which of the people in your life do you turn to because connecting with them brings you joy, affirmation and a sense of belonging and enables you to respond appropriately to the joys and sorrows of other people?
 - What binds you more closely to your human communities?
 - Where do you find companionship?
 - What generates new inspiration and ideas?
 - How are you and God growing in relationship at this time?
 - What restores balance and refreshes your inner vision?
3. Go back to 1.
4. Share some of these reflections with people you trust, both from your personal life and church life. Consider inviting them to covenant with you as to how they best be of help for you if times become difficult.

When you are in time of high pressure in ministry:

1. Set aside some time to be with God in whatever form of prayer is meaningful in this moment.
2. Recall your list from when times were better/easier.
3. How can you remain attentive and open to God, even here?
4. What would it be wise to do?
5. Who would it be wise to talk with?
6. Do not be afraid to ask for help – this is a sign of strength.
7. Go back to 1.

Appendix 3

Capacity questions

The following questions are to enable you to think through your capacity to take on a new piece of work, activity or responsibility. Not all questions will be relevant in all situations but you are encouraged to always reflect on the last question.

1. How big is this/activity/commitment piece of work and what impact will it have on my time?
2. What impact will this have:
 - on my well-being?
 - on ministry in the local church and circuit?
 - on my home life?
3. What support and accountability is there in the church or circuit to help me consider this?
4. Could I arrange a conversation with a circuit steward, the circuit superintendent or minister in oversight to discuss this further?
5. Should I take this to supervision or discuss it with my spiritual director?
6. What can I give up or set aside in order to take this on?

Appendix 4

Funeral checklist

Funeral detail of:

Address:

.....

Date of Death: Age:

Cause of Death:

Service:

Day	Date	Time
Church	Crematorium	Cemetery

Name of Nearest Relative: Relationship:

Address: Pre-funeral Visit:

.....

.....

Telephone Number: (Day) (Evening).....

Funeral Directors:

Church Responsibilities

Stewards	Flowers
Organist	Booking Steward
Bereavement Link Person	Refreshments

Type of service

Service of Thanksgiving and prayer	Service of Thanksgiving and prayer with eulogy led by Minister	Service of Thanksgiving and prayer with eulogy led by family member or friend	Create own style of service
------------------------------------	--	---	-----------------------------

Name popularly known as:

Hymns:

.....

Music/Readings:

.....

Order of Service?

Born where?

Moved to this area when?

Name of parents

One of how many children?..... Position in family?.....

Married when?

To Whom?

Where?

Children?

.....

Grandchildren

.....

Great Grandchildren

.....

What sort of person?

Interests and hobbies?

Achievements?

Church background?

Occupation?

A story that sums up the deceased?

.....

Other Information

.....

Appendix 5

Ministerial well-being: Email and social media

In 2019/2020 there was a substantial piece of research about ministerial well-being. Over 60 per cent of ministers in active ministry, as well as supernumeraries and senior circuit stewards, responded and in response to what was shared various changes have been made and support offered.

The handling of emails was an issue which came up many times, and which the Connexional well-being staff say is often cited when ministers approach them for support. Therefore, it is suggested that circuits and districts consider having communications policies covering the use of email, mobile phones and social media.

Like all matters relating to well-being and flourishing, it is wise to have agreement about expectations and boundaries, and one shared local policy saves time rather than everyone needing to make their own decisions and communicate those. If you are having to make decisions on your own about email and social media response times, is that a red flag that you are working in isolation?

Having a conversation and agreeing how emails will be used and managed can play a big part in reducing stress, because having agreed guidelines in place gives ministers some confidence in knowing they have support and backing.

There are also actions individuals which can take to take the pressure off what, for some, can feel like the relentless demand of emails.

The Ministries: Vocation and Worship team have gathered together information that circuits, districts and individuals might want to use as a launch pad for conversations and individual actions.

Research in the Harvard Business Review from as far back as 2012¹ shows that the more emails we send, the more we receive. Therefore, you could chose to make more phone calls or visits, or raise things in person with people when you see them. This, of course, will not eliminate all emails, so below are some examples of good practice with the aim of helping you to find ways to manage emails in a way that works for you, and which your circuit or district might choose to engage with.

Communication policies

Handling email

¹ Amy Gallos, 'Stop Email Overload', hbr.org/2012/02/stop-email-overload-1 (accessed 31/5/2023)

How fast is “fast enough”?²

That depends on answers to questions like:

- How urgent is this particular issue for this specific person?
- Who is cc'd in to this email and whose responsibility is it to respond?
- Remember the differences between urgent and important – which is this?
- What promises have you/the circuit/church, made about how quickly you will respond?
- What expectations have you, or others, set with this person before?
- What expectation is this person bringing to you because of experiences with others in the church?
- What is your diary like at this time of year?
- What impact will a delayed response have?
- Will responding create more emails? Might it be helpful to make a phone call?
- How long is “too long” for this person to wait for a response?

Knowing yourself and knowing others: What irritates you? How do you irritate others?³

Sending fewer emails is proven to help but also sending fewer emails that irritate others helps too!

Knowing yourself

Which of these irritate you and which do you think you do which might irritate others? What can we do to mitigate this?

Things that might irritate others	Possible reminders before you act
Not getting round to finishing or sending emails you started	Have you checked before you log off?
Skim reading emails and misunderstanding what is being asked	Take the time needed when checking emails. Does this mean not checking emails whilst on the move?
Reply to all/not replying to all	Does everyone need to know your response?
In your desire to please, replying too quickly	If you need time to reflect, send a holding email to manage expectations
Failing to respond to an email that has made you angry, fearful, etc	Send a holding email to manage expectations whilst you reflect
Emailing people whilst stressed	Is your email really said how you want to say it?

² Adapted from helpscout.com/helpu/email-customer-service-whats-an-acceptable-reply-time (accessed 31/5/2023)

³ Adapted from Myers Briggs 'Get more from email'

Knowing others

Knowing yourself and the person you are emailing	Checking you've pitched your email helpfully
For those who process quickly	Do you give people time to reflect on what you are asking?
Some people respond better to short emails with factual information, others find that brusque	Which are you? Which is the person you are emailing?
If you are very concerned about how people feel, or you know you are quite direct	Is your email clear and concise? Does it have the right balance of checking in with the receivers' feelings? Does the title of the email communicate what you want it to most helpfully?
Some people like one topic per email, whereas others like one email with all the issues in it you want to raise with them	Which are you and which is the person you are emailing?
Did someone email you at a time of day that concerns you for some reason?	It could be a sign that they are under undue pressure, or that they do their best thinking at a different time of the day to you

Different people manage their inbox differently: What works and doesn't work for you?

There is no right and wrong way to manage your inbox, but having a system that works for you might help.

If you think there might be a system that would suit you better, have an internet search to see what some options are. Here are some suggestions:

- Using your email inbox as your 'To Do' list – where each email reminds you of a necessary corresponding task.
- Triage the inbox and manage the content with flags or folders – which of these require you to act now? Which require you to act later? Which of these need nothing from you but action from others? Which need no action at all?
- Aiming to have an empty inbox and having filing systems to put emails that require action at a later date etc.

Out of office reply

Good use of the out of office reply can manage people's expectations, and an internet search can provide many examples. Here are some options:

I am currently out of the office until [return date] for [reason]. I will be happy to reply to your message when I return. If you need assistance in the meantime, please contact [name of colleague and their job title] at [email, phone, etc.]

Thank you for your email. I am not at my desk again until **[Date of Return]**. During this period I will have limited access to my email. My mobile phone will be on at times whilst I am away from emails **[your phone number]**.

Mobile phones

Most ministers have clarity about the landline – who answers it, when, and what the answering machine message says. However, mobile communication is less clearly defined.

Do you have to be in every WhatsApp group the church has, or can it be agreed that someone from the group will inform you if there is information you need to know?

Is it possible to mute messages that pop up when you are in periods of rest? There are ways to control notifications which mean you still see messages from loved ones or dedicated contacts. Research your options.

Many people either have two mobile phone numbers – either two phone handsets, or one handset and twin SIM cards or two SIM cards. Again, research your options and which will be most beneficial for you.

Management of social media

For some people use of social media is a joy that enables connections to be made, is a part of mission and evangelism, or is a place where small queries can be dealt with quickly. For others it is an additional burden.

What does the context require?
What is good for your well-being?

If you are using social media as a communication tool within your ministry context, have a similar conversation as you did about emails, using the 'how fast is fast enough' questions, paying attention to different personalities, turning off notifications during times of rest, plus conversations about 'when should it not be used'. All of this helps us to create boundaries and realistic expectations.

It might be that a communication policy helps to determine which groups you should be in and the preferred method of communication for that group. If we are ministering with under 30s who rarely check their emails, how will we communicate? What about how will we communicate as a staff team?

Remembering in all of this the importance of good safeguarding practice. Connexional social media guidelines can be found at methodist.org.uk/Digital/SocialMedia

Appendix 6

Example of a Church Council Agenda shaped around Our Calling

This is an example of an agenda based on Our Calling and drawn up for a church of 100 regular worshippers.

The individual items can be changed and reordered. Moving items regularly to fit under the four headings will enable the meeting to view and deal with the business through the lens of worship, evangelism, service and learning and caring.

Although this agenda looks full it gives a guide to the council on how much is needs to be covered in the time available. Some things will be for discussion and other things for information. This meeting lasted two hours.

1. Opening Devotions
2. Membership of meeting and apologies for absence and declarations of conflicts of interest
3. Minutes of last Church Council (distributed)
4. Matters arising not covered by agenda and declaration of AOB for end of meeting
5. Correspondence

Our Calling to EVANGELISM: The Church exists to make more followers of Jesus Christ

6. Circuit vision strategy document
7. Our mission statement
8. Justice Dignity and Solidarity
9. Junior Church report
10. Our new coffee shop
11. Update to website
12. Using the Methodist Way of Life

Our Calling to SERVICE: The Church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice

13. Finance – including our giving to charities (policy)
14. Outside users
15. Property and resources group
16. Safeguarding

17. Newsletter
18. Pastoral list
19. Recent Joint Public Issues team reports/blogs

Our Calling to WORSHIP: The Church exists to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love

20. Review of worship
 - Future special services
 - Appointing worship leaders

Our Calling to LEARNING AND CARING: The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care

21. Engaging in growth: the way forward: social events, Bible study?
22. Vocations Day
23. Fundraising
24. Christmas meal for the homeless
25. Visioning day – set date
26. Any other business
27. Data protection and confidentiality
28. Date of the Church Council
29. Devotions to be led by...
30. Closing prayers

Appendix 7

Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations

The Conference of 2022 adopted the Commitments and Expectations set out below. The full report, 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers: Commitments and Expectations' can be read here: methodist.org.uk/ministry/commitmentsandexpectations

1 INTRODUCTION

In making these commitments and affirming these expectations we seek by the grace of God to renew the covenant relationship between the members, officers, institutions, committees and Conference of the Methodist Church on the one hand, and its ministers, both presbyters and deacons, on the other.

In doing so, we seek to respond to the encouragement and challenge to be found in the following extracts from chapter 4 of the Letter to the Ephesians.¹

¹ I ... beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit...

*⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift...
¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ...*

¹⁵Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

It is a mutual relationship, in which all parties have a part to play that is of equal importance and value. All Christians are called to be members of the Church engaging in worship and mission as disciples. Their discipleship is focused in various callings according to the circumstances of their lives and the situations in which they find themselves. The ordained ministries of presbyters and deacons are but two particular forms of that focusing.

It is a mutual relationship of service. Presbyters and deacons are called to fulfil their office on behalf of the Church and in the church and the world by serving the church and the world and leading them in worship and mission. The Church in turn serves

them by setting them free from other concerns and providing them with the resources necessary to do it.

In this covenant relationship, both the Church and those who are ordained are committed to each other and accountable to each other within their ultimate commitment and accountability to God. That commitment and accountability is embodied both connexionally and locally. Just as a presbyter's or deacon's commitment to the Conference is embodied in the way that they serve people in their particular appointments, so the Conference's commitment to a presbyter or deacon is embodied in the way that they are used and treated by local churches and their representatives.

Occasionally, of course, ministers and others fail to live out their calling in the way that the Church reasonably expects them to do. Those who engage with them in the processes of Reflective Supervision approved by the Church, those who otherwise have oversight of them, and those who are recipients of their ministry or other forms of discipleship, should find in the Expectations suggestions about how levels of appropriate conduct and competence can be identified and assessed. They are not, however, designed to be a list against which complaints should be made. What they might offer is guidance for those involved in any complaint about the reasonable expectations of the Church in the matters concerned.

The overarching purpose, however, of the Commitments and Expectations is not to incite guilt in the practitioner (lay or ordained) but to assist in the reasoned review of self and practice which is part of living and working accountably in a covenant relationship. It is therefore a mutual relationship of supporting and caring for each other, bearing each other's burdens, guiding one another and holding each other to account, and in that sense watching over one another in love.

To this end, we are asked to make the appropriate Commitments and affirm the Expectations, and to support each other in doing so and in reflecting together on them all.

2. COMMITMENTS

These Commitments are to be made in the Representative and Presbyteral Sessions of the Conference and the Conference Diaconal Committee as relevant, and may also be made in other local and connexional meetings as appropriate.

2.1 MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

As members of the Church, we remember that ministers (both presbyters and deacons) may be in the active work or supernumerary (retired), and that they may exercise their ministry in many different types of appointment in which they are appointed or permitted to serve. All however have been received into Full Connexion with the Conference in a covenant relationship, and the Conference has authorised their ordination. The Conference's decision that they are suitable to be received into Full Connexion is echoed in the shout of the people present at the ordination service that "They are worthy!".

Just as the ministers believe that they are called by God to minister, so the Conference believes that it is called by God, and on behalf of the whole Church it commits itself to accept the offering of their ministries, and to nurture, guide and support them in them. As members of the Church and representatives of the Conference we play our parts in maintaining that covenant relationship as we exercise our particular responsibilities towards ministers in our various ways.

As expressions of that commitment, we resolve:

1. To receive the gifts and graces of particular presbyters and deacons (in circuit and other appointments) and to listen, consider and, as appropriate, enable those ministers to develop them and flourish in a variety of expressions of ministry.
2. To work collaboratively with ministers in Local Church, Circuit, District or other bodies of the Methodist Church, 'watching over one another in love' in a covenantal relationship to ensure that they and we are worthy representatives of Christ and the Methodist Church.
3. To provide time, opportunity, and appropriate encouragement and resources for the spiritual development of Methodist ministers and to allow them to support and guide us in responding to God's call to holiness in prayer, worship, lifestyle and action.
4. To find ways of building the resilience of Methodist ministers and members to face the stresses and strains and changing demands of their various ministries and discipleship, including providing the necessary pastoral support for the well-being of ministers and their households.
5. To work to change cultures in the Church and support ministers as appropriate to the type of their appointment in (a) implementing the Church's policies and requirements on such as safeguarding; equality, diversity and inclusion; bullying and harassment; and pastoral practice, and (b) in maintaining in their relationships and responsibilities boundaries between those matters that are personal and those that are connected to their work as a minister.
6. To support ministers and share with them in developing strategic vision, acquiring practical tools and exercising evangelistic, prophetic and socially engaged ministries and mission in the world.
7. To promote and embody the culture of shared leadership in which ministers and lay people collaborate in playing appropriate and complementary roles, and in which people are enabled where necessary to live with contradictory convictions.
8. To embody and encourage a culture of lifelong learning and continuing theological reflection amongst all the Methodist people, including presbyters and deacons, not least by ensuring that time and resources are available for it.

9. To help ensure that ministers are trained, equipped and supported so that they understand and, where appropriate, practise the relevant and necessary communication skills to serve the present age, including those relating to social media and digital technology.

2.2 PRESBYTERS

As presbyters, we remember that we have been received into Full Connexion with the Methodist Conference in a covenant relationship and have been ordained in God's name and received the charge:

to preach by word and deed the Gospel of God's grace;
to declare God's forgiveness of sins to all who are penitent;
to baptize, to confirm and to preside at the celebration of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood;
to lead God's people in worship, prayer and service;
to minister Christ's love and compassion;
to serve others, in whom you serve the Lord himself.

As part of the Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers we renew our ordination promises each year and are asked to respond to the questions:

Does each of us continue faithfully to discharge the obligations laid upon us by the ministry we have received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the grace of God?
Do we continue to believe and preach our doctrines and observe and administer our discipline?

As expressions of those commitments, whether in the active work or supernumerary and irrespective of the type of appointment to which we are appointed or in which we are authorised to serve, or the place where we are permitted to reside, we resolve afresh:

1. To seek to fulfil our continuing calling and commitment and, insofar as we are permitted and able, the charge we received at ordination.
2. To share with colleagues, lay and ordained, in watching over one another in love, exercising and accepting oversight, supervision and support of our conduct as representatives of the Methodist Church.
3. To nurture our relationship with God and constantly seek holiness in worship, prayer, the reading of the Holy Scriptures, lifestyle and action.
4. To care for ourselves, seeking to understand our own personalities and allowing our characters to be formed by engaging with our limitations and vulnerabilities and recognising our dependence on and experience of grace.
5. To show unfailing love towards others both in relationships that are formal or professional and in those that are personal or private; to exercise caution in

maintaining appropriate boundaries and our use of power particularly where people are marginalised, vulnerable or distressed; and to abide by all the Church's standards and guidelines concerning safeguarding; equality, diversity and inclusion; harassment and bullying; confidentiality; intimacy and sexuality.

6. To lead God's people in mission in and to the world by sharing with Methodists and where possible with ecumenical partners and others in informed theological reflection about God and the world; to share with others in the work of evangelism, in engagement with social issues in ways that demonstrate Christ's justice and compassion, and in prophetic ministry in which God's steadfast love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace are combined.
7. To lead people in both humility and confidence by sharing with them in responding and being accountable to God's call and the discipline of the Church; to work collaboratively with lay and ordained colleagues in ways which encourage and enable their various gifts to flourish and which respect and seek to hold together their differing and even contradictory convictions.
8. To engage in lifelong learning and theological reflection, with regular and intentional study of the Bible and Christian faith, and of issues in society and the world.
9. To dedicate ourselves to constantly learning how both to hear and to speak with clarity and passion about people's experience of life and the world, and also about God and the good news of Christ in relation to those experiences; to strive to use the words, language, images and actions that are appropriate for each audience; and to seek to ensure that we abide by the Church's guidance on the use of social and other media.

2.3 DEACONS

As deacons, we remember that we have been received into Full Connexion with the Methodist Conference in a covenant relationship which includes membership of a dispersed religious order, the Methodist Diaconal Order, and have been ordained in God's name and received the charge:

*to assist God's people in worship and prayer;
to hold before them the needs and concerns of the world;
to minister Christ's love and compassion;
to visit and support the sick and the suffering;
to seek out the lost and the lonely;
and to help those you serve to offer their lives to God.¹*

¹ *MWB Ordination of Deacons* p. 317. The Conference in 2019 amended a sentence in the third paragraph of the Introduction to the Ordination Services (*MWB* p. 297) to read "Deacons are ordained to a ministry of witness and service and pastoral care and seek to equip God's people for witness and service in the world."

As part of the Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers we renew our ordination promises each year and are each asked to respond to the questions:

Do you continue to believe that God has called you to be a Deacon in the universal Church?

Do you continue to accept the Holy Scriptures as revealing all things necessary for salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord?

Do you continue to believe the doctrines of the Christian faith as this Church has received them?

Do you continue to accept the discipline of this Church, working together with your brothers and sisters in the Church?

Will you continue to be faithful in worship, in prayer, in the reading of the Holy Scriptures and in those studies which will equip you for ministry?

As expressions of those commitments, whether in the active work or supernumerary and irrespective of the type of appointment to which we are appointed or in which we are authorised to serve, or the place where we are permitted to reside, we resolve afresh:

1. To seek to fulfil our continuing calling and commitment and, insofar as we are permitted and able, the charge we received at ordination.
2. To share with colleagues, lay and ordained, in watching over one another in love, exercising and accepting oversight, supervision and support of our conduct as representatives of the Methodist Church.
3. To nurture our relationship with God and constantly seek holiness by following the Order's Rule of Life and in worship, prayer, the reading of the Holy Scriptures, lifestyle and action.
4. To care for ourselves, seeking to understand our own personalities and allowing our characters to be formed by engaging with our limitations and vulnerabilities and recognising our dependence on and experience of grace.
5. To show unfailing love towards others both in relationships that are formal or professional and in those that are personal or private; to exercise caution in maintaining appropriate boundaries and our use of power particularly where people are marginalised, vulnerable or distressed; and to abide by all the Church's standards and guidelines concerning safeguarding; equality, diversity and inclusion; harassment and bullying; confidentiality; intimacy and sexuality.
6. To lead God's people in mission in and to the world by sharing with Methodists and where possible with ecumenical partners and others in informed theological reflection about God and the world; to share with others in the work of evangelism, in engagement with social issues in ways that demonstrate Christ's justice and compassion, and in prophetic ministry in which God's steadfast love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace are combined.

7. To lead people in both humility and confidence by sharing with them in responding and being accountable to God's call and the discipline of the Church; to work collaboratively with lay and ordained colleagues in ways which encourage and enable their various gifts to flourish and which respect and seek to hold together their differing and even contradictory convictions.
8. To engage in lifelong learning and theological reflection, with regular and intentional study of the Bible and Christian faith, and of issues in society and the world.
9. To dedicate ourselves to constantly learning how both to hear and to speak with clarity and passion about people's experience of life and the world and about God, and also about the good news of Christ in relation to those experiences; to strive to use words, language, images and actions that are appropriate for each audience; and to seek to ensure that we abide by the Church's guidance on the use of social and other media.

3. EXPECTATIONS

These Expectations set out standards and provide tools for discernment with regard to how ministers fulfil their office, and how they are treated by others within and on behalf of the Church. Like the Commitments, they follow the Headings of the Selection Criteria for Ministry approved by the Conference. The various sub-sections may best be used separately as occasion makes them appropriate.

3.1 VOCATION (CALL AND COMMITMENT)²

'It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of Christian ministry depends upon the call of God'.³ Throughout the process of candidating and training, people are tested on their call and asked if they remain persuaded that God has called them to ordained ministry in the Church. That call to ordained ministry is a particular expression of the vocation to discipleship which is shared by all members of the Church. Those ordained as ministers 'focus, express, and enable the ministry of the whole people of God'.⁴ Ministers (both presbyters and deacons) are people who witness to a sense of a distinct call to serve in the ministry to which they are ordained. They are aware of the need continually to ask to what they are being called and to test the development of their call with others in the Church. They live with a conviction that for them the call to be a presbyter or deacon is part of, and indispensable to, the call to holiness which is common to all disciples but which finds different expression in each; this vocation however is not individualistic but is tested and affirmed by the community of disciples. All these ministers, whatever the nature or type of their appointment, therefore seek to discern their developing vocation (eg at times of stationing) in dialogue with the Church and its processes.

² The Retreat Association, of which the Methodist Church is a member, provide details on finding spiritual directors, see retreats.org.uk

³ Deed of Union clause 4.

⁴ 'What is a Presbyter?' paragraph 4

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- receive the gifts and graces of particular ministers (in circuit or other appointments);
- balance their apparent skills with the apparent needs of the Church;
- have discussions with ministers about their calling and commitment to ordained ministry;
- show a commitment to enabling them to grow and develop their gifts and graces in a variety of expressions of ministry.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- speak of your sense of call when appropriate;
- share the challenges of living the life of a disciple and a minister;
- explore with others (eg with minister exercising oversight, supervisor, spiritual director, lay and ordained colleagues) how your vocational calling has changed or developed;
- show a commitment to helping people worship God and share in God's mission in the world.

3.2 VOCATION (MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN GREAT BRITAIN)

Whilst the Methodist Church ordains 'not to a denomination, but to the presbyterate and diaconate of the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church', Methodist ministers (both presbyters and deacons) exercise ministry within and as representatives of the Methodist Church in Britain. As such all ministers, including those who exercise oversight over their peers, are equally accountable to the Conference.

This representative ministry is conducted in collaboration with others and in partnership with Christians of other denominations with whom the Methodist Church in Britain is committed to work for a fuller expression of God-given unity.

Deacons are people whose calling is to focus a ministry of witness and service on behalf of the whole Church by enabling the ministry of others. They are required to live according to the Diaconal Order's Rule of Life.

Presbyters are called to a 'principal and directing part' in the life of the Church through the ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral responsibility.

All ministers are called to work with colleagues from other denominations in a way which honours the others' positions whilst maintaining their own identity as Methodist.

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- receive, own and support the ministry of the ministers to whom you are connected, (whether in circuit or other types of appointment, and whether in the active work or supernumerary);
- work collaboratively with ministers, 'watching over one another in love' in a covenantal rather than an employer/employee relationship;
- be aware of any unhealthy power imbalances affecting collaborative working between all members, lay and ordained; and take appropriate steps to rectify these where they occur;
- work alongside Methodist ministers in engaging with other partners in projects with mission opportunities.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- be a representative of the Methodist Church in your particular type of appointment; work collaboratively and share leadership with other members of the Church (presbyters and deacons, lay officers and lay members);
- give and receive oversight ('watching over one another in love') with other ministers and lay people;
- be accountable for your conduct as a representative of the Methodist Church and recognise the power inherent in the office;
- demonstrate respect for the significance and integrity of the other order of ministry, and of lay officers and members.

3.3 RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Presbyters and deacons are first and foremost people of prayer and spirituality.

Presbyters and deacons commit themselves at ordination to 'be faithful in worship, in prayer, [and] in the reading of the Holy Scriptures.'⁵ It is recognised that there are diverse ways in which spirituality can be expressed and nurtured.

Ministers need to nurture a spiritual life that is authentic and disciplined and which is based on a confidence in God's love for them and a sense of the call to holiness which embodies prayer and worship in lifestyle and action. This spiritual life will be manifest in regular engagement with the means of grace in private devotion and in the life of the worshipping community. As for all Methodist disciples, this will include participation in public worship, regular communion, and prayer and Bible study in small groups. Ministers need to be those who are able to receive as well as to give in worship, fellowship, pastoral care, and mission.

⁵ *Methodist Worship Book*, p. 303, 318.

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- provide time, opportunity, and appropriate encouragement and resources for the spiritual development of ministers, recognising the breadth of spirituality found among them and the different types of appointment that they fulfil;
- seek to enrich the spiritual lives of the members of the Church and others; encourage and enable ministers to seek out opportunities for prayer and worship, both within and beyond the Methodist Church, which will nourish their relationship with God;
- allow ministers and others to support you, 'to watch over you in love' in your relationship with God;
- respond to the call to holiness in prayer, worship, lifestyle and action;
- embody in yourself and encourage ministers in a commitment to Our Calling.

Expectation of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- be faithful in worship, in prayer and in the reading of the Holy Scriptures;
- nurture your own and others spirituality;
- attend worship when you are not leading other people in worship;
- develop healthy supportive friendships;
- seek out those who offer oversight in regards to your relationship with God;
- respond to the call to holiness in prayer, worship, lifestyle and action;
- embody and encourage others in a commitment to Our Calling.

3.4 PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

A New Testament model for ministry is the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. No matter in what type of appointment ministers serve, or what type of personality or theological outlook they have, their life can be spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, and physically demanding. As the Ordination service puts it 'This ministry will make great demands upon you.'⁶

Ministers therefore need to develop and to maintain the resources and traits of character to face these demands. Practically, as people for whom the Church has to a greater or lesser extent provided, presbyters and deacons conduct their own financial affairs with probity and appropriate transparency, live modestly and, so far as their means allow, embody the generosity of Christ to others. As representative people they are duty bound to live simply and demonstrate the care for the environment and conservation of the resources of the planet that expresses the Church's concern for the integrity of creation.

⁶ *Methodist Worship Book* p.. 302, 317.

More generally, ministers need to understand their own limitations and vulnerability, and recognise their dependence on and experience of grace. They need to care for themselves, and to have the capacity to engage with and to work on areas of perceived weakness.

The formation of their character in these matters is a continuing process throughout their life and ministry, not least through living and working within the Church's policy that all ministers should operate under a programme of reflective supervision.

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- seek to help build the resilience of Methodist ministers and fellow disciples to face the changing demands and pressures of ministry and discipleship;
- offer pastoral support for the well-being of ministers and their households;
- seek to reduce the pressures on Methodist ministers in order that they may fulfil their calling;
- recognise that supernumerary ministers continue to be ministers, and enable them to exercise their ministry in appropriate ways within the limits of what they can offer;
- help to ensure that ministers in the active work who are required to live in property provided by the Church are housed in manses that are appropriate to their needs and those of their families, and that their manses and equipment are up to standard and well maintained;
- be aware of the Methodist Church's policies and practices of Reflective Supervision, Ministerial Development Reviews, Training, Continuing Development in Ministry, and Safeguarding.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- strive to flourish in ministry by practising self-care;
- if in the active work, maintain reasonable working hours,⁷ and take regular days off and holidays, including quarter days as laid out in the current guidance;
- if in the active work or otherwise required to do so, meet regularly with a supervisor, and make effective use of the space to reflect on ministry with a view to improving your practice;
- use wisely the gift of any sabbatical, study days or retreats whilst acknowledging the benefits and difficulties caused by accepting them;
- take good care of your health, including taking proper time for physical exercise;
- seek advice, counsel, treatment and rest when stressed or unwell;

⁷ CPD Book VII Guidance, Part 3

- seek to live within your means, keep accurate records of all receipts of gifts or other monies in addition to your stipend, salary, or pension, and abide by the Church's policies in relation to occasional fees, gifts, and gratuities;
- work with local stewards to take care of the manse with which you have been provided.

3.5 BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

All ministry is relational. So far as those who are ordained are concerned, both presbyters and deacons are called to have 'unfailing love'⁸ for those amongst whom they minister. Their conduct towards them should be that of loving servants who are called to live among those whom they may find it easy or difficult to like. As all human relationships have dimensions of power and vulnerability, they should be alert to these and cautious of any words or actions that could be interpreted as an abuse of their power. They therefore need to be conversant with and to advocate the Church's policies and practices in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. They also need to be conversant with and live openly in accord with the policies concerning equality, diversity, and inclusion;⁹ and with the statements and guidance regarding principles of good relating, cohabitation and the understanding of marriage, including same-sex marriage.¹⁰ The expectation that all ministers will seek to live in accordance with the Church's policies and statements on marriage, family life, and other relationships applies to their personal as well as their public life. In this aspect and more generally presbyters and deacons should seek and be encouraged to recognise that as well as their calling to have 'unfailing love' for those amongst whom they minister, they all have other vocations (eg to be spouses or partners, parents, children, siblings, friends, or neighbours) and are called prayerfully to balance their responsibilities to those close to them with the demands of their ministry in and on behalf of the Church.

No matter what the type or circumstances of their appointments, all ministers should therefore model good, wholesome, and loving relationships.

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- exercise your responsibilities under the covenant relationship towards those ministers for whom you care;
- ensure that ministers feel valued and supported whilst they are exercising the Church's care for others;
- support ministers in implementing the Church's policies and requirements on such as safeguarding; equality, diversity and inclusion; bullying and harassment; and pastoral practice;

8 *MWB* Ordination of Presbyters para 16 p. 306; Ordination of Deacons para 16 p. 321

9 As set out in the 'Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity: working towards a fully inclusive Methodist Church' adopted by the Conference in 2021 (Item 56 in the 2021 Agenda).

10 As adopted by the Conference in 2021 following the report to the Conference in 2019 'God in Love Unites Us' and the report to the Conference in 2021 'Marriage and Relationships: Provisional Resolutions'; and from 2021 set out in *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* Book VII Part 10 Marriage and Relationships: Good Relating, Cohabitation and Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage.

- intervene and offer support where Methodist ministers believe that they experience bullying, discriminatory, or belittling behaviour;
- offer appropriate help and support to Methodist ministers (as identified in our policies and practices) before their well-being and mental health is affected;
- recognise and help others recognise that as well as being a place of work the manse is primarily a home where privacy is to be respected;
- support ministers to maintain a balance between their personal relationships and responsibilities and those connected with their work as a minister.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- exercise 'unfailing love' towards others in professional or public relationships;
- exercise 'unfailing love' in personal or private relationships;
- balance your responsibilities to those close to you with the demands of ministry;
- follow the stipulations in the Church's policies on bullying and harassment, safeguarding¹¹ and on equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- conduct all pastoral work in accordance with the Church's directions and guidance¹² and keep accurate and meaningful records of pastoral visits and encounters;¹³
- identify and maintain appropriate boundaries in pastoral relationships and refer to Reflective Supervision or a minister in oversight any relationship that might threaten to cross the boundaries of professional, pastoral care;
- discuss with your minister in oversight serious difficulties in or likely breakup of personal relationships;
- be willing to admit to being vulnerable at times and seek help from the Church family.

3.6 THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY IN GOD'S WORLD

Ministers are called to lead God's people in mission to the world. They are those in whom particular gifts have been identified which contribute to the fulfilling of the mission of the Church. Their lives are shaped by the calling of the Church to worship, learning and caring, service, and evangelism and by seeking to reflect theologically on the Church's vocation in the context of the 21st century.

Theological reflection is therefore central to the life of presbyters and deacons. They will seek to be informed about the world and to ask where God is at work. In this, their opinions should be informed by the use of reliable and authoritative media. It is wholly inappropriate for Methodist ministers to be members of any movements that implicitly or explicitly deny the equality of all God's children.

¹¹ 4 See Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/policies-and-guidance/

¹² eg see Conference reports, 'With Integrity and Skill' and 'Positive Working Together.'

¹³ See Code of Safer Working Practice with Adults in Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/policies-and-guidance

All ministers (whether in circuit or other appointments or without appointment and in all aspects of their ministry) are called to work ecumenically, where possible, to reflect the Methodist Church's understanding of the catholicity of the Church as God's instrument of mission in the world. Within a broad understanding of what it means to be God's people in this place and time, they will develop their own theological and other interests and aim to contribute to the life and witness of the Methodist Church and the universal church in particular ways, proclaiming the good news of God's love in ways that are appropriate to their context.

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- accept the support, leadership and encouragement of ministers to exercise evangelistic, prophetic and socially engaged ministries and mission in the world;
- support, advise, and empower Methodist ministers to engage in a prophetic ministry in the Church and in the world, and to work with you and others in furthering God's mission for human flourishing and the well-being of creation;
- engage with ministers in theological reflection on the pressing issues of our times.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- lead God's people in mission to the world;
- discern with others where God is at work;
- ensure the Church's work is outward facing, engaging with both God and the world in worship and practical action;
- reflect in your own interests and commitments the Church's mission to the world;
- exercise a prophetic ministry in which God's steadfast love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace are combined;¹⁴
- engage with social issues in ways that make clear Christ's way of justice and compassion;
- avoid denigrating the opinions or motivations of others, whilst being free to hold and to express party political views;
- speak respectfully of Christians of other denominations and of members of other faith communities;
- seek to develop partnerships in mission with members of other churches working with the guidance of connexional and district officers as and when appropriate.

3.7 LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Presbyters have 'a principal and directing part in [the] great duties [of the Church]'.¹⁵
Deacons 'in many different contexts ... embody, proclaim and point to the transforming

¹⁴ For the last of these, see Psalm 85:10

¹⁵ Deed of Union clause 4

love of Christ and it is their responsibility as representative persons to lead the people to share with them in that calling'.¹⁶

Both presbyters and deacons are called to 'accept our discipline and work together with... sisters and brothers in the Church'. This requires an appropriate degree of both humility and confidence in the way in which leadership is exercised. Ministers therefore need to have an ability to work with others in a variety of ways. They should work collaboratively with their lay and ordained colleagues in the leadership of churches, circuits, or other bodies to which they are stationed. They should be able to let others flourish and to delegate to them when appropriate. At other times they will find themselves required to act decisively on the part of the church, circuit, or other body. To do this they will need to have an appropriate understanding of their own authority. The *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD)* orders, regulates, and guides the work of those who exercise leadership in the life of the Church and all presbyters and deacons are expected to be familiar with its contents.

The covenant relationship is one in which presbyters and deacons are called to represent the Conference within and beyond the Church. Particularly in the public arena, they should uphold the decisions of the Conference and express personal disagreement with those decisions in a manner which is collegial and respectful of the Conference and its officers, demonstrating 'a willingness to work with a dynamic tension of diversity, recognising that openness does not mean that 'anything goes' but is a desire to discern God's will in and for the other and the Church'.¹⁷

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- promote and embody the culture of shared leadership in which ministers and lay people play appropriate roles;
- support ministers in encouraging and enabling participation;
- support ministers when circumstances have required that they act decisively, even if such decisions may be judged by some to be ill-advised;
- help ministers to enable people to live where necessary with contradictory convictions.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- lead whilst collaborating with others;
- encourage participation, shared responsibility and learn from feedback;
- delegate tasks to others according to their gifts and graces;
- ensure that meetings in the life of the Church are properly constituted, effectively administered, and functionally efficient;

¹⁶ Conference 'The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate' para 2.2.1 MWB p. 303, 318

¹⁷ Conference 2006 'Living with Contradictory Convictions'.

- consult with and act in accordance with the relevant Standing Orders, Regulations and Guidance contained in *CPD*, and the decisions of the Conference and its officers;
- enable people to live, when necessary, with contradictory convictions;
- chair and contribute to meetings in ways which clearly encourage all present to express opinions and model respectful listening;
- encourage those with whom you share in ministry to help to implement the decisions of the Conference.

3.8 LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING

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 doctrines of the Christian faith to those who have received the gospel and to those who are yet to receive it. Their practice of ministry must also be informed by an understanding of the great truths of the Faith and an ability to reflect theologically using a range of resources.

Presbyters and deacons should therefore see themselves as lifelong learners who are constantly engaged in theological reflection. Their regular life should include dedicated times of study, engagement with Scripture and theological texts, and participation in study activities. It is recommended that all ministers identify their own theological interests and pursue them.

Presbyters and deacons should also explore and develop their interests in other avenues of knowledge, and seek to engage with a range of cultural pursuits and activities.

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- embody and encourage a culture of lifelong learning and continuing theological reflection amongst all the Methodist people, including presbyters and deacons;
- provide Methodist ministers, in particular, with the necessary time and resources so that they may actively pursue theological and other interests;
- encourage ministers to make theological study a priority;
- support ministers and others in engaging in the apologetic task;
- ensure that ministers maintain their general reading and engagement with cultural activities.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- engage in lifelong learning and theological reflection;
- maintain habits of study and Bible reading;
- be aware of the resources of the Church in developing skills of theological reflection;

- engage with particular areas of theological reflection;
- engage with general reading and other media;
- participate in the study opportunities offered by the circuit, district, and Connexion.

3.9 COMMUNICATION

Much of ministry is concerned with speaking about God and, at times, with all humility in the name of God to people within and outside the Church. It also involves being able to speak with people, listening and seeking to help them to articulate their lives and their experience of the world around them. To do this and at the same time articulate the truths of the Christian faith demands the skills of communication. Ministers are those who are constantly learning how to hear and speak with clarity and passion about the Good News of Christ.

Ministers therefore need to be aware of the various methods of communication that are available to them and of the importance of using appropriate methods to speak to people with different learning styles and abilities. They need to be alert to cultural differences and to those who do not find written or spoken English easy. They should also be aware of the opportunities and the perils of digital technology and social media and be conversant with and careful about using modern methods of communication.

Above all, ministers should remember that whenever they communicate they do so as those who represent Christ in the name of the Methodist Church and therefore be careful about what they say, the words that they use to say it, and how it might be repeated and interpreted.

Expectations of members, officers and committees of the Church

The Church expects that you will:

- help to train, equip and support ministers so that they understand and, where appropriate, practise the relevant and necessary communication skills to serve the present age, including those relating to social media and digital technology;
- encourage the Methodist people and ministers in particular to speak of God in God's world;
- harness the communication skills of others to enable better communications;
- work with ministers, and lay officers to improve our communications with all generations;
- be prepared to raise questions about other people's, including ministers', use of languages, images and other forms of communication – on and offline.

Expectations of ministers

The Church expects that you will:

- constantly seek to improve your communication skills;
- obtain regular feedback on your preaching and other forms of public communication;

- ensure that the words, language, images and actions you use to communicate are appropriate to each particular audience;
- avoid the intentional use of language or imagery that could be found offensive;
- abide by the Church's guidance on the use of social media and generally ensure that your use of information technology and social media is competent and appropriate;
- consider carefully how you respond to any printed, broadcast, or Internet material that has gratuitously sexual or violent content.

Amendments and corrections are welcomed – please email mww@methodistchurch.org.uk

This handbook will be updated annually.