

The Preaching Ministry of Ministers who have resigned from full connexion - a guidance note

When permission is given to a minister to resign from full connexion with the Conference, a declaration is made as to what continuing status they have with regards to the Methodist Church in Britain (SO760(6)). This may be member, Local Preacher or no status. If they continue to hold the status of Local Preacher, then all the usual rights and duties of that status apply (SO 563). In the other two cases, they hold no status in which they can ordinarily lead worship or preach in the Methodist Church in Britain. However, in some cases, ministers who have resigned seek to exercise a continuing ministry of this kind in local Methodist Churches.

The Methodist Church in many situations welcomes those of other denominations to lead worship or preach as visiting preachers. This should be an occasional arrangement and would usually be part of a local church's ecumenical or other relationships. Who may be a visiting preacher is ultimately a question for the Superintendent in the exercise of their responsibility for the circuit plan (SO521). The Superintendent should consider what the Methodist Church's relationship is with the church or denomination from which the prospective visiting preacher comes. If there is any doubt as to this relationship or it is unclear to whom they are accountable for their ministry, then the Connexional Ecumenical Officer should be consulted. The category of visiting preacher must not be used to circumvent the normal requirements for exercising ministry in the Methodist Church and, in the case of ministers who have resigned, we would strongly recommend that taking appointments as visiting preachers would be inappropriate, at the very least for the initial years following the resignation. Customarily, ministers who have simply left a circuit in the normal process of stationing would observe a gap of a year before any question of a return visit to preach or lead worship. In the case of a resignation from full connexion, a far longer interval would be appropriate before any consideration of a visit to preach or lead worship is undertaken. The length of this interval depends on the circumstances: in relatively amicable cases, one year may be enough; in more difficult cases, five years is a sensible starting point. In considering the appropriateness of a minister who has resigned returning as a visiting preacher at any point, the Superintendent should consult with the District Chair, who will, if necessary, seek the guidance of the Conference Office.

Adopted by the Ministries Committee

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