

2024



The Constitutional Practice  
and Discipline of

Volume 2

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*Editor's Notes.* (1) Generally in this edition, text in ***bold italics*** differs from that of the previous year, and [...] indicates an omission, although changes in the editorial notes in small type and any changes to the text in Books IV -VII are not marked. However, the conventions which have been adopted in indicating the major changes which were adopted by the Conference in 2024 as a result of the report on Oversight and Trusteeship (Conference Agenda, report 50) are explained in (3) below.

### Oversight and Trusteeship

(2) The Conference of 2023 confirmed the Special Resolution adopting the changes to the Deed of Union (provisionally adopted the previous year), bringing to an end the Methodist Council, and creating the Connexional Council as the connexional trustee body and providing the foundational rules for the relationship between the council and the Conference. That Conference directed that those changes should take effect on 1 September 2024. The Conference of 2024 adopted the resolutions providing for all the necessary amendments of the Standing Orders and of the texts to be found in Books IV to VII, with effect from that same date.

(3) While there are amendments arising from this process to be found throughout this volume, the key change is that the whole of the previous Parts 2, 3 and 10 of Standing Orders has been replaced by Parts 2 and 3 as printed in this volume. However much of the text of the Standing Orders in those Parts has been retained unaltered at this stage, and so the numbers in square brackets at the beginning of a Standing Order or clause in Parts 2 and 3 of this edition denote where the text appeared in substantially the same form in the 2023 edition. Any further changes to those substantially retained Standing Orders are denoted in the usual way (see (1) above), as are the consequential amendments to the rest of this volume. In the Standing Orders which have required to be dealt with in this process, further changes to achieve gender neutral language have been made.

(4) As a result of the proposals contained in the successive Oversight and Trusteeship reports to the Conference, certain committees have now ceased to exist, notably the Strategy and Resources Committee, the Connexional Allowances Committee and the Property Development Committee. Their continuing functions will generally be performed under the aegis of the Connexional Council and its main committees (Ministries, Mission and Resourcing). A new connexional panel for review groups has been created (S.O. 291), to deal with appeals and reviews on various matters which previously came, in general, into the purview of the Methodist Council.

(5) Note also the resolutions referred to in Book VI Part 1 (pp. 807) as to Qualifications for Appointment and Safeguarding Disclosures which continue in force the rulings made by the Methodist Council, and the resolution reaffirming the requirement for regular up-to-date checks.

(6) Although it had been expected that the Special Resolution amending the Model Trusts to reflect the changes as to Oversight and Trusteeship would be confirmed at the Conference of 2024, the process needed to be delayed to comply with the provisions relating to appropriate consultation (with the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods). So this Special Resolution was again provisionally adopted, and will be brought for confirmation to the Conference of 2025. However, the Conference adopted a new Standing Order 904, designed to deal with the immediate situation, providing that the Connexional Council shall constitute the connexional trustees for any connexional property and that the Connexional Council shall perform and exercise the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities which were assigned to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts. The Conference also delegated to the Connexional Council the power to appoint trustees of Conference property.

(7) The Conference noted that the work on Oversight and Trusteeship is still in process and anticipated that further revisions would be brought to the Conference in 2025. Part of that work relates to the Connexional Leaders' Forum, so the reader will note that S.O. 293, though renumbered, remains suspended.

#### Property and finance matters

(8) There was one further, unrelated, Special Resolution amending paragraph 26 of the Model Trusts which was again unable to be confirmed for the same reason but which was again provisionally adopted and will be brought for confirmation next year. This is intended to remove the provisions about a signed memorandum of consent on every disposition of model trust property. The Conference meanwhile directed that, as such a memorandum no longer serves a useful purpose in England and Wales and is burdensome and time-consuming, no further such memoranda in respect of property in England and Wales shall be executed.

(9) S.O. 654(4)(ii) was amended to clarify the position as to balances that are held on specific trusts other than the Model Trusts when a Local Church ceases to exist. The new trustees are required to hold the funds on such trusts as shall be determined in accordance with charity legislation most closely to fulfil the original purposes of the trust.

#### The Conference

(10) The Conference confirmed the Special Resolution to amend clause 14(2) of the Deed of Union to delete the category of conference-elected representatives and reduce the Methodist Church in Ireland's representation at the Conference. These changes will take effect for the Conference of 2025, although the existing conference-elected representatives will serve out the remainder of their term of office that year. Accompanying amendments of S.O. 102 were adopted.

(11) The Conference provisionally adopted a Special Resolution which, after appropriate consultation, will be presented to the Conference of 2025 for confirmation, further amending clause 14(2) of the Deed of Union to provide for the possibility of a deputy for a District Chair being a member of the Conference where the Chair is unable to attend. Standing Orders relating to this and other aspects of District Leadership will be brought to the Conference in 2025.

(12) The Conference Financial Committee was replaced by the Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee with a wider remit (S.O. 136A).

### Ministry

(13) Last year, the Conference adopted substantial changes relating to candidature for ministry. This year, consequential changes, including the separate but related provisions about change of order of ministry (between presbyteral and diaconal), were adopted (S.O. 718).

(14) The Guidance in cases of breakdown of the marriage or civil partnership of ministers and probationers (replacing S.O. 111(3)) was approved and now appears in Book VII Part 5A (pp. 833-836 below)

(15) Further changes consequential upon the ending of the Medical Committee last year were made in relation to reinstatement, applications to become supernumerary and the guidance as to ministers affected by impairment.

### Methodist Children and Youth Assembly

(16) S.O. 240 (previously 250) was substantially amended, including as to the age range for attendance, the role of the Youth President and methods of election for office.

### Other legislative changes

(17) These included amendments to:

- the provisions as to Districts and Circuits with modified constitutions;
- S.O. 124, to give effect to last year's decision to separate the Minutes of the Conference from the Directory of the Methodist Church;
- the constitution and work of the Methodist Forces Board (now S.O. 286).

### Comparative Tables

(18) As the Comparative Tables previously found at the end of this volume contain historical material not usually required for current reference, they have been removed this year. If information on any such point is needed, this continues to be available on the Methodist Church website.

Users are invited to report any errors or omissions, in relation both to the text of this volume and to the index, to the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, Methodist Church House, 25 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SF or email: [lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk).



## PREFACE

Since 1974 Methodists have become familiar with what has come to be known as 'the black book'. The loose-leaf ring-book binding in which *Constitutional Practice and Discipline* was published was designed to make it easier to incorporate amendments by substituting sheets. The format was heavy and cumbersome, however, and it is hoped that the new style of presentation will be lighter and easier to use. Volume 1 contains the fixed texts: the Acts of Parliament and historic documents. Volume 2 comprises the material which Conference is empowered to amend, and this will be reissued annually in order to provide readers with an up to date version.

This division also helps to illustrate the legal framework within which the Methodist Church is governed. The authority under which the Conference acts is legally given by the 1976 Methodist Church Act. The next 'tier' of authority is given by the Model Trusts in the second Schedule of the Act and the Deed of Union. These derive their authority from the Act. They can be amended, but the process is deliberately protracted, to ensure that there is consultation and time for reflection. Thirdly there are the Standing Orders and guidelines adopted by the Conference, which are far more detailed and more easily changed, provided that they are within the limits prescribed by the Act, the Model Trusts and the Deed.

The existence of this large body of legislation illustrates one aspect of Methodism's understanding of the church. Each local church is a member of a larger body, subject to a common discipline and pattern of government, sharing in a wider life. The authority of the Conference, legally given by Act of Parliament, has its theological basis in this understanding of the church as a 'connexion' of local churches, circuits and districts, expressing their fellowship in the Body of Christ by their constitutional ties.

The fact that most aspects of constitutional practice and discipline can be amended, and that such amendments occur so frequently is also significant. Changes reflect not only the need for administrative adjustment, but the conviction that the church must not stand still, but must move forward as the Spirit leads, and is always in need of reform.

These volumes have been prepared under the direction of the Law and Polity Committee, and the Committee is grateful, as always, especially to Mr John Hicks whose wide sympathies and attention to detail are so generously placed at the service of the Church.

Brian E Beck  
Secretary of the Conference 1988  
Westminster



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## *Book II The Deeds*

The Deed of Union, adopted by the uniting conference in 1932 (see s. 8(1) of the 1929 Act (Vol. 1, p. 87), and recital (6) of the Deed itself, below) is printed as amended from time to time by the Conference under its powers in that behalf, and in particular as extensively rearranged and revised in form, although not in substance, in 1990. The amendments and rearrangement affect only the operative clauses 1 to 47; the formal parts at the beginning and end (parties, testatum, recitals (1) to (7), testimonium and attestation clauses) are unaltered, and provide the historical setting.

**Parties. TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME WE JOHN SCOTT LIDGETT** of the Bermondsey Settlement in the County of London Master of Arts Doctor of Divinity the President for the time being of the Uniting Conference referred to in and holden pursuant to the provisions of the Methodist Church Union Act 1929 **HENRY MALDWYN HUGHES** of Wesley House Cambridge in the County of Cambridge Master of Arts Doctor of Divinity the President elected in the year 1932 of the Annual Assembly or Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church **WILLIAM YOUNGER** of Llanfaes 41 Mead Walk Anlaby Park in the City and County of Kingston-upon-Hull the President elected in the year 1932 of the Annual Assembly or Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church and **WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER JACKSON** of 45 Northumberland Street Higher Broughton Manchester in the County of Lancaster Master of Arts the President elected in the year 1932 of the Annual Assembly or Conference of the United Methodist Church **SEND GREETING.**

**Recitals. (1) Methodist Church Union Act 1929.** WHEREAS by the Methodist Church Union Act 1929 it was enacted that the respective annual Conferences or Assemblies of the three several Churches denominations or connexions in the said Act and in this Deed referred to respectively as the Wesleyan Methodist Church the Primitive Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church and collectively as 'the said Churches or denominations' respectively holden in the year 1931 or any subsequent year might (by resolution to be passed in the Wesleyan Methodist Conference or Assembly by the votes of not less than three-fourths of the members present and voting in the Pastoral Session and also by the votes of a like majority in the Representative Session of the said Conference or Assembly and in the respective Conferences or Assemblies of the Primitive Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church by the votes of a like majority of the members present and voting in such respective Conferences or Assemblies) decide and determine that each of the said Conferences or Assemblies holden in the then next succeeding year should after the conclusion of its ordinary business adjourn its proceedings to the same day and place to be appointed by the said resolutions for the purpose of holding in such next succeeding year a united meeting of the members of such Conferences or Assemblies and that it should be lawful on the day and at the place so appointed for the said Conferences or Assemblies to unite and sit together as one united Conference (in the said Act and in this Deed referred to as 'the Uniting Conference') AND WHEREAS by the said Act it was also enacted that it should be lawful for the Uniting Conference by resolution passed by the votes of not less than three-fourths of the respective representatives of each of the said Churches or denominations present at the Uniting Conference and voting upon the said resolution (the representatives of each of the



## *Part 1 Deed of Union*

said Churches or denominations voting first separately and then as one body and in the case of the separate voting of the representatives of the Wesleyan Methodist Church the representatives of the Pastoral Session and of the Representative Session voting separately) to declare that the said Churches or denominations should be united in and form one united Church or denomination under the name of 'The Methodist Church' and under such constitution and upon such terms and conditions as might be declared and defined in a deed poll setting forth the basis of union to be settled and adopted by the Uniting Conference as in the said Act provided AND WHEREAS by the said Act it was also enacted that it should be lawful for the Uniting Conference by resolution passed in like manner as aforesaid to settle and adopt a deed poll setting forth the basis of union and that such deed (in the said Act and in this deed referred to as the Deed of Union) should declare and define the constitution and doctrinal standards of the said united Church or denomination under the name of 'The Methodist Church' and the terms and conditions of such union aforesaid and should contain all such provisions as to the constitution election powers duties and privileges of the Conference and all such other provisions (including powers from time to time subject to the provisions of the said Act to alter amend or repeal any of the provisions of the Deed of Union or of the constitution of The Methodist Church as declared and defined thereby and to adopt any new provisions with respect to any matter to which the Deed of Union related or to the constitution of The Methodist Church) as in the judgement of the Uniting Conference might be necessary or desirable for the government and discipline of The Methodist Church and the management and administration of the affairs thereof provided that the Conference should not have any power to alter or vary in any manner whatsoever the clauses contained in the Deed of Union which defined the doctrinal standards of The Methodist Church AND WHEREAS by the said Act it was also enacted that the Deed of Union when the same had been adopted by such resolution of the Uniting Conference as aforesaid should be forthwith sealed and delivered by the President of the Uniting Conference and by any of the Presidents elected in the year in which the Uniting Conference should be held of the said respective Annual Conferences or Assemblies of the Wesleyan Methodist Church the Primitive Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church who might be present at the Uniting Conference and be willing to execute the Deed of Union

The above recital (1) summarises the relevant provisions of the Methodist Church Union Act 1929 (Vol. 1, p. 80), which has now been repealed and replaced by the Methodist Church Act 1976 (Vol. 1, p. 2). For the most part this recital, recounting as it does the provisions of the 1929 Act, prescribing the procedure to be followed in constituting and holding the Uniting Conference, needs no explanation or qualification. In the third part, however, dealing with the contents of the Deed of Union, the final proviso, excluding amendment of the doctrinal clauses, does not state the present law, which is contained in section 5 of the 1976 Act (Vol. 1, p. 9).

### **(2) Passing of Resolutions to adjourn Conferences of said Churches or Denominations.**

AND WHEREAS the respective annual Conferences or Assemblies of the said Churches or denominations respectively holden in the year 1931 (by resolutions duly passed in manner in the said Act in that behalf provided and in the case of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference or Assembly not only in both its Representative and Pastoral Sessions but confirmed by the vote of the Legal Conference commonly called the Legal Hundred)

## *Book II The Deeds*

decided and determined that the yearly Conference of each of the said Churches respectively to be holden in the year 1932 should after the conclusion of its ordinary business adjourn its proceedings to the 20th day of September 1932 at the Royal Albert Hall London for the purpose of holding the Uniting Conference and carrying into effect the powers conferred upon the three Churches by the said Act.

**(3) Adjournment of Conference of said Churches or Denominations.** AND WHEREAS the event in that behalf in the said Act mentioned having happened the meetings of the respective annual Conferences or Assemblies of the said Churches or denominations holden in the year 1932 were by virtue of the said Act adjourned as in the said Act mentioned

**(4) Sitting of Uniting Conference.** AND WHEREAS in pursuance of the recited powers in that behalf conferred on them by the said Act the said Conferences or Assemblies assembled at such adjourned meetings as aforesaid have duly united and sat together as one Uniting Conference

**(5) Resolution to Unite.** AND WHEREAS the Uniting Conference in pursuance of the recited powers in that behalf conferred upon it by the said Act by resolution duly passed in manner in the said Act in that behalf provided and in the case of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference or Assembly confirmed by the vote of the Legal Conference aforesaid has declared that the said Churches or denominations shall be united in and form one united Church or denomination under the name of 'The Methodist Church' and under such constitution and upon such terms and conditions as may be declared and defined in a deed poll setting forth the basis of union to be settled and adopted by the Uniting Conference as in the said Act provided AND WHEREAS such united Church or denomination is hereinafter referred to as 'The Methodist Church'

**(6) Resolution settling and adopting this Deed as Deed of Union.** AND WHEREAS the Uniting Conference in pursuance of the recited powers in that behalf conferred upon it by the said Act by resolution duly passed in manner in the said Act in that behalf provided has settled and adopted this Deed as the Deed of Union setting forth the basis of union and declaring and defining the constitution and doctrinal standards of The Methodist Church and the terms and conditions of such Union as aforesaid

**(7) As to execution of this Deed.** AND WHEREAS it is intended that this Deed shall be executed pursuant to the provisions in that behalf in the said Act contained by the said JOHN SCOTT LIDGETT and by any of them the said HENRY MALDWYN HUGHES WILLIAM YOUNGER and WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER JACKSON who may be present at the Uniting Conference and willing to execute this Deed.

**NOW THIS DEED WITNESSETH** that WE the said JOHN SCOTT LIDGETT HENRY MALDWYN HUGHES WILLIAM YOUNGER and WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER JACKSON do and each of us doth hereby declare as follows that is to say:

## Part 1 Deed of Union

### Operative Clauses.

The Conference of 2023 confirmed the special resolution of 2022 to amend the Deed of Union to provide for a new Connexional Council as the Methodist Church in Great Britain's charity trustee body (see Section C of Conference Report 57 (2023): *Oversight and Trusteeship*).

The changes (amendments to clauses 1, 18 and 21 and insertion of a new Section 9A comprising clauses 37A, 37B and 37C) appear for the first time in this edition, as the Conference of 2023 resolved that they would only take effect from 1 September 2024, at the same time as the substantial number of amendments to Standing Orders – see particularly the notes on the title pages of Parts 2 and 3 of Standing Orders (Book III below). (For details, see Section 3 of Conference Report 50 (2024): *Oversight and Trusteeship*).

See, however, the note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024* at the beginning of Part 2 of this Book II (Model Trusts), as to the provisions applicable to the Model Trusts pending the confirmation (if the Conference so resolves) of the Special Resolution in 2025 which will make the necessary amendments to the Model Trusts arising from the creation of the Connexional Council.

### Section 1. Interpretation

**1 Particular Expressions.** In this Deed, unless the context otherwise requires:

(i) 'the 1976 Act' means the Methodist Church Act 1976;

See Vol. 1, p. 2.

(iA) 'in the active work' when used in relation to a minister means one who is not a supernumerary nor without appointment under any Standing Order in that behalf;

See (xxxii) below and S.O. 774 and 775.

(ii) 'admitted into Full Connexion' in reference to a presbyter or deacon means that he or she has been admitted by the Conference into Full Connexion as a presbyter or a deacon respectively of the Methodist Church and is entitled to that status;

For admission into Full Connexion see also S.O. 728 and 728A.

The Conference of 1998 admitted all existing members of the Methodist Diaconal Order into Full Connexion.

(iii) 'Church Council' means the principal meeting responsible for the affairs of a Local Church, constituted in accordance with the provisions of this Deed and of Standing Orders;

See cl. 40 below and Section 61 of Standing Orders.

(iv) 'Church Courts' means the Conference, the Synods, the Circuit Meetings, the Local Preachers' Meetings, the Church Councils and the boards and committees appointed by or reporting to those bodies;

See cl. 40 below and the notes to the definitions of the bodies named.

(v) 'Circuit' means the unit of one or more Local Churches in which one or more presbyters are stationed;

See cls. 38 and 39 below and Part 5 of Standing Orders, especially S.O. 500.

(vi) 'Circuit Meeting' means the principal meeting responsible for the affairs of a Circuit, constituted in accordance with the provisions of this Deed and of Standing Orders;

See cl. 40 below and Section 51 of Standing Orders. Also Section 58, adopted by the Conference in 2011 to allow for modified circuit constitutions.

(vii) 'class leader' means a person appointed by the Church Council or by a

responsible committee under its authority to meet a class and exercise pastoral care over those committed to his or her charge, and to fulfil such other duties as may be prescribed by this Deed or by Standing Orders;

See cls. 9 and 10 below and S.O. 631.

- (viii) 'the Conference' means the annual Conference of the Methodist Church, as constituted under this Deed;

See cls. 11 to 37 below and Part 1 of Standing Orders.

- (viiiA) 'Conference Diaconal Committee' has the meaning appearing from clause 25A below;

See the note to that clause.

- (ix) 'conference-elected representatives' has the meaning appearing from clause 14 (5) below;

This item is now redundant, in view of the removal of the category of Conference-elected representatives from clause 14(2)(ix) (see the note to that clause below). A Special Resolution will be brought in due course for its deletion here and elsewhere where there is reference to this category.

- (x) 'connexional' means relating to the Methodist Church in general and not only to one or more particular Local Churches, Circuits or Districts;
- (xA) ***the 'Connexional Council' means the body, so named, constituted under clause 37A;***
- (xB) 'the Convocation' means the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order, as constituted by Standing Orders;

See S.O. 751 to 753.

- (xi) 'the date of union' means the date of the execution of this Deed, namely the 20th September 1932;
- (xiiA) 'deacon' when used in relation to the Methodist Church includes 'deaconess' and means a person ordained in accordance with Standing Orders to the office and ministry of a deacon, admitted into Full Connexion as a deacon and received into full membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, or a person recognised and regarded as a deacon admitted into Full Connexion under the provisions contained in this Deed;

See S.O. 728A as to reception into Full Connexion and ordination, and Section 75 of Standing Orders as to the Methodist Diaconal Order.

The Conference of 1998 admitted all existing members of the Methodist Diaconal Order into Full Connexion.

As to persons 'recognised and regarded' see cl. 45A below and as to the usage of the word 'deacon' in that context see also S.O. 732(4).

The Conference in 1997 resolved that 'deacon' should be the term used thereafter to refer to all members of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

See (xix) below for the inclusion, with effect from 2012, of 'deacon' within the definition of 'minister'.

- (xii) 'District' means the unit of one or more Circuits constituted by that name in accordance with the provisions of this Deed and of Standing Orders;

See cls. 38 and 39 below and Part 4 of Standing Orders, especially S.O. 400.

- (xiiA) 'district Policy Committee' means a committee appointed by the Synod, by that or any other name, to fulfil the functions assigned to the district

Policy Committee in this Deed and Standing Orders;

See Section 43 of Standing Orders.

- (xiii) 'home districts' and 'home circuits' have the meanings given in clause 38(b) below and 'home Synods' and 'the home work' have corresponding meanings;
- (xiv) 'the Irish Conference' means the annual conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland;
- (xivA) 'lay' when used in relation to the Methodist Church refers to a person who is not a minister;
- (xv) 'Local Church' and 'Society' are equivalent expressions and mean (subject to any exceptions provided for by Standing Orders) the whole body of members of the Methodist Church connected with and attending one particular place of worship;

See Part 6 of Standing Orders, especially S.O. 600.

For exceptions see S.O. 605A, 612 and 942.

- (xvi) 'local preacher' means a preacher recommended by the Local Preachers' Meeting, approved by the Circuit Meeting and admitted in an act of public worship;

See Section 56 of Standing Orders, and in particular S.O. 566.

- (xvii) 'Local Preachers' Meeting' means a meeting of all the local preachers in a Circuit, with other persons, constituted in accordance with the provisions of this Deed and of Standing Orders;

See cl. 40 below and S.O. 560.

- (xviii) 'member of the Methodist Church' means a person recognised as a member of the Methodist Church under the provisions of this Deed and of Standing Orders;

See cls. 8 and 10 below and Section 05 of Standing Orders.

- (xviiiA) 'the Methodist Diaconal Order' means the body constituted under that name and regulated by Standing Orders;

See Section 75 of Standing Orders.

- (xix) 'minister' when used in relation to the Methodist Church means a presbyter or deacon;

This definition of 'minister' was adopted by the Conference of 2012, to give final effect to the recommendations of the report *Signalling Vocation and Clarifying Identity* which were accepted in principle in 2008. Prior to this amendment the term was confined to those ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament.

Note that 'minister' does not include 'probationer'.

As to persons 'recognised and regarded' as presbyters see cls. 43(b), 44(b) and 45(a) below and as to the usage of the word 'minister' in that context see also S.O. 732(4).

- (xx) *[deleted]*
- (xxi) *[deleted]* – see (xxviiB) below for the equivalent provision
- (xxii) *[deleted]* – see (xxviiC) below for the equivalent provision
- (xxiii) 'the Model Trusts' means the provisions of Schedule 2 to the 1976 Act, as amended from time to time under the powers in that behalf

contained in the Model Trusts;

The Model Trusts are set out in Part 2 of this Book II, below.

- (xxiv) 'other autonomous Conferences' or 'other autonomous Methodist Conferences' means the Conference or General Conference as the case may be of each of the following churches, namely –
- every Methodist Church specified for this purpose from time to time in Standing Orders, and
  - every Methodist Church, whether or not so specified, formed after 3rd July 1972 as the constitutional successor of an overseas District of the Conference;

See S.O. 002(2).

- (xxv) 'overseas District' means a District of the Methodist Church other than a home District and 'overseas station' means any station to which a minister or probationer is assigned by the Conference outside the home Districts;

In 2009, the last existing overseas District of the Methodist Church was granted autonomy, as The Methodist Church The Gambia; there are therefore now no overseas Districts or overseas stations.

- (xxvi) 'Pastoral Committee' means the meeting or committee having under the provisions of Standing Orders the responsibilities of a Pastoral Committee as specified in Section 3 of this Deed;

See S.O. 644(11).

- (xxvii) 'pastoral visitor' means a person appointed by the Church Council or by a responsible committee under its authority to exercise pastoral care over those committed to his or her charge, and to fulfil such other duties as may be prescribed by this Deed or by Standing Orders;

See cl. 9 below and S.O. 631(2).

- (xxviiA) 'presbyter' when used in relation to the Methodist Church means a person ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament and admitted into Full Connexion in accordance with clauses 4 and 23(h) of this Deed, or a person recognised and regarded as such a presbyter under provisions of clauses 43, 44 or 45;

This definition was adopted by the Conference of 2012, to give final effect to the recommendations of the report *Signalling Vocation and Clarifying Identity* which were accepted in principle in 2008. For the previous position, see the note to (xix) above.

As to persons 'recognised and regarded' as presbyters see cls. 43(b), 44(b) and 45(a) below and as to the usage of the word 'minister' in that context see also S.O. 732(4).

- (xxviiB) 'Presbyteral Session' 'when used in relation to the Conference means a session of the Conference, being the session referred to in the 1976 Act as the Ministerial Session, of which only presbyters are members;

The terminology adopted in this and the next item was adopted in 2012, as part of the process of giving effect to the report referred to under the foregoing item.

See cls. 15, 23, 24 and 25 below and Section 15 of Standing Orders.

- (xxviiC) 'Presbyteral Session' when used in relation to a Synod means a session of the Synod of which only presbyters and presbyteral probationers are members;

See cl. 24(c)(iii) below and Section 48 of Standing Orders.

- (xxviii) 'probationer' means a person who has been admitted by the Conference upon probation for presbyteral or diaconal ministry and is stationed by the Conference but has not yet been admitted into Full Connexion as a presbyter or deacon respectively, and 'presbyteral probationer' and 'diaconal probationer' have corresponding meanings;

See Section 72 of Standing Orders.

- (xxix) 'Representative Session' when used in relation to the Conference or a Synod means a session of the Conference or Synod respectively other than the Presbyteral Session;
- (xxx) 'Standing Orders' means rules or regulations made by the Conference under clause 19 of this Deed and required to be published in accordance with clause 37 of this Deed;
- (xxxi) 'the stations' means the comprehensive list adopted annually by the Conference for the ensuing connexional year of ministers and probationers, arranged according to the Circuits, institutions, offices and other spheres of work to which they are appointed or in which they are authorised to serve or (otherwise than under any Standing Order permitting residence off one's station) to reside. A 'station' in relation to an individual minister or probationer means his or her particular assignment in the stations. To 'station' a minister or probationer means to assign him or her to a station by the action of the Conference in adopting the stations or by the exercise of the President of his or her powers under clause 29;
- (xxxii) 'supernumerary' means a minister permitted or directed under the provisions of this Deed or of Standing Orders to retire from the active work;

See cl. 23(i) and 25A(j) below and Section 79 of Standing Orders.

- (xxxiii) 'Superintendent presbyter' or 'Superintendent' in relation to a Circuit means the presbyter or presbyters identified as such in the list of presbyters appointed to the Circuit. In the event of the death, resignation or incapacity of a person so identified it includes also such other presbyter or presbyters as may be appointed as Superintendent under the provisions of Standing Orders in that behalf;

See S.O. 502(1), 520 to 522 and 785(3).

- (xxxiv) 'Synod' and 'district Synod' are equivalent expressions and mean the principal meeting responsible for the affairs of a District, constituted in accordance with this Deed and Standing Orders;

See cl. 40 below and Section 41 of Standing Orders. See also Section 48A, adopted by the Conference in 2004, which allows, within certain limits, for the adoption of a modified District, and Synod, constitution.

- (xxxv) 'the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order' or 'the Warden' means the person, being a deacon, appointed in accordance with Standing Orders to have responsibility for the oversight of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

See S.O. 754.

## 2 General Provisions. (a) In this Deed, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (i) the singular includes the plural and vice versa;
- (ii) the masculine includes the feminine and vice versa;
- (iii) references to Sections, clauses or sub-clauses by number or letter, without more, or to 'this Section', 'this clause' or 'this sub-clause' are to the Sections, clauses and sub-clauses so identified of this Deed or of the clause in which they occur;
- (iv) references to persons 'present and voting' or to 'votes cast' exclude those not voting for or against, whether or not they are required to be or are enumerated or recorded as neutrals or abstentions or otherwise.

(b) The provisions of this Section are subject to and shall pro tanto be displaced by any contrary express provision applicable to any particular part of this Deed.

(c) The headings or titles of Sections, clauses or sub-clauses shall not be taken as part of this Deed nor affect its construction or interpretation.

(d) References in this Deed to Local Churches and Circuits shall apply, so far as circumstances permit, to corresponding ecumenical bodies in which Methodists participate and which are designated under Standing Orders made in that behalf, and references to Church Councils and Circuit Meetings shall, so far as aforesaid, apply respectively to the principal meetings responsible for the affairs of such bodies.

See S.O. 512.

## Section 2. Purposes and Doctrine

**3 Purposes.** The purposes of the Methodist Church are and have been since the date of union those set out in Section 4 of the 1976 Act.

**4 Doctrine.** The doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church are as follows:

The Methodist Church claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ. It rejoices in the inheritance of the apostolic faith and loyally accepts the fundamental principles of the historic creeds and of the Protestant Reformation. It ever remembers that in the providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith and declares its unfaltering resolve to be true to its divinely appointed mission.

The doctrines of the evangelical faith which Methodism has held from the beginning and still holds are based upon the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist Church acknowledges this revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice. These evangelical doctrines to which the preachers of the Methodist Church are pledged are contained in Wesley's Notes on the New Testament and the first four volumes of his sermons.

The Notes on the New Testament and the 44 Sermons are not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on Methodist preachers, but to set up standards of preaching and belief which should secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of the gospel of redemption and ensure the continued witness of the Church to the realities of the Christian experience of salvation.



Christ's ministers in the church are stewards in the household of God and shepherds of his flock. Some are called and ordained to this occupation as presbyters or deacons. 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 and they have no exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of souls. These ministries are shared with them by others to whom also the Spirit divides his gifts severally as he wills.

It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of the Christian ministry depends upon the call of God who bestows the gifts of the Spirit the grace and the fruit which indicate those whom He has chosen.

Those whom the Methodist Church recognises as called of God and therefore receives into its ministry as presbyters or deacons shall be ordained by the imposition of hands as expressive of the Church's recognition of the minister's personal call.

The Methodist Church holds the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of persons but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised.

All Methodist preachers are examined tested and approved before they are authorised to minister in holy things. For the sake of church order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office the presbyters of the Methodist Church are set apart by ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments.

The Methodist Church recognises two sacraments namely baptism and the Lord's Supper as of divine appointment and of perpetual obligation of which it is the privilege and duty of members of the Methodist Church to avail themselves.

This clause was amended, in minor respects, by the Conference in 1995, and further amended in 2012 to reflect the change of usage from 'minister' to 'presbyter' and to give explicit recognition to the diaconal order of ministry.

**5 Interpretation of Doctrine.** The Conference shall be the final authority within the Methodist Church with regard to all questions concerning the interpretation of its doctrines.

### Section 3. Membership

**6 Baptism.** According to Methodist usage the sacrament of baptism is administered to infants and regular oversight should be given by the Local Church and its ministers to all who have been dedicated to God by this sign.

See also S.O. 010A and 054(2).

**7 Children and Young People.** Within the Societies of the Methodist Church provision shall be made for the Christian nurture of children and young people. The aim shall be to develop faith and commitment to Christ, as they share in worship and learning based on Holy Scripture.

See also S.O. 050(2).

**8 Admission to Membership.** (a) All those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and accept the obligation to serve him in the life of the Church and the world are welcome as members of the Methodist Church.

(b) Subject to clauses (d) and (e) below a candidate for membership requires to be approved by the Church Council in accordance with Standing Orders and shall then at the earliest opportunity be publicly received as a member of the Methodist Church and (if not already confirmed) confirmed at a service conducted by a presbyter in the presence of the Local Church and including the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

(c) If any have not received Christian baptism that sacrament should be administered either before or in connection with the service of reception and confirmation.

See also S.O. 050.

(d) Provision may be made by Standing Order for the reception into membership and confirmation of persons approved by the Church Council in accordance with sub-clause (b) above but unavoidably absent from the service provided for by that sub-clause.

See S.O. 050(6).

(e) Provision may be made by Standing Order for:

- (i) the admission into membership of persons received from other Methodist churches or who are members of other Christian communions;
- (ii) the admission by way of dual membership of members of other Methodist churches;
- (iii) the re-admission of former members.

Any such Standing Order shall prescribe to what extent, if any, the requirements of sub-clause (b) above shall apply in each such case.

See S.O. 051 to 053.

**9 Privileges and Duties of Membership.** (a) It is the privilege and duty of members of the Methodist Church to avail themselves of the two sacraments, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper. As membership of the Methodist Church also involves fellowship it is the duty of all members of the Methodist Church to seek to cultivate this in every possible way. The weekly class meeting has from the beginning proved to be the most effective means of maintaining among Methodists true fellowship in Christian experience. All members of the Methodist Church shall have their names entered on a class book, shall be placed under the pastoral care of a class leader or pastoral visitor and shall receive an annual ticket of membership.

(b) The privileges and duties of membership, as set out in sub-clause (a) above and appearing from Standing Orders, are commitments by each member to Christian discipleship within the Methodist Church, and to acceptance of its discipline, and by the Church to provision of the means by which that discipleship may be fully expressed, including pastoral care and oversight. Membership is therefore a covenant relationship between the member and the Church, freely entered into by the grace of God, but entry into membership has never been, and is not, intended on the part of either party to

create, and does not create, a contract or other legal relations.

See also S.O. 054(5) and (6), 526(1), 631, 644(8)(vii), 700 and 701.

**10 Cessation of Membership.** (a) Any member of the Methodist Church who without sufficient reason persistently absents himself or herself from the Lord's Supper and from the meetings for Christian fellowship shall be visited by both his or her leader and a presbyter, except that no visit is necessary when the address of the member is not known. The name of any such person who by such prolonged absence severs himself or herself from Christian fellowship shall be removed from the class book by the Pastoral Committee and he or she shall thereupon cease to be a member of the Methodist Church. The Conference may make provision by Standing Order for an appeal or appeals against a decision by the Pastoral Committee under this clause.

See also S.O. 056.

(b) There is and always has been power for a competent church court to remove a person from membership upon finding a charge proved in disciplinary proceedings, and Standing Orders may continue to regulate the exercise of that power.

See S.O. 1134.

(c) Provision may be made by Standing Orders for resignation from membership.

See S.O. 057.

#### Section 4. Government

**11 The Conference.** The governing body of the Methodist Church shall be the Conference constituted and meeting annually as provided in this Deed.

#### Section 5. Constitution of the Conference

**12 Eligibility.** Subject to clauses 14(3), 14(4), 43(c), 44(c), 45(b) and 45A of this Deed no person shall be a member of the Conference who is not:

- (i) a member of the Methodist Church; or
- (ii) in the case of a lay person elected by a Synod, a member of another communion who holds office or is an elected member of a meeting under the constitution of an ecumenical area or local ecumenical partnership in that District authorised by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod; or
- (iii) in the case of a lay representative appointed under clause 14(2)(x) (but only in circumstances authorised by Standing Orders), a member of another communion.

Cl. 14(3) concerns members representing the General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Cl. 14(4) concerns associate members representing other autonomous Conferences and Churches.

Cls. 43(c), 44(c), 45(b) and 45A concern persons 'recognised and regarded' as Methodist presbyters or deacons in Full Connexion.

**13 The Sessions.** The Conference shall meet in Representative Session and in Presbyteral Session, each constituted as provided below.

The Conference in 2009 confirmed amendments to the Deed, with the effect that from the close of that Conference, there ceased to be a Diaconal Session of the Conference and instead the Conference Diaconal Committee was created, with the constitution and functions defined in cl. 25A below, including the responsibility and power to make final decisions on certain matters on behalf of the Conference (see cl. 25A(e)). The role of the Diaconal Session as an occasion where deacons conferred more generally was recognised to be performed by the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

For the definition of the Presbyteral Session see cl. 1(xxviiB) above.

**14 The Representative Session.** (1)(a) **Numbers.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall consist of presbyters, deacons and lay persons to the total number prescribed by Standing Orders, of whom at the opening of the Conference at least the minimum number similarly prescribed shall be deacons.

See S.O. 100.

(b) Of those who are members of the Conference at its opening otherwise than by virtue of sub-clause (2)(vii), (3) or (4)(d) below at least one half shall be lay persons.

- (2) **Membership.** The Conference in its Representative Session shall comprise:
- (i) the persons who when it commences its sitting hold office as the President, the Vice-President and the Secretary of the Conference;
  - (ii) the persons who last held office as the President and the Vice-President of the Conference;
  - (iii) the President-Designate, the Vice-President Designate and (if any) the Secretary-Designate nominated by the last preceding Conference;
  - (iv) assistant secretaries and other officers of the Conference, as prescribed by Standing Orders;
  - (v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District;
  - (vi) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
  - (vii) the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Secretary of the Irish Conference;
  - (viii) the members and associate members appointed by or on behalf of other conferences, churches and Christian bodies as prescribed in sub-clauses (3) and (4) below;
  - (ix) **[deleted]**
  - (x) **such** representatives of **the Connexional Council and** of connexional committees, funds and institutions, **and such other connexional officers**, as **are** prescribed by Standing Orders;
  - (xA) representatives, as prescribed by Standing Orders, of a Methodist Youth Assembly to be established in accordance with Standing Orders;
  - (xB) **[deleted]**
  - (xi) members elected by the Representative Sessions of Synods, as prescribed below.

As to (iv) see S.O. 116A, 116C, 117.

As to (v) the Conference of 2024 provisionally adopted an amendment to the Deed of Union providing for a deputy to be entitled to be a member of the Conference under this head where the District Chair is unable to attend. After the appropriate consultation, the amendment will return to the Conference of 2025 and if

confirmed will come into effect for the Conference of 2026.

As to (x) see S.O. 102(1)–(2).

As to (xA) see S.O. 102(1)(viii).

The Conference of 2024 confirmed the special resolution adopted at the Conference of 2023 to amend the representation of the Methodist Church in Ireland (at (vii) above and sub-clause (3) below) and to remove the category of conference-elected representatives (at (ix) above and sub-clause (5) below). See Conference Report 35 (2023): *Composition of the Conference*. These changes will therefore come into effect at the Conference of 2025, except that the Conference in 2024 resolved that the revocation at (ix) should not apply with regard to the remaining Conference-elected representatives (i.e. those elected to hold office until the close of the Conference of 2025). Consequential amendments to the Deed arising from the abolition of this category will be brought to a later Conference.

(3) **[...] The General Conference of the United Methodist Church.** The [...] General Conference of the United Methodist Church shall [...] be entitled to appoint annually to the Conference two persons.

See note to sub-clause (2) above.

(4) **Other Conferences, Churches and Christian bodies.** (a) Persons may be appointed as associate members of the Conference by or on behalf of other autonomous Conferences not represented under sub-clause (3), by other churches and Christian bodies in Great Britain, by other Methodist churches and by united churches in which Methodists have joined.

(b) The numbers of such persons and the identities of the appointing bodies shall be prescribed by Standing Orders, which may make provision for the representation of some or all such bodies to be according to a rota.

See S.O. 107.

(c) Associate members shall not be entitled to vote nor, except as otherwise resolved by the Conference at the time, to be present during any closed meeting of the Conference, and shall not be counted for the purposes of sub-clause (1), but shall for all other purposes, including the right to speak, be members of the Conference.

(d) Provision shall be made by Standing Orders for the appointment annually as members of the Conference, from among those appointed as associate members by or on behalf of other autonomous Conferences, by other Methodist Churches or by united churches in which Methodists have joined, of two persons who shall thereupon cease to be associate members.

(5) **[revoked]**

This provision previously contained details about the mode of election and other matters in relation to the now-abolished category of Conference-elected representatives. See the note to sub-clause (2) above.

(6) **Synod Representatives.** Except as provided in heads (i) to (xA) of sub-clause (2) and in clause 17(a) all members of the Representative Session of the Conference shall be elected by the Representative Sessions of the home Synods, the numbers of presbyters, deacons and lay persons to be elected by each Synod being specified by or on behalf of the Conference in accordance with rules prescribed by Standing Orders.

See S.O. 105.

**15 The Presbyteral Session.** (a) The Conference in its Presbyteral Session shall consist:

- (i) of all those members of the Representative Session of the Conference who are presbyters, and any persons appointed under clause 14(3) or 14(4)(d) who are authorised by their Conference or church to exercise generally (whether or not by the name of presbyter) a ministry of word and sacrament, but excluding those received into Full Connexion during the course of the Conference; and
- (iA) of, as associate members, any persons who are appointed as such under clause 14(4) who are authorised by their Conference or church to exercise generally (whether or not by the name of presbyter) a ministry of word and sacrament; and
- (ii) subject to sub-clauses (b) and (c), of such other presbyters as attend under their own arrangements with the permission of the Presbyteral Sessions of their Synods or (in the case of any presbyter who is not a member of a Synod) of such person or body as may be specified in Standing Orders; and
- (iii) of any presbyters appointed by the last preceding Conference as assistant secretaries or other officers of the Conference in its Presbyteral Session who are not members of the Representative Session of the Conference.

As to the last part of (ii) see S.O. 151.

(b) Persons who are members of the Conference under head (iA) or (ii) of sub-clause (a) shall not be entitled to vote nor, except as otherwise resolved by the Conference at the time, to be present during any closed meeting of the Conference.

(c) Any meeting of the Conference in its Presbyteral Session convened under clause 24(i) shall be a meeting of those only who are members under head (i) of sub-clause (a) above.

**16 List of Members.** (a) Before the assembling of the Conference in each year the Secretary of the Conference shall make out a list of the conference-elected representatives and other persons entitled to be members of the forthcoming Conference.

(b) On the assembling of the Conference in each year and before any other business is transacted the Secretary of the Conference, if present and willing to act, failing whom the person who has most recently held office as such, if present and willing to act, and failing any such person then some person chosen by the Conference for that purpose shall lay before the Conference the list made out by the Secretary of the Conference under sub-clause (a). If the completeness or correctness of that list is forthwith questioned by any person who (in the opinion of the Conference) is entitled to be a member of the Conference the Conference shall forthwith supply any omission or correct any error but subject as aforesaid such list shall be taken to be final and conclusive as to the persons of whom the Conference consists other than the persons (if any) appointed by the Conference as herein provided to fill up the casual vacancies (if any) in the number of the Conference-elected representatives or as substitutes for

any members who are not able or willing to attend.

See the note to clause 14(2) above for the abolition of the category of conference-elected members.

**17 Substitutes.** (a) The Conference shall have power to elect a substitute for any member who is unable or unwilling to attend except the President **or the Lay Leader** of the Methodist Church in Ireland or the Secretary of the Irish Conference or a member or associate member appointed under clause 14(3) or 14(4) above, but in the case of a member elected by the Representative Session of a Synod only upon nomination in accordance with Standing Orders:

- (i) if the member is a deacon, by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order; or
- (ii) otherwise, by an officer or officers of that Synod.

See S.O. 417.

(b) When the Conference meets first in Presbyteral Session it shall in that session have power to elect such a substitute for any such member of that session.

## Section 6. Powers of the Conference

**18 [...] Responsibilities.** (a) The government and discipline of the Methodist Church [...] shall be vested in the Conference, and the Conference shall have and may exercise and shall perform all the powers, authorities, rights and duties necessary or desirable in its discretion **to fulfil its functions as the governing body of the Methodist Church, but not in such a way as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as its trustees. [...]**

(b) **Without prejudice to the generality of sub-clause (a) the Conference shall in particular have final authority over:**

- (i) **doctrine, including its powers under section 3(2) of the 1976 Act;**
- (ii) **legislation, in accordance with clause 19, provided that Standing Orders may confer on the Connexional Council the power to amend, supplement or revoke the legislation of the Conference, pending the next meeting of the Conference, if and only if that becomes necessary in order to meet legal requirements or to avoid infringement of the Methodist constitution;**
- (iii) **connexional mission and policy;**
- (iv) **connexional polity;**
- (v) **the formation, admission and discipline of ministers, officers and members;**
- (vi) **the stationing of ministers and probationers, in accordance with clause 20, subject to the powers of the President under clause 29;**
- (vii) **the connexional budget and allocation of district contributions, to the extent and in the manner determined by Standing Orders.**

(c) **The Conference [...] may also exercise [...] the particular powers, authorities, rights and duties specified in clause [...] 21 [...].**

See the note at the head of Section 1 above. This clause was substantially amended (with effect from 1 September 2024) to clarify the responsibilities and authority of the Methodist Conference as the governing body of the Methodist Church and its relationship to the newly created Connexional Council (as to which see Section 9A below). For further details, see Section C of the report of the Law and Polity Committee to the

Conference of 2024 (Agenda report 49, pp. 528ff).

As to item (b)(ii), see S.O. 203(6)(b)-(d).

**19 Standing Orders.** (a) The Conference shall have power from time to time to make, amend, suspend or revoke Standing Orders or other rules or regulations for the constitution and procedure of the Conference, for the summoning and meeting of the Conference in the interval between its ordinary meetings, for regulating the stationing of ministers and probationers, for the determination of their privileges and obligations whether as a whole or by categories, including eligibility for membership of the Conference, and for the government of the Methodist Church in general and shall also have power to adopt in any special case that may arise any means that it may deem necessary to meet it; provided that no such Standing Order, rule, regulation or means may be contrary to law or to this Deed or to the purposes of the Methodist Church.

(b) Any making, amendment, suspension or revocation of Standing Orders may extend to the whole or to any part or parts of the Methodist Church.

(c) Any resolution suspending Standing Orders shall:

- (i) specify the period for which it shall operate, by reference to dates or events, but terminating in any event not later than the close of the next following annual Conference;
- (ii) apply to not less than a complete Standing Order or a self-contained clause of a Standing Order, such that what remains in force is capable of operating independently; and
- (iii) either make provision for the regulation of the subject-matter of the suspended provision during suspension or state that it is to be unregulated.

See also S.O. 127 and 131(20).

**20 The Stations.** The Conference shall annually station as ministers and probationers such persons as it thinks fit and in the exercise of this power it shall be lawful for the Conference notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the trust deeds of any of the said Churches or denominations existing at the date of union to appoint a presbyter to the use and enjoyment of any place of worship for more than three years successively.

See Section 78 of Standing Orders.

**21 Other Particular Powers.** The Conference shall have power at its discretion, ***but not so as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as the trustees of the Methodist Church:***

- (i) to continue or found or authorise the founding of connexional funds or institutions for the promulgation of the Gospel at home and abroad, for assistance to Circuits or Local Churches or for the benefit of retired and superannuated ministers or the [...] ***spouses, civil partners or dependants*** of deceased ministers or for other objects and purposes of or in connection with the Methodist Church [...] and to approve any scheme for the amalgamation of any such funds or institutions, whether



founded before or after the date of this Deed, and whether belonging to or connected with any of the said Churches or denominations existing at the date of union or to the Methodist Church and for the transfer in connection with any such amalgamation of any of such funds from the existing trustees or other persons having the legal control thereof to the trustees of any other of such funds or institutions;

- (ii) **[deleted]**
- (iii) **[deleted]**
- (iv) to elect committees for the management of the various connexional institutions; provided that the election of any such committee is not in contravention of any provision of any trust deed relating to the relevant institution;
- (v) to appoint boards and committees for the despatch of connexional business or for the exercise of any of the powers or duties of the Conference during or in the interval between its sittings, in such numbers and with such terms of reference, membership, powers and duties as the Conference thinks fit;
- (vi) to appoint such treasurers, secretaries, stewards, editors and other officers of connexional committees, funds or institutions as the Conference thinks fit and to specify their powers, duties and terms of office;
- (vii) to appoint such representatives or delegates as the Conference thinks fit to act for and represent the Conference;
- (viii) to delegate to any officer of the Conference or to any board, committee, officer, representative or delegate appointed in exercise of the powers conferred by this clause all or any of the powers of the Conference including, if the Conference thinks fit, power to sub-delegate any power of the Conference so delegated.

(ii) dealt with aspects of Methodist publishing ('Book Rooms') which are now obsolete.

(iii) provided for various aspects of management of connexional activities, those which are still extant now being the responsibility of the Connexional Council, for which see Section 9A below.

As to (v) and (vi) see Parts 2 and 3 of Standing Orders.

As to (vii) see S.O. 106.

As to (viii) see S.O. 201.

## Section 7. The Sessions of the Conference

**22 Functions of the Representative Session.** Except as otherwise provided by this Deed the Conference shall act in its Representative Session.

**23 Functions of the Presbyteral Session.** (a) In addition to any powers conferred by any other clause of this Deed the Conference shall in its Presbyteral Session have the powers and perform the functions specified in the following sub-clauses.

As to powers conferred by other clauses see e.g. cl. 17(b) (appointment of presbyteral substitutes).

(b) While the Conference meets in Presbyteral Session before the Representative

Session it shall in that session have power to appoint the presbyteral members of any committee required by Standing Orders to be appointed by the Conference from among its own members and to function in both that and the Representative Session.

(c) The Conference shall in its Presbyteral Session make such other appointments as may be prescribed by Standing Orders.

See e.g. S.O. 139, 150 (scrutineers, business committee).

(d) The Conference in its Presbyteral Session shall have exclusive jurisdiction over the following business:

- (i) any appeal to the Conference arising out of a decision taken by the body authorised to do so by Standing Orders as to discontinuance in training or on probation of any student or probationer in training or on trial for presbyteral ministry;
- (iA) any decision, other than one referred to in item (i) above, as to the continuance in training or on probation or reinstatement of each student or probationer in training or on trial for presbyteral ministry;
- (ii) any appeal to the Conference arising out of any charge against a presbyter or probationer or a student in training for presbyteral ministry.

(e) The decisions of the Presbyteral Session in the exercise of its jurisdiction under sub-clause (d) and all appointments made by the Conference in that session in exercise of its powers in that behalf shall be reported to the Conference in its Representative Session and there incorporated in the Journal provided for by clause 36.

(f) The Conference shall in its Presbyteral Session engage in pastoral consideration of the number and state of the Societies and in pastoral conversation on the Work of God and on pastoral efficiency.

(g) Acceptance of candidates for presbyteral ministry shall be by the Conference in its Representative Session, but no candidate shall be proposed for acceptance except upon the recommendation of the Presbyteral Session.

See S.O. 717.

(h) Admission (including re-admission) into Full Connexion as a presbyter, whether of probationers or others, shall in all cases be by the Conference in its Representative Session, which shall by the same act resolve that any person thus admitted and not already ordained shall be ordained by the laying-on of hands, but no person shall be presented for admission into Full Connexion without the judgment of the Presbyteral Session that he or she is fit for such admission and, if appropriate, for ordination.

See S.O. 728, 730(14), 761(13).

(i) The Conference shall by Standing Order prescribe the circumstances in which a presbyter may or shall become a supernumerary on the ground of age, years of travel, ill health, compassion, difficulty of finding an appointment or otherwise. A presbyter may be directed to become a supernumerary by any competent church court upon finding a charge against him or her proved, and may in cases of urgency arising between meetings of the Conference be permitted by the President to become a supernumerary on the ground of ill health, but otherwise all permissions and directions to become supernumeraries shall be given by the Conference in its Representative Session.

All cases requiring a decision of the Conference shall be considered first by the Presbyteral Session, which shall recommend to the Representative Session who shall become supernumeraries and on what grounds. Any permissions granted

by the President shall be reported to the Conference in both the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions.

See Section 79 of Standing Orders.

(j) The deaths of all presbyters shall be reported to the Conference in both the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions and obituaries shall be approved by the Conference in its Presbyteral Session and reported to the Representative Session and there incorporated in the said Journal.

See S.O. 153, 487.

(k) The resignation of a presbyter or withdrawal of a presbyteral probationer shall be reported to the Conference in both the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions.

See S.O. 760.

(l) The Conference in its Presbyteral Session shall have such functions in relation to the stationing of presbyters and presbyteral probationers as may be prescribed by Standing Orders.

(m) The Conference may in its Presbyteral Session discuss any subject in the Agenda of the Representative Session or any other subject within the jurisdiction of the Conference and communicate its views thereon to the Representative Session by resolution or otherwise.

**24 Transaction of General Business.** (a) In this clause 'general business' means decisions on matters of policy or principle, the adoption, amendment or repeal of Standing Orders, other general resolutions and all other business of the Conference not involving decisions on matters within clause 23 or 25A as to particular persons.

(b) The Conference in its Representative Session shall have jurisdiction over all general business, but subject to the following sub-clauses of this clause.

(c) In this clause 'shared business' means any general business which concerns any of the matters listed below, and for the avoidance of doubt includes any direction as to the process by which a resolution which is shared business is to come into effect, or the date or dates on which and the extent to which it shall do so, or as to any consultation which is to take place:

- (i) any special resolution to which section 5(3) of the 1976 Act applies; or
- (ii) the procedure of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference; or
- (iii) the continuance, composition, functions or procedure of the Presbyteral Session of the Synods.

Section 5(3) of the 1976 Act (Vol. 1, p. 9) requires a special resolution of both the Ministerial and Representative Sessions of the Conference if the Deed is to be amended so as to affect the continuance of the Ministerial Session of the Conference as a separate body or the definition of its rights and privileges relative to the Representative Session. See cl. 1(xxviiB) above for the provision that the Presbyteral Session shall be the session referred to in the Act as the Ministerial Session.

As to certain types of general business affecting the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Convocation, see cl. 25B below.

(d) Shared business shall be dealt with as specified in sub-clauses (e) to (j), which relate only to such business except as provided in clauses (k) and (l).

(e) Shared business may be raised on notice of motion in the Representative Session of the Conference, but any consequent resolution shall be referred to the Conference of

the next following year.

(f) Resolutions referred under sub-clause (e) and all other items of shared business, including the confirmation of provisional legislation on a matter of shared business, shall be presented first to the Conference in its Presbyteral Session. They shall then be presented to the Representative Session with a report on any debate or resolutions thereon in the Presbyteral Session, including a fair summary of the principal arguments.

As to provisional legislation see S.O. 122.

(g) If any proposition has been adopted by the Presbyteral Session in an amended form those presenting the business in the Representative Session may at their option move it there in its original form or in that adopted by the Presbyteral Session.

(h) Adoption by the Conference in its Representative Session of a resolution in a form already approved by the Presbyteral Session shall dispose of the business.

(i) Adoption by the Representative Session of a resolution in any other form shall be conditional upon ratification by the Presbyteral Session, which shall be reconvened for the purpose only of deciding whether to concur with the resolution of the Representative Session or to reaffirm its own decision, and may deal with that matter with or without notice, adjournment or debate, and in the presence or absence of the members of the Conference who are not members of that reconvened session. Concurrence by the Presbyteral Session shall dispose of the business.

(j) If the Presbyteral Session as so reconvened reaffirms its own decision the Representative Session shall have the final decision whether to concur with the Presbyteral Session or to abandon the business.

(k) Any proposition before the Conference which relates both to shared business and to other business shall also be dealt with as specified in sub-clauses (e) to (j).

(l) If a report in the Agenda of the Conference proposes some resolutions within sub-clause (d) or (k), and some not, those presenting the report to the Conference may at their option present to the Presbyteral Session those resolutions only which are within those sub-clauses or all the resolutions, and in the latter event they shall all be dealt with as specified in sub-clauses (e) to (j).

**25 Reference of Business and Correction of Records.** (a) Either session of the Conference may refer or delegate to the other, for comment or decision, any matter within the jurisdiction of the referring session. The majority required for delegation of a matter for decision shall be that required for a substantive resolution on that matter. Any comment or decision on any such matter shall be reported to the referring session and any such decision so reported to the Representative Session shall there be incorporated in the Journal provided for by clause 36.

(b) Either session of the Conference may exercise, in relation to the earlier proceedings of the other session of the same Conference, the same powers of correction of records as in relation to its own proceedings and also any powers which have been conferred by Standing Orders on the Conference, acting on the recommendation of any committee or sub-committee charged with responsibility for Methodist law and polity, to make consequential provisions or to rescind or amend

resolutions for purposes arising out of that responsibility.

For the committee/sub-committee charged with this responsibility, see S.O. 211, and, as to resolutions moved by those bodies, S.O. 131(25) and (25A).

## Section 7A. The Conference Diaconal Committee

**25A The Conference Diaconal Committee: constitution and functions.** (a) There shall be a Conference Diaconal Committee constituted in accordance with sub-clauses (b) and (c) below, which shall, in addition to any powers conferred by any other clause of this Deed or Standing Orders, have the powers and perform the functions specified in sub-clauses (e) to (k) below.

The Conference in 2009 confirmed amendments to the Deed, with the effect that from the close of that Conference, there ceased to be a Diaconal Session of the Conference and instead the Conference Diaconal Committee was created, with the constitution and functions defined here, including the responsibility and power to make final decisions on certain matters on behalf of the Conference (see (e) below). The role of the Diaconal Session as an occasion where deacons conferred more generally was recognised to be performed by the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

(b) The committee shall consist of

- (i) the President and Vice-President of the Conference;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference or his or her deputy;
- (iii) subject to sub-clause (c)(i) below, all those deacons who were, *ex officio* or by appointment or election, members of the Representative Session of the last preceding Conference or, if the committee meets during the Representative Session itself, of the current Conference;
- (iv) any persons appointed by the President in accordance with sub-clause (c) below;
- (v) any persons appointed in accordance with Standing Orders as officers of the committee.

(c) The President shall have power, acting in consultation with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order and in accordance with Standing Orders made in that behalf, to appoint persons to serve on the committee in substitution for or in addition to those deacons falling under head (iii) of sub-clause (b) above where:

- (i) a casual vacancy arises because a person falling under that head has, since the last Conference, died or ceased to be a deacon or otherwise become ineligible by reason of disqualification or incapacity to be a member of the Conference; or
- (ii) for any other reason it appears that the number of deacons able and willing to attend a meeting of the committee is likely to fall below the minimum number of deacons prescribed by Standing Orders to be members of the Conference; or

For the minimum number of deacons, see S.O. 100.

- (iii) it is necessary to reach the minimum number prescribed by Standing Orders for the committee when exercising its jurisdiction under sub-clause (e)(iii) below.

For this minimum number, see S.O. 1145(2)(a).

Any persons appointed for the purposes of head (i) or (ii) above shall be deacons.

- (d) (i) When the committee meets to hear an appeal in a matter of discipline or discontinuance the person who shall preside shall be determined in accordance with the relevant Standing Order.
- (ii) At every other meeting of the committee the President or the Vice-President shall preside, or, if both are absent the Warden, or such other person as the committee may choose, shall during their absence preside.

(e) The committee shall, in relation to deacons and to students and probationers in training or on probation for diaconal ministry, have the responsibility and power, on behalf of the Conference, to:

- (i) hear and determine any appeal to the Conference arising out of a decision taken by the body authorised to do so as to discontinuance in training or on probation of any student or probationer;
- (iA) make all decisions, other than those referred to in item (i) above, as to the continuance in training or on probation of each student or probationer;
- (ii) consider and determine any application for reinstatement by a former student or probationer;
- (iii) hear and determine any appeal to the Conference arising out of any charge against a deacon, probationer or student;

and its decisions on such matters shall be final.

(f) The decisions of the committee in the exercise of its powers under sub-clause (e) shall be reported to the Conference in its Representative Session and there incorporated in the Journal provided for by clause 36.

(g) Acceptance of candidates for diaconal ministry shall be by the Conference in its Representative Session, but no candidate shall be proposed for acceptance except upon the recommendation of the Conference Diaconal Committee.

See S.O. 717(5),(7).

(h) Admission (including re-admission) into Full Connexion as a deacon, whether of probationers or others, shall in all cases be by the Conference in its Representative Session, which shall by the same act resolve that any person thus admitted and not already ordained shall be ordained by the laying-on of hands, but no person shall be presented for admission into Full Connexion without the judgment of the Conference Diaconal Committee that he or she is fit for such admission and, if appropriate, for ordination.

See S.O. 728A, 730(14), 761(13).

(i) The Conference shall by Standing Order prescribe the circumstances in which a deacon may or shall become supernumerary on the ground of age, years of travel, ill health, compassion, difficulty of finding an appointment or otherwise. A deacon may be directed to become supernumerary by any competent church court upon finding a charge against him or her proved, and may in cases of urgency arising between meetings of the Conference be permitted by the President to become supernumerary on the ground of ill health, but otherwise all permissions and directions to become supernumeraries shall be given by the Conference in its Representative Session. All cases requiring a decision of the Conference shall be considered first by the Conference Diaconal Committee, which

shall recommend to the Representative Session who shall become supernumeraries and on what grounds. Any permissions granted by the President shall be reported both to the committee and to the Representative Session.

See Section 79 of Standing Orders.

(j) The deaths of all deacons shall be reported to both the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Representative Session of the Conference and obituaries shall be approved by the committee and reported to the Representative Session and there incorporated in the said Journal.

See S.O. 182, 753(2).

(k) The resignation of a deacon or withdrawal of a diaconal probationer shall be reported to both the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Representative Session of the Conference.

See S.O. 760.

### **25B Conference Diaconal Committee and Convocation: Required Consultation.**

(a) This clause applies where general business of the Conference as defined by clause 24(a) above concerns any of the matters listed below, and for the avoidance of doubt includes any direction as to the process by which a resolution which is governed by this clause is to come into effect, or the date or dates on which and the extent to which it shall do so, or as to any consultation which is to take place:

- (i) the continuance of the Conference Diaconal Committee as provided by this Deed or the definition, by virtue of this Deed, of the relative responsibilities and powers of that committee and the Representative Session respectively; or
- (ii) the continuance, composition, or functions of the Convocation.

(b) Any business falling under sub-clause (a) above shall be dealt with by way of special resolution and the appropriate consultation required by section 2(1) of the 1976 Act shall include submission for approval or disapproval to the Conference Diaconal Committee and, in the case of business falling under sub-clause (a)(ii) above, the Convocation.

## **Section 8. Officers of the Conference**

**26 The President.** The President of the Conference shall be a presbyter and shall be elected by the Conference by a clear majority of the votes cast. He or she shall be designated at the preceding Conference by ballot and by a clear majority of the votes cast.

See also S.O. 110.

**27 The Vice-President.** There shall be a Vice-President of the Conference who shall be a lay member of the Methodist Church or deacon and shall be elected by the Conference by a clear majority of the votes cast. He or she shall be designated at the preceding Conference by ballot and by a clear majority of the votes cast.

See also S.O. 110.

**28 Who presides at the Conference.** (a) The function of presiding at meetings of the Representative Session of the Conference is one to be shared between the President and the Vice-President. While only one of them is present that one shall preside, and while both are present they shall preside alternately.

(b) If the President and the Vice-President are absent from any meeting of the Representative Session then the person who shall during such absence preside shall be:

- (i) the person who has most recently held the substantive office of President or Vice-President and who is present and willing to act, and if two such persons are equally qualified the one whom the Conference may choose, and
- (ii) failing any such person then such other member of the Conference as the Conference may choose.

(c) At every meeting of the Presbyteral Session the President shall preside. In the absence of the President the ex-President who has most recently held the substantive office and who is present and willing to act, and failing any such person then such other member of the Conference (being a presbyter) as the Conference may choose shall during such absence preside.

(d) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-clauses (a) to (c) above when the Conference in either Session meets to hear an appeal in a matter of discipline the person who shall preside shall be determined in accordance with the relevant Standing Order.

(e) The person who presides over the Conference under the provisions of sub-clauses (a) to (d) of this clause shall during the period of such presidency act as the President with all the powers rights and duties of the President.

**29 The President and the Stations.** (a) If any person stationed as presbyter or presbyteral probationer for any year dies or ceases to be in the active work the President may station another person as presbyter or presbyteral probationer to take the place for such year or the remainder of such year (as the case may be) of the person so dying or ceasing to be in the active work. The President may, after consulting with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, exercise similar powers in relation to the stationing of deacons and diaconal probationers.

(b) If in the opinion of the President it becomes necessary or expedient during the year to make any change in the stations of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers, whether by removing any person from a station, changing the station of any person or stationing any eligible person (including a presbyteral student) not previously stationed the President may effect that change in such manner as he or she thinks fit. The President may, after consulting with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, exercise similar powers in relation to the stations of the deacons and diaconal probationers.

(c) Any action by the President under sub-clause (a) or (b) above shall take effect and be as valid in every respect as if it had been made by the Conference and shall be deemed to be the act of the Conference to all intents and purposes and a note thereof shall be entered in the current Journal kept under the superintendence of the



Conference and shall be signed by the President and Secretary for the time being of the Conference and such Journal being duly subscribed and attested as provided in clause 36 shall be taken and received for all purposes whatsoever as conclusive evidence of such action.

**29A Exercise of Presidential Powers.** (a) In order to ensure that so far as possible the powers and duties of the presidency are exercised collaboratively by the President and Vice-President the Conference shall have power to direct by Standing Order that all or some, as specified, of the powers rights and duties of the President or a former President conferred by sub-clause (i) of clause 23, sub-clauses (b), (c) and (i) of clause 25A, clause 29 and (excepting the last sentence of sub-clause (c)) clause 42 of this Deed may be exercised from time to time by the Vice-President or a former Vice-President.

(b) The exercise by the Vice-President or former Vice-President of any of the powers right and duties of the President or former President under the provisions of sub-clause (a) of this clause shall be taken for all purposes as acts of the President or former President as the case may require.

**30 The Secretary.** There shall be a Secretary of the Conference, who shall be a presbyter.

As to the designation and appointment of the Secretary, see S.O. 114.

**31 Duration of Office.** (a) The President and Vice-President of the Conference shall take office upon election, and subject to the provisions of this clause shall continue in office until the election of their respective successors.

(b) The Secretary of the Conference shall take office on the first day of September next following appointment and in the interval is the Secretary-Elect, except that if during that interval there is a casual vacancy in the office of Secretary then the Secretary-Elect shall take office as Secretary forthwith.

(c) A casual vacancy arises in the office of President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference if the holder of the office dies or becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a presbyter or member (as the case may be) of the Methodist Church and a prospective casual vacancy arises in the office of Secretary of the Conference if the Secretary-Elect dies or becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be such a presbyter.

(d) If such a casual vacancy or prospective casual vacancy arises during a meeting of the Conference in its Representative Session it shall be filled by the Conference, which shall for that purpose determine its own procedures.

(e) Subject to sub-clauses (b) and (d) any such casual vacancy shall be filled by the substitution as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference (as the case may be) of the person who has most recently held the relevant office and is qualified, able and willing to act.

(f) Subject to sub-clause (d) any such prospective casual vacancy shall be filled by the continuance in office of the Secretary of the Conference, if able and willing to act.

(g) Failing any person to fill a casual vacancy or prospective casual vacancy in accordance with sub-clause (b), (e) or (f) the vacancy shall be filled (until the taking effect of an appointment by the Conference) by the appointment of a qualified person by such committee as may be specified by the Conference.

See S.O. 013A(1)(vii) for the group identified to act as the committee for this purpose.

(h) Upon the occurrence of a casual vacancy in the office of Secretary of the Conference the President of the Conference shall act as and be the Secretary of the Conference for all purposes until it has been ascertained who has filled that vacancy in accordance with the above sub-clauses.

(i) If the President-Designate or Vice-President-Designate has died or is for any reason not appointed President or Vice-President respectively the Conference shall determine its own procedure for the purpose of making the relevant appointments.

(j) In relation to the provisions in sub-clause (c) concerning the incapacity or unfitness of the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference:

- (i) any issue whether such a person is unfit to act on grounds apt to be the subject of a charge involving his or her standing as a presbyter or member shall be determined in accordance with the regulations of the Conference for the time being in force in relation to disciplinary proceedings;
- (ii) any issue whether such a person is incapable of acting or unfit to act on any other grounds shall be determined in accordance with regulations from time to time made by the Conference for that purpose;
- (iii) pending determination of any such issue there shall be power to suspend such a person from all or any of his or her functions in accordance with the relevant regulations.

As to (i) see Part 11 of Standing Orders.

As to (ii) see S.O. 013(12), 013A.

**32 Other Officers.** The Conference may appoint such assistant secretaries and other officers as it thinks fit and fill any casual vacancies which may occur in any of those offices.

See S.O. 101, 116A, 116C.

## Section 9. Proceedings and Records of the Conference

**33 Meetings.** (a) Subject to the following sub-clauses of this clause every ordinary meeting of the Conference shall be held at such place and shall commence its sitting on such date as the last preceding Conference may determine.

(b) In the case of great emergency, so judged by the President of the Conference, the Conference shall notwithstanding sub-clause (a) meet at such place and shall commence its sittings on such date in the year beginning on the 1st September next following the last preceding ordinary meeting of the Conference as the President of the Conference may, after consulting the Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference,

direct.

(c) If by reason of a direction given under sub-clause (b) the Conference meets before any one or more categories of members to be elected or appointed by or on behalf of any Conference, Synod, committee, institution or other body have been so elected or appointed then the person or persons who were members of the last preceding Conference in the relevant category or categories shall be members of the Conference in that category or categories.

Sub-cl. (b) and (c) deal with the alteration of the date or place fixed for the next ordinary meeting; compare Section 16 of Standing Orders, which provides for additional meetings between the ordinary meetings.

**34 Voting.** Except as in this Deed or Standing Orders otherwise expressly provided or as the Conference may otherwise direct the vote of the majority in number of the members present and voting at any meeting of the Conference shall be taken as and be the act of the Conference for any of the purposes for which such act is hereby rendered necessary and be binding and conclusive on and against every member of the Methodist Church to all intents and purposes whatsoever and in the case of the votes being equal the person presiding at the meeting (whether or not he or she has already voted) shall have a casting vote, which if the vote has been taken by ballot shall be exercised forthwith, but otherwise the person presiding may at his or her discretion either forthwith exercise the casting vote or direct that the question be decided by ballot.

Special majorities are needed for amendment of the Deed itself (s. 5 of the 1976 Act, Vol. 1, p. 9) or of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2, para. 27). Other specific majorities are required, for example, for certain procedural and other resolutions by virtue of the rules of debate in S.O. 131, or for certain appointments (e.g. S.O. 385(3)).

**35 Validation of Proceedings.** (a) All acts done and votes given at a meeting of the Conference or of any committee thereof or of any other committee or board appointed by the Conference by any person acting or voting as a member of the Conference or such committee or board shall notwithstanding its being afterwards discovered that there was some defect in the appointment or election of that person or that he or she had become disqualified be as valid as if there had been no such defect or disqualification.

(b) No meeting and no vote, act or proceeding at any meeting of the Conference or of any committee thereof or of any other committee or board appointed by the Conference shall be hindered or rendered invalid, void or voidable by reason of the absence from such meeting of any person or class of persons or representatives forming part of the Conference or of any such committee or board or by reason of any informality in the summoning of the Conference or any such committee or board or by reason of the failure to give due notice of the meeting of the Conference or of any such committee or board to any person entitled to attend the same.

(c) No omission by inadvertence or mistake to comply with any provision, whether in the 1976 Act, this Deed, the Model Trusts, Standing Orders or otherwise, requiring submission or reference to or consultation with any Synod or other body or any person or consideration of any report before the adoption or confirmation by the Conference of any resolution shall amount to failure of appropriate consultation for the purposes of the 1976 Act or the Model Trusts or invalidate any purported adoption or confirmation

in good faith of any such resolution.

See also S.O. 110A(4), 126(2).

**36 The Journal.** (a) Notes, minutes or copies (as the case may require) of all acts, orders, resolutions and proceedings whatsoever of the Conference shall be entered in a Journal, either directly or by reference to the Agenda of the Conference or to other documents presented to the Conference for that purpose. In this clause 'incorporated documents' means the Agenda and any other such documents.

(b) The contents of the Journal shall, unless otherwise ordered by the Conference, be circulated among or read or summarised to its members for confirmation during its sittings in the form of a daily record of proceedings kept for incorporation in the Journal, or in such other form as the Conference may direct.

For the Daily Record, see S.O. 123.

(c) At or after the end of the Conference the Journal and the incorporated documents shall be subscribed by the President, Vice-President and Secretary for the time being in the presence of two or more members of the Conference as attesting witnesses.

(d) Having been so subscribed and attested the Journal and the incorporated documents shall subject to clause (f) below be taken and received for all purposes whatsoever as conclusive evidence of the acts and proceedings of the Conference.

(e) The Journals and incorporated documents of the Conference held in any year and of all preceding Conferences shall be and remain in the custody of such person or persons as the Conference may from time to time direct.

See S.O. 125(1).

(f) The Conference held in any year may exercise, in relation to the proceedings of an earlier Conference, the same powers of correction of records as in relation to its own proceedings and also any powers which have been conferred by Standing Orders on the Conference, acting on the recommendation of any committee or sub-committee charged with responsibility for Methodist law and polity, to rescind or amend resolutions for purposes arising out of that responsibility. A note of any exercise of such powers which affects the contents of the Journal shall be placed with the Journal affected, but the text of the Journal itself, once subscribed and attested, shall not be altered.

For the Conference's power of correction of records in relation to its own proceedings see cl. 25(b) above.

For corrections for the purpose of achieving accuracy see S.O. 123.

For the committee and sub-committee charged with responsibility for Methodist law and polity see S.O. 211(1)–(5) and (6) respectively, and as to resolutions moved by those bodies see S.O. 131(25) and (25A).

(g) Any rescission or amendment effected under sub-clause (f) above shall relate back to and have effect from the adoption of the resolution rescinded or amended, provided that no such rescission or amendment shall affect the validity of any act done meanwhile in good faith, without knowledge of any ground for the exercise of the power to rescind or amend or in the reasonable belief that such power was unlikely to be exercised.

This clause as a whole was adopted in this revised and rearranged form in 2001, so as to achieve a comprehensive simplification consequent upon the substantive amendments made to this clause and cl. 25 in 2000 and 2001, which included, *inter alia*, the power to correct the record of, or to amend or rescind a resolution of, a preceding session of the Conference or of an earlier Conference (see cl. 25(b) and sub-cl. (f) above).

**37 Publications.** All Standing Orders adopted or amended and all other general resolutions passed by the Conference held in any year and such other parts of its proceedings as the Conference or its President, Secretary and (with respect to the Representative Session only) Vice-President may direct shall as soon as may be after its close be printed and published.

See also S.O. 124.

### **Section 9A. The Connexional Council**

The Conference of 2023 confirmed the special resolution of 2022 to amend the Deed of Union to provide for a new Connexional Council as the Methodist Church in Great Britain's charity trustee body (see Section C of Conference Report 57 (2023): Oversight and Trusteeship).

This new Section 9A appears for the first time in this edition, as the Conference of 2023 resolved the various changes to the Deed of Union would only take effect from 1 September 2024, at the same time as the substantial number of amendments to Standing Orders – see particularly the notes on the title pages of Parts 2 and 3 of Standing Orders (Book III below). For details, see Section 3 of Conference Report 50 (2024): Oversight and Trusteeship).

**37A Constitution.** *(a) There shall at all times be a Connexional Council, constituted as follows:*

- (i) the President and Vice-President of the Conference;*
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference;*
- (iii) other members of the council as prescribed by Standing Orders, which shall include a chair of the council.*

*(b) The members of the council under head (a)(iii) shall be members of the Methodist Church with relevant skills and experience to oversee its connexional administration and shall be appointed by the Conference. Provision shall be made by Standing Orders for their appointment, normal period of service and possible variations in that period for good cause.*

See S.O. 200 as to the Standing Orders referred to at (a)(iii) and (b).

**37B Responsibilities.** *The members of the Connexional Council shall, without derogation from the position, authority and powers of the Conference as governing body, have the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church, and shall accordingly be its trustees.*

See S.O. 203.

**37C Particular Powers.** *(a) The provisions of sub-clauses (b) and (c) of this clause are without prejudice to the generality of clause 37B.*

*(b) The Connexional Council shall have exclusive authority over:*

- (i) the direction and management of the persons stationed, appointed or employed, whole time or part time, to carry out connexional duties as a 'team', or by some other title, under Standing Orders;*
- (ii) all matters relating to or arising out of the employment of persons by connexional bodies;*
- (iii) compliance with legal requirements affecting the conduct of connexional bodies, including requirements under charity law or regulation or the law of trusts or as to data protection, safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and*

- others, or health and safety;*
- (iv) *recommendation to the Conference of legislation or guidance affecting Districts, Circuits or Local Churches to be adopted with respect to the subject-matter of head (ii) or (iii) above.*

*(c) The Connexional Council shall, except on subjects assigned for this purpose by Standing Order to other bodies, formulate and analyse connexional policy options for presentation to the Conference with the council's appraisal and recommendations.*

*(d) The Connexional Council shall have such further powers, responsibilities and functions as may from time to time be delegated to it by the Conference in Standing Orders or by other means.*

See S.O.s 203-207, and for the council's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, S.O. 222. For the work for which the council is responsible, through its main council committees, see Sections 30 to 37 of Standing Orders and for the Connexional Team referred to in (b)(i) above, Section 38.

## Section 10. Districts, Circuits and Local Churches

**38 The Home Work.** (a) The Local Churches in Great Britain, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Malta and Gibraltar forming part of the Methodist Church shall be formed into Circuits for mutual encouragement and help (especially in meeting their financial obligations) in accordance with directions from time to time made by the Conference, and the Circuits shall be arranged by the Conference in Districts in like manner, but the Conference shall not direct the division or combination of existing Circuits or Districts or the formation of new Circuits unless and until the Synod or Synods of the District or Districts involved have been consulted.

See also S.O. 401 and S.O. 501.

The Malta United Area has been designated by the Conference as an ecumenical area within the South-East District (cf. S.O. 512). The Gibraltar Circuit is a Circuit in the South-East District.

(b) The Circuits and Districts formed in accordance with this clause shall be referred to as the 'home Circuits' and 'home Districts' respectively.

**39 The Overseas Work.** (a) All Local Churches forming or from time to time recognised and regarded by the Conference as forming part of the Methodist Church outside Great Britain (other than in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Malta and Gibraltar) and all overseas missions shall so far as may be lawful be organised, governed and regulated in such manner as the Conference may from time to time determine.

See also S.O. 128.

(b) In addition to the Districts from time to time existing in the home work the Conference may from time to time, in any case where it may think fit and so far as may be lawful, constitute a District consisting of any number of Circuits or Local Churches situate outside Great Britain (other than in Northern Ireland or in the Republic of Ireland).

In 2009, the last existing overseas District of the Methodist Church was granted autonomy as The Methodist Church The Gambia; there are therefore now no overseas Districts.

**40 Church Courts.** District Synods (which shall include all the ministers stationed

in the District), district Policy Committees, Circuit Meetings, Church Councils, Local Preachers' Meetings, General Church Meetings and any other meetings and committees shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons, and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as may consistently with this Deed be provided in that behalf from time to time by the Conference.

For Synods see Section 41 of Standing Orders, for district Policy Committees Section 43, for Circuit Meetings Section 51, for Church Councils Section 61, for Local Preachers' Meetings S.O. 560 and for General Church Meetings Section 62.

**41 Validation of Proceedings.** The provisions of clause 35 shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the proceedings of meetings or committees constituted under clause 40 as they apply to those of the Conference.

See also S.O. 126(2), 518, 616.

**42 Chairs of Districts.** (a) Every District shall have at least one Chair, the number of Chairs for each District being determined from time to time by the Conference. Every Chair shall be a presbyter and shall upon first appointment as such to the relevant District be elected by the Conference by a clear majority of the votes cast. Standing Orders may provide for the appointment by District Synods, and the functions, of deputies for Chairs, and for the appointment by or on behalf of District Synods of persons to undertake specified duties on behalf of Chairs or deputies temporarily unable to fulfil them.

(b) Subject to sub-clause (bb) below, the Chair of each District shall, *ex officio*, preside over the Synod of that District and over all other district meetings having relation to that Synod, when present. If there are more Chairs than one, the right and responsibility of presiding over any meeting of the Synod or of any other such body shall, unless otherwise agreed among the Chairs, be determined in accordance with clause (e) below.

- (bb) (i) Any Chair entitled as above to preside may at his or her absolute discretion, without leaving the Synod or any other such meeting, invite another Chair, or a deputy or other person appointed under the last sentence of sub-clause (a) above, to preside for a period.
- (ii) The President of the Conference, if present, shall have the right to preside at the meetings of the Synod of which he or she is a member, and
- (iii) the Conference may by Standing Order provide for other exceptions.

See also S.O. 424 and 425.

(c) Each Chair of a home District elected by the Conference held in any year shall enter upon his or her duties on the first day of September after being elected and continue in office while appointed to that station under clause 20 above; provided that if a Chair of any such District becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a presbyter he or she shall be disqualified from being Chair and shall thereupon vacate office as Chair and a casual vacancy in the office of Chair of that District shall be deemed to have arisen; provided further that if any casual vacancy arises in a home District, whether under the provisions of this present clause or by death or otherwise, after the end of the Conference it shall be filled by the substitution as Chair of that District of such other

person, being a presbyter in the active work stationed in the District, as the members of the district Policy Committee choose, being able and willing to act; and it shall be the duty of the President of the Conference, upon receiving notice of any such casual vacancy to convene a meeting of the district Policy Committee over which the President, or an ex-President designated by him or her, shall preside to ascertain their choice, and thereupon to appoint and declare the presbyter thus chosen to hold the office of Chair of such District until the entry upon his or her duties of a new Chair duly elected by the Conference under sub-clause (a) above (whether already so elected when the vacancy arises or to be elected by the next succeeding Conference). Until the casual vacancy has been so filled the President of the Conference shall act as Chair of the District.

(d) In relation to the provisions of sub-clause (c) concerning the incapacity or unfitness of a Chair:

- (i) any issue whether a Chair is unfit to act on grounds apt to be the subject of a charge involving his or her standing as a presbyter shall be determined in accordance with the regulations of the Conference for the time being in force in relation to disciplinary proceedings;
- (ii) any issue whether a Chair is incapable of acting or unfit to act on any other grounds shall be determined in accordance with regulations from time to time made by the Conference for that purpose;
- (iii) pending determination of any such issue there shall be power to suspend a Chair from all or any of his or her functions in accordance with the relevant regulations.

As to (i) see Part 11 of Standing Orders.

As to (ii) see S.O. 013(12), 013A(2).

(e) In a District which has more than one Chair, any reference in this Deed or Standing Orders to a right, duty, privilege or responsibility (however described) of the Chair of a District which can by its nature apply only to a single person shall be construed as applying to such one of the Chairs of the relevant District as may be determined by the district Policy Committee of that District in accordance with and subject to Standing Orders or other regulations from time to time made by the Conference for that purpose. If a case arises which is not covered by the preceding sentence, the relevant reference shall be construed as applying to that one of the Chairs of the relevant District who has been longest stationed in that appointment. As between Chairs of equal length of service in the appointment, the issue to which Chair the relevant reference is to be construed as applying shall be determined by drawing lots.



### Section 10A. Trusteeship

**42A Benefits to trustees.** The provisions of paragraphs 2(2) and (3) and 16(1) (p) and (2) of the Model Trusts shall apply, with any necessary changes, to all Church Courts and their members when acting as charity trustees, notwithstanding that they may not be transacting Model Trust business.

This clause was inserted in 2020.

### Section 11. Other Conferences and Churches

**43 The Irish Conference.** (a) *[deleted]*

(b) Ministers of the Irish Conference admitted into Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland whether before or since the passing in Northern Ireland of The Methodist Church in Ireland Act (Northern Ireland) 1928 and in the Irish Free State of The Methodist Church in Ireland Act 1928 shall be recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

(c) Ministers and lay members of the Methodist Church in Ireland may be appointed members of the Conference [...] or of any [...] committee of the Conference of the Methodist Church.

(d) Ministers of the Irish Conference who under the provisions of this clause are recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion shall be subject to the rules and discipline of the Conference of the Methodist Church while filling any appointment in the home work or serving in any of the overseas stations of the Methodist Church.

See also S.O. 732(1).

**44 Other Autonomous Conferences.** (a) The Conference shall have power, if satisfied that the constitution of the proposed new church will embody and safeguard Methodist doctrines, to concur in the establishment of an autonomous Methodist Church comprising or including one or more Districts, Circuits or Local Churches until then forming part of the Methodist Church, and so far as the law allows:

- (i) to grant and transfer to the conference or other governing body of the newly autonomous church the authority and power of the Conference in relation to the members of the Methodist Church concerned; and
- (ii) to convey and transfer to the newly autonomous church or its trustees or to other appropriate transferees for its use and benefit all or any properties in the relevant area vested on behalf of the Conference of the Methodist Church in the Methodist Missionary Trust Association or other trustees, persons or bodies.

(b) Persons authorised by any other autonomous Methodist Conference to exercise generally (whether or not by the name of presbyter) a ministry of word and sacrament, if stationed in the home Districts or overseas, shall during the period of such stationing only be recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

(c) They shall be eligible for membership of the Conference and of other church courts during the period of such stationing as if they were ministers in Full Connexion with the Conference.

(d) Ministers of other autonomous Methodist Conferences who under the provisions of this clause are recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion shall be subject to the rules and discipline of the Conference of the Methodist Church while stationed in the home work or serving in any of the overseas stations of the Methodist Church.

See also S.O. 732.

**45 Presbyters from other Churches.** (a) Such other persons as the Conference may from time to time specify, if stationed as presbyters in the home Districts or overseas, shall during their period of such stationing only be recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

See also S.O. 732.

(b) They shall be eligible for membership of the Conference and of other church courts during the period of such stationing as if they were presbyters in Full Connexion with the Conference.

(c) Persons who under the provisions of this clause are recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion shall be subject to the rules and discipline of the Conference of the Methodist Church while stationed in the home work or serving in any of the overseas stations of the Methodist Church.

See also S.O. 732.

**45A Deacons of other Churches.** (a) Such persons as the Conference may from time to time specify, if stationed as deacons in the home Districts or overseas, shall during the period of such stationing only be recognised and regarded as deacons of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

(b) They shall be eligible for membership of the Conference and of other church courts during the period of stationing as if they were deacons in Full Connexion with the Conference.

(c) Persons who under the provisions of this clause are recognised and regarded as deacons of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion shall be subject to the rules and discipline of the Conference of the Methodist Church while stationed in the home work or serving in any of the overseas stations of the Methodist Church.

See also S.O. 732.

**46 Power to unite with other Churches.** The Conference shall have the powers specified in section 6 of the 1976 Act in relation to schemes or arrangements for unification, amalgamation or association of the Methodist Church or any body thereof with any other Christian church or organisation.

For s. 6 see Vol. 1, p. 9.

## Section 12. Amendment

**47 Amendment.** The Conference may amend this Deed by the procedures and with the effect specified in section 5 of the 1976 Act.

For s. 5 see Vol. 1, p. 9.

IN WITNESS whereof we the said John Scott Lidgett, Henry Maldwyn Hughes, William Younger and William Christopher Jackson have hereunto set our respective hands and seals the 20th day of September 1932.

*Signed sealed and delivered by the*

said John Scott Lidgett  
in the presence of:

R. W. Perks, *Baronet*.

11 Kensington Palace Gardens,  
London, W.8.

J. SCOTT LIDGETT

L.S.

*Signed sealed and delivered by the*

said Henry Maldwyn Hughes  
in the presence of:

R. Newbald Kay, *Solicitor*.

York.

H. MALDWYN HUGHES

L.S.

*Signed sealed and delivered by the*

said William Younger  
in the presence of:

S. Alford Butt, *Solicitor*.

2 Walbrook, E. C. 4.

WILLIAM YOUNGER

L.S.

*Signed sealed and delivered by the*

said William Christopher Jackson  
in the presence of:

A. J. Cash, *Solicitor*.

Derby.

WM. C. JACKSON

L.S.



## Part 2 Model Trusts

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## Book II The Deeds

In this Part formerly appeared the 1932 Model Deed of the Methodist Church. Although the present Model Trusts are no longer in legal form a deed, being Schedule 2 to the Methodist Church Act 1976, they are printed at this point because they replace the Model Deed and, like it and the Deed of Union, are subordinate to the main body (sections 1 to 31) of the 1976 Act and (unlike those sections) can for the most part be amended by the Conference (see para. 27 below).

The paragraph titles set out above and printed as side headings to the text of the paragraphs below are editorial insertions added for ease of reference only and do not form part of the Schedule as enacted.

The Methodist Church Act 1976, and these Model Trusts which form Schedule 2 to the Act, extend to Scotland, but with certain modifications, for which see s. 29 of the Act (Vol. 1, pp. 22-23). Apart from that in paragraph 16, the modifications have not been incorporated into the text set out below but appear in the notes in italics at the relevant points.

In their application to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man the Model Trusts, as part of the 1976 Act, are modified in certain respects by the Orders extending the Act to those islands (see the notes to s. 30(1) of the Act, Vol. 1, p. 24).

For the consultation required in the home Districts outside England and Wales before amendments are proposed, see S.O. 919A, and for the 'appropriate consultation' before confirmation, see S.O. 126(1)(a).

### *Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*

*In 2023 the Conference passed two Special Resolutions amending various provisions in the Model Trusts. One was an amendment to paragraph 26 (as to which see the note under that paragraph in the text below). The other major one contained the amendments which were generally intended to give effect to the proposals in the 2023 Conference Report 57: Oversight and Trusteeship) by replacing the references to "Methodist Council" by "Connexional Council". The intention was that after appropriate consultation these would be brought back for confirmation in the usual way in 2024, with the intention of taking effect from 1 September 2024. However, because the required consultation with the Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Scotland and Shetland Synods was unfortunately not able to take place, the Conference was not in a position to confirm either resolution. The process therefore needed to begin again and the Conference duly re-adopted the two Special Resolutions, to enable the appropriate consultation to take place before being brought for confirmation (or otherwise) in 2025.*

*However, as the references to "Methodist Council" therefore remain in place for the time being, the Conference was invited by the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee to adopt an amended Standing Order 904. The Sub-committee's reasoning is set out in the report at item 5/7/1 of the 2024 Conference Daily Record. In essence, S.O. 904 as now amended (Daily Record 5/7/3) makes two provisions (which are consistent with the general approach as to the amendments to Standing Orders being made by the Conference). It provides that the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts shall be exercised and performed by the Connexional Council (the Connexional Council being, for this purpose only, to be regarded as the body of persons identified under the Model Trusts as the Methodist Council). It also provides that the Connexional Council shall constitute the connexional trustees. A further resolution was necessary, with regard to the appointment of trustees of Conference property. It had been intended that such appointments would in future be made by the Connexional Council rather than the Conference. Therefore, pending such change, the Conference delegated its power of appointment to the Connexional Council (2024 Daily Record, item 5/7/4).*

## SCHEDULE 2

### MANAGING TRUSTEES OF MODEL TRUST PROPERTY AND MODEL TRUSTS

#### PART I INTERPRETATION

Since this Schedule is part of the 1976 Act the interpretation provisions of s. 2 of the Act (Vol. 1 p. 5) also apply. In particular, it should be noted that throughout the Model Trusts 'the Board' (with capital 'B') means the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.

For the resolutions adopted by the Conference of 2024, see *Resolutions of the Conference of 2024* on the title page of this Part.

- 1 Interpretation.** In this Schedule, unless the subject or context otherwise requires –
- 'appropriate Church Council' means, in relation to any local property, the Church Council of the Local Church for whose benefit or in connection with which such property is for the time being solely or mainly held, used or applied;
  - 'appropriate Circuit Meeting' means, in relation to any Circuit property, the Circuit Meeting of the Circuit for whose benefit or in connection with which such property is for the time being solely or mainly held, used or applied;
  - 'Church' means the Methodist Church;
  - 'Church Council' means the body of persons of that name for the time being constituted in relation to a Local Church under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders;
  - 'Circuit' means a Circuit of the Church constituted under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders;
  - 'Circuit manse' means, in relation to any Circuit, a dwelling for occupation by a minister or probationer appointed to such Circuit;
- For the definition of 'minister' see Deed of Union, cl. 1(xix).
- 'Circuit Meeting' means the body of persons of that name for the time being constituted in relation to a Circuit under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders;
  - 'Circuit property' means any model trust property (other than Conference property) or any part thereof for the time being held, used or applied for Circuit purposes in accordance with the model trusts, and includes any property which but for this provision would after the commencement of this Act have ceased to be local property and have become general property by reason only of there having ceased to be any relevant Local Church;
  - 'Circuit purposes' means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof and in relation to any Circuit, all or any of the purposes of a Circuit manse or of any other property (not being local property), for the time being used or applied or held for the purposes of being used or applied, in accordance with the model trusts, solely or mainly by or in connection with such Circuit, and includes any other charitable purpose comprised in the model trusts which the Conference

may by Standing Order designate as a Circuit purpose in relation to such Circuit and to model trust property;

‘Conference property’ means any model trust property or new model trust property or any part of any such property which the Conference, judging it to be of special significance to the Church as a whole, has (with the prior consent of the then managing trustees) declared to be Conference property;

See, e.g., as to the New Room, Bristol, S.O. 280, and as to Westminster Central Hall S.O. 281.

‘Conference trustees’ means, in relation to any Conference property or any part of such property, the persons or body of persons, being members of the Church, annually appointed by the Conference to be the managing trustees of such property or part property;

See *Resolutions of the Conference of 2024* on the title page of this Part, for the delegation by the Conference to the Connexional Council of this power of appointment, and the note under ‘Methodist Council’ below.

‘Connexional dwelling’ means, in relation to any Connexional organisation, a dwelling for occupation by the Secretary or any other officer or any employee of such organisation;

‘Connexional organisation’ means any Connexional Committee, Connexional Institution or other Connexional organisation for the time being constituted under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders;

See also S.O. 906.

‘Connexional property’ means any model trust property (other than Conference property) or any part thereof for the time being held, used or applied for connexional purposes in accordance with the model trusts;

‘Connexional purposes’ means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof and in relation to any Connexional organisation, all or any of the purposes of a Connexional dwelling, or of any other property (not being local, Circuit or District property), for the time being used or applied or held for the purpose of being used or applied, in accordance with the model trusts, solely or mainly by or in connection with such organisation, and includes any other charitable purpose comprised in the model trusts which the Conference may by Standing Order designate as a connexional purpose in relation to such organisation and to model trust property;

See, e.g., as to the Aldersgate Memorial S.O. 340(6).

‘Connexional Trustees’ means, in relation to any Connexional property or any part of such property, the person or persons for the time being constituting, in accordance with Standing Orders, the Connexional Trustees for that property or part property;

See S.O. 904, as amended by the Conference of 2024 to provide for the Connexional Council to constitute these trustees (*Resolutions of the Conference of 2024* on the title page of this Part and the note under ‘Methodist Council’ below).

‘Disposal’ or ‘disposition’, in relation to any model trust property, means disposal of the property or any estate or interest in it by any means, including conveyance, assignment, transfer, demise and letting, and ‘dispose’ has a corresponding meaning;



'District' means a District of the Church constituted under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders;

'District manse' means, in relation to any District, a dwelling for occupation by a Chair of such District;

'District property' means any model trust property (other than Conference property) or any part thereof for the time being held, used or applied for District purposes in accordance with the model trusts;

'District purposes' means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof and in relation to any District or group of Districts, all or any of the purposes of a District manse, or of any other property (not being local or Circuit property), for the time being used or applied, or held for the purpose of being used or applied, in accordance with the model trusts, solely or mainly by or in connection with such District or group of Districts, and includes any other charitable purpose comprised in the model trusts which the Conference may by Standing Order designate as a District purpose in relation to such District or group of Districts and to model trust property;

See S.O. 966(4).

'District Trustees' means, in relation to any District property or any part of such property, the body of persons for the time being constituting, in accordance with Standing Orders, the District Trustees for that property or part property;

See S.O. 966(1).

'general property' means any model trust property (other than Conference property) or any part thereof for the time being held, used or applied for general purposes in accordance with the model trusts;

'general purposes' means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof (not being for the time being local, Circuit, District or Connexional property), all or any of the charitable purposes comprised in the model trusts;

'Local Church' means the body of persons for the time being constituting a Society or Local Church under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders;

'local property' means any model trust property (other than Conference property) or any part thereof for the time being held, used or applied for local purposes in accordance with the model trusts;

'local purposes' means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof and in relation to any Local Church, all or any of the purposes of a place of worship, or of any other property, for the time being used or applied, or held for the purpose of being used or applied in accordance with the model trusts, solely or mainly by or in connection with such Local Church (whether or not in conjunction with members of any other church pursuant to a sharing agreement under the Act of 1969) and includes any other charitable purpose comprised in the model trusts which the Conference may by Standing Order designate as a local purpose in relation to such Local Church and to model trust property;

‘managing trustees’ means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof, the managing trustees from time to time and includes (except in paragraph 4 of this Schedule) the temporary trustees of that property or any part thereof, such trustees being ascertained in accordance with the provisions of Part II of this Schedule;

‘Methodist Council’ means the body of persons of that name for the time being constituted by the Conference under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders for the despatch of connexional business in relation to (inter alia) property affairs or other the body of persons constituted for the time being under Standing Orders to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division, and includes, where appropriate, any person or persons to whom any functions of such body under any provision of this Schedule may have been delegated by such body in accordance with any Standing Order made pursuant to paragraph 11 of this Schedule, and ‘board of the Property Division’ has the same meaning;

The Methodist Council ceased to be in existence from 1 September 2024 (see Conference Agenda Report 57, 2023, and Report 50, 2024, on *Oversight and Trusteeship*). The Conference of 2024 resolved (S.O. 904(2)) that the Connexional Council should perform and exercise the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council in these Model Trusts, and, for that purpose only, the Connexional Council is “the body of persons of that name ... constituted by the Conference”. For the explanation of why this provision was required, see the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*, on the title page of this Part. If the Conference of 2025 confirms the Special Resolution adopted in 2024, this definition of ‘Methodist Council’ will be replaced by a new definition, ‘Connexional Council’ and further amendments will be made, including to the definitions of ‘Conference Trustees’ and ‘Connexional Trustees’.

For the responsibilities of the Connexional Council in relation to the previous functions of the Property Division see now S.O. 204(4).

‘Methodist practice’ means the constitutional practice, usage and discipline of the Church as regulated for the time being by the Deed of Union and Standing Orders;

‘model trust amenity’ means a place of worship, cemetery or burial ground, house or other dwelling, vestry, hall, classroom, school room, day school, office, hostel, college, bookshop, playground or any other building or amenity and includes any kitchen, convenience or other building, room or structure ancillary to any such aforementioned premises;

‘model trust operation’ means the laying out, building, furnishing, equipping, maintaining, repairing, altering, enlarging, demolishing, rebuilding, refurbishing or re-equipping of any model trust amenity for use for or incidental to any kind of charitable purpose comprised in the model trusts, and includes the conversion of any such model trust amenity or any part thereof to another category of model trust amenity for use as aforesaid;

‘new model trust property’ means any property or any part thereof which shall after the commencement of this Act become model trust property pursuant to any provision of section 10 (Power to adopt model trusts) or of sections 12 to 16 inclusive of this Act and shall not be affected by any direction made pursuant to paragraph 3(2) of this Schedule;

For ss. 10 and 12 to 16 of the Act see Vol. 1, pp. 13, 15-17.

‘place of worship’ means any church, chapel or other place for religious worship by members of the Church;

'Property Secretary' means the person appointed in accordance with Standing Orders to fulfil the duties assigned in this Schedule to such an officer or to the General Secretary of the board of the Property Division;

See S.O. 006(2A).

'purposes of the Church' means the purposes of the Church for the time being under section 4 (Purposes) of this Act;

See Vol. 1, p. 8.

'statutory or other legal provision' means any Act, any instrument or document made or having effect under or by virtue of any such Act, any other instrument or document affecting legal rights or obligations, any trust (whether arising under a trust instrument or otherwise), and any rule of law, being an Act, instrument, document, trust, or rule in force at the commencement of this Act;

'trustees' means the Board in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof held by the Board upon the model trusts under paragraph 4(2) of this Schedule and the Board as custodian trustees together with the managing trustees in relation to any other model trust property.

As to the meaning of 'the Board' see the note at the head of para. 1.

## PART II MANAGING TRUSTEES OF MODEL TRUST PROPERTY

**2 Managing trustees.** (1) Subject to the provisions of this Part of this Schedule, so long as any model trust property or any part thereof shall be held, used or applied so as to fall within any category mentioned below, the managing trustees of such property or such part thereof shall be the body of persons or the person or persons (or such of those persons as shall have attained full age) specified immediately after such category as follows:

- (a) local property: the appropriate Church Council;
- (b) Circuit property: the appropriate Circuit Meeting;
- (c) District property: the District Trustees;
- (d) Connexional property: the Connexional Trustees;
- (dA) Conference property: the Conference Trustees;
- (e) general property: the Secretary or the person or persons for the time being authorised under Standing Orders to exercise the functions of the Secretary.

(2) Employees of managing trustees may become members of the body constituting those trustees ex officio or by election or appointment on the same basis as if they were not employees and may retain any increased benefits resulting from a subsequent change or changes to their terms of employment as if they were not trustees.

(3) For the avoidance of doubt, a person may be a trustee and exercise trustee functions under sub-paragraph (1) above notwithstanding the fact that he or she is a minister, exercises those functions as part of his or her ministerial responsibilities and is also in receipt of a stipend and other benefits as a minister.

Only persons of full age may be managing trustees of model trust property (s. 9(3) of the Act, Vol. 1, p. 11). In Great Britain as a whole, persons of 18 years and over are of full age, while in Scotland the minimum age for charity trusteeship is 16.

Sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) were inserted in 2020 and also apply to trustees transacting non-Model Trust business – see cl. 42A Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

As to the Connexional Trustees, and the Conference Trustees, see the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024* on the title page of this Part.

**3 New model trust property.** (1) Any new model trust property or part of such property is general property until a direction affecting it has been made under sub-paragraph (2) of this paragraph, or until it earlier becomes Conference property.

(1A) For the purposes of this paragraph and of paragraphs 5 to 10 of this Schedule ‘trust body’ means any Church Council, Circuit Meeting, District Trustees or Connexional Trustees or the Secretary.

(2) (a) Subject to (b) below and to the next sub-paragraph the Methodist Council may, after appropriate consultation, direct in writing under the hand of the Property Secretary or of any other person authorised by it in that behalf that any new model trust property or any specified part of any new model trust property shall fall within the category of model trust property specified in such direction and that the trust body similarly specified shall be the managing trustees thereof, and any such direction shall have effect according to its tenor, but without prejudice to any subsequent change of category or of managing trustees arising by the operation of sub-paragraph 2(1) of this Schedule or otherwise.

For the ‘appropriate consultation’ required see S.O. 902 and the regulations in Book VI, Part 2.

(b) If it seems fit to the council, because of the desirability of a joint managing trusteeship or for any other reason, its direction under this sub-paragraph may take the form of a Memorandum of Terms of Management determining the matters specified in (a)(i) and (ii) and (b)(i) and (ii) of paragraph 8(1) of this Schedule, and in that event paragraph 9 of this Schedule shall apply.

(3) In exercise of the power conferred by the foregoing sub-paragraph the Methodist Council shall give consideration to any declaration of preference, made pursuant to section 12 (Future model trust settlements) of this Act or deemed to have been so made by virtue of section 15 (Gifts to Local Churches or Circuits) of this Act, in respect of any new model trust property or any part thereof but shall not be bound to give effect thereto.

For ss. 12 and 15 of the Act see Vol. 1, pp. 15-16.

(4) If any new model trust property or part of such property becomes Conference property before a direction affecting it has been made under sub-paragraph (2) of this paragraph then the provisions of sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) of this paragraph shall forthwith cease to apply to it.

**4 Temporary managing trustees.** (1) If and during such period as there shall be no managing trustees of any model trust property or any part thereof by reason of there being no person or persons respectively constituting any of the bodies or holding or entitled to exercise the functions of the office mentioned in sub-paragraph 2(1) of

this Schedule (or corresponding to any such body or office pursuant to section 24 (Construction of references to abolished bodies and offices) of this Act), or for any other reason, the Methodist Council may, by a written instrument under the hand of the Property Secretary or of any other person authorised by the council in that behalf appoint any local or other body of the Church or any officer of the Church or of any such body as the temporary managing trustees or trustee during such period of such property or part thereof.

For s. 24 of the Act see Vol. 1, p. 21.

(2) If during any period (hereinafter referred to as 'the suspense period') there shall be no managing trustees or temporary managing trustees of any model trust property or any part thereof, the custodian trusteeship of the Board and the model trust vesting provisions shall be suspended in respect of such property or such part thereof until the expiration of the suspense period and, during the suspense period, the Board shall hold such property or such part thereof upon the model trusts so far as circumstances permit.

As to the meaning of 'the Board' see the note at the head of para. 1 above.

**5 Management issues.** (1) For the purposes of this paragraph and of paragraphs 6 to 10 of this Schedule –

'Management Certificate' means a certificate issued under paragraph 6 of this Schedule;

'Management Memorandum' means a Memorandum or amended Memorandum of Terms of Management under paragraph 8 or 9 of this Schedule.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule a management issue occurs in relation to any model trust property or any part of a model trust property (other than new model trust property and Conference property) whenever the Methodist Council, acting of its own motion or upon the written request of any trust body, declares in writing under the hand of the Property Secretary or of any other person authorised by the council in that behalf:

- (a) that –
  - (i) no trust body claims to be the managing trustees of such property or part property; or
  - (ii) more than one trust body claims to be the managing trustees of all such property or part property; or
  - (iii) any trust body or the council is doubtful as to the category of such property or part property or as to who are the managing trustees thereof;
- (b) and that –
  - (i) no Management Memorandum dealing with the questions raised under (a) above is in force; or
  - (ii) one or more of such questions remain unresolved by any Management Memorandum in force.

(3) Upon the occurrence of a management issue and until it is resolved by a Management Certificate the Secretary shall be the managing trustee of the property or part property affected by that issue.

**6 Resolution of management issues.** (1) As soon as may be after the occurrence of a management issue the Methodist Council shall, after appropriate consultation and subject to sub-paragraph (2) of this paragraph, certify under the hand of the Property Secretary or of any other person authorised by the council in that behalf that at the date of such certificate the property or part property affected by such issue falls within the category of model trust property specified in such certificate and that the trust body similarly specified are the managing trustees thereof. Such a certificate shall determine and be conclusive evidence of the matters so certified as at its date.

For the 'appropriate consultation' required see S.O. 902 and the regulations in Book VI, Part 2.

(2) The Methodist Council shall, immediately before issuing any Management Certificate, have regard to any Management Memorandum affecting the same property or part property and shall procure that any description in such Management Certificate of any land or other assets shall, so far as possible, follow the corresponding description in such Management Memorandum.

**7 Division of management.** For the purposes of this Schedule a division of management occurs in relation to any model trust property whenever such property falls within more than one category of model trust property or there are two or more trust bodies which are or claim to be managing trustees of such property or of parts thereof.

**8 Terms of management.** (1) As soon as may be after the occurrence of a division of management the following matters (in this Schedule referred to as 'terms of management') shall, after appropriate consultation and subject to sub-paragraphs (3) and (4) of this paragraph, be determined by agreement between the sets of managing trustees or the trust bodies involved:

- (a) where there are two or more trust bodies which are or claim to be managing trustees of the same property or part property –
  - (i) whether as to each such property or part property one trust body (and if so which) shall be the managing trustees or there shall be a joint managing trusteeship; and
  - (ii) if there is to be a joint managing trusteeship, how the joint managing trustees shall be constituted;
- (b) and in any event –
  - (i) the boundaries and extent of any land and a description of any other assets, comprised in the property, in respect of which any (and which) managing trustees or joint managing trustees shall exercise any (and what) powers, duties or discretions arising under the model trusts or any other statutory or legal provision (whether or not the bodies to exercise such powers, duties or discretions are themselves the managing trustees of the land or assets in question under (a) above or otherwise);
  - (ii) any ancillary matters expedient to be determined, including (where appropriate) provision for the apportionment of income and expenditure arising or incurred in relation to the property and for the making of reports and the rendering of accounts by any bodies exercising powers,

duties or discretions under (i) above to the managing trustees or joint managing trustees of the land or assets in question.

For the 'appropriate consultation' required see S.O. 902 and the regulations in Book VI, Part 2.

(2) Upon the determination of such terms of management the managing trustees and trust bodies involved shall have them embodied in a Memorandum of Terms of Management, signed by not less than two of the persons constituting each such set of managing trustees or trust body (or, in the case of general property, by the Secretary or any person exercising his or her functions) and transmitted to the Board.

(3) In default of compliance with sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) of this paragraph within three months (or such other period as may be prescribed by Standing Orders) of the occurrence of a division of management the Methodist Council shall after appropriate consultation, and except insofar as it considers that all or any of the questions arising would more appropriately be dealt with as a management issue under paragraphs 5 and 6 of this Schedule, determine the terms of management and have them embodied in a Memorandum of Terms of Management, which shall be signed by the Property Secretary or some other person authorised by the council in that behalf and transmitted to the Board.

(4) Immediately before determining any terms of management under sub-paragraph (1) or (3) of this paragraph the persons or bodies involved shall have regard to any Management Certificate affecting the same property or any part thereof and shall procure that any description in the Management Memorandum of any land or assets shall so far as possible, follow the corresponding description in such Management Certificate.

**9 Amendment of terms of management.** The sets of managing trustees or joint managing trustees affected by terms of management may, after appropriate consultation, agree to amend them and sub-paragraphs (2) and (4) of paragraph 8 of this Schedule shall then apply to the agreed amended terms as to original terms of management.

For the 'appropriate consultation' required see S.O. 902 and the regulations in Book VI, Part 2.

**10 Evidence of terms of management.** Without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 26 of this Schedule any Management Memorandum shall from the date of its receipt by the Board under paragraph 8 or 9 of this Schedule be conclusive evidence for all purposes of the terms or amended terms of management embodied therein.

**11 Delegation by the Methodist Council.** The Conference may by Standing Orders authorise the Methodist Council to delegate, in such manner and subject to such restrictions or conditions as may be prescribed in such Standing Orders, to any committee or officer of the council or to any other body or officer of the Church, all or any of the functions of the council under this Schedule.

**11A Change of status of Conference property.** The Conference may at any time declare that any Conference property or any part of such property shall cease to be Conference property, and if it does so shall at the same time give a direction under sub-

paragraph (2) of paragraph 3 of this Schedule as if such property or part property were new model trust property and the Conference were the Methodist Council. Every such declaration shall have effect according to its tenor and every such direction shall have effect in accordance with and subject to the said sub-paragraph, except that no writing shall be required beyond the record in the Conference Journal and that no consultation shall be required beyond any which may already have taken place.

PART III  
MODEL TRUSTS

**12 Model trusts to be governed by purposes of Church.** Model trust property shall be held upon and subject to the following charitable trusts, powers and provisions if and so far only as the execution, exercise or operation respectively of any of such trusts, powers or provisions in respect of such property or any part thereof shall be in furtherance of or incidental to a purpose of the Church.

For the purposes of the Church see s. 4 of the Act (Vol. 1, p. 8).

**13 The trusts.** Subject to the provisions of this Act and of this Schedule, the trustees shall hold the property upon the following trusts, or such of them as shall be capable of having effect having regard to the character and condition of the property, namely upon trust:

- (a) To apply, at the discretion of the managing trustees, any moneys available for such charitable purposes in the purchase of land or any chattel or other property for the purposes of a model trust amenity or a model trust operation or for any other purpose for which model trust property may be held or applied, or directed to be held or applied, under any provision of this Part of this Schedule;
- (b) To permit any place of worship to be used for religious worship and for public and other meetings and services held in accordance with Methodist practice and the provisions of the next following paragraph;
- (c) To permit activities for children and young people to be held in accordance with Methodist practice in any suitable part of the property, but if in a place of worship, only at such time as not to interfere with public worship;
- (d) To permit any further meeting to be held in or upon any part of the land comprised in the property only if the holding of such meeting is not contrary to Methodist practice;
- (e) To permit any day school to be used for the education of children and young persons under such system of management as the Conference may prescribe or approve or as may be required by law;
- (f) To permit any suitable building or part of a building comprised in the property to be used as an office, hostel, college, bookshop or other institution for or incidental to any purpose of the Church;
- (g) To permit any house or other dwelling to be used as a Circuit or District manse, or Connexional dwelling or for such other purpose of the Church as the Conference shall by Standing Order prescribe;



- (h) To permit any vestry, hall, classroom, kitchen, convenience, building, room, structure, or other appurtenance and any vacant land to be used for or in connection with any of the above purposes or for purposes ancillary to any of such purposes;
- (i) To permit any land laid out as a cemetery or burial ground to be used for such purposes;
- (j) To permit any land laid out as a playground to be used for such purposes;
- (k) To change the use or application of the property or any part thereof from any one or more of the above purposes to any one or more other of such purposes or to permit the property or any part thereof to be held, used or applied mainly for any one or more of such purposes and partially for any one or more other of such purposes;
- (l) To carry into effect any sharing agreement affecting the property or any part thereof and made after the commencement of this Act under the provisions of the Act of 1969;
- (m) To permit any land comprised in the property or any part of such land thereof when not required or expected to be required for any of the above purposes by the managing trustees, to be used or applied temporarily or occasionally or intermittently, but without creating any lease or tenancy, for any charitable purpose which is not contrary to Methodist practice;
- (n) To permit any chattel to be used in furtherance of or incidental to any purpose of a model trust amenity or model trust operation or for any other purpose for which model trust property may be held or applied or directed to be held or applied under any provision of this part of this Schedule; and
- (o) To hold the same or any part thereof for or incidental to any such purpose of the Church as the Conference may from time to time authorise.

As to (g), see S.O. 929.

See S.O. 926, as to exceptional provisions applicable to certain commercial leases of Methodist premises no longer required for any purpose within heads (b) to (o) above.

**14 Religious worship.** (1) The managing trustees shall permit such services and meetings for religious worship to be held in any place of worship at such times in such manner and to be officiated at by such presbyter or such other person as shall be required or permitted by Methodist practice and by the provisions of this paragraph.

See S.O. 521(1), 920(1).

(2) Notwithstanding that any of the members of any communion or body hereinafter mentioned may not subscribe to the doctrinal standards, the managing trustees may with the consent of such person or persons as the Conference may by Standing Order prescribe –

- (a) hold, and permit the participation by members of the Church together with any members of any other Christian communion or body in, any occasional joint service or meeting in a place of worship or on any other premises comprised in the property;
- (b) permit any member of any such communion or body to officiate and to preach at any such joint service or meeting.

For the consent required see S.O. 920(2).

(2A) Notwithstanding that any of the members of any church or congregation hereinafter mentioned may not subscribe to the doctrinal standards, the managing trustees may with the consent of such person or persons as the Conference may by Standing Order prescribe permit the use of a place of worship or any other premises comprised in the property by members of one or more Christian churches or congregations, either for particular occasions or for a period determined by the managing trustees by way of a licence or a lease, provided that such consent as aforesaid shall be given only in cases where to grant such permission would not (having regard to all the circumstances) offend the doctrinal standards.

This sub-paragraph (2A) was originally inserted and consequential amendments made in sub-paragraph (3) in 1983. Sub-paragraph (2A) was amended again with effect from 1 September 2021 to enable permission to be granted by way of licence or lease of any duration. Prior to this amendment, permission was restricted to revocable licences only for periods not exceeding 12 months.

For the consent required see S.O. 920(3).

(3) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (2A) of this paragraph and to any provision of the Act of 1969 or of any sharing agreement made thereunder affecting the property or any part thereof, the managing trustees shall not permit any person, at any service or meeting for religious worship held at or in any part of any premises comprised in the property, so to preach or expound God's Holy Word or perform any act as to deny or repudiate the doctrinal standards.

For the doctrinal standards see cl. 4 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

**15 Cemeteries and burial grounds.** Subject to the provisions of this Schedule, it shall be lawful for the managing trustees to sell, subject to such restrictions and conditions as they think proper and either in perpetuity or for a limited time, the exclusive right of burial (and of the right of one or more burials) in any part of any cemetery or burial ground comprised in the property, and also the right of erecting and placing any monument, gravestone, tablet or monumental inscription in such cemetery or burial ground.

**16 General powers of managing trustees.** (1) Subject to any statutory restriction and to the provisions of this Schedule, the managing trustees may –

- (a) borrow such sum or sums as they consider necessary or expedient for the execution of any purpose of or the exercise of any power or the performance of any duty conferred or imposed on them, under this Schedule or any other statutory or other legal provision and may mortgage or charge the property or any part thereof to secure any sum borrowed by them;
- (b) sell the property or any part thereof for the best price that can reasonably be obtained;
- (c) grant or renew any licence for the use of the whole or any part of any land comprised in the property for such period and for such reasonable payment and otherwise subject to such conditions as the managing trustees shall think fit;
- (d) build, repair, alter, enlarge, demolish or rebuild and furnish any building, structure or works of any description whatsoever and generally improve any

- part of any land comprised in the property, except where such land or any part thereof is in the actual possession of a mortgagee as such under a mortgage which contains a provision to the contrary;
- (e) let or re-let at a rent, or on a lease for a premium, rent, royalty, share of profits or other consideration or any combination thereof, the whole or any part of the land comprised in the property or any timber, mineral or other rights therein;
  - (f) sell any timber, minerals or other products of or substance in or on any part of any land comprised in the property;
  - (g) provide facilities of any kind for any tenant or occupant of any land comprised in the property or any part of such land;
  - (h) dispose of the property or any part thereof for development under a building lease or other arrangement including or not including provisions for the acquisition by the trustees of a freehold or leasehold interest (to be held on the model trusts) in all or any part of any new premises to be comprised in such development;
  - (i) bring or defend any action relating to the property;
  - (j) refer or join in a reference to arbitration of any disagreement or dispute which may arise between the trustees and any other person in relation to the property;
  - (k) delegate all or any of their powers or duties under these trusts to the Conference or to any Connexional, District, Circuit or local body of the Church, or any Committee of any such body;
  - (l) appoint and dismiss such Committees, Stewards or Treasurers or other officers or servants as may be necessary and expedient in respect of the property or any part thereof;
  - (m) determine what is necessary or expedient for the purposes of the management of the property;
  - (n) *[applicable to Scotland only]* so far as circumstances permit, exercise the same powers in the same manner and to the same effect as the powers relating to the manner of executing instruments conferred upon charity trustees by section 333 of the Charities Act 2011; and
  - (o) *[not applicable to England, Wales, Scotland or the Bailiwick of Guernsey]* apply income in paying premiums on a policy or policies of insurance to indemnify the managing trustees (or any of them) against personal liability for acts or omissions affecting the property, provided that this power may not be exercised unless every such policy excludes cover in respect of (i) fines, (ii) the costs of unsuccessfully defending criminal prosecutions for offences arising out of the fraud or dishonesty or wilful or reckless misconduct of any managing trustee, (iii) liabilities which result from conduct which the relevant trustee knew, or must be assumed to have known, was a breach of trust or of duty or as to which that trustee was reckless about whether or not it was such a breach, and (iv) any liability to account where the relevant trustee has received a benefit.

- (p) subject to compliance with Standing Orders as to conflicts of interest:
- (i) employ or engage the services of any managing trustee or connected person at remuneration and on terms not more preferential than would be accorded to a member of the public with the same qualifications and experience;
  - (ii) subject to any obligation to obtain a necessary consent, buy or sell land or goods from or to any managing trustee or connected person on terms not more preferential than would be accorded to a member of the public for the same transaction.

(2) In sub-paragraph (p) the expression “connected person” has the meaning given by section 188 of the Charities Act 2011 and the expression “necessary consent” means:

- (i) in England and Wales, the consent of the Charity Commission if required by statute;
- (ii) in other jurisdictions, the consent of any person or body whose consent is required under the law of the relevant jurisdiction.

As to (1)(i) and (1)(j) see S.O. 931(5), (6).

As to (1)(f) see S.O. 912.

For additional paragraph (1)(n), applicable to Scotland only, see Methodist Church Act 1976, section 29(2)(f) (Volume 1, p. 23). In that paragraph the words ‘section 34 of the Charities Act’ were amended in 2001 to read ‘section 82 of the Charities Act 1993’.

As to (1)(o), the Conference of 2010 deleted this item in so far as it applies to England and Wales, and the 2012 Conference deleted it in so far as it applies to Scotland and Guernsey, as the situation is now covered by statutory provision. See S.O. 911 as to the exercise by trustees in these jurisdictions of their statutory powers.

As to (1)(p) and (2), these were inserted in 2020 and also apply to trustees transacting non-Model Trust business – see cl. 42A Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1). For conflicts of interest, see S.O. 019A.

**17 Investment.** Subject to the provisions of this Schedule, the managing trustees may invest any moneys requiring investment in or upon any investment for the time being authorised by law for the investment of trust funds or in any common investment fund or deposit fund for the time being constituted by or pursuant to the scheme contained in the First Schedule of the Act of 1960.

See S.O. 914.

For the First Schedule to the Act of 1960 see Vol. 1, p. 50.

**18 Proceeds of sale and other dispositions.** (1) The trustees shall hold any property to which this paragraph is applicable upon trust for such purpose or purposes of the Church and in such manner as the Conference shall declare by Standing Order made pursuant to sub-paragraphs 1(e) and (2) of the next following paragraph, or as the Conference or the Methodist Council shall direct pursuant to any Standing Order made pursuant to the said provisions of the next following paragraph, as the case may be.

See S.O. 916 and 955.

(2) This paragraph shall apply to all moneys which shall be paid or payable to the trustees (whether by one or more or successive or recurrent payments) on or pursuant to any sale, letting or other disposition of the property or any part thereof or of any

interest therein made by the managing trustees in exercise of any power in that behalf conferred on them under any provision of paragraphs 15 or 16 of this Schedule.

As to 'disposition' see the second note to para. 20(1) below.

**19 Standing Orders.** (1) Without prejudice to the generality of its powers as the governing body of the Church conferred by this Act and the Deed of Union, and without prejudice to any other provision of this Act or the said Deed expressly requiring or authorising it to prescribe any matter or thing by Standing Orders or otherwise, the Conference shall by Standing Orders declare, prescribe or regulate, in the manner provided in the next following sub-paragraph, the following matters or things, namely: –

- (a) when and in what manner and subject to what procedure, requirements or conditions the managing trustees may exercise any power conferred on them under any provision of paragraphs 15, 16 or 17 of this Schedule;
- (b) the duties and terms of appointment of any Committee, Steward, Treasurer or other officer or servant appointed by the managing trustees pursuant to sub-paragraph (l) of sub-paragraph 16(1) of this Schedule;
- (c) subject to the provisions of sub-section (2) of section 6 (Contributions to investment funds and deposits in deposit funds to be authorised investments) of the Act of 1960 but otherwise without regard to general law or the effect of any statutory or other legal provision, what part of the property shall be deemed to be capital and what part of the property shall be deemed to be income for the purposes of the administration of these trusts;
- (d) subject to the next following provision of this sub-paragraph, the manner in which the managing trustees may apply capital and income for the purposes of these trusts;
- (e) the purpose or purposes of these trusts or of the Church for which and the manner in which the trustees shall hold any property to which paragraph 18 of this Schedule is applicable;
- (f) subject to any statutory requirement or regulation, what accounts shall be kept by the managing trustees and what arrangements shall be made by the managing trustees for the audit of such accounts;
- (g) any such other matter or thing being consistent with this Act and Methodist practice as the Conference may deem expedient in relation to the property and the model trusts, which (for the avoidance of doubt) may include provisions enabling any managing trustee or trustees to contract on their own account with their co-trustees, to receive and retain remuneration or other benefits out of trust moneys or from elsewhere for acts done in connection with those trusts, or to purchase trust property, and so that any such provision shall prescribe the circumstances in and extent to which they may do so and any conditions as to disclosure, approval by their co-trustees, abstention or otherwise which must be met.

As to (a) see Part 9 of Standing Orders generally, and Sections 92 and 93 in particular.

As to (b) see S.O. 912 and the Standing Orders listed in the note to S.O. 912(2).

As to (c) see S.O. 915 and as to (d) S.O. 916 and 917.

As to (e) see S.O. 916, 955 and 970.

As to (f) see S.O. 913.

As to the last part of (g) see S.O. 019A.

(2) In the exercise of its duty under the foregoing sub-paragraph the Conference may from time to time make any Standing Order declaring, prescribing or regulating the whole or any part of any such matter or thing or providing that the whole or any part of such matter or thing shall, in the circumstances specified in such Standing Order, be subject to the direction of the Conference or of the Methodist Council.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-paragraph (1)(g) of this paragraph, and for the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that the Conference may by Standing Order empower the Methodist Council:

- (a) to require the trustees of any model trust property to restore and reinstate in such manner as the council may direct any part or the whole of that model trust property if it has been altered, demolished or destroyed in breach of trust or of any Standing Order, direction or authority made or given under or pursuant to any provision of this Act or without, or contrary to the conditions of, any approval or consent required by this Schedule or by any Standing Orders made under it; and
- (b) in default of compliance with any such requirement, to carry out the required works of restoration and reinstatement and charge the cost to the trustees, who shall pay the amount so charged.

See S.O. 985(4) and 986(4).

**20 Special powers on disposal of property.** (1) If the board of the Property Division shall consider that any purpose of the Church would thereby be advanced, it shall be lawful for such board to authorise the trustees of any model trust property, by a written authority under the hand of its General Secretary or of any other person authorised by such board in that behalf to dispose of such property or any part thereof, in any manner whatsoever to any person upon trust for such purpose of the Church without the payment or provision of any consideration or for the payment or provision of less consideration than might otherwise be reasonably obtainable in respect of such property or such part thereof, and it shall be lawful for such trustees to enter into any transaction pursuant to such authority.

The functions of the 'board of the Property Division' (which no longer exists) have been exercisable by the Methodist Council by virtue of the definition of the latter in para. 1 above, but the name remains in this paragraph, which is unamendable (see para. 27). For similar reasons the functions of the 'General Secretary' of the board are now exercisable by the 'Property Secretary', as to whom see S.O. 006(2A). See the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*, on the title page of this Part, as to the Connexional Council's powers and responsibilities in this regard, from 1 September 2024.

For the conditions upon which model trust property can be disposed of to a Housing Association under this paragraph see S.O. 935.

(2) Where any model trust property or any part thereof comprises or includes a place of worship or a former place of worship, then, if the board of the Property Division shall consider that any purpose of the Church would thereby be advanced or tend to be advanced, such board may, by a written authority given under the hand of its General Secretary, or of any other person authorised by such board in that behalf, authorise the

trustees of such model trust property or such part thereof to dispose of such property or such part thereof subject to any restriction (to be specified in such written authority) of the use of any land and any building or part of any building comprising such place of worship or former place of worship; and any transaction entered into by the trustees of such model trust property or such part thereof pursuant to any such authority shall not be capable of being impugned by reason of any such restriction.

As to the 'board of the Property Division' and its 'General Secretary' see the first note to sub-para. (1) above.

See also S.O. 943(3).

(3) In the foregoing sub-paragraph 'former place of worship' means any property which was formerly a place or part of a place of worship but which, in the opinion of the board of the Property Division, ceased to be such a place or part of such a place not more than twenty years before the date of any written authority affecting the said property given by the said board pursuant to the powers contained in the foregoing sub-paragraph.

As to the 'board of the Property Division' see the first note to sub-para. (1) above.

**21 Trustees to comply with Standing Orders.** The trustees shall not exercise or perform or concur in the exercise or performance of any discretion or power conferred or duty imposed by any provision of this Schedule, or by any other statutory or other legal provision, save in accordance with any Standing Order and any direction or authority respectively made or given under or pursuant to any provision of this Act:

Provided that, in the event of any conflict between any such Standing Order or any such authority or direction and any provision of the Act of 1969 or any sharing agreement made pursuant thereto and affecting any such model trust property, the provision of that Act or agreement shall prevail.

**21A Proceedings for Enforcement.** Without prejudice to any other power in any person or body to take proceedings with respect to the model trusts each of the following shall be entitled at any time and without the concurrence of any other person or body to commence and prosecute proceedings in any court for the enforcement of the model trusts or for the restraint of any breach or prospective breach of the model trusts or of any Standing Order, direction or authority made or given under or pursuant to any provision of this Act, namely:

- (a) the Board;
- (b) the Property Secretary; and
- (c) any other person authorised in this behalf by the Methodist Council.

See S.O. 985(3)(ii). See also the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*, on the title page of this Part, as to the Connexional Council's powers and responsibilities in this regard, from 1 September 2024.

For the replacement of a Circuit Meeting or a Church Council by a new such body in exceptional circumstances, see SOs 512B and 611A respectively, adopted by the Conference in 2015.

**22 Declarations of preference.** Subject to the provisions of the foregoing paragraph the managing trustees shall, in the exercise or performance in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof, of any discretion or power conferred or duty imposed by

this Schedule or by any other statutory or other legal provision, give consideration to any declaration of preference, made pursuant to section 12 (Future model trust settlements) of this Act or deemed to have been so made by virtue of section 15 (Gifts to Local Churches or Circuits) of this Act, in respect of such property or such part thereof, but shall not be bound to give effect thereto.

For ss. 12 and 15 of the Act see Vol. 1 pp. 15-16.

**23 Redundancy.** (1) The Conference may resolve that in the opinion of the Conference any model trust property (other than any such property held by the Board upon the model trusts under paragraph 4(2) of this Schedule) or any part thereof has become redundant or that its retention is not a practicable means of advancing any purpose of the Church, and may (by the same or any subsequent resolution) further resolve that in the opinion of the Conference such property or part thereof ought to be sold, and upon the passing of such further resolution the Board shall, by virtue of this Act and without further assurance, cease to be the custodian trustees upon the model trusts and shall become the trustees of such property or part thereof to the exclusion of the managing trustees thereof, and shall hold such property or part thereof upon trust to sell the same and to hold the proceeds of sale upon trust (after discharge of any incumbrance or of any liability in respect of which any previous trustees or managing trustees and the Board as the previous custodian trustees shall be entitled to indemnity) to apply the same for any purpose of the Church in accordance with such scheme as may be made or approved by the Conference or by the board of the Property Division.

As to the 'board of the Property Division' the first note to para. 20(1) applies to this paragraph also.

As to the meaning of 'the Board' see the note at the head of para. 1 above.

See also S.O. 605A and 943.

(2) The provisions of sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) of paragraph 20 of this Schedule shall apply in the case of any disposition of any model trust property or any part thereof by the Board pursuant to the foregoing sub-paragraph as if any reference to the trustees of such property in any of such provisions were a reference to the Board:

Provided that where any model trust property or any part thereof comprises or includes a place of worship or a former place of worship and, pursuant to the provisions of the foregoing sub-paragraph, such model trust property or such part thereof is to be sold by the Board to a person who worshipped in such place of worship or former place of worship as a member or adherent of the Church immediately before the Conference resolved that such property or such part thereof ought to be sold and who proposes to use such place of worship or former place of worship for the purposes of Christian religious worship, nothing in sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) of paragraph 20 of this Schedule as hereinbefore in this sub-paragraph applied, shall enable the board of the Property Division to authorise the Board, when selling such model trust property or such part thereof to such person, to impose any restriction excluding the use for the purposes of Christian religious worship of any land or any building or part of any building comprising such place of worship or former place of worship.

As to the 'board of the Property Division' the first note to para. 20(1) applies to this paragraph also.

As to the meaning of 'the Board' see the note at the head of para. 1 above.

As to 'disposition' see the second note to para. 20(1) above.



**24 Protection of trustees.** (1) The amount of any sum properly borrowed for the purposes of these trusts upon the personal security of the managing trustees shall be deemed to be charged upon and secured by a lien against the property or such part thereof in respect of which such sum was borrowed, for the amount of such sum in favour and for the indemnity of such trustees, but no such charge or lien shall have any effect as against a purchaser, mortgagee, lessee or other person under a sale, mortgage, charge, lease or other disposition made for value in execution of these trusts, whether made with or without notice of that charge or lien.

- (2) The trustees shall not be –
- (a) liable for any involuntary loss suffered by them nor for any injury done by any other person to the property;
  - (b) accountable for more money than comes to their hands; or
  - (c) responsible for the repair and upkeep of the property, except to the extent of funds available or supplied to them for that purpose.

**25 Receipts.** Any receipt given on behalf of –

- (a) the Board by the person who purports to be the treasurer or the secretary for the time being of the Board; or
- (b) the managing trustees by the persons purporting to be the managing trustees or the majority of such trustees or by any person purporting to be the Steward, Treasurer or other officer entitled to give such receipt on behalf of the managing trustees;

shall be a good and sufficient discharge for all moneys or other property therein acknowledged to have been received, and any person who shall have paid, delivered or transferred any such property shall be exonerated by such receipt from all liability to enquire whether the Board or the managing trustees were the proper recipients of such moneys or property, and from all liability to see to the application thereof, and from all loss arising by or in consequence of the misapplication or non-application of the same.

As to the meaning of ‘the Board’ see the note at the head of para. 1 above.

**26 Protection of purchasers.** (1) For the purposes of this paragraph –

‘document’ means, in relation to a purchaser, the document transferring, creating or evidencing any interest;

‘interest’ means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof and to any purchaser, any interest in or charge on such property or such part thereof or the benefit of any covenant or agreement expressed to be entered into by the trustees or the managing trustees of such property or such part thereof;

‘memorandum of consent’ means a memorandum signed by the Property Secretary or by any other person authorised by the Methodist Council in that behalf and attested by two witnesses present at the time of such signature, consenting to the transaction therein mentioned;

The Conference of 2023 passed a Special Resolution to delete the definition of memorandum of consent and sub-paragraphs (3) and (4) from this paragraph 26. However, as explained in the Note of *The Resolutions*

of the Conference of 2024 on the title page of this Part, that was not able to be confirmed in 2024 because of the lack of appropriate consultation, and so the Special Resolution was re-adopted, for confirmation in 2025 if the Conference so resolves. However the Law and Conference Sub-committee's report to the 2024 Conference (Daily Record 5/7/1) suggested that in the meantime, as this provision (and those in (3) and (4) below) do not oblige anyone to execute a memorandum, and since such memoranda no longer serve a useful purpose under the law of England and Wales, the Conference could make a direction that no further memoranda should be executed in that jurisdiction. The Conference adopted a resolution making that direction (Daily Record 5/7/5).

'purchaser' means, in relation to any model trust property or any part thereof, any person acquiring an interest from the trustees or managing trustees thereof in good faith and for money or money's worth, and includes the successors or assigns of such person.

- (2) A statement in a document to the effect that –
- (a) any person named as a party to such document and purporting to execute the same as the sole managing trustee of any model trust property or any part thereof, is such sole managing trustee;
  - (b) any persons together named as a party to such document and purporting to execute the same as the managing trustees of any model trust property or any part thereof, are such managing trustees; or
  - (c) any three or more persons together described as the managing trustees of any model trust property or any part thereof and named as a party to such document purporting to be executed by any two or more of such persons pursuant to section 333 of the Charities Act 2011, are such managing trustees;

shall, in favour of a purchaser, be conclusively presumed to be true.

See Methodist Church Act 1976 s. 29(2)(g) (Vol. 1 pp. 22-23) for the wording of (c) applicable in Scotland.

Under s. 333 of the Charities Act 2011 (as in the predecessor Acts) charity trustees can confer authority on two or more of their number to execute documents in the names and on behalf of the trustees for the purpose of giving effect to transactions to which the trustees are a party.

(3) If, before any transaction creating or purporting to create an interest has been entered into, a memorandum of consent in respect of such transaction has been executed, then such interest shall not, as against the purchaser, be capable of being impugned on the ground that such transaction was not within the powers conferred on managing trustees under the model trusts or that such transaction was entered into in breach of Standing Orders.

(4) For the purpose of this paragraph, if a memorandum of consent shall purport to have been signed and attested as mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) of this paragraph, then, on proof (whether by evidence or as a matter of presumption) of the signature such memorandum shall be presumed to have been so signed and attested, unless the contrary is shown.

**27 Amendment of model trusts.** (1) Subject to the two next following sub-paragraphs, the Conference may by special resolution amend, repeal or add to the provisions of this Schedule except the provisions of paragraphs 12, 17, 20, 21, 23, and 24 thereof and the provisions of this paragraph.

See section 2(1) of the Methodist Church Act 1976 (Vol. 1, p. 5) as to 'special resolution', and as to

'appropriate consultation' see S.O. 126. For the additional consultation required in the home Districts outside England and Wales before an amendment is originally proposed, see S.O. 919A.

(2) The Conference shall make any amendment or repeal of or any addition to the provisions of this Schedule by deferred special resolution if such amendment repeal or addition relates to or affects the provisions of paragraph 14 of this Schedule or any amendment of or addition to such provisions.

(3) No amendment or repeal of or addition to the provisions of this Schedule shall authorise the use or application of the property or any part thereof for any purpose which is not a purpose of the Church or incidental to a purpose of the Church.

(4) After any amendment or repeal of or addition to the provisions of this Schedule pursuant to sub-paragraph (1) of this paragraph, any reference to this Schedule or to the model trusts in this Act or in any other statutory or other legal provision shall be deemed to be a reference to this Schedule or to the model trusts respectively subject to such amendment, repeal or addition.

(5) The Conference may procure that any such amendment, repeal or addition may at any time and from time to time be embodied in a deed poll under the hand and seal of the President of the Conference for the time being and the Conference shall procure that any such deed poll shall, within three months after the execution, be sent to the office of the Commissioners for the purpose of being enrolled in the books of the Commissioners pursuant to section 25 of the Charities Act.

For the wording applicable in Scotland, see Methodist Church Act 1976, s. 29(2)(h) (Vol. 1, p. 23).

Section 25 of the Charities Act 1960 has been repealed and substantially re-enacted as section 30 of the Charities Act 1993 and then section 340 of the Charities Act 2011, to which the provisions of this clause should therefore now be read as referring. Reference to "the Commissioners" now means the Charity Commission.



# BOOK III STANDING ORDERS

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By cl. 19 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) the Conference has power to make Standing Orders for (*inter alia*) the government of the Methodist Church.

By para. 19 of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) the Conference has a duty to regulate by Standing Order a number of matters relating to the management of model trust property.



## Part 0 Introductory

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## Section 00 Interpretation

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**000 The Acts and the Deeds.** In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (i) 'the 1929 Act' means the Methodist Church Union Act 1929 and 'the 1976 Act' means the Methodist Church Act 1976;
- (ii) 'the Deed of Union' means the Deed Poll dated the 20th September 1932 executed by John Scott Lidgett and others pursuant to the provisions of the 1929 Act, as amended from time to time under the powers in that behalf contained in the 1929 Act, the 1976 Act and the Deed of Union;
- (iii) 'the Model Trusts' means the provisions of Schedule 2 to the 1976 Act, as amended from time to time under the powers in that behalf contained in the Model Trusts.

For the 1929 Act see Vol. 1 p. 80, for the 1976 Act Vol. 1 p. 2, for the Deed of Union Book II, Part 1 and for the Model Trusts Book II, Part 2.

**001 The Methodist Church.** In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires, the expression 'the Methodist Church', when used without geographical qualification, means the united church or denomination referred to by that name in the Deed of Union and the expressions 'the Connexion' and 'the Church' are sometimes used in the same sense.

**002 Terms defined in the Deed of Union.** (1) In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions have the meanings assigned to them by clause 1 of the Deed of Union:

- (i) 'in the active work';
- (iA) 'admitted into Full Connexion';
- (ii) 'Church Council';
- (iii) 'church courts';
- (iv) 'Circuit';
- (v) 'Circuit Meeting';



- (vi) 'class leader';
- (vii) 'the Conference';
- (viiA) 'Conference Diaconal Committee';
- (viii) 'connexional';
- (viiiA) **'the Connexional Council'**;
- (viiiB) 'the Convocation';
- (viiiC) 'deacon';
- (ix) 'District';
- (x) 'the home Districts' and cognate expressions;
- (xi) 'the Irish Conference';
- (xiA) 'lay';
- (xii) *[deleted]*
- (xiii) 'local preacher';
- (xiv) 'Local Preachers' Meeting';
- (xv) 'member of the Methodist Church';
- (xvA) 'the Methodist Diaconal Order';
- (xvi) 'minister';
- (xvii) *[moved in reworded form to (xviiiB) below]*
- (xviii) 'pastoral visitor';
- (xviiiA) 'presbyter';
- (xviiiB) 'Presbyteral Session';
- (xix) 'probationer';
- (xx) 'Representative Session';
- (xxi) 'the stations' and cognate expressions;
- (xxii) 'supernumerary';
- (xxiii) 'Superintendent presbyter or 'Superintendent' in relation to a Circuit';
- (xxiv) 'Synod' and 'district Synod';
- (xxv) 'the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order' and 'the Warden'.

For cl. 1 of the Deed of Union see Book II, Part I.

Note that by virtue of these definitions the word 'presbyter', throughout these Standing Orders (when used without qualification), includes supernumeraries and persons 'recognised and regarded' as presbyters in Full Connexion under clauses 43, 44 and 45 of the Deed of Union, but excludes probationers, and the word 'deacon' has a corresponding meaning.

Note also that the word 'minister', with effect from 2012, means a presbyter or deacon.

(2) The Methodist Churches to be specified for the purpose of the definition of 'other autonomous Conferences' in clause 1(xxiv) of the Deed are the following:

- The Methodist Church of Benin
- The Methodist Church, Brazil
- The Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas
- The Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire
- The Methodist Church in Fiji
- The Methodist Church The Gambia
- The Methodist Church, Ghana

The Methodist Church, Hong Kong  
 The Methodist Church in Kenya  
 The Korean Methodist Church  
 The Methodist Church, Upper Myanmar  
 The Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Hahi Weteriana O Aotearoa  
 The Methodist Church, Nigeria  
 The Evangelical Methodist Church, Portugal  
 The Methodist Church in Samoa  
 The Methodist Church, Sierra Leone  
 The Methodist Church of Southern Africa  
 The Methodist Church, Sri Lanka  
 The Methodist Church of Togo  
 The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga  
 The United Methodist Church  
 The Evangelical Methodist Church in Uruguay  
 The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

**003 Church Courts and Jurisdictions.** In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (i) *[deleted]*
- (ii) *[deleted]*
- (iii) 'overseas Districts' and 'overseas station', have the meanings assigned to them by clause 1(xxv) of the Deed of Union and 'the overseas Districts', 'overseas Synods', 'overseas Synod' and 'overseas work' have corresponding meanings;

In 2009, the last existing overseas District of the Methodist Church was granted autonomy as The Methodist Church The Gambia; there are therefore now no overseas Districts.

- (iv) *[deleted]*
- (v) *[deleted]*
- (vi) 'the Island Districts' means the Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Shetland Districts;
- (vii) 'Local Church' means (subject to the provisions of Standing Orders 605A, 612 and 942) the whole body of members of the Methodist Church connected with and attending one particular place of worship, and the word 'church' is sometimes used in the same sense;
- (viii) 'local', in connection with church courts or with officers other than local preachers, means relating to a Local Church;
- (ix) 'Pastoral Committee', in relation to a Local Church, includes where appropriate the meeting or committee having under the provisions of Standing Order 644(11) the responsibilities of a Pastoral Committee.

**004 Officers and Members.** In these Standing Orders:

- (i) 'the President' means the President of the Conference unless some other body or institution is indicated;
- (ii) 'the Chair' means the Chair of the relevant District unless some other body or institution is indicated;
- (iii) 'the Superintendent' means the Superintendent presbyter of the relevant Circuit unless some other body or institution is indicated;
- (iv) 'member' and 'members', refer to membership of the Methodist Church unless some other body or institution is indicated, and 'membership' has a corresponding meaning;
- (v) references to membership in a District or Circuit refer to membership in a Local Church within that District or Circuit;
- (vi) 'the ex-President' means the person who last held the office of President and 'the ex-Vice-President' and 'the ex-Secretary' have corresponding meanings, but 'an ex-President', 'ex-Presidents', 'the ex-Presidents' and corresponding expressions refer to any or all, as the case may be, of the persons who have formerly held the office in question;
- (vii) 'the President-designate' means the person who has been designated in accordance with the Deed of Union to be the President in the next ensuing year and 'Vice-President-designate' has a corresponding meaning;
- (viii) *[deleted]*
- (ix) 'Connexional Secretary' means [...] **the** Connexional Secretary appointed as such in accordance with Standing Order **383**.
- (x) 'local lay-pastor' means a person appointed and authored by licence to exercise that office in accordance with the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders.

As to (vi) and (vii) see cls. 26 and 27 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 114.

**005 Presbyters and Deacons.** In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (i) 'presbyter in Full Connexion' means a presbyter of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion, and 'deacon in Full Connexion' has a corresponding meaning;
- (ii) 'student minister', or 'student' in relation to training for presbyteral or diaconal ministry, means a person who has been accepted by the Conference as a candidate for such ministry and is undergoing training but is not a probationer, and 'student presbyter' and 'student deacon' or 'student' have corresponding meanings;
- (iii) *[deleted]*
- (iv) to 'appoint' when used in relation to the action of the Conference means to assign a minister (presbyter or deacon) or probationer to fulfil ministerial duty in a particular Circuit or other station within the control of the Church;

- (v) 'circuit presbyters' means the presbyters in the active work who are appointed to a Circuit to discharge the responsibilities specified in Standing Order 520, being those whose names appear under the heading of a Circuit in the stations in accordance with sub-clause (4)(a) of Standing Order 785 as the Superintendent or among the ministers in category (i) of that sub-clause;
- (vA) 'circuit deacons' means deacons who are appointed to exercise diaconal ministry in a Circuit, being the deacons in the active work whose names appear, in accordance with sub-clause (4)(a) of Standing Order 785, under the heading of a Circuit in the stations appointed by the Conference in category (i) of that sub-clause;
- (vi) the circuit ministers (presbyters and deacons) of a Circuit, and the probationers assigned to fulfil ministerial duty in circuit work in that Circuit whose names also appear in the stations in the category referred to in heads (v) and (vA) above, are referred to as being 'appointed to' that Circuit;
- (viA) 'ministry deployment figure', in relation to a District, has the meaning appearing from Standing Order 785(6);
- (vii) the ministers and probationers appointed to a Circuit, together with any other ministers or probationers whose names appear under the heading of that Circuit in the stations and who are not merely residing in the Circuit for the purposes of the stations under the provisions of Standing Order 785(8)(c) or (d), are referred to as being 'stationed in' that Circuit;
- (viii) 'the ministry' means the body of persons defined in the Deed of Union as ministers, or the office and work of such persons, and 'ministerial' has a corresponding meaning, but 'ministry' normally has a broader meaning, to include, where the context so requires, the ministry exercised by lay people in the Church;
- (ix) 'the diaconate', when used in relation to the Methodist Church, means the body of persons defined in the Deed of Union as deacons, or the office and work of such persons, and 'diaconal' has a corresponding meaning;
- (x) 'the presbyterate', when used in relation to the Methodist Church, means the body of persons defined in the Deed of Union as presbyters, or the office and work of such persons, and 'presbyteral' has a corresponding meaning.

The definitions of 'presbyter in Full Connexion' and 'deacon in Full Connexion' should be read in conjunction with those of 'presbyter', 'deacon' and 'admitted into Full Connexion' in the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1). Note that 'presbyter' or 'deacon' does not include 'probationer'. See further the note to S.O. 002(1) above.

For the definition of 'minister', with effect from 2012, see cl. 1(xix) of the Deed of Union.

Note that persons 'recognised and regarded' under clauses 43(b), 44(b), 45 and 45A of the Deed of Union are 'presbyters', or 'deacons', but not 'presbyters in Full Connexion' or 'deacons in Full Connexion' as those expressions are employed in these Standing Orders.

As to the arrangement of names in the stations see also S.O. 785(4).

As to presbyters, deacons and probationers residing in a Circuit see S.O. 785(8), 774(10) and 775(3).

**006 Property.** (1) In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions have the meanings assigned to them by section 2(1) of the 1976 Act or paragraph 1 of the Model Trusts:

- (i) 'church property';
- (ii) 'land';
- (iii) 'model trust property';
- (iv) 'property';
- (v) 'trust instrument';
- (vi) 'circuit property';
- (viA) 'conference property';
- (viB) 'conference trustees';
- (vii) 'connexional property';
- (viii) 'connexional trustees';
- (ix) 'district property';
- (x) 'district trustees';
- (xi) 'general property';
- (xii) 'local property';
- (xiii) 'place of worship';
- (xiiiA) *[deleted]*
- (xiv) 'purposes of the Church'.

For (i)–(v) see Vol. 1, pp. 5-8 and for (vi)–(xiv) Book II, Part 2, noting in particular, with regard to (viA) to (viii) the resolutions adopted by the Conference in 2024, as set out in the note to paragraph 1 of the Model Trusts.

Note that the definition of 'land' incorporated by this reference includes, in particular, buildings.

(2) In these Standing Orders 'chapel' has the same meaning as 'place of worship', as defined in clause (1) above.

(2A) In these Standing Orders 'Property Secretary' or 'connexional Property Secretary' means the person appointed in accordance with Standing Order **204(4)** to fulfil the duties assigned in the Model Trusts to the Property Secretary or to the General Secretary of the board of the Property Division, and in any particular Standing Order includes also any other person authorised by the [...] **Connexional** Council to exercise or fulfil the powers, functions or responsibilities of the Property Secretary under that Standing Order.

(3) (a) In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires, the expressions 'trustees' and 'managing trustees' have, in relation to model trust property, the meanings assigned to them by paragraph 1 of the Model Trusts, but in relation to other property both expressions mean all the persons in or among whom the title to and general powers of management of the property in question are for the time being vested or distributed.

(b) In these Standing Orders, in relation to model trust property, unless the context otherwise requires, 'custodian trustees' means in relation to property in Great Britain the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, in relation to property in the Isle of Man the Trustees for Manx Methodist Church Purposes, in relation to property in the Island of Jersey the Trustees for Jersey Methodist Church Purposes and in relation to property

in the Bailiwick of Guernsey the Trustees for the Bailiwick of Guernsey Methodist Church Purposes. For the purposes of this sub-clause property other than land is situated in the territory where the managing trustees of the property meet, except that any general property is situated in the territory specified for this purpose in writing by the Property Secretary.

For the definitions referred to in (a) see Book II, Part 2.

The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes were incorporated by s. 3 of the Methodist Church Act 1939 (Vol. 1, p. 27) and their constitution and powers are prescribed by the Act. In particular they are empowered to receive and hold as trustees or custodian trustees any real or personal property for any purposes connected with the Methodist Church or any of its component bodies or organisations (s. 10). They are the custodian trustees of all model trust property (1976 Act, ss. 9–17, Vol. 1, pp. 10-17), except in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

For the Property Secretary see clause (2A) above.

(4) In these Standing Orders, in relation to model trust property, unless the context otherwise requires, 'capital' means any property deemed to be capital for the purposes of the administration of the Model Trusts, 'capital money' has a corresponding meaning and 'income' means any property deemed to be income for those purposes.

See S.O. 915.

(5) In these Standing Orders:

- (i) in relation to land in England and Wales 'listed building' has the meaning given by section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and in relation to land outside England and Wales it means any building or structure listed, or otherwise identified, and protected as being of architectural or historic interest under legislation corresponding to that Act;
- (ii) in relation to land in England and Wales 'conservation area' means an area for the time being designated under section 69 of the said Act, and in relation to land outside England and Wales it means any area designated, or otherwise identified, and protected under legislation corresponding to that section.

**007 Other Terms.** In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (i) 'connexional year' means a year beginning on the 1st September and 'year' means a connexional year unless a calendar year or some other year is indicated;
- (ii) (a) 'training institution' means a college or other body, whether or not wholly Methodist, at which training for lay people or ministers is carried on in connection with the Methodist Church;
- (b) 'theological college' means a college, whether or not wholly Methodist, at which ministerial training is carried on in connection with the Methodist Church;
- (c) *[deleted]*
- (d) 'oversight tutor' means an office-holder who is a member of the Methodist Church appointed by the Conference to have responsibility on behalf of the relevant oversight committees for the formation, discipline and pastoral care of student ministers,

and to carry out the specific duties prescribed elsewhere in Standing Orders.

- (iii) 'the Daily Record' means the record of the proceedings of the Conference prescribed by Standing Order 123;
- (iv) 'the Minutes of Conference', or sometimes 'the Minutes', means the book described in Standing Order 124(1);
- (v) 'Action for Children' means the charitable company of that name originally incorporated on the 14th May 2003;

As to Action for Children see S.O. 282. The charity (founded in 1869, and known over the years by various names, most recently 'NCH') was previously regulated by a Scheme made in 1932 by the then Charity Commissioners, the property being held by a body of trustees. It was incorporated as a charitable company on the date referred to above and the assets were transferred to the company with effect from 1st April 2004. The change from 'NCH' to the current name took effect on 11th September 2008.

- (vi) 'the Connexional Team' or 'the Team' has the meaning appearing from Standing Order **380**.

**008 General Provisions.** In these Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (i) the singular includes the plural and vice versa;
- (ii) masculine words and expressions include the feminine and vice versa;
- (iii) *[deleted]*
- (iv) reference to 'Parts' and 'Sections' by number or to 'this Part' or 'this Section' are to the Parts and Sections so identified of these Standing Orders;
- (ivA) references to a 'meeting' have the meaning given in Standing Order 019B;
- (v) references to a motion or resolution carried by a majority expressed as a fraction or percentage of those present and entitled to vote or of those present and voting are to a motion or resolution carried by the votes of that fraction or percentage or more of those present and entitled to vote or of those present and voting, as the case may be;
- (vi) references to persons 'present and voting' exclude those not voting for or against, whether or not they are required to be or are enumerated and recorded as 'neutrals';
- (viA) references to a majority of any kind, without further qualification, are to be read as references to a majority of that kind of those present and voting, understood as in (v) and (vi) above;
- (vii) *[deleted]*
- (viii) in Standing Orders prescribing the purposes, responsibilities or functions of any church fund, body or court 'ecumenical work', and other expressions in which 'ecumenical' is used to describe any activity, include any charitable work or other charitable activity carried on in partnership or co-operation with one or more other Christian churches or bodies, but in such ways only as not to involve any conflict with the advancement of the Christian faith in accordance with the doctrinal standards and discipline of the Methodist Church, and 'ecumenically'

in relation to the carrying on of any such work or activity has a corresponding meaning.

**009 Saving.** The provisions of this Section are subject to and shall pro tanto be displaced by any contrary express provision applicable to any particular Standing Order or Orders or to any part of a Standing Order.



## Section 01 General Provisions

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**010 Qualification for Appointment.** (1) No person shall be appointed to office in the Church who teaches doctrines contrary to those of the Church, or who holds doctrines likely to injure the peace and welfare of the Church.

For the doctrinal standards of the Church see cl. 4 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part I).

(2) Subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (or any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force and any regulations or orders made or having effect thereunder)

- (i) no person who has been convicted of or has received a simple or conditional caution from the police concerning an offence mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (as amended) or who is barred by the Disclosure and Barring Service from work with children, young people or vulnerable adults or who the Safeguarding Committee concludes otherwise poses a risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults shall undertake work with children, young people or vulnerable adults in the life of the Church;

- (ii) no person who has been convicted of or has received a simple or conditional caution from the police concerning an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or mentioned in Schedule 15 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003 or who is barred by the Disclosure and Barring Service from work with children, young people or vulnerable adults or who is the subject of a risk assessment under Standing Order 235 as a result of which the Safeguarding Committee concludes that he or she presents a significant risk of serious harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults shall be appointed or reappointed to any office, post or responsibility or engaged or re-engaged under any contract to which this sub-clause applies unless authority for the appointment or employment has been obtained under clause (5) below.

See also S.O. 1101(1)(i)(b).

(3) Sub-clause (ii) of clause (2) above shall apply to:

- (i) *[deleted]*
- (ii) *[deleted]*
- (iii) first appointment to a station as a presbyteral or diaconal probationer or, if no such appointment has been made, admission into Full Connexion as a presbyter or deacon;
- (iv) first appointment to a station as a presbyter or deacon recognised and regarded as such under the Deed of Union or first entry upon the stations as a person authorised by the Conference to serve as a presbyter or deacon;
- (ivA) first appointment to undertake specific acts of ministry under permission given by the Conference to a person granted the status of associate presbyter or deacon;
- (v) re-admission into Full Connexion as a presbyter or deacon;
- (vA) any appointment or re-appointment to the office of local lay-pastor under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders;
- (vi) any other appointment or re-appointment to any office, post or responsibility or any engagement or re-engagement under a contract of service or for services which is at the date of appointment, re-appointment, engagement or re-engagement specified for this purpose by the [...] **Connexional** Council, either generally by reference to categories or by a ruling in the particular case.

The Conference of 1999 directed that the appointments and engagements specified under this head by the Methodist Council, together with any rulings made in particular cases, should be published in Book VI below. See Part 1 of that book. See Part 1 also for the directions requiring criminal record disclosures. The Conference of 2024, consequent upon the replacement of the Methodist Council by the Connexional Council from 1 September 2024 in relation to these functions, adopted the resolution printed in Book VI, Part 1, below so as to continue in force the current rulings and power to make directions, pending any further actions taken by the Connexional Council.

See also S.O. 1101(1)(i)(b).

(4) Clause (2) above shall have effect in relation to persons in any jurisdiction within the home Districts other than England and Wales as if, in any such jurisdiction in which any of the legislative provisions there mentioned does not have effect, there were substituted a reference to the legislation, if any, of similar substance in force in

that jurisdiction from time to time and as if the reference to the Disclosure and Barring Service were a reference to the body in that jurisdiction, if any, with a comparable power of barring persons from work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

- (5) (a) If a church court or other appointing body wishes
- (i) to grant permission to undertake work with children, young people or vulnerable adults in the life of the Church to a person who is not prevented from undertaking such work by legislation but, in the absence of authority under this clause, is disqualified from undertaking such work by virtue of clause (2)(i) above; or
  - (ii) to appoint to an office, post or responsibility a person who is not prevented from holding such office, post or responsibility by legislation but, in the absence of authority under this clause, is disqualified from holding it by virtue of clauses (2) and (3) above,

the secretary or convener of the body concerned may request the Secretary of the Conference to refer the proposed permission or appointment to the safeguarding officer as defined in Standing Order **230(3)(ii)**. Any such request shall be accompanied by a written statement of the reasons for which it is made.

(b) On receiving such a request, the Secretary of the Conference shall refer it to the safeguarding officer, who shall arrange for the determination of the reference by the Safeguarding Committee in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order **230**. If following the reference an authorisation to permit or appoint is given, the body concerned may, but need not, proceed to grant the permission or make the appointment notwithstanding the provisions of sub-clause (2)(i) or (as the case may be) (ii) above.

(c) No such authorisation shall be given unless the nominated members of the Safeguarding Committee are satisfied that:

- (i) the circumstances are exceptional; and
- (ii) the granting of the permission or making of the appointment will not expose children, young people or vulnerable adults to the risk of harm.

(d) If an employing body wishes to engage under a contract a person who is not prevented from holding such office, post or responsibility by legislation but, in the absence of authority under this clause, is disqualified from being so engaged by virtue of clauses (2) and (3) above, the secretary of that body may request the Secretary of the Conference to refer the proposed contract to the Safeguarding Committee and the procedure set out in sub-clauses (a) and (b) above shall be followed. No authorisation to employ shall be given unless the nominated members of the Safeguarding Committee are satisfied as set out in clause (c)(i) above and that the entry into the contract will not expose children, young people or vulnerable adults to the risk of harm.

(6) (a) Subject to paragraph (b) below, a minister or a person holding any other office, post or responsibility or engaged under any contract to which sub-clause (ii) of clause (2) above applies who acquires a conviction or who receives a simple or conditional caution from the police of a kind specified in that sub-clause subsequent to being appointed to the office, post or responsibility or engaged under the relevant contract shall cease to exercise any of the duties of a minister or of a person holding that office,

post or responsibility or engaged under that contract unless authorised to do so under clause (7).

(b) In relation to a person employed under a contract of employment, paragraph (a) above has effect only so far as is consistent with the terms of that contract and employment legislation.

(c) Any person to whom paragraph (a) above applies must inform the responsible officer for the purposes of Standing Order 013 (if a person holding an office, post or responsibility) or his or her employer (if a person engaged under a contract of employment) of the fact of the conviction or caution as soon as is reasonably possible after it is acquired or received.

(d) Nothing in this sub-clause (6) prevents the exercise of the power to suspend contained in Standing Order 013.

- (7) If: (i) a church court or other body wishes to obtain authority for a minister or other person falling within clause (6) above to continue to exercise any of his or her duties; or
- (ii) such a minister or other person wishes to obtain such authority; the secretary or convener of the church court or other body or that minister or other person (as the case may be) may request the Secretary of the Conference to refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee and the provisions of clause (5) above shall apply with any necessary changes.

(8) The provisions of clauses (6) and (7) above shall cease to have effect if as a result of a conviction or caution by virtue of which clause (6) applies to a minister or other person a complaint within the meaning of Standing Order 1101 has been made against that minister or other person or the matter has been referred to the connexional Complaints Panel under Standing Order 1121(14) and the responsible person has exercised the power of suspension given by Standing Order 1105.

**010A Baptism.** (1) Except in an emergency, baptism shall be administered only after instruction has been given to the candidate or to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a candidate who is a young child.

(2) Normally baptism shall be administered by a presbyter, or by a presbyteral probationer appointed to the Circuit, or a person authorised to serve as a presbyter who is appointed to fulfil presbyteral duties in the Circuit under Standing Order 733, or a person granted the status of associate presbyter who is permitted to undertake such an act of ministry in the particular local church concerned under Standing Order 733A. However, where local considerations so require, it may be administered, with the approval of the Superintendent, by a deacon or diaconal probationer appointed (in either case) to the Circuit, or by a person authorised to serve as a deacon who is appointed to fulfil diaconal duties in the Circuit under Standing Order 733, or a person granted the status of associate deacon who is permitted to undertake such an act of ministry in the particular local church concerned under Standing Order 733A, or by a local preacher. In an emergency baptism may be administered by any person.

(3) Normally baptism shall be administered at a service of public worship, but in exceptional circumstances, such as prolonged or serious illness, baptism may take place at another time, if possible in the presence of members of the Local Church. In these circumstances, where a candidate is able to answer for himself or herself, the person who is to administer baptism shall be satisfied as to the candidate's repentance, faith and desire for baptism.

(4) Subject to clause (6) below, at every baptism the following words shall be said when water is poured on the candidate or the candidate is dipped in water:

N, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(5) It is contrary to the principles and usage of the Methodist Church to confer what purports to be baptism on any person known to have been already baptized at any time.

(6) If it is uncertain whether a candidate has already been baptized, the following words shall be said when water is poured on the candidate or the candidate is dipped in water:

N, if you are not already baptized, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

These provisions are supplemental to that in cl. 6 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1), which provides that baptism is by Methodist usage administered to infants and that there should be regular oversight of those who have been baptized.

**010B Wine at the Lord's Supper.** (1) In accordance with Standing Order 922(1) and subject to clauses (2) and (3) below, on Methodist premises and in services held elsewhere in the name of the Methodist Church in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the wine used shall be non-alcoholic.

S.O. 010B was adopted by the Conference in 2023 as a new Standing Order to cover the use of alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper. This S.O. 010B(1) incorporates what was formerly contained in S.O. 922(2).

(2) Standing Order 922(1) and clause (1) above shall not preclude the use of alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper by a non-Methodist congregation worshipping according to its own traditions on Methodist premises or in regular acts of ecumenical worship on those premises, provided that:

- (i) such use is not contrary to any sharing agreement that may apply;
- (ii) such use is authorised by the trustees and permitted by the rules that apply to that congregation; and
- (iii) when a Methodist presbyter or other person authorised by the Conference under Standing Order 011 presides that presbyter or other authorised person consents.

S.O. 010B(2) incorporates what was formerly contained in S.O. 922(4) (with adaptations) and is designed primarily to deal with the situation of a non-Methodist congregation worshipping on Methodist premises without the benefit of a formal sharing agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969. Where, however, such a sharing agreement exists, the rule is that the provisions of that Act and the agreement prevail in the case of a conflict with the provisions in the Model Trusts and these Standing Orders. This rule applies both where, as would be more usual, the Act or sharing agreement permits activities which would otherwise be forbidden and where (as the wording of the clause makes explicit) it forbids activities otherwise permitted by the clause.

For the meaning of the term 'ecumenical' see S.O. 008(viii).

(3) Clause (1) above shall not preclude the use of alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper when a Methodist presbyter or other person authorised by the Conference under Standing Order 011 presides, and where:

- (i) such use is for a congregation of another denomination or in an ecumenical act of worship;
- (ii) such use does not take place on Methodist premises; and
- (iii) the presbyter or other authorised person consents.

For the meaning of the term 'ecumenical' see S.O. 008(viii)

(4) In all cases where a Methodist congregation regularly shares in the Lord's Supper in an ecumenical act of worship or a Methodist presbyter or other person authorised by the Conference under Standing Order 011 is regularly invited to preside at such a service, non-alcoholic wine shall also be available.

For the meaning of the term 'ecumenical' see S.O. 008(viii)

**011 Authorisations to Preside at the Lord's Supper.** (1) A Circuit which considers that it is deprived of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper because it cannot meet a sustained need for the celebration of that sacrament with the presbyters available may apply for the authorisation of persons other than presbyters to preside at that sacrament when appointed to do so on the circuit plan, or on other occasions when authorised by the Superintendent.

(2) (a) Subject to clauses (4) and (5)(a) below all such applications, with reasons for making them and the consent of the nominee, shall be submitted by the Circuit Meeting for consideration by the district Policy Committee. The Superintendent of any Circuit making an application may attend the committee while that application is under consideration.

(b) Persons nominated for authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper shall be members in the Circuit or presbyteral probationers appointed or expected to be appointed to it. The district Policy Committee shall be provided with information as to the suitability of all persons so nominated, and shall make its recommendations to the Synod. Such information shall be provided by the Circuit Meeting in the case of members in the Circuit and by the appropriate Oversight Committee in the case of presbyteral probationers.

(3) All such applications shall be sent, with the recommendations of the district Policy Committee and the comments of the Synod thereon, to the convener of an Authorisations Committee appointed for the purpose by the **[...] Conference on the nomination of the Ministries Committee**, and the Authorisations Committee shall report with its recommendations directly to the Conference, which shall grant such authorisations as it thinks fit, to take effect from the beginning of the next connexional year. Appeals against the committee's recommendations shall be heard by a further committee appointed for the purpose from among the members of the next Conference by the **[...] Ministries Committee**. The report of the appeals committee shall be presented together with the general report of the Authorisations Committee.

For the criteria applied by the Authorisations Committee see Book VI, Part 3.

(4) If an additional appointment of a presbyteral probationer to a Circuit is proposed, or if circumstances arise which require a member in a Circuit to be nominated, at a date when it is no longer practicable to complete the procedure prescribed by clause (2) above an application may be made by the Circuit Meeting (or if it cannot be called in time by the Superintendent and circuit stewards) directly to the Authorisations Committee. The criterion in clause (1) above and the requirements of clause (2)(a) above as to the provision of reasons and consent shall apply and information as to the nominee shall be provided to the committee by the appropriate person under clause (2)(b) above.

(5) (a) The authorisation shall be renewable annually. If the district Policy Committee is satisfied that the person authorised remains suitable and the circumstances of the Circuit have not changed, it may on the application of the Circuit Meeting recommend a renewal of the authorisation for a second or third year, and the Authorisations Committee shall support any such recommendation without further investigation. If renewal is sought beyond the initial period of three years the procedures set out in clauses (2) and (3) above shall be followed in full. No person may hold an authorisation for a continuous period in excess of six years.

(b) Once granted, an authorisation shall cease to be exercisable by the person authorised on cessation of membership or of the status of presbyteral probationer, as the case may be, or on removal from the Circuit.

The Conference of 2023 directed that, in any individual case, any period of authorisation prior to 1 September 2023 shall be disregarded for the purposes of determining the six-year period in S.O. 011(5).

(6) Persons so authorised shall, unless already instructed in presidency at the Lord's Supper, be so instructed by the Chair or by a presbyter appointed by him or her, the forms of service authorised by the Conference being used as a basis of instruction.

(7) In emergencies arising after the meeting of the Conference by the death of a presbyter or otherwise, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf may grant an authorisation having immediate effect and continuing until the 31st August following the next meeting of the Conference.

**011A Marriage.** (1) The Methodist Church understands that marriage is given by God to be a particular channel of God's grace, and that it is in accord with God's purposes when a marriage is a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of two people who freely enter it. Within the Methodist Church this is understood in two ways: that marriage can only be between a man and a woman; that marriage can be between any two people. The Methodist Church affirms both understandings and makes provision in its Standing Orders for them.

(2) The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship or elsewhere.

See also *Guidance for the Methodist Church regarding Marriage and Relationships*, at Book VII C, Part 8 below.

S.O. 011A was amended in 2021 and much of its previous text incorporated with additional provisions into a new S.O. 011B following the Conference vote on the provisional resolutions of 2019 relating to the Church's understanding of marriage. See report to the Conference in 2019: *God in Love Unites Us* and report to the Conference in 2021: *Marriage and Relationships: Provisional Resolutions*.

**011B Divorce, Remarriage, Marriage of Same-Sex Couples and Respect for Conscience.** (1) Divorce does not of itself prevent a person being married in any Methodist place of worship or by Methodist ministers, probationers or members.

(2) Under no circumstances does the Conference require any person who is subject to the discipline of the Church as a minister, probationer, officer or member to officiate at or participate in the marriage of a particular couple, should it be contrary to the dictates of his or her conscience to do so.

(3) When:

- (i) a minister or probationer is stationed in a new appointment; or
- (ii) it is proposed that a member should become authorised to conduct marriages and he or she for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the marriages of couples in particular circumstances, the person concerned shall participate in a pastoral conversation on the matter with the District Chair and the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit (if he or she is not the Superintendent). Every effort shall be made to ensure that no individual is placed under any pressure to act against the dictates of conscience.

(4) Whether or not the law of the relevant jurisdiction requires that Methodist premises must be registered for same-sex marriages before such marriages can take place, no same-sex marriage may take place on Methodist premises unless the managing trustees or, if none, the trustees, have approved the use of the premises for that purpose and taken any steps which may be necessary under the applicable law.

(5) A minister, probationer or member who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a mixed-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) or elsewhere but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.

(6) A minister, probationer or member who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a same-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) or elsewhere but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall notify the District Chair, who shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.

(7) A couple who seek to be married in Methodist premises which are not appropriately registered for the purpose shall be referred, if registration is required, to the person responsible for the conduct of marriages at premises which are so registered, preferably in the same circuit. If the person receiving the request is not willing for reasons of conscience to make such a reference, he or she shall so inform the District Chair, who shall make the reference in that person's place.

(8) The managing trustees or, if none, the trustees of any Methodist premises which are registered for the solemnisation of the marriage of same-sex couples shall ensure that the District Chair is notified of such registration.

(9) The Methodist Church opposes discrimination on the basis of sexuality, gender or race. Accordingly, if a couple is seeking to be married in a Methodist place of worship or



elsewhere no objection to the performance by a particular minister, probationer, officer or member of any duty in respect of their proposed marriage shall be entertained on such a ground. No minister, probationer, officer or member shall perform the relevant duty or duties in place of the other person concerned or otherwise assist the couple to make the objection effective.

S.O. 011B was inserted in 2021 following the Conference vote on the provisional resolutions of 2019 relating to the Church's understanding of marriage. See notes to S.O. 011A above.

**012 Accounts.** (1) Methodist money shall not be held in private accounts but in official bank accounts requiring the signatures of, or electronic authorisation by, two persons for withdrawals.

This amended provision is in accordance with the guidance on internet banking from the Charity Commission for England and Wales. In the absence of guidance for other jurisdictions it is considered that compliance with this published guidance is likely to constitute good practice in these jurisdictions also.

A guidance note prepared on the direction of the Conference on the safe use of internet banking can be found on the Methodist Church website.

(2) Accounts shall be kept of all money held at connexional, district, circuit or local church level including that of organisations at any such level. The accounting records shall include (i) entries showing from day to day all sums of money received and expended and the matters in respect of which the receipt and expenditure takes place, and (ii) a record of assets and liabilities. An annual statement of accounts complying with section 132 of the Charities Act 2011 shall be prepared, including either a statement of financial activities and balance sheet prepared on the accruals basis and notes to the accounts or (but only if it is permitted by law and the responsible body so resolves) a receipts and payments account and statement of assets and liabilities.

Detailed guidance as to accounts is integrated into the Standard Form of Accounts available from the Connexional Team.

(3) All such accounts shall be audited annually by an auditor in accordance with section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 or examined annually by an independent examiner in accordance with section 145 of that Act, as appropriate. The appointment of the auditor or examiner shall be made by the body specified in the Standing Order relating to the fund concerned or, if no body is so specified, by the body responsible for the fund. The auditor or independent examiner shall report to the appointing body and to its committee, if any, responsible for finance. The report shall comply with any applicable regulations and in particular shall state in writing that cash in the hands of treasurers and at the bank, and all investments, deposits and loans outstanding have been verified and that receipts and payments have been properly accounted for.

As to the appointment of auditors or examiners in specific cases see S.O. 636 (local funds) and 913(2), (3) (property funds).

(4) The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring that auditors or independent examiners, as appropriate, are appointed in respect of all funds under the jurisdiction of the Circuit Meeting or Church Councils in the Circuit and that they report after each audit or examination. The Chair is similarly responsible for funds under the jurisdiction of the Synod. If any report is unavailable or inadequate it shall be the responsibility of the Superintendent or Chair (as appropriate) to ensure that a report is presented to the next meeting of the relevant body.

(5) Any qualification in the auditor's report shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the audited accounts are presented.

As to local accounts see also S.O. 636 and as to accounts relating to model trust property S.O. 913.

(6) The appointing body under clause (3) above shall adopt and set out with its annual statement of accounts a reserves policy for each of its funds, and a policy for the management of any Advance Fund, in accordance with guidance provided by the Connexional Team. The initial adoption of, and any change in, every such policy requires the approval of the body designated for that purpose by the [...] **Connexional** Council.

**012A Duties of Treasurers.** (1) A treasurer of any Methodist fund is responsible for the oversight of the fund and of the assets representing it.

(2) Every such treasurer shall ensure that:

- (i) any relevant trusts are fulfilled;
- (ii) subject to (i), all lawful directions of the Conference are implemented;
- (iii) subject to (i) and (ii), the fund is raised and administered in accordance with the lawful instructions of the committee concerned;
- (iv) any relevant advice of the Charity Commission is taken into account;
- (v) Standing Order 012 is implemented.

(3) For these purposes a treasurer shall arrange for and participate in the preparation of budgets and the monitoring of income and expenditure, or shall ensure that adequate and effective systems are in operation for the discharge of those responsibilities by others.

(4) Every such treasurer shall at all times have access to and the right to call for all relevant information, books of account and records.

(5) In addition to any requirements in Standing Orders relating to particular cases the meeting, committee or other body responsible for the fund concerned may assign to a treasurer additional duties not in conflict with the responsibilities set out in clauses (2), (3) and (4) above.

(6) A treasurer shall report on all the above matters to the meeting, committee or other body concerned.

**013 Suspension.** (1) Subject to clauses (12) and (13) below, clauses (3) to (11) of this Standing Order regulate the exercise of office in the Church, including:

- (i) in the case of presbyters, deacons and probationers all powers, responsibilities and duties of any appointment to a station within the control of the Church, but not their status as presbyters, deacons or probationers;
- (ii) in the case of local preachers all responsibilities as such, and the right to attend Local Preachers' Meetings, but not their status as local preachers so named in the circuit plan;
- (iii) any exercise of any other lay office in the Church, except in so far as application of this Standing Order would involve a breach of a contract of employment;

- (iv) membership of any meeting or body constituting the managing trustees of any model trust property.
- (2) In this Standing Order:
- (i) 'office-holder' means a person exercising office in the Church within the meaning of clause (1) above;
  - (ii) subject to clauses (12) and (13) below 'the responsible officer', in relation to an office-holder, means, in the case of persons falling within clause (1)(i) above, the Chair or other person to whom Standing Order 1130(6)(b) or, as the case may be, (c) requires a copy of any charge brought under the provisions of Part 11 to be sent and, in the case of a lay person, the Superintendent of the Circuit in which that person is a member;
  - (iii) 'the Pastoral Committee' means a connexional Pastoral Committee consisting of three persons chosen from the connexional Panel by the convener responsible for Pastoral Committees, but not including that convener.

As to the connexional Panel see S.O. 290.

The term 'office-holder' includes, but is not limited to, a treasurer or steward.

(3) (a) If the responsible officer believes on reasonable grounds that an office-holder is incapable through mental illness or otherwise of duly exercising office, or is subject to an insolvency process as defined in sub-clause (c) below, or that a safeguarding issue has arisen, or that for the preservation of good order in the Church the office-holder should on some other ground be suspended under this Standing Order and if the office-holder does not resign, then the responsible officer may suspend that office-holder from the exercise of any or every office in the Church, or from particular functions, powers or responsibilities of any such office, and the responsible officer may, subject to clause (9) below, discharge, vary or extend any such suspension, as may seem to be required by any change of material circumstances.

(b) If Standing Order 1105 applies, any suspension on grounds within its scope must be imposed under it and may not be imposed or continued under this clause. Apart from that there is no limitation on the circumstances in which there may be a suspension under this clause, and in particular (for the avoidance of doubt) that may occur (i) if power to suspend under Standing Order 1105 does not yet exist, although it may arise later, and (ii) whether or not Section 04 or any Standing Order as to curtailment applies.

Standing Order 1105 makes provision for power of suspension in complaints and discipline procedures.

Section 04 deals with ministerial competence.

Curtailment procedures are covered by e.g. S.O. 544 for ministerial circuit appointments, S.O. 421(3) for District Chairs, S.O. 388 for certain connexional appointments, S.O. 754(1) for the Warden of the MDO, S.O. 723(2)(d) for probationers.

See also the Conference's resolution in 2024 as to the exercise of powers of suspension by responsible officers in relation to an office-holder's failure to obtain the required safeguarding disclosure (Book VI Part 1, Section 2).

- (c) An office-holder is subject to an insolvency process if:
- (i) a bankruptcy order has been made against him or her;
  - (ii) he or she has entered into an individual voluntary arrangement or otherwise compounded with creditors generally; or
  - (iii) a debt relief order has been made relating to him or her.

(d) Where the power given by sub-clause (a) above is exercised on the ground that a safeguarding issue has arisen, the responsible officer shall immediately refer the matter to the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order **230(3)(ii)**), who may offer advice or refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee for its advice, direction or recommendations.

(3A) Where the responsible officer exercises the powers given by clause (3) above and the Deed of Union and Standing Orders contain no provision for securing the continued exercise of some or all of the functions, powers and responsibilities to which the suspension relates, he or she must also make interim arrangements for such continued exercise, in consultation with those affected as far as is reasonably possible in the circumstances, and for that purpose may appoint a person to exercise any of the relevant functions, powers and responsibilities, other than those expressly given by the Deed of Union to the office-holder concerned, until the suspension is lifted or such interim arrangements otherwise cease to be necessary.

(4) Any two persons, being ministers or members, may request the responsible officer in writing to exercise his or her powers under clause (3) above and, if dissatisfied with the response, may refer the matter to the Pastoral Committee.

(4A) On a reference under clause (4) above the Pastoral Committee shall determine its own procedure, shall consider whether the office-holder should be informed of the hearing, and may impose any suspension within the scope of clause (3) above. If it does so clause (3A) above shall apply to the Committee as it does to a responsible officer in like case.

(5) The office-holder may appeal to the Pastoral Committee against any suspension by the responsible officer under clause (3) above and against any suspension imposed by a Pastoral Committee under clause (4A) above.

(6) On an appeal under clause (5) above or an application by anyone other than the office-holder to the Pastoral Committee under clauses 8(ii) and (9) below the committee shall ensure that the office-holder is informed of, and has an adequate opportunity to deal with, the reasons why suspension is requested, has been imposed or is sought to be varied or extended, and the facts relied upon in support of those reasons, and subject to that shall determine its own procedure. It may discharge, vary or extend any suspension already imposed and may itself impose any suspension within the scope of clause (3) above. If it imposes or extends a suspension clause (3A) above shall apply to the committee as it does to a responsible officer in like case.

(7) (a) Where an office is held by virtue of an election or appointment (including the stations) for a finite period not exceeding one year, the maximum term of any suspension imposed under this Standing Order, including any extension, shall be until

the expiration of the period of office arising from the latest election or appointment made before, at or not more than three months after the beginning of the suspension.

(b) Where sub-clause (a) above does not apply the maximum term shall be one year.

(8) Save as provided in clause (5) above there shall be no appeal from a decision of the Pastoral Committee under this Standing Order, but without prejudice to:

- (i) fresh recourse to the procedures of this Standing Order on the basis of facts not previously existing or not previously known;
- (ii) the right to apply for the discharge, variation or extension of any subsisting suspension on the ground of change of material circumstances.

(9) Any application under clause (8)(ii) above shall be made to the responsible officer unless another reference, appeal or application to the Pastoral Committee under clause (4) or (5) above or this clause is already pending or has been dealt with, in which case it shall be made to the Pastoral Committee. Application may be by the office-holder or by any two persons, being ministers or members, or (if to the Pastoral Committee) by the responsible officer. The office-holder or the applicants may appeal to the Pastoral Committee against any decision of the responsible officer on such an application.

(10) The Pastoral Committee may be differently constituted on different references, applications or appeals, and there shall be no common members of a Committee who imposed a suspension under clause (4A) above and any Committee considering an appeal against that suspension.

(11) When a minister or probationer is suspended under this Standing Order the Circuit or other body responsible shall continue to provide his or her stipend and shall also reimburse the minister or probationer for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during suspension, until the suspension ceases, and he or she shall for the same period be entitled to continue residing in the manse or other accommodation provided. Any Circuit or other body making any payment or providing any accommodation under this clause may apply for a discretionary payment under Standing Order **376(6), including for reimbursement of the costs of supplying ministry in place of the suspended minister or probationer.**

(12) In their application to the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Secretary-Elect of the Conference and to Chairs of Districts clauses (1) to (11) above shall apply with the following modifications:

- (i) 'the responsible officer' shall have the meaning given in Standing Order 013A(3);
- (ii) in relation to the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference the functions of the Pastoral Committee shall be discharged by a [...] **review group of three persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel.**

(13) In their application to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order clauses (1) to (11) above shall apply with the following modifications:

- (i) 'the responsible officer' shall be the President;

- (ii) in clause (3)(a), substitute for the words 'then the responsible officer may' to the end of the clause the following: 'then the responsible officer shall refer the matter to the Pastoral Committee and may, pending the determination of the issue, suspend the Warden from the exercise of any or every office in the Church, or from particular functions, powers or responsibilities of any such office.';
- (iii) in clause (6), for 'clause (4)' read 'clause (3) or (4)';
- (iv) in clause (9), for 'clause (4) or (5)' read 'clause (3), (4) or (5)'.

**013A Incapacity and Unfitness of Senior Officers** (1) For the purposes of clause 31(c) of the Deed of Union:

- (i) any issue whether the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference is incapable of acting or unfit to act on grounds not apt to be the subject of a charge within Part 11 shall be determined by **[...] a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel, the group being called** in this clause [...] 'the committee';
  - (ii) if the responsible officer believes that the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference is so incapable or unfit **[...] the officer** shall refer the matter to the committee;
  - (iii) any two persons, being ministers or members, may request the responsible officer in writing to exercise **[...] the powers [...] given by** (ii) above and, if dissatisfied with the response, may refer the matter to the committee;
  - (iv) the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect may appeal **[...] against any [...] finding** by the committee **[...] of incapacity or unfitness to act. The appeal shall be dealt with by a group of at least three persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel, being persons who were not involved in the determination under head (i) above;**
  - (v) on any reference or appeal under (ii), (iii) or (iv) above the committee or the **[...] appeal group constituted under (iv) above**, as the case may be, shall ensure that the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect, as the case may be, is informed of, and has an adequate opportunity to deal with, the reasons **[...] for the allegation of incapacity or unfitness to act**, and the facts relied upon in support of those reasons, and subject to that shall determine its own procedure, and on any such appeal the decision of the council shall be final;
  - (vi) *[deleted]*
  - (vii) the committee to fill a casual vacancy not otherwise filled shall be **[...] a group constituted as in head (i) above.**
- (2) For the purposes of clause 42(c) and (d) of the Deed of Union:
- (i) any issue whether a Chair is incapable of acting or unfit to act on grounds not apt to be the subject of a charge within Part 11 shall be

- determined by the Pastoral Committee, as defined in Standing Order 013(2)(iii);
- (ii) if the responsible officer believes that a Chair is so incapable or unfit [...] **the officer** shall refer the matter to the Pastoral Committee;
  - (iii) any two persons, being ministers or members, may request the responsible officer in writing to exercise [...] **the powers [...] given by** (ii) above and if dissatisfied with the response, may refer the matter to the Pastoral Committee;
  - (iv) on any reference to the Pastoral Committee under (ii) or (iii) above it shall ensure that the Chair is informed of, and has an adequate opportunity to deal with, the reasons [...] **for the allegation of incapacity or unfitness to act**, and the facts relied upon in support of those reasons, and subject to that shall determine its own procedure and its decision shall be final.

(3) For the purposes of clauses (1) and (2) above ‘the responsible officer’ in relation to the Vice-President, Secretary or Secretary-Elect of the Conference or a Chair means the President and in relation to the President means the Vice-President.

**013B Racism.** The Methodist Church believes that racism is a denial of the gospel.

See also S.O. 050.

**013C Safeguarding and the Exercise of Office.** (1) The Methodist Church believes that it has a particular responsibility to children, young people and vulnerable adults to take all reasonable steps to protect them from the risk of harm.

(2) In order to discharge that responsibility the Secretary of the Conference may, on a recommendation to that effect of the Safeguarding Committee made under Standing Order **230(4)(vi)**, give to any minister, local preacher or member a direction that he or she shall cease to exercise any or every office in the Church, or shall cease to exercise particular functions, powers or responsibilities of any such office, until such time (if any) as the direction may be withdrawn in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(3) A direction under clause (2) above shall be given in writing and shall be accompanied by a copy of the recommendation made by the Safeguarding Committee and any additional grounds on the basis of which the Secretary of the Conference has decided to accept the recommendation.

(4) The Secretary of the Conference shall not exercise the power given by clause (2) above if he or she believes that the matters relied on to support the recommendation could be addressed in accordance with Standing Order 013 (the general power to suspend) and Part 11 (the complaints and discipline process) without any increase in risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults.

(5) In the subsequent provisions of this Standing Order a “direction” means a direction given by the Secretary of the Conference under clause (2) above and a “directed person” means a person to whom a direction has been given.

(6) The directed person may appeal to the Pastoral Committee against any direction as if the direction were a suspension imposed by the responsible officer under clause (3) of Standing Order 013 and the provisions of clause (6) of that Standing Order shall apply accordingly, except that the powers of the Pastoral Committee shall be limited to withdrawing or maintaining the direction. The decision of the committee shall be communicated to the directed person in writing.

(7) There shall be no appeal from a decision of the Pastoral Committee under clause (6) above, but without prejudice to the right to apply subsequently for the withdrawal of the direction in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(8) Subject to clause (9) below, whether or not the directed person has appealed to the Pastoral Committee, he or she may apply to the Safeguarding Committee for a review of the recommendation on the basis of which the relevant direction was made. Any such review shall take the form of a complete reconsideration of the reasons for which the Safeguarding Committee concluded that a safeguarding risk existed in respect of the directed person and of any new material relevant to the question whether such a risk continues to exist, and the members of the committee conducting the review shall not have been involved in making the original recommendation or (unless a review could not otherwise take place) in conducting a previous review. On review the committee may decide to make the same recommendation as was previously made, to make a different recommendation or to make no recommendation. The decision of the committee, together with its reasons, shall be communicated to the directed person in writing.

(9) No application for review under clause (8) above may be made within a year of the date on which the relevant direction was made or of the date on which the Pastoral Committee dismissed any appeal brought under clause (6) above or clause (11) below, or within 3 years of the date on which the decision of the Safeguarding Committee on a previous application for review was notified to the directed person.

(10) If on review the Safeguarding Committee decides that the previous recommendation should be varied, it shall immediately so inform the Secretary of the Conference, who shall withdraw the existing direction but (subject to clause (3) above) may make a new direction in place of the existing direction if the committee so recommends.

(11) If on review the Safeguarding Committee decides that the previous recommendation should not be varied or that a different recommendation should be made, the directed person may appeal to the Pastoral Committee against the maintained direction or any new direction made by the Secretary of the Conference as if he or she were appealing against the original direction.

(12) When a direction is made against a minister under this Standing Order the Circuit or other body responsible shall continue to provide his or her stipend for the remainder of the connexional year or for the period of six months from the date of the direction or the dismissal of any appeal against the direction brought under clause (6) above, whichever is the shorter, and shall also reimburse the minister for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that period, and he or she shall for the



same period be entitled to continue residing in the manse or other accommodation provided. Thereafter he or she shall be treated as a minister without appointment under Standing Order 774 but the second part of clause (10) and the whole of clause (11) shall not apply.

(13) When a direction is made against a probationer under this Standing Order the Circuit or other body responsible shall continue to provide his or her stipend for the remainder of the connexional year or for the period of six months from the date of the direction or the dismissal of any appeal against the direction brought under clause (6) above, whichever is shorter, and shall also reimburse the probationer for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that period, and he or she shall for the same period be entitled to continue residing in the manse or other accommodation provided. Thereafter he or she shall be treated as if a connexional Review Committee had made a decision to accept a recommendation for discontinuance and no appeal had been brought against that decision.

(14) Any Circuit or other body making any payment or providing any accommodation under clause (12) or (13) above may apply for a discretionary payment under Standing Order **376(6)**.

**014 Gambling and other Activities.** (1) Subject to any specific resolution of the Conference it is not permissible in any circumstances to raise funds for Church purposes by any form of gambling which under Standing Order 924 could not be permitted on Methodist premises in use for any purpose within heads (b) to (o) of paragraph 13 of the Model Trusts.

(2) Entertainments and diversions forbidden on Methodist premises by Standing Orders 925 and 927 shall not be held elsewhere in the name of the Church and no entertainment inconsistent with Standing Order 927(1) may be arranged by any Methodist organisation.

(3) Activities relating to intoxicants and forbidden by Standing Order 922 clauses (1) to (3) on Methodist premises in use for any purpose within heads (b) to (o) of paragraph 13 of the Model Trusts shall not take place elsewhere as part of any publicly advertised event using the name of the Methodist Church unless:

- (i) the body authorising the use of the name of the Methodist Church has authority to do so and, having considered its social responsibility and the witness which will be given, has explicitly approved the activities in question, or
- (ii) the event is organised in conjunction with partners who are not governed by any similar restrictions, and (in either case)
- (iii) all public announcements of the event contain an explicit warning that intoxicants will be available, and
- (iv) suitable alternatives are provided.

**015 Archives.** (1) (a) All minute books, account books, and baptismal, burial and marriage registers, and any other records relating to district, circuit and local church affairs which are deemed worthy of permanent preservation by the district archivist

and recipient archivists, when no longer needed for current reference in the conduct of business, shall be deposited on permanent loan with a public authority having appropriate repository facilities.

(b) If any such records are kept in digital (electronic) format they shall not be so deposited in that format unless the depositing body has made, or has satisfied itself that the public authority accepting them has made, satisfactory arrangements to ensure that they permanently continue to remain accessible, that is to say recoverable in legible form. If that requirement cannot be met a printed version shall be deposited.

As to certain connexional records see S.O. 125.

As to district minutes see also S.O. 415.

As to the functions of the district archivist see S.O. 473.

(1A) Subject to Standing Order 125, connexional records no longer needed for current use and worthy of permanent preservation shall be deposited on similar terms in the connexional archives. In the process of deciding what records should be so deposited the managing trustees or other persons responsible for them shall obtain and take into account the advice of the liaison officer for Methodist archives.

As to the liaison officer for Methodist archives see S.O. 340(4)(a),

(2) The responsibility for supervising and arranging the deposit of records under this Standing Order shall rest with the responsible supervisor who shall be:

- (i) in relation to local church and circuit records, the church or circuit archivist, if appointed, failing whom the Superintendent;
- (ii) in relation to district records, the Chair; and
- (iii) in relation to connexional records, the relevant secretary or convener.

(2A) *[revoked]*

(3) Unless the deposited material has already been made public, and subject to clause (3A) below, there shall be a restriction on access of thirty years from the date of the last entry in the relevant document except where the responsible supervisor for the time being otherwise informs the depositee in writing, either on the occasion of the deposit or subsequently. Any variation may lengthen, shorten, remove or suspend the restriction otherwise applicable and may be general or relate to specific documents or categories of documents or to inspection by specific persons.

(3A) A restriction on access of seventy five years from the date of the last entry in the relevant document shall apply to records of a confidential nature, including correspondence, papers and machine-readable records containing personal details of a sensitive nature relating to individuals in respect of complaints, disciplinary procedures, interviews, invitations, stationing, pastoral matters, case-studies and assessment files, and the responsible supervisor shall inform the depositee accordingly in writing whenever such records are deposited.

(3B) For the avoidance of doubt records deposited before the 1st September 1994 shall be subject to the provisions of clauses (3) and (3A) above.

(3C) Records deposited on permanent loan may be removed temporarily for display purposes or for legal reasons provided that satisfactory arrangements are made for their safe custody.

(4) Nothing in this Standing Order derogates from the rights and duties of the owners of any records or of the managing trustees of any records which are model trust property, including their rights of access.

**016 Nominations.** Where provision is made in these Standing Orders for the nomination or proposal of a name or names by a committee or officer to an appointing or nominating body for appointment or nomination respectively by that body then in the absence of provision to the contrary members of that body may add other names before the vote takes place and unless some other procedure is specified may do so orally when the business is called.

This provision does not apply to nominations brought by the Nominations Committee (S.O. 220(7)).

**016A Single Transferable Vote.** (1) When the Conference or any other body is required by Standing Order to hold an election by single transferable vote or resolves to do so (as it may at any time unless Standing Orders require otherwise) it shall be done in accordance with this Standing Order provided that, where only two candidates are standing for election, the vote shall be by simple majority and the remainder of this Standing Order shall not apply.

Elections are required to be held by single transferable vote under S.O. 110A(6) (President and Vice-President) and S.O. 136(1A) (Conference Business Committee).

(1A) Voting shall be by paper ballot or an agreed electronic voting system. Reference to ballot paper throughout this Standing Order shall refer to the paper ballot or the equivalent electronic system.

(2) The name of every candidate shall be listed on the ballot paper. Every voter shall enter on the ballot paper the number 1 against the name of the candidate to whom he or she gives first preference, and may enter further numbers (2, 3 and so on) against the names of some or all of the other candidates in order of preference. No voter may place more than one number against any name, nor the same number against more than one name; a voting paper shall not be valid unless the voter's first preference is clearly expressed, and no preference shall be effective which is expressed in breach of this clause or is lower than one which is so expressed.

(3) When the number of valid voting papers has been counted the number necessary to obtain the required majority shall be determined, and, unless some specified majority greater than a clear majority is required by the Deed of Union or Standing Orders, shall be calculated by dividing the total number of valid voting papers by one more than the number of places to be filled, and taking the number, to two decimal places, next above the exact quotient.

(3A) The counting of the votes shall be undertaken by a recognised single transferable voting method, as determined by the [...] **Conference Business Committee** prior to the Conference.

A recognised electronic system would, for example, include one used by the Electoral Reform Society or other nationally-recognised electoral counting body.

For the Conference Business Committee see S.O. 136.

(4) The candidate or candidates (if any) who have the required majority of first

preference votes are thereby elected.

(5) – (13) [revoked]

(14) When the election is declared, the returning officer shall provide a written statement of the calculations upon which it has been based.

**017 Annotations.** The annotations to these Standing Orders in small type are inserted for information and assistance only; they are not part of the Standing Orders and except where otherwise stated have no authority, save that the notes to any Agendas of particular meetings and committees are authorised by the Conference.

**017A Office of the Conference.** The office of the Secretary of the Conference shall be the office of the Conference for the purposes of the Methodist Church Act 1976 and any other legislation.

See section 21(2) of the Act, Vol. 1, p.20.

**018 Employment of Lay Persons.** (1) This Standing Order applies to all connexional, district, circuit and local bodies of the Church and all other bodies under the authority of the Conference insofar as any such body employs lay persons.

(2) Every such body shall comply with the legislation for the time being in force governing the supply to each employee of documents and information as to the terms of employment, and with the relevant Standing Orders.

For the relevant Standing Orders see in particular S.O. 438A and note also S.O. 570 and 575.

(3) Every such body shall publish and implement an equal opportunities policy statement substantially to the effect of that distributed under Standing Order 438A(3) (iv).

The Conference of 2010, in receiving the report upon the notice of motion ‘...Racism is a Denial of the Gospel’, encouraged Districts, Circuits and Local Churches to incorporate a commitment to equality in all future job descriptions and adopt a model Code of Conduct for employees. The Methodist Council in 2012 recommended a Dignity at Work policy for all Methodist employing bodies.

The insertion of para. 16(1)(p) in the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) in 2020 means that managing trustees in England and Wales may now be employed by their managing trustee body without the need for Charity Commission consent, provided any conflicts of interest are managed appropriately. In other jurisdictions restrictions on employing trustees may apply, and the consent of the relevant charity regulator may be required. As to conflicts of interest, see S.O. 019A. As to employees being trustees, see para. 2(2) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

**018A Notice of Disputes.** (1) Every church court shall at once inform the Connexional Team if any of the following situations arises, unless Standing Order 931 (5) or (6) applies and is being implemented:

- (i) any action is brought against the church court;
- (ii) any dispute or difference between it and another party is submitted to a statutory tribunal or similar body or to arbitration, or becomes the subject of an appeal or official enquiry;
- (iii) it contemplates bringing any action or making any application to a statutory tribunal or similar body or referring or joining in a reference to

arbitration of any dispute or difference between it and another party.

(2) Clause (1) above shall also apply if the party or prospective party to the action, application, dispute or difference is not the church court itself but one of its officers or members and the subject-matter is within its responsibilities.

**019 Data Protection.** (1) All connexional, district, circuit, local and other Methodist bodies, and all societies, institutions and other organizations subsidiary or ancillary to the Methodist Church shall comply with the Data Protection Acts for the time being in force and with any regulations or orders made or having effect under such legislation.

(2) In particular, every such body shall be registered, where required to do so, with the relevant Commissioner or other authority, as specified in clause (3) below.

(3) In England and Wales, and in Scotland, any such body shall be registered separately with the relevant authority (the Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO')), if and only if inclusion within registration by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes ('the Board') is not sufficiently comprehensive for its purposes. Every such body which is thus registered directly with the ICO shall notify the Board in writing of that fact and of the reasons why separate registration has been necessary. Every such body which has not so notified the Board will be included within the Board's registration. In other jurisdictions, any such body must register separately with the appropriate authority as required by the relevant legislation.

Further detail about the applicability of the Data Protection legislation is provided in a booklet available from the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.

(4) Every Synod, Circuit Meeting and Church Council included within the Board's registration shall adopt and comply with such data protection policies and procedures as the Board may properly require as data controller and shall indemnify the Board, as data controller, against the consequences of any breach of clause (1) above or of this clause committed by any officer (ministerial or lay), meeting or committee of that body or by any other person or persons holding data relating to its affairs.

**019A Conflicts of Interest and Duty.** (1) This Standing Order applies to all situations in which a trustee or managing trustee of Methodist property or member of a church court has an interest in any question falling to be considered by the relevant trustees or church court or some duty or loyalty to another person or body in relation to any such question.

(2) This Standing Order has effect so far as any applicable trust instrument permits.

(3) In the remainder of this Standing Order provisions expressed by reference to a church court or its members shall, subject to clause (2) above, apply equally to other trustees and managing trustees within the scope of this Standing Order.

(4) Subject to clauses (7) and (8) below a member of a church court with such an interest, duty or loyalty shall, if present, disclose it to the other members present before the discussion of the relevant question opens, if it is on the agenda, or, if it is not, as soon as it is raised, and shall not preside over any discussion or vote on any resolution relating to that question. Such a member shall withdraw from the meeting while the question is discussed and any resolutions voted upon unless, after such disclosure:

- (i) a majority of the other members present approves that member's

- remaining and contributing to the discussion; or
  - (ii) a majority of the other members present approves that member's remaining on terms that he or she shall not contribute to the discussion unless asked by the person presiding over the discussion to comment on a particular point or points, in which event his or her contribution shall be limited accordingly.

(5) Without prejudice to the generality of clause (1) above, for the purposes of this Standing Order:

(a) a member has an interest in a question if, for example, it involves or may involve a decision whether or not the church court shall:

- (i) enter into any contract with that member; or
- (ii) do anything which will or may lead to the receipt of any remuneration or other benefit in money or money's worth or the incurring of any liability by that member or to the loss of or release from or a change in any such remuneration, benefit or liability; or
- (iii) sell property to or buy property from that member

whether, in any of those cases, the member in question acts alone or jointly with one or more other persons, and

(b) a member has a duty or loyalty to another person or body in relation to a question if, for example, that other person or body is interested (whether directly or indirectly) in that question and he or she has been elected or appointed as a trustee or managing trustee by that other person or body or is also a member, trustee or managing trustee of that other body.

(6) A member of a church court shall not be liable to account to that court or to any fund administered by it for any benefit received (whether directly or indirectly) from such an interest if the liability would have arisen solely from the existence of that interest and he or she:

- (i) is not present at the meeting at which the relevant decision is made and has not sought to influence that decision; or
- (ii) is present at the relevant meeting and has complied with clause (4) above.

(7) Where a member of a church court has a duty or loyalty within clause (1) above to another church court then that member shall, if present, disclose it at the outset of any meeting and may thereafter participate fully in any business of the meeting affected by that duty or loyalty unless, in relation to any particular item of such business, a majority of the other members present require him or her to comply with the provisions of clause (4) above.

(8) For the purposes of clause (7) above, disclosure through the process specified in Standing Order 411(1A), (1B), 514(2A) or 613(2A), where applicable, is sufficient disclosure.

(9) In the application in jurisdictions outside England and Wales of this Standing Order and the provisions specified in clause (8) above:

- (i) they shall take effect only so far as consistent with and applicable

- under the law of the local jurisdiction; and
- (ii) they may by resolution of the Conference be revoked or amended in their application in any specified jurisdiction.

S.O. 919 (regarding conflicts of interest for managing trustees dealing with Model Trust business) was revoked in 2021 and incorporated into this S.O. 019A. See also S.O. 514(2A) and S.O. 613(2A).

**019B Form of Meetings.** (1) Subject to clauses (6) and (8) below, a ‘meeting’ for the purposes of these Standing Orders is any coming together of a group of persons which is a physical meeting, an electronic meeting or a hybrid meeting as defined in clauses (2) to (4) below and related terms shall be construed accordingly.

(2) A ‘physical meeting’ is a meeting at which those attending come together at a specified geographical location and meet face to face.

(3) An ‘electronic meeting’ is a meeting at which those attending come together by means of any equipment or other facility which enables persons who are not in the same place to speak to and be heard by each other (whether or not the equipment or facility also enables those persons to see each other).

(4) A ‘hybrid meeting’ is a meeting at which those attending come together by a combination of physical presence in accordance with clause (2) above (whether in a single location or more than one) and other means specified in clause (3) above.

(5) A person is ‘present’ at a meeting for voting purposes if that person is present physically in the case of a physical meeting, electronically in the case of an electronic meeting or either physically or electronically in the case of a hybrid meeting at the time when the vote is taken.

(6) A meeting may not take the form of an electronic meeting or a hybrid meeting if such a meeting would be contrary to any provision of the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts or, where the meeting is not to be held in England and Wales, the law applying to the holding of meetings in the relevant jurisdiction.

(7) Clause (8) applies to a meeting of the following bodies:

- (i) an initial or appeal committee under Section 03;
- (ii) a consultative or pastoral committee under Section 04;
- (iii) a safeguarding panel or safeguarding appeal panel under Section 23; and
- (iv) a discipline or appeal committee under Part 11.

(8) Where this clause applies, a meeting may only be held as an electronic meeting or a hybrid meeting if:

- (i) the person who is the subject of the relevant discontinuance, competence or safeguarding proceedings or the respondent under Part 11 agrees that the meeting may take place in such a form; or
- (ii) the chair of the relevant committee or panel is satisfied that in all the circumstances such a meeting would be able to deal fairly with the proceedings and decides that the meeting should be held in that form.

## [Section 02 Complaints and Discipline – deleted in 2008 and replaced by Part 11]

**Section 03 Continuance in Training and Probation**

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An initial or appeal committee under this Section 03 may be held electronically or in hybrid form provided the person who is the subject of the discontinuance proceedings agrees or the chair of the relevant committee is satisfied that meeting in such a way would still be able to deal fairly with the proceedings. See S.O. 019B(7) and (8).

**030 Scope of Section.** (1) The provisions of this Section relate to students and probationers in training or on trial for the presbyterate or the diaconate and in this Section ‘student’ and ‘probationer’ shall be construed accordingly.

(2) The provisions of Standing Orders 031 to 034 shall apply when either of the oversight committees concerned recommends discontinuance (that is to say that a student cease training or that a probationer be not continued on trial or be not recommended for ordination, as the case may be) but there is no charge which would, if established, put in question his or her standing as a member of the Church or as a local preacher.

As to oversight of presbyteral and diaconal probation, see S.O. 725.

(2A) The provisions of Standing Orders 031 to 034 shall also apply when a case has been referred by a complaints team appointed under Standing Order 1122 with a request to consider discontinuance but subject to the following modifications:

- (i) the words ‘the lead member of the complaints team’ shall be substituted for the words ‘the officers of the relevant oversight committee’ in Standing Order 031(1A);
- (ii) the words ‘the lead member of the complaints team’ shall be substituted for the words ‘officer of the oversight committee concerned’ in Standing Order 031(2);
- (iii) the words “the student should cease training or the probationer be not continued on trial (as the case may be) following a request for consideration of such discontinuance made by the complaints team” shall be substituted for the words “accept the recommendation of discontinuance made by the relevant oversight committee” in Standing Order 031(4).

(3) For the purposes of this Section the oversight committees concerned are:

- (i) for presbyteral and diaconal students the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and the local oversight committee appointed under Standing Order **252(11)**;



- (ii) *[deleted]*
- (iii) for presbyteral and diaconal probationers, including those who are in part-time circuit appointments, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and the district Probationers Committee.

For the district Probationers Committee see S.O. 484.

For the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee see S.O. 252.

(4) If during the annual review of the progress of students and probationers the question of discontinuance of a student or probationer arises for the first time at some stage later than that referred to in clause (2) above then so much of the procedure prescribed in Standing Orders 031 to 034, or an analogous procedure, shall be followed, and with such adaptations, as the church courts considering the case think fit.

(5) If there is a charge against a student or probationer within the terms of Standing Order 1101(1)(viii) then it shall be dealt with under Part 11 whether or not there are circumstances such that, but for the charge, the provisions of Standing Orders 031 to 034 would have applied, and if there are also such circumstances every church court dealing with the charge shall also consider the question of discontinuance, shall have the same powers in that regard as if it were responsible for dealing with that question under Standing Orders 031 to 034 and shall in that regard follow as much of the procedure prescribed under those Standing Orders, or an analogous procedure, and with such adaptations, as it thinks fit.

**031 Initial Committee.** (1) When this Standing Order applies a connexional Review Committee, consisting of five persons, shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Conference, who shall also appoint an additional person to be its secretary, and that committee shall be convened by its secretary to consider and make a decision upon the question of discontinuance.

(1A) The member of the Connexional Team responsible for student presbyters, student deacons, presbyteral probationers or diaconal probationers, as the case may be, shall be responsible with the officers of the relevant oversight committee for collating and presenting a statement of the grounds for recommending discontinuance and any reports or other documents which it is intended to place before the connexional Review Committee. These shall be submitted to the secretary of the committee who shall immediately supply a copy to the student or probationer concerned. The committee shall not meet until at least fourteen days after the copy or, as the case may require, the last of the copies, has been supplied.

(1B) The student or probationer concerned shall send to the secretary of the committee any material which he or she wishes to be put before the connexional Review Committee not less than seven days before the date fixed for its meeting, unless the person appointed to chair the meeting permits a late submission of such material upon being satisfied that such material could not have been sent earlier.

(1C) If, after making further inquiries in respect of the material supplied by the student or probationer under clause (1B) above, the person presenting the case for

discontinuance (as determined by clause (2) below) wishes to put before the meeting the result of those inquiries, the committee shall not meet until at least seven days after the student or probationer has been informed of such result and sent any additional documents intended to be relied on. The date of the meeting shall, if necessary, be adjourned for this purpose. It may also be adjourned at the request of the person presenting the case where the chair of the committee has permitted a late submission of material by the student or probationer under clause (1B) above.

(1D) The secretary of the connexional Review Committee shall ensure that students and probationers are aware of their right to be accompanied each by a friend and shall encourage and assist them to avail themselves of that right. To that end the President shall maintain a list of persons, including senior presbyters and deacons, willing to act as friends.

(2) At the meeting of the committee the case for discontinuance shall be presented by the appropriate member of the Connexional Team or officer of the oversight committee concerned, as may be agreed with the person appointed to chair the meeting. The student or probationer shall have the right to attend and respond and to be accompanied by a friend, who shall also have the right to speak.

(3) Members of the committee who wish to raise any matter not referred to in the written statement of grounds shall do so before the student or probationer leaves the meeting and both the person presenting the case for discontinuance and the student or probationer shall be given an opportunity to deal with it (for which purpose the meeting shall be adjourned if necessary); no fresh matter shall be raised after the student or probationer has left.

(3A) The secretary of the Review Committee shall make the student or probationer aware of the importance of attending the meeting. If he or she then refuses or fails to attend, the committee must consider the reason for his or her absence and may adjourn for that purpose. The committee may then, if it thinks fit, hear the case for discontinuance and reach a decision in the absence of the student or probationer.

(4) The committee shall decide whether to accept the recommendation of discontinuance made by the relevant oversight committee, solely on the basis of the documents supplied in accordance with this Standing Order, the submissions presented at the meeting and any other documents which both the person presenting the case for discontinuance and the student or probationer agree that the committee may consider, and shall record its reasons for its decision. Where the committee decides to accept the recommendation, the decision shall take effect as soon as the period within which an appeal can be made has expired without the giving of a notice of appeal.

(4A) The secretary shall take notes of the proceedings which, together with the original written statement of grounds, any documents brought in evidence and the committee's decision and reasons for it, shall form the basis of the committee's report in the case of an appeal.

(5) The decision of the committee shall be communicated to the student or probationer in writing.

**032 Right of Appeal.** (1) A student or probationer may appeal against a decision in favour of discontinuance from the connexional Review Committee to a connexional Appeal Committee on one of the grounds set out in clause (2) below.

(2) The grounds of appeal for the purpose of this Standing Order are:

- (i) that there was a material procedural irregularity in how the matter was dealt with by the Review Committee;
- (ii) that the Review Committee failed to take into account all relevant matters or took into account irrelevant ones;
- (iii) that the decision of the Review Committee was against the weight of the evidence (proper regard being had to the need for the Review Committee to exercise its own judgment in reaching its decision);
- (iv) that in the light of events occurring since the decision, or of evidence of which the person appealing could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at the time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the decision.

**033 Procedure on Appeals.** (1) A student or probationer who wishes to appeal shall within fourteen days of receiving notice of the decision of the connexional Review Committee give notice of appeal in writing to the Secretary of the Conference. The notice shall be accompanied by a written statement indicating on which of the grounds in Standing Order 032 the appeal is brought and the specific nature of any error, omission or other matter relied on. The Secretary shall transmit it to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Appeal Committees under Standing Order **290**. The convener shall arrange for the appeal to be heard by a committee of three persons from the connexional Panel appointed under Standing Order **290(1)**, chaired by a person qualified to do so under Standing Order **290(3)**.

(1A) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under clause 032(2)(iv) above. Any such evidence not already supplied with the notice of appeal shall be provided by the student or probationer to the convener no later than 14 days before the date of the meeting and copies shall be provided by the convener to the secretary of the connexional Review Committee and the members of the Appeal Committee no later than seven days before the date of the meeting.

(2) At the meeting of the committee the secretary of the connexional Review Committee shall first present that committee's report.

(3) The student or probationer shall have the right to attend and put forward his or her case on the basis of the grounds of appeal specified, and to be accompanied by a friend, who shall also have the right to speak.

(4) Members of the committee who wish to raise any matter not referred to in the report given under clause (2) above shall do so before the student or probationer leaves the meeting and both the secretary of the connexional Review Committee and the student or probationer shall be given an opportunity to deal with it (for which purpose the meeting shall be adjourned if necessary); no fresh matter shall be raised after the student or probationer has left.

(4A) The convener of the Appeal Committee shall make the student or probationer aware of the importance of attending the meeting. If he or she then refuses or fails to attend, the committee must consider the reason for his or her absence and may adjourn for that purpose. The committee may then, if it thinks fit, hear the appeal and reach a decision in the absence of the student or probationer.

(5) The committee shall decide whether to uphold or dismiss the appeal solely on the basis of the documents supplied in accordance with this and the preceding Standing Order, the submissions presented at the meeting and any other documents which both the secretary of the connexional Review Committee and the student or probationer agree the committee may consider, and shall record its reasons for its decision. Where the committee decides to dismiss the appeal, the discontinuance shall take effect as soon as the period within which a further appeal can be made has expired without the giving of a notice of appeal.

(6) *[revoked]*

(7) The decision of the committee shall be communicated to the student or probationer in writing.

**034 Reports upon Decisions.** The secretary of the Review Committee or, if there has been an appeal, the reporting officer of the Appeal Committee, shall report to the next ensuing Conference in its Presbyteral Session, or to the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may require, any decisions made under this Section.

**035 Further Appeal.** (1) Either the secretary of the connexional Review Committee or the student or probationer concerned may, within fourteen days of receiving notice of the decision of an Appeal Committee, appeal against the decision by giving notice of appeal in writing to the Secretary of the Conference.

(2) An appeal may be made on any of the grounds set out in Standing Order 032(2), but so that references to the proceedings of the Review Committee are to be understood as including additionally or alternatively those of the Appeal Committee. When the person appealing gives notice under clause (1) above he or she must supply to the Secretary a written statement indicating on which of those grounds the appeal is brought and the specific nature of any error, omission or other matter relied on.

(3) Before bringing an appeal, the person appealing must obtain permission from the Appeal Committee to appeal against its decision. The committee may only give permission if one of the conditions set out in clause (4) below is satisfied.

(4) The conditions upon which permission to appeal may be given are that:

- (i) the committee was evenly divided or reached its decision by a margin of one vote;
- (ii) the committee in its discretion considers that there is some substantial matter to be resolved,

(5) The provision of clauses (7), (8) and (9) of Standing Order 1144 apply, with the necessary modifications, to the seeking of permission from the Appeal Committee and to the receipt of a notice or statement under clause (2) outside the specified time limit.

(6) The appeal shall be heard by a committee of 15 persons appointed by the President or the Vice-President and comprising:

- (i) in cases involving presbyteral probationers and students, 15 persons appointed from among the members of the Presbyteral Session of the preceding Conference, and, if it proves impractical to find 15 such persons qualified and able to hear the appeal, from among the members of the Representative Session;
- (ii) in cases involving diaconal probationers and students, the Conference Diaconal Committee constituted in accordance with clause 25A(b) of the Deed of Union, supplemented, if the number of members of this body qualified and able to hear the appeal is fewer than 15, by persons appointed from among the members of the Representative Session of the preceding Conference.

The persons appointed shall, in the judgment of the President or Vice-President, as the case may be, represent the diversity of the Conference and include such of the officers specified in Standing Order 101 as he or she determines.

(7) The committee shall include as the person presiding the President or a past President or, in a case falling under clause (6)(ii), the Vice-President or a past Vice-President. Any past President or Vice-President presiding shall, if possible, be a member of the preceding Conference.

(8) The committee shall meet at a time determined by the President or Vice-President making the appointment.

(9) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under Standing Order 032(2)(iv).

(10) The process to be followed in preparation for, and during, the hearing of the appeal shall be within the discretion of the person presiding, having taken the necessary procedural advice from the appropriate Conference officers and subject always to the overriding requirement that all persons involved should be treated fairly and receive a fair hearing.

(11) The findings of the committee have the effect of findings of the Conference and shall be recorded in the Journal.

**036 Pastoral Care.** It is the responsibility of the Secretary of the Conference to ensure that the student or probationer and those connected with him or her are entrusted to appropriate pastoral care both during the discontinuance process and at its conclusion, and in particular to ensure, where a Review Committee or Appeal Committee decides upon discontinuance, that any consequential steps requiring to be taken are taken with appropriate pastoral regard to the implications of any discontinuance occurring part way through a connexional or academic year.

**037 Notice Provisions.** The provisions of Standing Order 1156 as to the giving of notice of decisions apply to any notice required to be given under the provisions of this Section.

## Section 04 Ministerial Competence

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A consultative or pastoral committee under this Section 04 may be held electronically or in hybrid form provided the person who is the subject of the competence proceedings agrees or the chair of the relevant committee is satisfied that meeting in such a way would still be able to deal fairly with the proceedings. See S.O. 019B(7) and (8).

**040 Failure to Fulfil Obligations.** (1) Where it is alleged or appears to the Chair that a minister in the active work has persistently or repeatedly failed adequately to fulfil his or her obligations, but there appears to be no ground for a charge under the provisions of Part 11, the Chair may, upon receipt of a reasoned request in writing from the Superintendent, a circuit steward, or any other member of the Circuit Meeting concerned or on his or her own initiative, request the Chair of another District to appoint a Consultative Committee to consider the matter.

(2) A Chair so requested under clause (1) or (4) or directed under clause (3) shall appoint such a committee, consisting of five persons, being stationed in or members in the District or neighbouring Districts. They shall not include the Chair referring the case nor any members of a curtailment committee which has referred the case under Standing Order 544(9), nor any person from the Circuit in which the person concerned is stationed. The committee shall include a convener and the appointing Chair, who shall preside.

S.O. 544 concerns the curtailment of the period of a minister's invitation or appointment to a Circuit.

(3) If the Chair declines to refer any such request to such a committee, appeal may be made by the person making it to the President, and if the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf upholds the appeal he or she shall direct the Chair of another District to appoint such a committee and shall refer the request to it in accordance with clause (1) above.

(4) The Chair shall also request the appointment of such a Consultative Committee if a case is referred by a complaints team appointed under Standing Order 1122 or by a district curtailment committee under Standing Order 544(9) or by the Stationing Committee under Standing Order 782(8) or 783(7), and in such a case the procedure prescribed in this Standing Order shall apply, with any necessary changes.

As to S.O. 544 see the note to cl. (2) above. S.O. 782(8) and 783(7) concern ministers for whom no appointment can be found.

(4A) Where the person concerned is a deacon, his or her Chair shall inform the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order of any request or direction made under the above clauses.

(5) The person concerned shall receive from his or her Chair a written statement of the failures alleged and, if the committee is convened following a referral by a connexional complaints team, a copy of the documents on the basis of which the

complaints team made its decision and of that decision. The committee shall meet with the person concerned and discuss with him or her the matters which have been referred to them, and shall have power to require a medical or psychological report, to interview the person making the request, and to make such other inquiries as may be required in order to arrive at a full understanding of the case. The person concerned may be accompanied by a friend.

(6) The duty of the committee shall be to establish whether there has been failure of the kind alleged, in whole or in part, and if so to determine what should in its judgment be done to remedy the cause. To that end the committee shall have power to require the person concerned to comply with any reasonable conditions which the committee judges may deal with the cause of the failure established. The requirements of the committee shall be communicated in writing to the person concerned, that person's Chair and also, in the case of a deacon, the Warden. The person making the request under clause (1) above or the lead member of the connexional complaints team (as the case may require) shall be informed in general terms of the outcome of the process under this Section and, in the latter case, the lead member shall convey that information to the members of the team and the person making the complaint under Part 11.

(6A) In performing its duty under clause (6) above, the committee shall ensure that the person concerned has copies of all documents before the committee (including responses to letters written by the committee) and is informed of the substance of any information given to the committee orally and of the names of the persons who have provided information. The committee shall seek information from any person whom the person concerned reasonably requests the committee to approach and shall supply the person concerned with a copy of any written response and inform him or her of the substance of any oral response. The committee shall give the person concerned a fair opportunity to comment on all documents and information before it, where possible at a meeting with the committee and if not, in writing. The committee shall seek expert advice on the physical and mental health of the person concerned if his or her state of health is relevant and it is appropriate to seek such advice in the interests of fairness.

(6B) Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 11 relating to the duties of the district Complaints Support Group in cases in which the committee is convened following a referral by a connexional complaints team, it shall be the responsibility of the chair of the committee to ensure that, taking account of the support given by that group where relevant, the person concerned, any person making the request about that person under clause (1) above and any person making a complaint which has led to a referral by such a team, and those connected with them, are entrusted, during the process under this Standing Order and at its conclusion, to appropriate pastoral care.

(7) It shall be the duty of every minister concerned to meet the committee when called upon to do so and to comply with its requirements made under clause (6) above.

(8) The cost of any of the remedies prescribed by the committee under clause (6) above shall be a charge upon the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)(iii)**.

(9) If as a result of the action of the committee under clause (6) above it becomes necessary for the person concerned to be without appointment the committee shall so direct and the provisions of Standing Order 774(9), except the last sentence, shall apply.

S.O. 774(9) concerns the position of a minister without appointment because no station can be found.

(10) The committee shall appoint a person or persons to monitor the progress of the actions it has initiated under clause (6) above and shall satisfy itself that the cause of the failure is being addressed.

(11) The person concerned may within two weeks of receiving the written communication under clause (6) above appeal against the action of the committee to the President in writing, setting out the reasons for the appeal. The President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall consider the documentary evidence before the committee including any notes of meetings and the committee's record of its decision and the reasons for it, or may appoint a committee of not more than three persons from the connexional Panel established under Standing Order 290 to consider the appeal on his or her behalf (holding a hearing for the purpose if the committee thinks it necessary) and advise on a reply. The reply of the President or Vice-President upon the appeal shall be final.

(12) If at any time it appears to the Consultative Committee that the matters raised are such as to warrant consideration whether a charge or charges should be brought under the provisions of Part 11 they shall immediately refer the case to the relevant Connexional Team member as defined in Standing Order 1101(1) to be investigated under Standing Orders 1122 to 1124 as if the chair of the committee were the complainant and no further action shall be taken by the committee under this Standing Order unless the connexional complaints team after investigation decides not to refer the matter for the preparation of a charge or to follow one of the alternative procedures specified in Standing Order 1123(6).

**041 Non-compliance with Requirements.** If the person concerned declines to meet with the committee, or refuses or neglects to comply with its requirements under Standing Order 040(6) above, the committee may decide that a complaint shall be made under the provisions of Part 11, in which case the chair of the committee shall refer the case to the relevant Connexional Team member as defined in Standing Order 1101(1) to be investigated under Standing Orders 1122 to 1124 as if the chair were the complainant.

**042 Inability to Fulfil Requirements.** (1) If in any case not dealt with under Standing Order 041 the committee judges that its action under Standing Order 040(6) has failed to achieve its intention it may review the case and give further directions under that clause or may refer the matter to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Pastoral Committees, who shall appoint five members of that panel, of whom not less than two shall be presbyters in the case of a presbyter, and not less than two deacons in the case of a deacon, to constitute a connexional Pastoral Committee to investigate the matter and reach a judgment.

For the connexional Panel for Pastoral Committees, see S.O. 290.



(2) Clauses (1) and (2) of Standing Order 1102 shall apply, with any necessary changes, to the appointment of the Pastoral Committee and the conduct of the investigation, but subject to those requirements the committee shall have power to regulate its own procedure. The convener shall ensure that the person concerned is aware of the right to be accompanied by a representative and, where the convener thinks it necessary, shall encourage and assist him or her to make use of that right. If requested by the person concerned, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf shall suggest the names of three persons willing to act as representatives in the case.

(3) The Pastoral Committee may in a matter referred to it under this Standing Order adjudge that the minister shall be without appointment at his or her own charges or become a supernumerary (and in such a case shall direct what allowances or other payments and what other provisions shall be made), or may impose some lesser requirement. In all such cases the committee shall determine at what date its judgment shall take effect.

(4) The person concerned may appeal from the Pastoral Committee to a connexional Appeal Committee, and thence to the Conference, or, in the case of a deacon, the Conference Diaconal Committee, and in relation to such appeals Standing Orders 1140 to 1145 shall apply, with any necessary changes.

(5) Any payments to be made as a result of a direction under clause (3) above shall be a charge upon the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)(iii)**.

(6) If as a result of proceedings under the provisions of this Section a minister offers to resign, the relevant advisory committee may recommend that a payment be made from the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(6)(iii)**.

(7) The case of a minister who has been designated 'without appointment' under Standing Order 040 or this Standing Order shall be reported to the Stationing Advisory Committee. If the person concerned seeks to return to the active work he or she shall apply to the President, in which case the application shall be considered and determined as set out in clauses (1) to (10) of Standing Order 761, with any necessary changes.

**Section 05 Membership**

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For the provisions concerned with baptism, see cl. 6 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 010A.

The provisions of S.O.s 050 to 052 are supplemental to those of cls. 7 and 8 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) which prescribe the main elements of the procedure for admission to membership of the Methodist Church, and those clauses should be referred to for their precise terms. In summary: (i) candidates for membership not already baptized should receive baptism; (ii) candidates require the approval of the Church Council; (iii) those approved by the council should generally be publicly received as members and (if not already confirmed) confirmed at a service; (iv) provision is to be made for the Christian nurture of children and young people.

The basis of membership in the Methodist Church is stated in cl. 8(a) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

**050 Admission.** (1) The Church Council shall itself or through the Pastoral Committee arrange preparation classes for all candidates for membership. Such preparation shall include an introduction to the doctrines, discipline and formal statements of the Methodist Church, including its belief that racism is a denial of the gospel. The classes shall be led by a presbyter or other suitable person and shall be such as to prepare each candidate for the commitment involved in membership of the Methodist Church and to enable the leader to report to the council, directly or through the committee, as to the matters of which the council must be satisfied under clause (4) below.

See S.O. 013B for the statement of belief as to racism.

(2) The Church Council shall keep in constant review the names of the children growing up in the Local Church and provide for their needs at each stage of their development. When they sincerely desire to serve Jesus Christ and are receiving regular instruction in the Bible and the Faith they shall be treated as candidates for membership. Before such children are admitted into membership the classes in which they have been meeting shall take the form of, or be supplemented by, the preparation class required by clause (1) above.

(3) Where candidates for membership are pupils in a Methodist independent school the Church Council responsible under clauses 8 and 9 of the Deed of Union and this Standing Order shall be that of the nearest appropriate Local Church, as arranged between the chaplain of the school and the Superintendent of the Circuit.

See also S.O. 621 and 631(3).

(4) Before approving admission to membership the Church Council shall be satisfied of each candidate's sincere acceptance of the basis of membership in the Methodist

Church as shown by evidence of life and conduct, by fidelity to the ordinances of the Church and by the maintenance of Christian fellowship in the means of grace.

As to persons received from other Christian communions see cl. 8(e) of the Deed of Union and S.O. 052.

As to re-admission after discipline see S.O. 053, and after resignation S.O. 057.

(5) A public service of reception into membership and confirmation should be held at least once a year either for a Local Church or for a group of Local Churches, and further such services may be held at any time. A service will not include confirmation if all the candidates have already been confirmed.

(6) If any candidate approved by the Church Council is unavoidably absent from any such service the presbyter or probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church shall arrange for his or her reception and (if not already confirmed) confirmation at a suitable time and place in the presence of members of the Local Church.

**051 Members of other Methodist Churches.** (1) Members of Methodist churches overseas who join in the life and worship of the Church while living in its territory may be received as members by transfer in the same way as members removing from one Circuit to another, and shall always be encouraged to do so.

See the note to S.O. 055(5).

(2) Nevertheless, if such members retain strong links with their home churches and wish to retain their membership there, they may be admitted into membership of the Church without such a transfer upon compliance with clause (3) below.

(3) Before admitting such a person to membership the Church Council shall:

- (i) satisfy itself that the applicant is currently a member in good standing with another Methodist church overseas ('the home church'); and
- (ii) obtain confirmation that the discipline of the home church permits the dual membership contemplated; and
- (iii) inform the applicant's minister, class leader and pastoral committee in the home church, or the persons with comparable duties, of its intention to act under this Standing Order and of the effect of doing so.

(4) Having complied with clause (3) above the Church Council shall admit such persons to membership of the Methodist Church and they shall then have all the privileges and duties of members and be subject in all respects to the discipline of the Methodist Church as members. In particular clauses 9 and 10 of the Deed of Union, Part 11 of Standing Orders and Standing Orders 054, 055, clauses (1) to (5), and 056 shall apply, subject to clauses (5) and (6) below.

(5) It shall be the responsibility of the Church Council and Pastoral Committee of the Local Church of which such a person is for the time being a member, and the presbyter and class leader with pastoral responsibility, to co-operate fully with the corresponding bodies and persons in the home church in maintaining pastoral care of that member, and in particular the Pastoral Committee shall consult with the corresponding body in the home church whenever a question arises as to a disciplinary charge under Part 11 or as to lapse of membership for persistent absence under clause 10(a) of the Deed of Union and shall inform that body of any action taken.

(6) When such a member returns to the territory of the home church the Pastoral Committee shall record the fact that he or she has ceased for that reason to be a member of the Church, but shall do so in a separate category from lapse or transfer and shall inform the appropriate officer of the home church.

**052 Other Cases.** (1) Where Standing Order 051 does not apply members in good standing of any recognised Christian communion may be received as members in accordance with clause 8(b) of the Deed of Union. Standing Order 010A and clauses (5) and (6) of Standing Order 050 shall be implemented.

S.O. 010A concerns baptism, and 050(5) and (6) provide for the public service of reception.

For guidance produced by the Faith and Order Committee as to the procedure to be followed, in particular in relation to the service of reception, see Book VII C, Part 13 below.

(2) A presbyter or Church Council in doubt whether a body is a recognised Christian communion for the purpose of clause (1) above should consult the Faith and Order Committee.

(3) Re-admission to membership of former members of the Church shall be by the Church Council, which shall satisfy itself as to the matters specified in Standing Order 050(4) and, if Standing Order 053 applies, shall comply with its requirements.

(4) Unless it is inappropriate for pastoral reasons to do so persons admitted or re-admitted into membership in accordance with Standing Order 051 or clause (3) above shall be publicly recognised at a service conducted by the presbyter in the presence of the Local Church and including the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

S.O. 051 provides for the possibility of admission to dual membership for members of other Methodist Churches overseas.

**053 Re-admission after Discipline.** (1) The Conference, mindful of the purpose for which the Methodist Church was raised up and believing in the possibility of repentance and forgiveness, declares that any person expelled from membership under Part 11 may at any time be admitted again after application to a Church Council. Re-admission shall take place only if the council, in the light of all the relevant evidence, is satisfied that the person concerned is sincerely penitent and has made, or is prepared to make, such reparation as is possible.

(2) In all cases where a person ceased to be a member as a result of a decision of a Discipline Committee or a connexional committee or the Conference under Part 11 or by the action of the President or the Conference under clause (6) of Standing Order 760 or clause (2) or (3) of Standing Order 727 the Chair of the relevant District or the Secretary of the Conference (as the case may require) shall be consulted before the person is re-admitted. Where the person was previously a deacon, diaconal probationer or student deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall also be consulted.

**054 Oversight.** (1) The names of all persons, whether children or adults, who have been baptized shall be entered into a baptism register kept for the purpose in each Local Church or Circuit.

(2) A roll of baptized children shall be kept and periodically reviewed by the Church Council of each Local Church. The council shall satisfy itself that all possible oversight of such children is maintained and suitable instruction given, as they are able to receive it, to prepare them for Christian discipleship.

This clause concerns the Baptismal Roll, commonly called the 'Cradle Roll', kept with a view to the pastoral care and Christian nurture of baptized children. As to the baptism register, see clause (1) above.

(3) The names of all children for whom thanks have been given in a public act of thanksgiving after their birth or adoption shall be entered into a thanksgiving register kept for the purpose in each Local Church or Circuit separately from the register of baptisms.

(4) The names of all persons who have been confirmed in a service of public worship shall be entered into a confirmation register kept for the purpose in each Local Church or Circuit.

(5) The Pastoral Committee shall record in a book or roll, to be kept for the purpose, the names of all the members of the Methodist Church belonging to the Local Church, and shall examine the roll name by name not less than once in each year.

The provisions of this Standing Order in relation to pastoral oversight of members are supplemental to those of cl. 9 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1). This clause should be referred to for its precise terms, but in summary it covers the privilege and duty of members to avail themselves of the sacraments and the duty to meet in fellowship, and the requirement for all members to be in a Class under the pastoral care of a class leader and to receive an annual ticket of membership.

As to the duties of circuit presbyters and presbyteral probationers in relation to pastoral care see S.O. 526(1).

As to the Pastoral Committee see S.O. 644.

As to members who are pupils in a Methodist independent school see S.O. 631(3) and 050(3).

(6) The number of members returned for each Local Church shall be recorded in the minutes of the Church Council after each annual review.

The annual return is of membership at the 1st November (S.O. 644(8)(i)).

(7) The Church Council shall establish a community roll or card-index system in which the names of all those who are within the pastoral care of the Local Church shall be recorded. This shall include baptized children, children in family church or Sunday school and adolescent or adult adherents as well as members.

Note the requirements of Section 69 of Standing Orders as to including on the roll persons convicted of or cautioned in respect of sexual offences.

(8) Every effort shall be made to lead those who are not members to the commitment involved in membership and to this end the roll shall be reviewed not less than once in each year. A name shall be taken off the roll only when it is clear that the person has completely severed connection with the local community of the Church.

See also clause (11) below.

(9) The procedure of transfer set out in Standing Order 055 shall apply to those whose names are on the community roll as well as to members.

(10) The number on the community roll, including members, shall be recorded in the minutes of the Church Council after each annual review.

(11) The name of a person who has ceased to be a member pursuant to clause 10(a) or (c) of the Deed of Union shall be retained on the community roll unless he or she requests that this shall not be so.

By cl. 10(a) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) any member who is persistently absent from the Lord's Supper and the meetings for fellowship is to be visited by the member's class leader and a presbyter. The name of any such member who by prolonged absence severs himself from Christian fellowship is to be removed by the local Pastoral Committee from the class book, whereupon that member ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church. (For appeal, see S.O. 056 below.)

Cl. 10(c) of the Deed of Union gives authority for Standing Orders to provide for resignation from membership. See S.O. 057 for the provisions made under that authority.

As to the circumstances in which a name is to be removed from the community roll, see cl. (8) above.

(12) The numbers on the membership roll and the community roll shall be reported by the Superintendent to the secretary of the Synod and by him or her to the Chair of the District.

(13) In all returns of membership the number of members shall exclude persons in training for membership.

As to members in training see S.O. 050(1) and (2).

**055 Transfers.** (1) The utmost care shall be taken to give notice by forwarding the record card in the event of the removal of members and non-members from one Circuit to another and to ensure that they are visited on arrival by a presbyter or presbyteral probationer of the Circuit to which they have removed. An acknowledgement slip should be sent by the recipient presbyter or probationer. When a member removes to Scotland from another District and there is any doubt about the Circuit or Local Church to which membership should be transferred or there appears to be no Methodist church in the area then the secretary of the Methodist Synod in Scotland should immediately be informed.

As to the transfer of local preachers see S.O. 563(5)(ii) and 564B(4).

(2) It shall be the duty of a class leader or pastoral visitor to send to the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church the name and new address of any member of the Class who is removing.

Notes for giving this information are included in the class books.

As to members who are in Methodist independent schools see S.O. 631(3) and 050(3).

(3) The presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church shall be responsible for carrying out the transfer of members removing from one Circuit to another and for sending to the recipient presbyter or probationer any form signed by such a member pursuant to the Church's policy for safeguarding children, young people or vulnerable adults.

(4) Members formally transferred from one Circuit to another shall invariably be received and their names entered on a membership roll in the receiving Circuit, even if they do not meet in worship or fellowship and it accordingly becomes necessary to visit them in accordance with clause 10(a) of the Deed of Union. When a transfer cannot immediately be made a letter of pastoral commendation shall in all known cases be sent to a presbyter or presbyteral probationer in the new Circuit. A member who has

removed to another area shall be transferred immediately to the nearest church until such time as a firm decision is made by the member concerned.

As to ceasing to meet see cl. 10(a) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

(5) Enquiry shall be made in the Pastoral Committee as to what removals of members have taken place either to or from the Local Church and whether in each case a proper transfer has been made.

The Conference of 1990, in replying to a memorial concerning the difficulties sometimes experienced in obtaining transfers of membership from overseas Methodist churches, indicated that in such cases a Local Church, if satisfied that there has been a serious attempt to obtain a proper transfer and that there are adequate grounds for accepting that the person concerned is a member in good standing, may properly use its discretion in accepting the member 'as by transfer', taking care to inform the overseas church of the action taken.

(6) Notes of removal for and information regarding Methodists removing overseas shall be sent to the appropriate officer of the overseas church as listed in the Minutes of Conference, or if no name and address are listed, to the Secretary of the Conference.

As to Methodist members arriving from overseas see S.O. 051(1) and the note to clause (5) above.

**056 Appeals.** (1) When a Pastoral Committee removes the name of a person from the class book under clause 10(a) of the Deed of Union the chair or secretary of the committee shall within fourteen days send notice in writing to that person that he or she has ceased to be a member of the Methodist Church, and of the reason, except that no such notice need be sent if the person's home address is not known and there is reasonably believed to be no other way of communicating with him or her. The notice shall be accompanied by a copy of clauses (1) to (3) of this Standing Order.

Note that cl. 10(a) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) defines the circumstances in which a person can be removed from the class book.

(2) A person who wishes to appeal against such a decision on one or more of the grounds set out in clause (3) below may do so by notice in writing specifying the ground or grounds relied upon and posted or delivered to the chair or secretary of the Pastoral Committee within 28 days of receipt of the notice required by clause (1) above. The secretary of the committee shall forthwith send any such notice to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Pastoral Committees.

For the connexional Panel and its convener see S.O. 290.

- (3) An appeal may be brought on any one or more of the following grounds:
- (i) that the appellant has not persistently absented himself or herself from the Lord's Supper and from the meetings for Christian fellowship;
  - (ii) that there was sufficient reason for any such absence;
  - (iii) that the visit or visits required by clause 10(a) of the Deed of Union were not made.

(4) Any such appeal shall be considered and determined by a connexional Pastoral Committee of Appeal consisting of five persons chosen from the connexional Panel by the relevant convener, which shall include at least two presbyters and at least two class leaders or pastoral visitors. No person may be a member of that committee who is a member of the Pastoral Committee appealed from or who for any reason might

be, or might reasonably be supposed to be, open to partiality or embarrassment in adjudicating.

(5) The appeal committee shall ensure that the appellant has all material information as to the grounds for the decision of the local Pastoral Committee and an adequate opportunity of contesting them and dealing with the evidence in support of them and that he or she and the Pastoral Committee receive a fair hearing. Subject to those requirements the appeal committee shall regulate its own procedure and may, in particular, require the appellant to state the nature of his or her case with sufficient particularity to give the Pastoral Committee an adequate opportunity of meeting it.

(6) If the appeal committee finds that the appellant has established ground (i) or (ii), as specified in clause (3) above, alone or with ground (iii), it shall allow the appeal and the appellant shall thereupon be reinstated in membership as if never removed. If the appeal committee finds that the appellant has established ground (iii) only it may allow the appeal, with the same effect as above, or may remit the matter to the Pastoral Committee with a direction that the appellant be visited in accordance with clause 10(a) of the Deed of Union and reinstated in membership until that has been done and the Pastoral Committee has reached a fresh decision or, if satisfied that all the requirements of clause 10(a) except as to visitation are met, that the appellant would not have responded satisfactorily to any visit, and that he or she still has no genuine intention of resuming the duties of membership, may dismiss the appeal.

(7) If the appeal committee allows the appeal it may also make recommendations for pastoral consultation with a view to the transfer of the member concerned to another Class or Local Church or for other pastoral measures it considers desirable.

(8) The decision of the appeal committee shall be final.

**057 Resignation.** (1) Subject to clauses (2) and (3) below a member may resign by notice in writing to the Pastoral Committee.

See cl. 10(c) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) for the authority to make this Standing Order.

(2) If a member seeking to resign is the subject of a charge under Standing Order 1130 the resignation shall take effect only by the leave of the church court responsible for investigating the charge and subject to any conditions which the court may impose, which may include a condition as to matters to be considered by any Church Council to which application is made for re-admission to membership.

As to re-admission after discipline see S.O. 053.

(3) In cases not within clause (2) above the Pastoral Committee, on receiving notice under clause (1) above, shall decide whether to accept it forthwith or to defer acceptance until the member has been visited by a presbyter or class leader.

## [Section 06 – Training - revoked]



## Part 1 The Conference

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The Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides for the Conference to be the governing body of the Methodist Church, meeting annually (cl. 11) and for its powers and duties (cls. 18 to 21).

*The rules as to what constitutes the membership of the Conference are contained in cl. 14 of the Deed and Section 10 below, which should be consulted as to the detailed provisions. However, a list is provided below for guidance, reflecting the changes adopted by the Conference of 2024, to take effect from the Conference of 2025.*

- Immediate ex-President and ex-Vice-President*
- President-designate and Vice-President-designate*
- Assistant Secretary of the Conference*
- Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice*
- Record secretary*
- Journal secretary*
- Convener of Memorials Committee*
- Chair of the Business Committee*
- All District Chairs*
- Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order*
- President or Lay Leader of the Methodist Church in Ireland and Secretary of the Irish Methodist Conference*
- Two representatives of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church*
- Two persons chosen from the associate members [defined in Deed cl. 14(4)(d)]*
- Youth President and one representative of the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly*
- [Remaining Conference-elected representatives who are due to retire in 2025]*
- Representatives of Connexional and other bodies*
  - Chair and seven other members of the Connexional Council*
  - Connexional Secretary*
  - Faith and Order Committee representative*
  - Law and Polity Committee representative*
  - One commissioned chaplain*
  - One person serving overseas*
  - Three persons representing the concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion*

*District representatives – the number to be elected is determined by subtracting the number of persons included in the above categories from the total membership of the Conference which under S.O. 100 is 225. (This district number can vary slightly from year to year, according to whether there are people who are dually qualified.) There are also provisions in cl. 14 of the Deed and Section 10 about the distribution of these seats between the Districts and between presbyters, deacons and lay persons.*

## Section 10 Constitution

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The Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides for the Conference to meet in sessions (cl. 13) and contains certain provisions as to its membership (cls. 14–17), as to the conclusiveness of the list of members (cl. 17) and as to representation in the Irish Conference (cl. 43(a)).

**100 Numbers.** (1) The Representative Session shall number 225 persons of whom at least 14 shall be deacons, one of those deacons being the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

See cl. 14(1) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

The Standing Order in this form first took effect fully for the 2010 Conference. The Conference of 2023 approved a reduction in numbers from 306 to 225, starting with the Conference of 2024 (see Conference Report 35 (2023) *Composition of the Conference*). The Conference of 2024 confirmed a special resolution proposing amendments to cl. 14 of the Deed of Union, the principal changes being to remove the category of Conference-elected representatives and to amend the representation of the Methodist Church in Ireland. These changes will therefore apply to the membership of the Conference of 2025 and thereafter (except that the remaining Conference-elected representatives will serve until their retirement at the end of the Conference of 2025.) A further amendment was provisionally adopted in 2024, which if confirmed in 2025 would, from the Conference of 2026, enable a Deputy District Chair to be a member where the Chair cannot attend.

(2) The Conference shall from time to time, and not less than once in every five years, review the numbers specified in clause (1).

See note to (1) above. The next review is due to take place no later than the connexional year 2027/28.

**101 Conference Secretariat and Other Officers of the Conference.** (1) Unless the Conference of the last preceding year otherwise determines the assistant secretaries and other officers of the Conference in its Representative Session who are as such to be members of the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(iv) of the Deed of Union shall be the assistant secretary of the Conference, the officer for legal and constitutional practice, the record secretary, the Journal secretary, the convener of the Memorials Committee, and the chair of the Business Committee appointed under Standing Order 136(1)(i).

For the Memorials Committee see S.O. 138.

(2) The assistant secretary shall be a presbyter. The other officers may be presbyters, deacons or lay persons.

For the assistant secretary see S.O. 116A.

(3) If either or both of the record secretary and the Journal secretary are not presbyters, one or two (as necessary) Presbyteral Session record secretaries, being presbyters, shall be appointed by the Presbyteral Session.

**102 Representatives of Connexional and Other Bodies.** (1) The **Connexional Council** and connexional committees, funds, [...] institutions **and concerns** to be represented in the Conference pursuant to clause 14(2)(x) **and (xA)** of the Deed of Union and the representation of each shall be as follows, any representative not otherwise identified being appointed by the body in question **or, in the case of [...] items (v)-(vii), by the Connexional Council:**

- (i) the chair and **seven other members of the [...] Connexional Council;**
- (ii) the Connexional Secretary[...];
- (iii) one representative of the Faith and Order Committee;
- (iv) one representative of the Law and Polity Committee;
- (v) one [...] **minister** who is a commissioned chaplain;
- (vi) one person who is serving overseas under the direction of the council or is a minister whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment under Standing Order 780(1)(vi);
- (vii) three persons representing the concerns of equality, diversity and inclusion;
- (viii) **the Youth President together with one lay person elected in accordance with Standing Order 240(11).**

(2) If a person appointed as a representative to the Conference under clause (1) of this Standing Order cannot attend then the responsible body shall **subject to Standing Order 240(11)** appoint a substitute in the appropriate category (presbyteral, diaconal or lay), failing which the [...] **Connexional** Council shall nominate a substitute for election by the Conference under clause 17 of the Deed of Union.

(3) [revoked]

(4) [revoked]

(5) [revoked]

(6) [revoked]

(7) [revoked]

For cl. 14(2)(x) of the Deed see Book II, Part I.

### **103 [revoked]**

This Standing Order contained the provisions relating to Conference-elected representatives, a category which the Conference finally removed at the Conference in 2024, although with provision for the existing representatives to serve until the expiry of their term at the end of the Conference of 2025.

### **104 [revoked]**

**105 District Allocations.** (1) The representatives elected under clause 14(6) of the Deed of Union shall be elected by the Representative Session of each home Synod. The total number of representatives to be so elected, and the apportionment between

categories of members, shall be calculated, based upon what will or may be required to ensure compliance in the composition of the Conference as a whole with clause 14(1) of the Deed. The numbers to be elected by each home Synod shall be arrived at in accordance with clauses (1A) to (3A) below and shall be specified by the Secretary of the Conference on its behalf in a list circulated to all synod secretaries by 15th July of the preceding connexional year and published in the Minutes of Conference. The calculation shall be based on the best information available at that date as to how many of the persons listed in Standing Orders 101 and 102 will at the following year's Conference be, respectively, presbyters, deacons and lay persons, and shall not be invalidated if those numbers subsequently change.

(1A) The allocation of diaconal representatives required in order to comply with Standing Order 100 shall first be made in accordance with a rota approved annually by the [...] **Secretary of the Conference**. The rota shall take into account the proportion of deacons in the active work and diaconal probationers expected to be stationed in the various Districts and shall ensure that, over a period of time, all Districts with eligible persons are represented.

(2) The following minima shall obtain in the allocation of the remaining seats that require to be filled:

- (i) Scotland and Shetland: six persons in all, distributed between them in accordance with clause (3A) below;
- (ii) Channel Islands and Isle of Man, two persons each;
- (iii) Each other District: four persons.

(3) The numbers to be elected by each Synod, after the diaconal representatives have been allocated in accordance with clause (1A) above, shall, subject to clause (2) above, be in proportion to the number of members in the District involved as listed in the most recent membership figures by District published in the Conference Agenda. The number of lay people to be elected by each Synod in order to satisfy the provisions of clause 14(1) of the Deed of Union shall similarly be in proportion to the number of members in the District involved. The remaining seats shall each be filled by a presbyter or a deacon.

See Book II, Part 1 for cl. 14(1) of the Deed of Union.

(3A) Subject to clause (2)(i) above the number of representatives to be elected by the Synods of the Scotland and Shetland Districts shall be calculated in accordance with clause (3) above as if they were a single District, adding together the number of members in each. The distribution of seats between them shall be by mutual agreement and the Chairs involved shall give notice to the Secretary of the Conference not later than the close of the preceding Conference how many of the minimum number of seats, and how many additional seats, if any, above the minimum, are to be allocated to each District for the following Conference.

(4) In specifying the allocations made under clause (2) to (3A) above the Secretary of the Conference shall state which Districts will be entitled to additional representatives or to fewer if places become available by reason of dual qualification or if an error within clause (5)(b) below requires correction, with the order of priority, arrived at in accordance with clause (3) above.

(5) (a) The provisions of this Standing Order prescribing the method of arriving at the allocations are directory only; subject to sub-clause (b) below the allocations specified by the Secretary of the Conference under clause (2) to (3A) above shall be binding notwithstanding any error in the calculations.

(b) If an error in computing the total number of seats available, as at the date of the circulation of the list under clause (3) above, to be filled under clause 14(6) of the Deed of Union is discovered after that date it shall forthwith be corrected and a note of the correction shall be entered in the Journal of the Conference and signed by the Secretary of the Conference.

(6) A Synod may elect representatives allocated under clauses (2) to (3A) above for one, two or three years, and Synods are strongly encouraged wherever possible to seek some continuity in their representation. If in any year a District is allocated six seats or more then in that year the Synod shall elect at least one representative for three years. For the purposes of clauses (2), (3) and (3A) above representatives who under this clause will be serving for a second or third year shall be deemed to be re-elected for that year and shall be included in the relevant minima and allocations accordingly.

(7) If a person elected for more than one year under clause (6) above becomes entitled in a second or third year to be a member of the Conference in another capacity, ceases to be eligible for election by that Synod under Standing Order 417(1), dies, resigns or becomes disqualified, his or her place shall be filled by election by the Synod, which shall determine the term of office of the person so elected.

#### **106 Representatives and Delegates to Other Bodies.** (1) *[revoked]*

(2) The Conference may itself appoint any representatives whom the Conference or the Methodist Church is entitled to appoint to other autonomous conferences (as defined in the Deed of Union), and may appoint a committee or committees to bring nominations for that purpose, but in so far as any such representatives are in any year not appointed by the Conference itself the power and responsibility of appointing them is hereby delegated to and laid upon the **[...] Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer.**

For the Ecumenical Officer, see S.O. 323(1).

(3) (a) Before the first meeting of the World Methodist Council in each quinquennium the Conference shall appoint its representatives for that quinquennium in such numbers as the Conference shall determine.

(b) The power and responsibility of making appointments to fill any vacancies arising during the quinquennium by the death or resignation of any such representatives or by the inability of any such representative to attend particular meetings is hereby delegated to and laid upon the **[...] Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer.**

For the Ecumenical Officer see, S.O. 323(1).

(4) The Conference shall from time to time decide whether any right of the Methodist Church or of any person or body on its behalf to appoint delegates or representatives to any assembly other than those specified in the above clauses shall be exercised. If so,

the Conference may itself appoint the delegates or representatives and may appoint a committee to bring nominations for that purpose, but in so far as any such delegates or representatives are in any year not appointed by the Conference itself the power and responsibility of appointing them are hereby delegated to and laid upon the [...] **Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer.**

For the Ecumenical Officer, see S.O. 323(1).

**107 Associate Members.** (1) The associate members of the Conference to be appointed under clause 14(4) of the Deed of Union shall be as follows:

- (i) four persons appointed by other churches and Christian bodies which are members of an ecumenical body or association in Great Britain of which the Methodist Church is also a member;
- (ii) fourteen persons appointed by other autonomous conferences, other Methodist churches and united churches in which Methodists have joined.

(2) The [...] **Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer** shall annually recommend and the Conference shall annually determine which bodies are to appoint associate members, and in what numbers, to the next or next but one Conference under clause (1) above.

For the Ecumenical Officer, see S.O. 323(1).

(3) The appointment under clause 14(4)(d) of the Deed of Union of two associate members as members of the Conference shall be made by the [...] **Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer.** Such appointment shall not give rise to a casual vacancy or require or permit further appointments of associate members to be made.

For the Ecumenical Officer, see S.O. 323(1).

**108 Relationship between the Conference and the Connexional Council.** (1) **The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice may at any time after consultation with the Law and Polity Committee seek external legal advice on any matter connected with or arising out of the relationship between the Conference and the Connexional Council at the office holder's discretion and notwithstanding the office holder's position as a member of the Connexional Team.**

(2) **All such advice shall be reported to the council, the Law and Polity Committee and the following Conference.**

(3) **The Law and Polity Committee shall bring to the following Conference such recommendations arising out of that advice as it may think appropriate, if any.**

This Standing Order was adopted by the Conference of 2024, on the recommendation of the Law and Polity Committee in its response to Notice of Motion 101 of the Conference of 2023, as to the relationship of the Conference and the Connexional Council under the Oversight and Trusteeship provisions. See section C of the Law and Polity Committee's report, 2024 Agenda, pp 528ff. See also S.O. 211(3) for the committee's responsibilities in advising the Conference and the Connexional Council.

## Section 11 Officers

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The Deed of Union provides by cls. 26–31 (Book II, Part 1) for the appointment and certain of the functions of the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference and for their tenure of office and the filling of vacancies.

**110 President and Vice-President.** (1) The President and Vice-President shall preside at the Conference and act as the representative embodiment of its authority as prescribed by the Deed of Union and in accordance with Standing Orders.

(2) They shall play a significant part in the oversight and leadership of the Church in responding to God’s Spirit and developing prophetic vision, offering to the Church a pattern of collaborative ministry in which their distinctive gifts and particular callings as ordained or lay persons are combined. To that end they shall consult together, so far as circumstances allow, concerning the exercise of their respective responsibilities and meet regularly for mutual support.

(3) They are to strengthen the bonds of the Connexion by a ministry of visitation to Districts and Circuits, to connexional committees and institutions (including schools) and to the Connexional Team, offering encouragement and support and sharing insights gained by such visits.

**(3A)** [previously SO 200] Except where Standing Orders otherwise provide, the President and Vice-President of the Conference have the right to chair **particular meetings or items of business at meetings of all committees or bodies constituted by the Conference, other than the Connexional Council, [...] where after consultation with the duly appointed officers of the committee or body concerned the President and Vice-President deem it appropriate. [...] If** both are present they shall determine which of them shall exercise the right.

(4) They shall work in conjunction with the Secretary of the Conference and support his or her ministry of strategic management and the development of the Church’s vision. Through their membership of the Connexional Leaders’ Forum they shall offer support and encouragement to its members in the exercise of their responsibilities and contribute to its discussions concerning the well-being and calling of the Church.

The Conference of 2023 agreed that the Connexional Leaders Forum in its current form be paused during the connexional year 2023-24 to enable other models to be explored. The Conference of 2024 agreed to continue that suspension until the close of the Conference of 2025. For the Connexional Leaders' Forum see S.O. 293.

(5) Before each meeting of the Conference the Secretary of the Conference shall convene a meeting of the persons who are designated to hold office as President and Vice-President at that Conference and in the year following, at which they shall agree upon and record the allocation of their respective responsibilities for that year, including those prescribed by Standing Orders. Such agreement may subsequently be modified by mutual consent as circumstances require.

(6) The ex-President, ex-Vice-President, President-designate and Vice-President-designate shall meet together with the President and Vice-President for mutual support and encouragement, and through their membership of the Connexional Leaders' Forum and in other ways shall contribute to the Church's reflection upon its calling, drawing upon the experience gained during their time in office.

See the note to clause (4) above.

(7) Where these Standing Orders give to the President a power to be exercised after consultation with the Vice-President:

- (i) the President and Vice-President may by agreement dispense with the need for consultation in specified situations;
- (ii) in the event of a disagreement the decision of the President shall prevail; and
- (iii) the exercise of the power shall not be rendered invalid by a failure to consult which was inadvertent or brought about by the urgency of the situation.

**110A Designation and Election.** (1) Before the opening of the Conference the Secretary of the Conference shall in writing invite members to submit nominations, on a form provided, for the designation of the President and Vice-President in accordance with clauses 26 and 27 of the Deed of Union.

In relation to this and the following clauses, the Conference of 2024 received a report from the Methodist Council (Section H, 2024 Agenda pp 211ff) on electing the President and Vice-President. It adopted the recommended revised policy for these elections and directed the Law and Polity Committee to prepare new Standing Orders to give effect to it. This Standing Order continues to apply pending any such amendment.

(2) Each nomination shall be signed by five ministerial and five other members of the Representative Session of the Conference. No person shall sign more than one nomination for the designation of the President nor more than one nomination for the designation of the Vice-President.

(3) Each nomination, in addition to specifying the name and District and Circuit in which the person nominated is stationed or is a member, shall contain a reasoned statement up to 200 words in support of the nomination.

(4) Clause (3) above is directory only, and omission of or inaccuracy in any or all of the information given shall not invalidate an otherwise valid nomination.

(5) Nomination papers shall be collected during the first three days of the Representative Session, unless the Conference otherwise determines, and shall be



displayed for 24 hours before a vote is taken. Before the vote is taken, the Secretary of the Conference shall seek from each nominee an assurance of willingness to serve, if elected, and shall report the outcome to the Conference.

(6) Voting shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business Committee or his or her representative shall be the returning officer.

For the procedure for election by single transferable vote see S.O. 016A.

(7) Subject to clause (8) below the Conference shall at each annual meeting vote on the resolution that the President-designate be elected President, and similarly as to the Vice-President-designate.

(8) If such a resolution is not carried, or if the President-designate or Vice-President-designate has died, or ceased to be qualified for the office, or is incapable of acting or unfit to act or unwilling to be elected, then the Conference shall by ballot elect some other qualified person to be the President or Vice-President, and clauses (1) to (6) above shall apply to that election as to a designation, with such variations in procedure as may, in the judgment of the Conference, be required by the circumstances.

**111 President's Powers.** (1) The President or, in respect of the Representative Session, the Vice-President shall have power to assist at any Synod, if requested to do so by the Chair or by a majority of the Superintendents in the District.

(2) The President shall have the right if requested to do so to visit any Circuit, to inquire into its affairs, and to take any steps open to him or her which he or she judges beneficial. He or she may delegate his or her powers in this respect to the Vice-President or to any other appropriate person or persons including the Chair of the District concerned to act on his or her behalf. The steps open to the President or his or her representative include referring any matter to the relevant Connexional Team member as defined in Standing Order 1101(1) for it to be dealt with by a connexional complaints team appointed under Standing Order 1122 except in a case in which the relevant request to the President came from such a team and related to that matter. If, under Part 11, a formal complaint is laid or a charge brought, no inquiry into the subject matter of the charge shall be pursued under this clause until the matter has been disposed of under that Part, unless a team appointed as aforesaid has requested the President to pursue such an inquiry.

(2A) If the President or his or her representative exercises the powers specified in clause (2) above:

- (i) in response to a request made under Standing Order 1123(6) or 1124(11) by a connexional complaints team; or
- (ii) in response to a request made by a court which has heard a case under the provisions of Part 11 (whether at first instance or on appeal)

then at the conclusion of the inquiry the President or his or her representative, as the case may be, shall prepare a written report stating the result of the inquiry and the steps (if any) which he or she has taken, with reasons for taking the steps in question or declining to take any steps. He or she shall send a copy of the report to the Secretary of the Conference, to be held under the provisions of Standing Order 1104(1) as if it were a decision of the relevant team, to the lead member of the relevant team or the chair of the

relevant court (as the case may require), to the person making the complaint and to the person complained against. He or she may also send a copy of the report to any other persons who ought properly, in his or her view, to be aware of its contents.

(3) **[revoked]**

This clause previously dealt with the President's responsibilities in relation to the breakdown of marriage or civil partnership of any minister. The Conference of 2023 agreed that this should be revoked with effect from the 2024 Conference, with guidance as to the process to be followed being produced in its place. The 2024 Conference approved that guidance and directed that it be published in this volume. See now Book VII A 5A below. The guidance applies to both the breakdown of a marriage and of a civil partnership and also extends to those of probationers.

For other powers and duties of the President, see the references in the Index.

**112 The Island Districts.** The President and Vice-President shall visit the Island Districts in accordance with arrangements laid down by the Conference from time to time.

The Conference of 2000 resolved that the arrangements should be as follows:

- a. for the Channel Islands District an annual visit by the President and Vice-President should be the norm;
- b. for the Isle of Man District the previous pattern of a visit by the Vice-President and the ex-President should be continued with the possibility of a visit by the President every third year; and
- c. for the Shetland District an annual visit by either the President or the Vice-President should be encouraged.

**113 Support for the President and Vice-President.** (1) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall ensure that the President and the Vice-President receive the support and assistance they need in the fulfilment of their duties, and that the financial provision made for that purpose is adequate.

(2) (a) Where the circuit stewards or comparable officers in the President's station consider that the appointment of a President's Assistant is necessary during his or her year of office, they shall immediately after his or her designation apply to the council. If the council agrees, an assistant shall be appointed for the connexional year beginning during the President's year of office. The cost of the appointment, including necessary accommodation, and the cost of having the duties of the President's station performed so far as is possible and necessary, whether with or without the appointment of an assistant, shall be treated as expenses of that office under Standing Order **371(3)(ii)**.

(b) The provisions of sub-clause (a) above shall also apply if a deacon is designated to become Vice-President, but so that (i) an application under that sub-clause, as so applied, may also be made by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and (ii) the Warden shall, before the council comes to a decision, be consulted about any such application made by others.

(3) The cost of secretarial or other services supplied to the President and Vice-President in the discharge of their duties, shall be treated as expenses of their office under Standing Order **371(3)(ii)**.

**114 Secretary of the Conference.** (1) The Secretary of the Conference shall be the executive officer of the Conference and shall fulfil those duties on behalf of the

Conference which are assigned to the Secretary by statute or in the Deed of Union, Model Trusts, and Standing Orders or required by resolutions of the Conference. He or she shall be responsible for encouraging good governance throughout the Church.

(1A) The Secretary shall play a principal part in the oversight and leadership of the Church, and in particular shall be responsible for ensuring that the Church has in place structures and processes that enable the Conference, other connexional bodies, Districts, Circuits, and Local Churches, in accordance with their respective natures, purposes, functions and responsibilities and acting collaboratively whenever appropriate:

- (i) to develop the Church's vision of unity, mission, evangelism and worship;
- (ii) to develop the strategic management of the Church's affairs;
- (iii) to give effect to the vision and strategy of the Church as so developed.

(1B) The Secretary shall work in conjunction with the President and Vice-President, ensuring that they have adequate support for the fulfilment of their duties and meeting with them at regular intervals in order to share information, to co-ordinate activities and to develop a shared vision of the Church's calling. He or she shall also offer support to the meetings held under Standing Order 110(6).

S.O. 110(6) provides for the ex-President, ex-Vice-President, President-designate and Vice-President-designate to meet with the President and Vice-President for mutual support and encouragement.

(1C) The Secretary shall, working collaboratively, lead and direct the Connexional Leaders' Forum and shall be available to Districts and Circuits for consultation.

The Conference of 2023 agreed that the Connexional Leaders' Forum in its current form be paused during the connexional year 2023-24 to enable other models to be explored. The Conference of 2024 agreed to continue that suspension until the close of the Conference of 2025. For the Connexional Leaders' Forum see S.O. 293.

(1D) The Secretary shall lead and direct the assistant secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary [...] appointed under Standing Order 383 in their responsibilities, including the management of the rest of the Connexional Team in their service of the Conference.

For the assistant secretary, see S.O. 116A.

(1E) The Secretary may delegate to the assistant secretary, or [...] the Connexional [...] **Secretary** or other senior members of the Connexional Team or members of the Connexional Leaders' Forum, as appropriate, or, after consultation with the President and Vice President, to some other person the exercise, in general or on a particular occasion, of any of the functions assigned to the Secretary by Standing Orders and of any other of his or her formal responsibilities. He or she shall prepare and maintain a list of all such general delegations made, identifying in each case the relevant person and the functions or responsibilities concerned. The Secretary shall retain ultimate responsibility for the exercise of any delegated functions or formal responsibilities.

The power of delegation under this clause does not extend to functions conferred upon the Secretary otherwise than by Standing Orders (e.g. those under the Model Trusts).

The Conference of 2023 agreed that the Connexional Leaders Forum in its current form be paused during the connexional year 2023-24 to enable other models to be explored. The Conference of 2024 agreed to continue that suspension until the close of the Conference of 2025. For the Connexional Leaders' Forum see S.O. 293.

(2) Subject to clause 31 of the Deed of Union the provisions of Standing Order **385** shall apply to the designation and appointment of the Secretary of the Conference as if holding an office under that Standing Order.

**115 Dual Election.** The Conference may at any time, if it thinks fit, designate or elect the same person as both President and Secretary of the Conference.

**116 Deputy Secretary.** (1) If the Secretary of the Conference is temporarily unable to fulfil the duties of the office because of accident, illness, absence from the country, sabbatical leave or other cause then a deputy shall have authority to exercise all the functions of the Secretary, including those exercisable as managing trustee of general property.

(2) A certificate signed by the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf of the Conference shall be conclusive evidence of the existence and duration of any such temporary inability.

(3) The assistant secretary of the Conference shall be the deputy, unless the President or Vice-President who certifies the inability appoints (as he or she shall have the power to do) some other person.

(3A) *[revoked]*

(4) Nothing in this Standing Order infringes upon the provisions in the Deed of Union for filling casual vacancies.

See cl. 31(c)–(h) of the Deed (Book II, Part 1).

**116A Assistant Secretary.** (1) The provisions of Standing Order **385** shall apply to the designation and appointment of the assistant secretary of the Conference as if holding an office under that Standing Order.

(2) The assistant secretary of the Conference shall be one of the Secretaries in the Connexional Team or another senior member of that Team.

**116B Precentor and Correspondence Secretary.** The *[...]* **Secretary of the Conference** shall annually appoint, from among the members of the ensuing Conference or otherwise, one or more persons each for the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions to act as precentor and correspondence secretary, who shall not by virtue of such appointment become voting members of the Conference.

**116C Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice.** (1) The provisions of Standing Order **385** or **386**, as appropriate, shall apply to the designation and appointment of the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice as if holding an office under that Standing Order.

(2) The Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice shall be a senior member of the Connexional Team.

**117 Other Officers.** Subject to Standing Order 136(1)(i), all other officers of the Conference shall be elected by the Representative Session of the Conference of the last preceding year. The Secretary of the Conference shall be responsible for bringing nominations.

## Section 12 Proceedings and Records

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The Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) makes provision for voting in the Conference, for the validation of its proceedings and as to the contents and effect of the Journal (cls. 34, 35, 36).

### 120 [revoked]

**121 Agenda.** (1) The Secretary of the Conference shall prepare the Conference Agenda. Secretaries and conveners of committees reporting to the Conference shall be responsible for supplying their portions of the Agenda and for the costs involved.

(2) Every such secretary and convener shall ensure that if any report brought by that committee recommends a major change in the policy of the Church on an issue, the report shall contain a statement of the ecumenical implications. The secretaries and conveners of working parties reporting to the Conference shall similarly ensure that a report recommending such a change contains such a statement.

The Conference of 1999 also adopted a Motion directing that those responsible for bringing second or subsequent editions of any reports to the Conference should indicate in the report the amendments made since the previous edition.

For reports proposing amendments to the Model Trusts see also S.O. 919A.

**122 Provisional Resolutions.** (1) If the Conference judges that any resolution which it has adopted is of such significance that it ought to be considered by the Synods and confirmed before coming into effect it may declare that it shall be a provisional resolution. If the resolution is being dealt with as shared business under clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union, such a declaration by the Conference in either of the sessions dealing with the business shall be effective.

(2) Notice shall be given of any motion for such a declaration either by means of a notice of motion which complies with Standing Order 132 or by the inclusion of a resolution to that effect in the report upon that business contained in the Agenda. Where notice is given before the adoption of the substantive resolution to which it relates the motion shall not be considered by the Conference until after such adoption.

(3) Provisional resolutions shall be submitted to the Synods of the home Districts and to the Law and Polity Committee, each of which may approve, disapprove or approve with amendments. Provisional resolutions shall be submitted for confirmation to the next annual meeting of the Conference with a report of the opinions of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee, and shall take effect only if then confirmed.

As to amendments to provisional legislation see cl. (6) below.

(4) The Conference may direct that the whole or some specified part of the text of any report leading to the adoption of a provisional resolution be submitted with it to the Synods. Unless it does so the Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that a brief summary of the arguments for and against the resolution and of the implications of adopting or declining it is prepared for the same purpose. The resolution and the above text or summary, as the case may be, shall be distributed by the district officers to all members of the Synod before its meeting. The district Policy Committee may arrange for such consultation within the District as it thinks fit before the Synod expresses its judgment.

(5) Provisional resolutions submitted to the Synods under clause (3) above shall be dealt with in their Representative Sessions and, if falling within one or more of the categories defined in heads (i), (ii) and (iii) of sub-clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union and dealt with under that clause, also in their Presbyteral Sessions.

(6) On receiving the reports of the Synods and the Law and Polity Committee upon a provisional resolution the Conference may confirm it unamended or may decline to confirm it, or may confirm it with amendments, and in the last event may, by the procedure of clauses (1) and (2) above, declare that the resolution as so amended shall itself be a provisional resolution.

For other resolutions of the Conference requiring confirmation see S.O. 401(5).

For the procedure for the adoption of special resolutions and deferred special resolutions see s. 2(1) of the 1976 Act (Vol. 1, p. 5) and S.O. 126.

**123 Daily Record.** (1) A record of the proceedings of the Conference shall be compiled by the record secretary and the Journal secretary appointed under Standing Order 101(1) and any Presbyteral Session record secretaries appointed under Standing Order 101(3). The record of each day's proceedings, except those of the last day of a session and those of any proceedings in closed session, shall be printed so as to be in the hands of the Conference before the time appointed for its confirmation.

(2) Subject to clause (3) below any suggested corrections must be submitted to the Conference for approval when its adoption is moved.

(3) The Conference may entertain a resolution for the correction of a day's record after its adoption if moved by an officer of the Conference or on behalf of the Conference Sub-committee of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity, and the Representative Session may do so in relation to the record of the Presbyteral Session of the same Conference or to the Journal of an earlier Conference.

For the authority to correct the record conferred by this clause see cl. 25(b) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1). Note cl. (4) below as to the limits of this provision.

As to the Conference Sub-committee see S.O. 211(6).

(4) The provisions of clauses (2) and (3) above authorise only corrections made for the purpose of achieving the accuracy of the document in question as a record of the proceedings of the Conference, not matters within the scope of Standing Order 131(25).

**124 Publication of Proceedings.** (1) Subject to clause (9) below the general resolutions and other proceedings of the Conference required by clause 37 of the Deed of Union to be printed and published shall be issued as a book under the title of *The Minutes of the Annual Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church* and the year of the Conference concerned. ***The book shall be printed and published in two volumes. The Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, apart from the Directory, shall be contained within volume one of the book. The Directory shall be contained in volume two of the book.***

For cl. 37 of the Deed see Book II, Part I.

(2) It shall be prepared for publication by the Secretary of the Conference.

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) Persons whose names and addresses are listed in the Minutes of Conference shall be entitled to have printed any degrees, distinctions or professional qualifications, held by them, of which they have given particulars to the Secretary of the Conference. In the case of degrees, the name of the awarding body shall be stated and the prefix 'Hon' shall be added to all honorary degrees.

(5) Every minister in the active work and every probationer shall possess a copy, the cost of which shall be an expense recoverable, in the case of persons in appointments within the control of the Church, from the Circuits or other bodies responsible for provision of their stipends.

(6) A copy **of the book** shall be presented to every supernumerary, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

**(7) The following persons additionally are entitled to receive a copy of volume two of the book:**

- (a) ***all ministers without appointment;***
- (b) ***all ministers authorised to serve and listed in the Directory;***
- (c) ***the Vice-President, and other officers of the Conference not otherwise included;***
- (d) ***secretaries of the Synods not otherwise included;***
- (e) ***connexional and district archivists;***
- (f) ***members of the Connexional Council;***
- (g) ***connexional Committee chairs;***
- (h) ***past Presidents and past Vice-Presidents.***

**(8) In addition to those listed in clause (7), the Secretary of the Conference, when satisfied that a proposed recipient requires volume two of the book in order to discharge any relevant duties, may direct that a copy of volume two of the book shall be provided to any such person.**

**(9) The expense of providing a copy of volume two of the book to the persons set out in clauses (7) and (8) above shall be met by the Methodist Church Fund.**

(10) A copy of the memorial service which incorporates that section of the Minutes of Conference containing the obituary notices of those ministers and probationers who have died shall be presented to the nearest relative of every such person whose obituary is printed in the issue of that year, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

(11) A copy **of volume one of the book** shall be presented to the spouse or civil partner of any deceased ministers who makes application, the cost being defrayed by the Methodist Church Fund.

For committee lists to be included in the Conference Agenda see S.O. 190(4).

For inclusion of names of ministers now in United Churches or autonomous conferences see S.O. 736.

As to obituaries see S.O. 153 and 182.

(12) Those general resolutions of the Conference embodied in Standing Orders shall be published with the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts and other appropriate texts under the title *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*. Amendments or an amended edition shall be published annually and prepared for publication by the officer for legal and constitutional practice. Every minister in the active work and every probationer shall possess a copy and receive annually the amendments or amended edition, the cost of which shall be an expense recoverable, in the case of persons in appointments within the control of the Church, from the Circuits or other bodies responsible for provision of their stipends.

(13) Ministers without appointment shall each be entitled, if they obtain the publication specified **as *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*** in clause [...] (12) above, to recover the cost of one copy of each per annum from the respective Circuits in which they reside.

(14) A brief summary of the transactions of the Conference shall be published annually for wide circulation in the Church. This summary shall highlight possible action points for individuals and Local Churches or questions that could be addressed at local level. The cost of publication shall be a charge on the Methodist Church Fund and arrangements for it shall be made by the [...] **Secretary of the Conference**. Responsibility for the content of the summary shall lie with the person or persons appointed to edit it, who shall be responsible for taking the following action:

- (i) consulting the Secretary of the Conference on the factual content; and
- (ii) ensuring that the master copy reaches Methodist Publishing so that it can be distributed by the end of August.

The Conference of 1999 directed that the following note be inserted here:

In 1999 the Conference, after debate, adopted a motion directing that reports and publications referred for consultation in the Districts and Circuits should be published by 30th September following the Conference where the business is to come back to the following Conference, and by 30th November in any other case. In giving this direction, the Conference acted on the basis that the responsibility for meeting the deadline lay both with those preparing the material for publication and with the Methodist Publishing House [now Methodist Publishing], and that there might be circumstances in which, despite the best endeavours of all concerned, the deadline could not practically be achieved.

(15) Any member of the Conference reporting the public proceedings of the Conference for the news media shall be personally responsible for the information given.



**125 Custody of Records, etc.** (1) The Journal and all documents required to be subscribed and attested with it shall be in the permanent custody of the Secretary of the Conference, but clause (5) below shall apply.

(2) The following records and documents shall also be in the permanent custody of the Secretary of the Conference:

- (i) the Conference Daily Record, and other documents officially circulated to members of the Conference for the purposes of its business, but clause (5) below shall apply;
- (ii) reports of committees (but not those of groups constituted under Standing Order 136(2)(v)) meeting during the Conference, so far as not included within clause (1) above;
- (iii) any legal opinion obtained on a matter of connexional significance, unless comprised in clause (3)(i) below;
- (iv) any deed poll executed in accordance with the provisions of section 24(3) of the 1976 Act;
- (v) a reference copy of each year's edition of *The Minutes of the Annual Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church*;
- (vi) a reference copy of each edition or revision of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.

As to circuit and local records see S.O. 015.

As to (i) see S.O. 123.

As to (iv) see Vol. 1, p. 22.

As to (v) see S.O. 124(1).

As to (vi) see S.O. 124(12).

(3) The following records and documents shall be in the permanent custody of the Property Secretary:

- (i) any legal opinion on a matter of connexional significance obtained by the Property Secretary or his or her predecessors, the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes or by any body with past or current connexional responsibility for the general oversight of Methodist property;
- (ii) any deed poll executed in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 27(5) of the Model Trusts.

As to the Property Secretary, see S.O. 006(2A).

As to (i) see S.O. 204(4) and the second note to 006(3)(b).

As to (ii) see Book II, Part 2.

(4) The copies of the agendas and minutes of Synods sent to the Secretary of the Conference in accordance with Standing Order 415(2) shall remain in his or her custody until in his or her judgment it is appropriate to deposit them in the connexional archives on suitable terms.

(5) Where this clause applies the Secretary of the Conference may, if he or she considers that there is inadequate office space to retain the whole of the records or documents in question, deposit some of them with the connexional archives, but

upon the condition that they remain in his or her legal custody and may at any time be consulted or removed on his or her authority.

See S.O. 015 as to archives generally.

(6) The Deed of Union shall remain with the connexional archives, but on the same condition as records or documents deposited in accordance with clause (5) above.

This clause refers to the original deed poll executed on the 20th September 1932 under the authority of the Methodist Church Union Act 1929. For the current provisions of the Deed of Union, see above, Book II, Part 1.

**126 Special Resolutions.** (1) (a) Subject to clause 25B(b) of the Deed sub-clauses (b) to (d) below shall constitute the provisions prescribing the ‘appropriate consultation’, as defined by section 2(1) of the 1976 Act, required before the confirmation of ‘special resolutions’, as so defined. Special resolutions amending the Model Trusts shall also be submitted to the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods.

Cl. 25B of the Deed of Union provides for the consultation required for certain business affecting the Conference Diaconal Committee or the Methodist Diaconal Convocation.

(b) The Conference, after considering the advice of the Conference Law and Polity Sub-committee on the point, shall direct, as to each such special resolution, whether consultation shall be in accordance with sub-clause (c) or (d) below, and in default of such a direction sub-clause (d) shall apply.

(c) Special resolutions within this sub-clause shall be submitted for approval or disapproval to the [...] **Connexional** Council unless moved on its behalf, in which case submission shall be to the Law and Polity Committee.

(d) Special resolutions within this sub-clause shall be dealt with under clauses (3) and (4) of Standing Order 122 in the same way as provisional resolutions, except that there shall be no power to approve with amendments.

For matters requiring special resolutions see ss. 5(2), (3) and 6(2)(b) of the 1976 Act (Vol. 1, p. 9) and para. 27(1) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2). Note that cl. (6) of S.O. 122 is inapplicable to special resolutions, which must be confirmed without amendment.

(2) The consultation required before the confirmation of ‘deferred special resolutions’, as defined in section 2(1) of the 1976 Act, shall take place as prescribed in clauses (3) to (7) below. The provisions of clauses (3) to (7) are directory only, and no failure to comply shall of itself invalidate such confirmation if reasonable steps have been taken by or on behalf of the Secretary of the Conference to procure compliance with clause (3) and to ensure that reports actually received from the bodies consulted, or a suitable summary, are placed before the confirming Conference.

See Vol. 1, p. 6, and for matters requiring deferred special resolutions s. 5(2) of the 1976 Act (Vol. 1, p. 9) and para. 27(2) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

As to the validation of proceedings see also cl. 35(c) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

(3) Deferred special resolutions shall be submitted to the Synod of every home and overseas District, to the Circuit Meeting of every Circuit, to the Church Council of every Local Church and to the connexional committees on Faith and Order and on Law and Polity.

(4) Each Synod shall consider any deferred special resolution during the year following the passing of the resolution.

(5) Each Church Council and Circuit Meeting shall consider any such resolution in or before March in the second year following the passing of the resolution and shall report its approval or disapproval both to the Synod of the District and to the Conference.

(6) Each Synod shall in the second year following the passing of any such resolution consider the reports of the Church Councils and Circuit Meetings of the District under clause (5) above and shall, after giving its own final consideration to the resolution, report its approval or disapproval to the Conference.

(7) The connexional committees on Faith and Order and on Law and Polity shall during either or both of the two years following the passing of any such resolution consider the resolution and they shall report their approval or disapproval to the Conference in the second such year.

**127 Suspension of Standing Orders.** (1) A resolution to suspend a Standing Order, or clause of a Standing Order, requires the same majority as a resolution to revoke that Standing Order or clause.

(2) The President, if of the opinion that such a resolution is of such significance that it ought to be considered by the Synods and confirmed before coming into effect, shall so inform the Conference and put to the Conference the motion that the resolution be declared to be a provisional resolution under Standing Order 122.

(3) This Standing Order does not apply to resolutions within Standing Order 131(20).

For general powers to suspend Standing Orders, see cl.19(c) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

**128 Extent of Legislation.** General resolutions of the Conference have effect throughout the home Districts, unless the Conference otherwise directs. **[...]**

In 2024 the Conference deleted the reference to the effect of its legislation on overseas Districts, there having been no overseas Districts since The Methodist Church The Gambia was granted autonomy in 2009.

**129 Conference Statements.** (1) It shall be open to the **[...] Connexional** Council or any committee which reports to the Conference to present a document intended, if adopted by the Conference under this Standing Order, to be a considered Statement of the judgment of the Conference on some major issue or issues of faith and practice, and framed with a view to standing as such for some years.

(2) The body producing such a document shall on first presenting it to the Conference move that it be dealt with as a draft Conference Statement and commended to the Connexion for study, discussion and response.

(3) If that motion is adopted the Conference shall give directions as to the distribution of the draft, the form and duration of such study and discussion, the timing and consideration of any such response and the year in which the matter shall next be brought before Conference, being at earliest the next year but one. The Conference may at any time vary those directions.

(4) (a) After such study and discussion and in the light of any such response the responsible body may present the document to the Conference for adoption in its original form or as revised.

The Conference of 1999 adopted a Motion directing that those responsible for bringing revised editions of reports to the Conference, including those falling under this clause, should indicate in their reports the amendments made since the previous edition.

(b) When such a document is presented for adoption notice of any proposed amendments to the text must be given in the Agenda or an order paper before the business is reached, and the Conference shall then decide whether to dispose of any such amendments in the ordinary course or to refer them to a revision committee and adjourn the debate.

(c) If the Conference decides to refer it shall appoint a revision committee consisting of a chair nominated by the President (after consultation with the Vice-President), one representative of each District and three [...] **Connexional Council** representatives. The committee, meeting if possible when the Conference is not in session, shall consider all the amendments and report with recommendations as to how each amendment shall be dealt with and as to any further changes consequential upon those recommendations. The proposer of each amendment and two representatives of the body presenting the document may speak to the amendment in the committee by such procedure as the committee may direct. The Conference shall deal with the proposed amendments by reference to the report of the committee, adopting or departing from its recommendations, which it may deal with as a whole or by sections. For the purposes of the rules of debate in Standing Order 131 the recommendations of the committee, as moved on its behalf, are at that stage substantive resolutions and any proposal to depart from them is an amendment.

The Connexional Council representatives in the above sub-clause replace the three Conference-elected representatives, as that category has been removed.

(d) All decisions of the Conference on amendments to the text of the documents, however dealt with, shall be taken by simple majority. After all such amendments have been disposed of any member of the Conference may move that the document be adopted as a Conference Statement. Such a resolution shall be carried only by a majority of not less than two thirds of the members of the Conference present and voting.

(5) No document adopted or approved or otherwise dealt with by the Conference in or after 1987 may be described as a Conference Statement or Declaration unless adopted under this Standing Order or provisions amending or replacing it.

(6) A Conference Statement shall cease to have that status if the Conference by a simple majority so resolves or if a further Statement covering substantially the same issue or issues is duly adopted.

**129A Revision Committee.** (1) If the Conference considers that any text presented for adoption or approval is likely to be the subject of a number of proposals for detailed amendments it may, if it thinks fit, without prior notice of motion resolve to follow the procedure set out in Standing Orders 129(4), sub-clauses (b) and (c), notwithstanding that the text is not being dealt with as a Conference Statement within Standing Order 129, and that procedure shall then apply so far as may be. Once the Conference has adopted that procedure any motion to refer any or all of the amendments to the body

originally presenting the text shall not be put to the vote until the revision committee has reported.

(2) If in any year the Conference considers that proposals are likely to come before the next following Conference which would require the appointment of a revision committee under Standing Order 129(4) or clause (1) above, but that the number or nature of the amendments to be expected is such as to make it desirable that they be submitted and the committee appointed before that next Conference assembles, the Conference may so direct and may make any ancillary provisions and any consequential modifications of the procedure under Standing Order 129(4), sub-clauses (c) and (d), or clause (1) above, as it thinks fit, and in that event Standing Order 129(4) and clause (1) above shall have effect subject to those directions and provisions and with those modifications.

**129B** [previously 207] **Special Days.** The [...] *Connexional* Council, *in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee*, may [...] *propose* to the Conference the observance by the Church of special days for prayer and the consideration of particular concerns.

**Section 13 Conduct of Business**

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**130 Introductory.** The rules of debate comprising the clauses of Standing Order 131 shall regulate the proceedings of the Conference, except that since much of the business of the Conference may be conducted in the form of conversations clauses (3) and (9) to (14) shall apply only when a formal resolution is under consideration.

**131 Rules of Debate.** (1) In this Standing Order ‘the President’ means the person presiding for the time being over the Conference in accordance with the provisions of clause 28 of the Deed of Union.

(1A) Any member who wishes to speak shall catch the President’s eye but shall not proceed further until called upon by the President.

(2) Every speaker shall address the President.

(3) No member may speak more than once on the same question without leave of the Conference, except in the exercise of a right of reply under clause (18) below. For this purpose an amendment or procedural motion raises a fresh question.

As to procedural motions, see clauses (11) to (16) below.

(4) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below every resolution or amendment shall be circulated beforehand in writing in the Agenda, or by other form of official report, or by notice of motion.

(b) Sub-clause (a) does not apply:

- (i) to procedural motions under clause (11) below or resolutions to extend sittings of the Conference beyond the time already determined;
- (ii) to resolutions submitted by the Law and Polity Sub-committee under clause (25) below;
- (iii) to business taken in closed session;
- (iv) to further amendments moved after a resolution has already been amended;
- (v) where the Conference has dispensed with circulation under clause (19) (a)(ii) below or Standing Order 129(4)(b) or 129A or otherwise;

Under S.O. 129(4)(b) or 129A a revision committee may be appointed without prior notice.

- (vi) if the President judges it necessary for the effective conclusion of a debate to admit a resolution or amendment without prior notice.

(c) Where sub-clause (b) applies, except by virtue of head (i), the resolution or amendment shall be produced in writing when proposed, and immediately handed to the Secretary.

(5) Every resolution or amendment, except a resolution moved on behalf of a body authorised to report to the Conference, requires to be seconded in order to be submitted to the Conference. With the same exception, all movers and seconders of resolutions or amendments must be members of the Conference.

(6) Persons presenting reports may speak to the resolutions in them and may give information on any development of major importance which has arisen since publication. Otherwise reports circulated in the Agenda or otherwise shall be presented without introductory speeches.

(7) When a resolution or amendment has been duly submitted it may not be withdrawn without the leave of the Conference.

(8) The seconder of a resolution or amendment may reserve the right to speak.

(9) (a) Any amendment of the terms of a resolution may be proposed if it is relevant to the subject-matter of the resolution, unless the same result could be achieved by the rejection of the resolution.

(b) If an amendment is carried the resolution as amended becomes the substantive motion, and as such may itself be amended under this clause.

(c) When an amendment has been duly submitted no other amendment may be moved until it has been disposed of, but any member may give notice of a proposed amendment and may state whether it is to be moved in any event or if not in what circumstances.

(10) A resolution may be disposed of by adoption (with or without amendment), rejection or withdrawal. Until it has been so disposed of no other resolution may be submitted except a procedural motion.

(11) The following are procedural motions, which may be adopted by the Conference at any time:

- (i) that the vote be now taken;
- (ii) that the question be not put;
- (iii) that the question be referred to the [...] *Connexional* Council or a committee;
- (iv) that the debate be adjourned;
- (v) that the Conference adjourn.

(12) If a resolution and amendment are before the Conference:

- (i) a motion that the vote be now taken relates only to the amendment;
- (ii) a motion that the question be referred or that the debate be adjourned relates to both;
- (iii) a person moving that the question be not put must state whether that motion relates to both or only to the amendment.

(13) A motion that the vote be now taken requires a majority of two thirds and shall be voted upon without discussion, but the President shall not be bound to put it to the vote if of the opinion that there has not been adequate opportunity for necessary debate.

(14) A motion that the question be not put may be discussed concurrently with the question to which it relates.

(15) A motion that the debate be adjourned may specify the time of resumption or be a motion for adjournment to a time to be resolved upon later.

(16) A motion for the adjournment of the Conference shall specify the time of resumption.

(17) (a) Subject to any Standing Order relating specifically to particular forms of report a report contained in the Agenda or in a document supplemental to the Agenda shall be dealt with as a whole or as to each part by a resolution in one of the following forms:

- (i) that it be referred back to the reporting body or referred to the [...] **Connexional** Council or a committee;
- (ii) that it be received;
- (iii) that it be adopted.

As to particular forms of report, see e.g. S.O. 129, 129A, 133.

(b) A resolution in any of these forms may contain or be accompanied by directions as to the publication or study of or any other action in relation to the report or (where appropriate) that no action be taken.

(c) Except as provided in (d) below or expressed in the resolution itself, no such resolution imports any endorsement by the Conference of any statement, opinion or recommendation in the report.

(d) By adopting a report the Conference endorses its recommendations or conclusions but not (without so stating) any reasons given for them.

(e) The Conference may qualify or limit any such adoption but shall not alter the text of any report except:

- (i) to rectify any manifest factual error; or
- (ii) to amend the terms of any passage which it is asked to endorse (whether expressly or by the operation of (d) above).

(f) The Conference may on a single motion deal en bloc with more than one resolution attached to a report, or with the resolutions to more than one report, but whenever:

- (i) an amendment is proposed to any such resolution; or
- (ii) there is a procedural motion under clause (11) above which in its original form or by a proposed amendment relates to less than all the matters before the Conference;

any matters which require to be put separately shall be so put.

(18) (a) When a vote falls to be taken, whether or not by the adoption of a motion under clause (11)(i) above, the following persons have a right to speak, and if more than one in the following order:



- (i) the seconder of the resolution or amendment to be put, if he or she has reserved the right to speak and has not already exercised that right;
- (ii) the mover of the substantive resolution, unless the question to be put is an amendment to which he or she has already spoken;
- (iii) if the question to be put is an amendment, the mover of the amendment.

(b) The person entitled to speak last under sub-clause (a) above may deal only with questions or arguments put during the debate.

(c) Before putting the question the President shall call the Conference to order and read the resolution or amendment to be put. Except on a point of order no member shall speak after the question has been put until the vote has been taken.

(19) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below, no decision of the current meeting of the Conference may be rescinded except by substantive resolution, and no such resolution shall be adopted unless either:

- (i) it is submitted on behalf of the Law and Polity Sub-Committee under clause (25) below; or
- (ii) it is moved upon notice in writing previously given and officially circulated (unless by a majority of two thirds the Conference has dispensed with notice) and obtains a majority of two thirds.

For the purposes of this sub-clause a resolution rescinds a previous resolution if, and only if, it is expressed to do so, or it directly reverses the previous resolution, or the President rules that in substance it is inconsistent with the intention of the Conference in adopting the previous resolution.

(b) Any resolution which, on the advice of the financial committee given in accordance with Standing Order 136A, would result in amendment of the provisions of the connexional budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed under Standing Order **204(1)** shall, if moved after the budget has been adopted, require a majority of two thirds, and, if carried, shall have the effect of amending the Conference's resolution on the budget without the operation of sub-clause (a) above.

(20) A resolution to suspend a rule of debate or other provision within the Conference rules of procedure, as contained in Standing Orders 122, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134(3) and (4), 134A, 136(2C) and 136A(3), requires a majority of two thirds.

For general powers to suspend Standing Orders, see cl.19(c) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

(21) The President shall call to order any speaker who departs from the question or violates the courtesies of debate.

(22) Any member may raise a point of order on the ground that the rules of debate or regulations of the Conference have been violated. The speaker then addressing the Conference shall give way until the point of order has been decided. The President decides all questions of order.

(23) (a) The following interventions in the ordinary course of business may occur, but only for substantial cause and by leave of the President:

- (i) a member who thinks himself or herself misrepresented may interrupt the speaker to correct the misrepresentation;

- (ii) a member may interrupt the speaker or intervene at the end of a speech to ask of the speaker a question of fact immediately connected with what is being or has been said;
- (iii) brief information on uncontested matters of fact germane to the business of the Conference may be given between speeches or between items of business.

(b) A member permitted to intervene under this clause must not enter into argument nor speak to the merits of the question.

(24) Questions which relate to the rights and privileges of the Conference or of individual members, or to the order of business, have precedence.

(25) The Conference may at any time entertain without notice any resolution moved on behalf of the Conference Sub-Committee of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of an earlier resolution of the current meeting of the Conference, in that or an earlier session, and which seeks:

- (i) to make consequential provisions; or
- (ii) to amend the earlier resolution for the purpose only of – clarification, or reconciliation with the requirements of the law or of Methodist polity, or the avoidance of unintended results, or the better achievement of the intention of the Conference, or the correction of factual error, or any other purpose considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the functions of the Law and Polity Committee; or
- (iii) to rescind the earlier resolution on the ground of illegality, irregularity or impossibility or any other ground considered by the Conference to be within the scope of the above functions.

For the appointment and functions of the sub-committee see S.O. 211(6). For the authority of a session of the Conference to exercise these powers see Deed of Union cl. 25(b) (Book II, Part 1). As to resolutions of earlier Conferences see cl. (25A) below.

Where the correction is not of a factual error (as in (ii) above) but one made solely for the purpose of achieving the accuracy of the record of the Conference, S.O. 123 applies.

(25A) The Conference may also entertain any resolution contained in the report of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity which arises out of a resolution of an earlier Conference and which seeks:

- (i) to amend the earlier resolution for a purpose within head (ii) of clause (25) above; or
- (ii) to rescind the earlier resolution on a ground within head (iii) of clause (25) above.

For the committee see S.O. 211. For the authority of the Conference so to resolve, and the effect of such a resolution, see Deed of Union cl. 36(f) and (g) (Book II, Part 1).

(26) The response of the Conference shall not normally be conveyed by clapping.

**132 Notices of Motion.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 131(4) any two members may upon notice of motion complying with this Standing Order bring before the Conference any lawful resolution within the competence of the Conference.

(1A) Every notice of motion shall be handed **or otherwise delivered** to the Secretary in written **or other permanent** form and signed by the following persons:

- (i) where the proposal is to amend a resolution and those responsible for presenting that business to the Conference are prepared to accept it, the proposer and seconder of the motion;
- (ii) where such a proposal to amend is not accepted by those responsible, the proposer and seconder and four other persons;
- (iii) in all other cases, the proposer and seconder and eight other persons.

(2) Only on matters of urgency, so judged by the President after consultation with the Vice-President, shall notices of motion in the Representative Session be accepted after 4.30 pm on the third day of the session, except that a notice of motion proposing to amend a resolution circulated or materially altered on or after the first day of the session shall be accepted if lodged before the close of business on the day before the resolution is to be dealt with.

**(3) A notice of motion which proposes to amend a resolution for the appointment of the members of the Connexional Council by removing from the list of names of those proposed for appointment the name of a current member of the council shall not be accepted later than 14 days before the commencement of the Representative Session of the relevant Conference except in cases of urgency and on the advice of the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee.**

For the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee, see S.O. 211(6). This clause was adopted upon the recommendation of the Law and Polity Committee in its response to Notice of Motion 101 of the Conference of 2023, as to the relationship of the Conference and the Connexional Council under the Oversight and Trusteeship provisions. See section C of the committee's report, 2024 Agenda pp 528ff.

**133 Memorials.** (1) The Conference may adopt, with or without amendment, or reject any reply proposed by the Memorials Committee or (if Standing Order 134(4) applies) by its convener.

For the committee see S.O. 138.

(2) In relation to any one or more memorials to which replies have been proposed by the committee any two members of the Conference may, on notice of motion submitted on the first day of the relevant session, move that instead of dealing with the committee's proposed reply in the ordinary course of business the Conference shall debate a resolution based on the relevant memorials, and if such a motion is carried the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference shall make arrangements accordingly.

See also S.O. 138(5).

(3) If there is a debate pursuant to Standing Order 138(5) or clause (2) above any resolution or amended resolution then adopted by the Conference is its reply to the relevant memorials.

(4) Subject to clause (5) below the Conference shall reply to every memorial, although it is open to the Conference as its interim reply to refer the memorial to the [...] **Connexional** Council or a committee for consideration and report. Rejection of a proposal that a memorial be declined is not itself a reply. It is the responsibility of the convener of the committee to ensure that if the Conference rejects the proposed reply

of the committee under clause (1) above or fails to adopt any resolution under clause (3) above consideration of the matter is not closed until a reply has been adopted.

For the convener of the committee see S.O. 101(1).

(5) The committee may recommend that the Conference instead of replying to a memorial refer the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such report.

**134 District Resolutions.** (1) Resolutions and reports submitted under Standing Order 419(2) in due time shall be printed in the Agenda. If a report is included the cost of printing shall be a charge on the District.

(2) *[revoked]*

(3) Such resolutions shall be moved and seconded in the Conference by representatives of the District and shall, subject to any recommendation from the business committee, be debated.

(4) If it appears likely to the Business Committee that the Conference will not, in the time available, be able to debate all such resolutions adequately, it may recommend to the Conference that one or more of such resolutions be dealt with instead as memorials. If the Conference adopts such a recommendation, the convener of the Memorials Committee shall, after such consultation as he or she thinks appropriate, frame a proposed reply, which shall be printed for the Conference in an order paper.

For the Memorials Committee see S.O. 138 and for its convener S.O. 101(1).

**134A En Bloc Business.** (1) (a) The Business Committee shall consider, taking into account the recommendations of the Memorials Committee made under Standing Order 138(5A), which resolutions to which sub-clause (b) of this Standing Order applies are unlikely to become provisional resolutions or to give rise to opposition or debate or to require amendment other than within sub-clause (e) below. It shall, no later than the opening of the Representative Session, table a list of such resolutions with notice of its intention to invite the Conference in due course to adopt all such resolutions en bloc.

(b) This clause applies to all resolutions in the Agenda or otherwise circulated before the opening of the Conference except those for the confirmation of provisional resolutions, or for the adoption or confirmation of special resolutions under Standing Order 126, and except resolutions relating to Conference Statements under Standing Order 129.

(c) Subject to sub-clause (e) below any resolution, including any recommended reply to a memorial, which becomes the subject of an amending notice of motion shall be removed from the list. In addition, by giving notice to the Secretary of the Conference in writing before the close of business on the third day of the Representative Session, any six members of the Conference may, without proposing an amendment, require any item or items, except a recommended reply to a memorial, to be removed from the list. The Business Committee itself shall be free at any time before the resolutions are moved to remove any item or items from the list.

(d) The resolutions remaining in the list shall not earlier than the fourth day of the Representative Session be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion.

(e) A need to make minor corrections to the text of any resolution on the list shall not necessitate its removal, and it may be moved under sub-clause (d) above as corrected. The Business Committee shall decide all questions as to the application of this sub-clause.

(2) The Business Committee may also advise, in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 136(2A)(c), that such resolutions based upon the recommendations of reference groups as it considers appropriate for such procedure should also be moved en bloc and voted upon without discussion. Sub-clause (1)(c) shall apply to the removal of any resolution from that procedure, provided the notice is duly given before the close of business on the day upon which such advice is circulated to the Conference.

**135 Closed Sessions.** (1) The Conference may at any time meet in closed session and shall do so when hearing any appeal arising out of any charge within Part 11.

(2) *[revoked]*

(3) During any closed session other than one for the hearing of an appeal within Part 11 no one may be present except members of the Conference entitled to vote on the business under consideration and any other persons or classes of persons whom the Conference may for the time being resolve to admit.

As to closed sessions for the hearing of appeals see S.O. 1145(7).

**136 Conference Business Committee.** (1) There shall be a Business Committee for the Representative Session of the Conference, consisting of:

- (i) an ex-President or ex-Vice-President, appointed by the previous Conference upon the nomination of the *[...]* **Secretary of the Conference** to serve for a period of three years, who shall chair the committee and who shall, whether or not a member in any other capacity, be a member of the Conference during the period of appointment; and
- (ii) three ministerial and three lay members of the Conference elected in accordance with clause (1A) or appointed under clause (1C).

The Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall be in attendance but without a vote and *[...]* the connexional Press Officer shall attend as a consultant *[...]* when required.

(1A) Where there will be a vacancy in the elected membership of the committee for the next Conference, an election shall be held after nomination by members of the current Conference. Each nomination shall be signed by a proposer and seconder. It shall contain the District and Circuit in which the person being nominated is stationed or is a member, current appointment or current offices within the church, age, occupation, and any other relevant information (up to fifteen words). No member shall nominate more than one person. In electing such members, the Conference shall consider the composition of the committee with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin. The election shall be by single transferable vote and the chair of the Business

Committee or his or her representative shall be the returning officer. The returning officer shall declare the persons elected to serve, together with two persons in each category as reserves in the event of any person who received a higher number of votes, or a continuing member under clause (1B), not being a member of the next Conference or not being able or willing to attend. Such reserves shall serve for the period for which the person originally elected would have served and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.

For the procedure for election by single transferable vote see S.O. 016A.

(1B) Committee members shall be elected for three years and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election. If an elected member is not a member of or is unable to attend the next ensuing or one of the subsequent Conferences the appointment shall lapse and the vacancy shall be filled in accordance with clause (1A) or (1C).

(1C) If it becomes clear during the course of the connexional year that there will be a vacancy on the committee which cannot be filled in accordance with the above provisions, the [...] **Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the President-designate and Vice-President-designate** shall have the power to appoint a member from amongst the members of the next Conference. Such appointment shall be for that Conference only.

(2) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as may be necessary and shall have the following responsibilities:

- (i) to draw up the order of business in the Conference and to allocate time to each item;
- (ia) to identify the resolutions which it proposes shall be moved en bloc under Standing Order 134A;
- (ii) to recommend to the Conference which notices of motion should be debated in the Conference and at what time, and which should be dealt with in some other way, and for what reason;
- (iii) to review at the end of each day the business allocated to the day but not completed and to advise the Conference how it should be dealt with;
- (iv) to recommend to the President and Vice-President items of business for which they might invite members of the Conference to indicate to the committee in advance a wish to speak, and to offer advice to the President and Vice-President so as to enable a representative range of views to be heard in any such debates;
- (v) to identify matters which are appropriate to be dealt with through any of the processes set out in clause (2A) below and to make the necessary arrangements, including assigning the members of the Conference to such groups as may be required.

(2A) (a) The committee may arrange for matters of general concern, not being dealt with in the formal business of the Conference, to be discussed in workshops or similar groups and shall advise the Conference on the procedure by which any issues raised in those discussions may be taken forward.

(b) The committee may identify items of Conference business which, because of the detail involved or the complexity of the issues, can profitably be explored in depth in hearings or group discussion before being debated in full Conference, and may advise the Conference whether, and if so how, the results of such exploration are to be reported.

(c) The committee may advise that certain items in the business of the Conference be dealt with in reference groups, with the expectation that the recommendations of such groups will be dealt with by the Conference en bloc under Standing Order 134A(2).

(2B) The committee may recommend that the Conference deal with any business by referring the questions raised to Synods and/or to Circuit Meetings for consideration or action without itself expressing a judgment on the substance of the issue. In such a case, the committee shall recommend whether Synods and Circuit Meetings are to report their conclusions to the Conference and, if so, a timetable for such reports.

(2C) The committee shall arrange for the budget for the Methodist Church Fund proposed by the [...] **Connexional** Council under Standing Order **204(1)** to be presented and considered not later than the fourth day of the Representative Session. The formal resolution for its adoption, and the consequent resolution as to the allocation to the respective Districts of the assessments, shall be moved on the final day of the Representative Session.

See S.O. 136A and 131(19)(b) as to resolutions which could affect the budget as proposed or adopted.

(3) All recommendations of the committee shall be reported daily to the Conference for approval or amendment. The person presiding shall have the power to limit the length of any debate on procedural questions arising from the committee's report.

**136A** [...] **Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee.** (1) The [...] **Connexional** Council, with a view to the discharge of its functions **generally and in particular its functions** under Standing Orders [...] **203(2) and (3), 204(1) and (2) and 205(3)** during the periods of the Conference, shall appoint a [...] **Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee** annually, consisting of [...] the Connexional Secretary [...] (**who shall chair the sub-committee**), **a member of the Connexional Council or the Resourcing Committee** and three other members [...] of the Conference, together with such other members of the Connexional Team in an advisory capacity as the council may decide.

For the Resourcing Committee's functions, see Sections 36 and 37 of Standing Orders.

**(1A) In appointing the three other members of the Conference referred to in clause (1) above, the council shall seek to ensure appropriate representation of those most affected by notices of motion which make or might make additional demands on the resources of districts, circuits and local churches, such as members of the Conference who hold office as synod secretaries, treasurers, superintendents and church stewards.**

(2) The **sub-committee** shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as necessary, shall [...] **scrutinise all material coming before the Conference which [...] has not already been the subject of an impact assessment in order to determine, as far as possible, the impact on the whole Connexion of any proposals for action contained in such**

**material in terms of resources, finance, personnel, workload, equality and culture and shall report its conclusions to the Conference.**

(3) In relation to all [...] resolutions **coming before the Conference** which, if adopted, would [...] **have increased [...] resource implications** the **sub**-committee shall advise the Conference, prior to any debate or vote upon them,

- (i) **whether the impact of the resolution, if adopted, has been fully articulated in the proposal and, if not, what the additional impact would be;**
- (ii) **whether the financial costs can be accommodated within the council's proposed budget;**
- (iii) **if not, how those additional costs should be funded;**
- (iv) if there are several such proposals before the **sub**-committee, what priority should be given to each.

The **sub**-committee's advice shall, except in emergencies, be conveyed to the Conference in writing.

**(4) For the purposes of this Standing Order, an 'impact assessment' is an assessment of the impact on the Connexion as a whole in accordance with the provisions of clause (2) above of any proposal contained in material coming before the Conference.**

S.O. 136A formerly contained the provisions for a Conference Financial Committee. The Standing Order now provides instead for this Conference Scrutiny Sub-committee, with wider functions. The changes indicated above reflect this altered remit.

**137 Committees of Reference.** (1) Whilst the Business Committee may identify, under Standing Order 136(2)(v), general items of business appropriate to be discussed in the Representative Session in groups, the provisions of this Standing Order shall apply where it is determined under clause (3) below that a matter shall be referred to a formal Committee of Reference.

(2) The [...] **President, Vice-President and Secretary** shall annually [...] **compile and circulate to the Conference** a list of the names of persons, all of whom are expected to be members of the ensuing Conference, who may be appointed to serve on Committees of Reference in accordance with clause (4) below. The list shall include, and identify as such, the names of an appropriate number of persons who may act as conveners.

(3) Either session of the Conference, or before that session meets the President (after consultation with the Vice-President in the case of the Representative Session) may refer any matter to a Committee of Reference for consideration and report.

(4) Each such committee shall be appointed from the list referred to in clause (2) above by the relevant session or, in a case arising before that session meets or where the urgency of the case so requires, the President, who in a matter concerning the Representative Session shall first consult the Vice-President. It shall be composed of a convener and eight other persons, all being members of the relevant session.

**138 Memorials Committee.** (1) [...] **The Memorials Committee, constituted in accordance with clauses (2) to (4) below, shall** consider all memorials from Synods and Circuit Meetings and make a recommendation on each to the Conference.

See S.O. 133, 419 and 516.



(2) In addition to the convener appointed by the preceding Conference the committee shall consist of:

- (i) a former President or Vice-President, **also appointed by the previous Conference**, who shall chair the committee;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference and the assistant secretary of the Conference;
- (iii) the Connexional Secretary;
- (iv) the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice;
- (v) the secretary of the Faith and Order Committee;
- (vi) a member of the Ministries Committee;
- (viA) a member of the Mission Committee;
- (vii) a member of the **[...] Resourcing Committee**;
- (viii) one district Chair, two presbyters, one deacon, one synod secretary and two lay persons, each nominated by a district Policy Committee from a different stationing region, according to a rota **maintained by the Secretary of the Conference**.

Those appointed under heads (i), (vi), (viA), (vii) and (viii) above shall normally serve for a period of three years. The President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate and the chair of the Business Committee shall attend, but without a vote.

(3) Each member nominated by a district Policy Committee shall in the first year of appointment be an elected representative of the District to the ensuing Conference. If any such member should cease to be a church member or minister in the District or should otherwise be unable to complete the full normal term of membership, the district Policy Committee shall nominate a substitute for the remainder of the term.

(4) The convener may invite other persons to attend the meeting of the committee in order to give information or otherwise assist the committee. Persons invited under this clause have no vote.

(5) The committee may, instead of proposing replies to particular memorials which it considers to be of special importance, recommend to the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference that arrangements be made for a resolution or resolutions based on one or more of them to be moved and debated in the Conference.

See also S.O. 133(2).

(5A) The committee shall recommend to the Business Committee which replies to memorials shall be proposed to be moved and voted upon en bloc under Standing Order 134A.

(6) The report of the committee shall clearly identify

- (i) those memorials which require to be considered by the Presbyteral as well as the Representative Session of the Conference, being shared business as defined by clause 24(c) of the Deed of Union; and
- (ii) those memorials which concern any of the matters specified in items (i) or (ii) of clause 25B(a) of the Deed, upon which the process prescribed by that clause will apply to the proposed reply.

Memorials from Synods must be sent so as to reach the convener by the Wednesday after the second Saturday in May (S.O. 419).

Memorials from Circuit Meetings must reach the convener by the 31st March (S.O. 516(4)).

(7) The committee shall meet shortly before the meeting of the Conference and its report shall, if possible, be printed for circulation in the Conference. If, however, in any particular year it should seem advisable to the convener of the committee and the Secretary of the Conference the committee may meet on the first day of the Conference.

(8) In respect of memorials remitted by the Conference for consideration and report by the [...] **Connexional** Council or other committees the reports shall be included in the Agenda of the next following Conference unless the Conference specifies some other year.

**139 Scrutineers.** The Representative and Presbyteral Sessions of the Conference shall each appoint from among their own voting members a sufficient number of scrutineers to count and record the votes of the Conference under the direction of one of their number appointed as Chief Scrutineer for that session by the [...] **Secretary of the Conference**.

## Section 13A Covenant Commitments

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The Conference of 2022 adopted the Commitments and Expectations set out in the report '*Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations*' and directed that they be published as Part 6 of Book IV where the full text of the report is to be found.

**13A1 Making the Commitments and Affirming the Expectations.** Annually, during the Representative Session of the Conference, those members present shall, on behalf of themselves and of the whole of the membership, make the Commitments and affirm the Expectations contained in Part 6 of Book IV: '*Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations*'.

For the meaning of 'members' and 'membership' see S.O. 004(iv).

This Standing Order was adopted by the Conference of 2023, and the making of the Commitments and affirmation of the Expectations took place for the first time during the service of Holy Communion at the close of the Conference in 2024.

## Section 14 Arrangements

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### 140 Conference Planning Executive and Conference Arrangements Committee.

(1) There shall be a body, to be known as the Conference Planning Executive, with overall responsibility for the strategic planning of, and the taking of executive decisions in relation to, all practical matters concerning meetings of the Conference.

(2) The members of the executive shall be:

- (i) the chair of the Business Committee for the Representative Session of the Conference;
- (ii) the chair of the Business Committee for the Presbyteral Session of the Conference;
- (iii) the member of the connexional Team with responsibility for the co-ordination of events;
- (iv) the Secretary of the Conference;
- (v) the Assistant Secretary of the Conference;
- (vi) the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice;
- (vii) **[...] a Connexional Team member responsible for connexional financial matters;** and
- (viii) the Connexional Secretary.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of clause (1) above, the responsibilities of the executive shall include making executive decisions about the following matters:

- (i) the venue and mode of meeting of the Conference;
- (ii) public acts of worship at or connected with the Conference (but for the avoidance of doubt subject to the provisions of Section 72 as respects reception into full connexion and ordination of presbyters and deacons);
- (iii) expenditure, including allowances to representatives;
- (iv) exhibitions, public lectures and other fringe events connected or associated with the Conference.

(4) The **[...] Secretary of the Conference** shall appoint a convener and other members of the Conference Arrangements Committee which, under the direction of the Secretary of the Conference, shall be responsible for all arrangements not falling within the scope of clauses (1) and (3) above, including in particular the arrangements for stewarding and the work of volunteers, and any other matters which the executive may request the committee to arrange.

**141 Expenses of Representatives.** The approved travelling expenses to and from the Conference and local travelling expenses during the Conference of all members and

associate members of the Conference, their approved accommodation costs and the cost of their lunches shall be met by the Methodist Church Fund.

**142 Charges.** (1) Each committee or institution requiring additional accommodation on the Conference premises shall apply to the Conference Planning Executive and, where it is available and allocated to them, shall contribute as required for the same to the Methodist Church Fund.

(2) Each committee or institution holding a public meeting in connection with the Conference shall be responsible for the expenses involved and shall, in addition, contribute to the Methodist Church Fund a quota of the amount received by way of collections. The quota shall be determined by the Conference Planning Executive.

**143-144** *[revoked]*

**145 Distribution of Written Communications.** No pamphlets, advertisements or other literature shall be distributed within the Conference hall unless required by the business of the Conference. Letters shall be distributed only if they are addressed to Conference members by name, and the Conference Arrangements Committee shall not be obliged to distribute envelopes, even if addressed by name, which they have reason to believe are not bona fide personal mail. In any case of uncertainty the decision of the President after consultation with the Vice-President shall be final.

**146 Printing Expenses.** The cost of producing the Daily Record and other material that is in the judgment of the Secretary of the Conference necessary for the Conference to conduct its business shall be a charge on the Methodist Church Fund.

For the Daily Record see S.O. 123.

See also S.O. 371(3)(i),(ii) and (ix).

## Section 15 The Presbyteral Session

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The Deed of Union provides by cls. 15, 23, 24 and 25 (Book II, Part 1) for the constitution and powers of the Presbyteral Session.

**150 Business Committee.** (1) There shall be a Business Committee for the Presbyteral Session of the Conference.

(2) The committee shall consist of:

- (i) the ex-President;
- (ii) two other presbyters appointed by the Conference in its Presbyteral Session to serve for three years, retiring sequentially, with power for the **[...] Secretary of the Conference** to fill casual vacancies;
- (iii) such presbyters as are elected under Standing Order 136 to be members of the Business Committee of the Representative Session.

(3) The Secretary of the Conference shall be the convener, but without a vote.

(4) The committee shall meet before and during the sessions of the Conference as may be necessary and shall have the following responsibilities:

- (i) to draw up the order of business in the Conference and to allocate time to each item;
- (ii) to recommend topics for pastoral consideration or conversation under clause 23(f) of the Deed of Union and subjects in the Agenda of the Representative Session or other subjects within the jurisdiction of the Conference for discussion under clause 23(m) of the Deed of Union, and in that connection, where appropriate, to frame resolutions for debate;
- (iii) to review at the end of each day the business allocated to the day but not completed and to advise the Conference how it should be dealt with.

**151 Permission to Attend the Conference.** A presbyter who is not a member of a Synod and who wishes to attend the Presbyteral Session of the Conference under clause 15(a)(ii) of the Deed of Union requires the permission of the President in order to do so.

See cl. 15(a)(ii) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part I).

**152** *[revoked]*

**153 Obituaries.** (1) During the Presbyteral Session of the Conference there shall be held a service of commemoration and thanksgiving for those presbyters,

presbyteral probationers and student presbyters who have died since the last preceding Conference.

(2) The names of the deceased presbyters, probationers and students shall be read by the Secretary of the Conference during the service.

(3) The Secretary of the Conference shall each year receive from the secretaries of the Synods the obituaries of deceased presbyters and presbyteral probationers which have been approved by the Synods, and from circuit Superintendents those of presbyters and presbyteral probationers who have died subsequently. In the case of a student presbyter's death, the Principal of the relevant training institution will be responsible for having an obituary produced and sending it to the Secretary. The Secretary of the Conference shall, if necessary, revise the obituaries and shall include them in the Agenda. They shall be presented to the Conference in its Presbyteral Session for adoption, with any further revision accepted by the Conference.

(4) Obituaries received too late for inclusion in the Minutes for the current year shall appear in the Agenda of the succeeding year.

For procedure in the Districts see S.O. 487.

**154 Annual Inquiry.** In the Presbyteral Session, when inquiry is made into the character and discipline of presbyters and presbyteral probationers, the names of the Districts shall be called one by one and the respective Chairs shall answer on behalf of their Districts. The right of any member of the Conference to bring a charge under Part 11 shall not be affected by the operation of this Standing Order.

## Section 16 Additional Meetings

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This Section contains regulations made under cl. 19 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) for the summoning of the Conference *between* its ordinary meetings. Compare cl. 33(b), which provides for the *alteration* of the date or place fixed for the next ordinary meeting.

**160 Summons.** In case of great emergency, so judged, after consultation with the Vice-President and the Secretary, by the President, he or she may summon an additional meeting or meetings of the Conference in the interval between the conclusion of its ordinary meeting and the assembling of the next ensuing Conference.

**161 Place and Date.** Any such additional meeting shall be held at such place and shall commence its sittings on such date as the President may, after consulting the Vice-President and the Secretary of the Conference, direct.

**162 Constitution.** For the purposes of such an additional meeting the Conference shall consist of those persons who were members of the Conference at its last preceding ordinary meeting.

**163 Status.** Any such additional meeting shall, so far as may be, have effect and be conducted as an adjourned meeting of the last preceding Conference for all the purposes of the Deed of Union and Standing Orders.

See, for example, cl. 31 of the Deed (Book II, Part 1) as to the duration of office of the President, etc., and S.O. 131(19) as to rescission of resolutions.



## Section 18 The Conference Diaconal Committee

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This section needs to be read in conjunction with cls. 25A and 25B of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) which deal with the constitution and powers of the Conference Diaconal Committee.

**180 Officers and Members.** (1) The preceding or current Conference shall, upon the nomination of the Secretary of the Conference, appoint recording officers of the Conference Diaconal Committee, and one of them also as its reporting officer. So far as not already members of the committee they shall, whether or not deacons, thereby become members under clause 25A(b)(v) of the Deed of Union.

(2) The Secretary of the Conference or his or her deputy shall be the convener of the committee.

(3) The Warden shall be responsible for notifying the President or Vice-President, as the situation may require, where it appears necessary or appropriate for the President or Vice-President to exercise the power conferred by clauses 25A(c) and 29A(a) of the Deed to appoint additional or substitute members.

(4) The deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order is hereby appointed an officer of the committee.

**181 Meetings and Reports.** (1) The Conference Diaconal Committee shall meet as necessary to discharge the responsibilities laid upon it by the Deed of Union and Standing Orders.

(2) The committee shall meet in closed session for business requiring decisions upon individual cases or other confidential matters, and in any other case where Standing Orders so require. It may resolve to do so on other occasions as it deems appropriate.

(3) The committee may refer any matter to a sub-committee of its members for consideration and report.

(4) The reporting officer shall be responsible for recording the decisions made by the committee, reporting them to the next following or current Conference, as the case may be, in its Representative Session and, where the Deed of Union or Standing Orders require, ensuring that they are entered into the Journal of the Conference.

For the Journal of the Conference, see cl. 36 of the Deed of Union.

**182 Obituaries.** (1) The obituaries of those deacons, diaconal probationers and student deacons who have died shall be prepared by the Warden in consultation where possible with the Convocation, and shall be presented to the Conference Diaconal Committee for adoption, with any further revision accepted by the committee.

For the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order see Section 75 of Standing Orders.

(2) The reporting officer shall be responsible for reporting them to the Conference for incorporation into the Journal of the Conference.

(3) The obituaries shall be printed in the Minutes and any received too late for inclusion in the Minutes for the current year shall appear in the Agenda of the succeeding year.

**183 Annual Inquiry.** (1) In the Conference Diaconal Committee the Warden shall annually give assurances on behalf of the Convocation as to the character and discipline of the deacons and diaconal probationers.

(2) The reporting officer shall be responsible for reporting the assurances to the Conference for incorporation into the Journal of the Conference.

(3) The right of any member of the committee to bring a charge under Part 11 shall not be affected by the operation of this Standing Order.

For the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order see Section 75 of Standing Orders.

**Section 19 Appointments by the Conference and Other Bodies**

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**190** [previously parts of 203, 204 and 206] **Nominations to the Conference for Appointment.** (1) This Standing Order relates to all bodies appointed by the Conference, subject to any contrary legal requirement **or to any provision in the Standing Order specifically dealing with the appointment of the relevant body.**

Besides the general provisions below, see the following S.O.s applying to those particular bodies.

As to the provisions governing Action for Children, see S.O. 282, and for those governing Conference nominations to the board of Methodist Homes, see S.O.283.

As to the provisions governing Conference appointments of Board members of the Inspiring Lives Education Trust and of the Epworth Education Trust see S.O.s 270 and 271 respectively.

As to the provisions governing Conference appointments of trustees of Methodist Independent Schools Trust see S.O. 273.

The membership of the Central Finance Board is governed by regulations 2 to 6 of the Second Schedule to the Act of 1960 (Vol. 1, p. 59). In this instance district representatives are effectively appointed by the Synods instead of nominated by them for appointment by the Conference, and the appointment is for such period as the Synod may specify or, if no period is specified, for three years.

(2) In appointments for which nominations are brought [...] by the bodies themselves [...] no person may be so nominated to the same body in the same category for more than six years in succession, except by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in the nominating body on a ballot vote taken after all proposals for nomination have been made, those for re-nomination containing a record of attendances and the special reason for re-nomination.

(3) Where nominations are made by the bodies themselves consideration shall be given to the composition of the body as a whole with regard to the age, sex, and ethnic origin of its members, and (subject to Standing Order 010) the diversity of experience and opinion in the church, including minority views.

(4) The secretaries or conveners of committees appointed by the Conference shall supply to the Secretary of the Conference, for inclusion in the Conference Agenda, lists of the names, including one Christian name, of each person nominated, distinguishing those proposed for re-appointment and those proposed for the first time.

(5) (a) All new nominations for committees, commissions or other bodies appointed by the Conference shall be supported by [...] **a reasoned statement (up to 25 words) about the nominee.**

(b) These [...] **statements** shall, unless printed in the Conference Agenda or otherwise officially circulated to the Conference, be displayed by notice in the Conference hall.

**191** [previously 208] **Commencement Date for Appointments.** All appointments made by the Conference or the [...] **Connexional** Council shall, subject to any contrary

legal requirement, take effect from the first day of September after appointment unless otherwise provided

- (i) in the resolution of appointment; or
- (ii) in the Deed of Union or these Standing Orders.

**192** [previously 202] **Expenses and Loss of Earnings.** (1) This Standing Order applies to the Conference, the [...] **Connexional** Council, and all boards and committees appointed by the Conference **or Connexional Council** (in this Standing Order called 'parent bodies') and to all subordinate committees, sub-committees and working parties appointed by or on the authority of a parent body.

(2) All sums payable under this Standing Order shall be paid out of the funds administered by the relevant body, or if none out of the Methodist Church Fund.

As to the Methodist Church Fund, see S.O. 371.

(3) The expenses of the members of all bodies to which this Standing Order applies (including sums necessarily paid to carers), incurred in attending the meetings or doing the work of the relevant body, shall be reimbursed, if desired.

(4) A loss of earnings allowance shall be paid, if desired, in accordance with clauses (5) and (6) below, to all members of the Conference, the [...] **Connexional** Council and any other bodies to which this Standing Order applies and which are specified for this purpose under clause (7) below.

(5) The amount of any such allowance shall be the amount of the loss of earnings actually sustained by attending a meeting of the relevant body, or the maximum determined under clause (6) below, whichever is the less.

(6) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall determine annually for the next connexional year the maximum daily allowance for loss of earnings.

(7) Each parent body shall specify annually for the next connexional year which bodies, if any, from among that parent body and its subordinate bodies, shall qualify for loss of earnings allowances.

## Part 2 Bodies Appointed by or Relating Directly to the Conference

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*Part 2 and Part 3 (below) were adopted as a whole by the Conference of 2024, finally to bring into effect the principal recommendations as to the connexional Oversight and Trusteeship of the Methodist Church, made in successive reports to the Conference [see in particular Section C of Conference Report 57 (2023): Oversight and Trusteeship], reflecting the relationship between the Conference as the governing body of the Church and the newly created Connexional Council as being the connexional trust body (see further the note at the head of Section 20 below). As the title to this Part 2 indicates, its focus is on the Conference, while that in Part 3 is on the work done under the aegis of the Connexional Council. Part 2 therefore broadly contains the Standing Orders relating to:*

- connexional bodies, including the Connexional Council and panels, which are appointed by the Conference;*
- other connexional bodies which report to the Conference;*
- entities which have a significant relationship with the Conference or Methodist Church as a whole; Conference properties as defined in the Model Trusts.*

*The Conference resolved that Parts 2 and 3 should come into effect on 1 September 2024, revoking the existing Parts 2, 3 and 10 of Standing Orders as of that date. However, the text of many of the Standing Orders in those Parts has been retained at this stage (although further changes can be anticipated in coming years) and the Standing Orders have simply been re-numbered; the numbers in square brackets indicate where the Standing Order substantially to the same effect was to be found previously. Although the whole of Parts 2 and 3 are technically new, for ease of reading they have been set out in plain text, with amendments to what appeared previously being indicated in the usual way by [...] and **bold italics**.*

## Section 20 The Connexional Council

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Clauses 37A to 37C of the Deed of Union, as adopted by the Conference of 2023 to come into effect on 1 September 2024, lay down the foundational rules for the creation of the Connexional Council as the connexional trust body having the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church, without derogation from the position, authority and powers of the Conference as the governing body of the Methodist Church. See clauses 18 to 21 (as similarly amended by the Conference of 2023) as to the general powers and responsibilities of the Conference as the governing body of the Methodist Church, such functions not being exercisable so as to prevent or inhibit the members of the Connexional Council from or in performing their duties as the trustees of the Methodist Church.

The Standing Orders relating to the Connexional Council in this Section and elsewhere are to be read in the light of the Deed of Union clauses cited above.

The intention was that that the Special Resolution making the necessary amendments to reflect the change from the Methodist Council to the Connexional Council in the Model Trusts would be confirmed at the Conference of 2024, and would therefore also come into effect on 1 September 2024. However, because the appropriate consultation had not been possible, this was not able to be done. The Conference instead adopted S.O. 904 which constituted the Connexional Council as the connexional trustees for the purposes of the Model Trusts, and authorised the Connexional Council to perform and exercise the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council by the Model Trusts. (See the report of the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee in the 2024 Daily Record at item 5/7/1.). The Conference re-adopted the relevant Special Resolution which will be brought back to the Conference of 2025.

### **200 Connexional Council: Constitution.**

*In this Standing Order 200, items in bold italics or strike-through indicate changes made by the Conference of 2024 to the text originally adopted by the Conference of 2023 for implementation from 1 September 2024.*

(1) (a) The Connexional Council constituted by clause 37A of the Deed of Union shall be appointed annually by the Conference and shall comprise at least 18 and no more than 22 members.

(b) In accordance with clause (1)(a) the membership of the council shall consist of:

- (i) the President and Vice-President of the Conference as required by clause 37A;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference as similarly required;
- (iii) the chair of the council appointed in accordance with clause (2)(a) below;
- (iv) the chair or **a** deputy chair of the Mission Committee;
- (v) the chair or **a** deputy chair of the Ministries Committee;
- (vi) the chair or **a** deputy chair of the Resourcing Committee;
- (vii) **the chair or a deputy chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;**
- (viii) up to **fourteen** other persons appointed in accordance with clause (2)(b) below.

***The meeting shall be quorate when twelve members are present.***

Note that this provision for a quorum is an exception to the usual rule that no quorum is required for meetings of Methodist bodies. It was adopted here in the light of the unique level of responsibility of the Connexional Council (see 2024 Agenda, Oversight and Trusteeship report 50, para. 1.5.2).

(c) The members of the council shall all be members of the Methodist Church.

***No person shall be a member of the council (other than as President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference) who is stationed to serve in or is employed in the Connexional Team.***

(d) In addition, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice shall attend and have the right to speak but not vote. From time to time, in order to assist the council in dealing effectively with its business, other persons whose attendance is appropriate may also be invited to be present and speak but not to vote.

***(e) A single named person shall be nominated annually by the relevant committee for appointment under each of heads (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of sub-clause (1)(b) above. There shall be no provision for voting substitutes. In the temporary absence of the appointee the alternative eligible officer in each case may where appropriate be invited to be present and speak but not to vote.***

(2) (a) The chair of the council shall be appointed upon nomination by the Nominations Committee normally to serve, subject to the [...] **provisions of clause (4)**, for a period of four years and may be appointed for a further period of up to two years. The Nominations Committee shall also nominate for appointment by the Conference, from the members appointed under head (1)(viii) above, a deputy chair, who may hold office during the period of appointment under sub-clause (b) below [...].

For the Nominations Committee, see S.O. 220. See also S.O. 132(3).

(b) The persons appointed under head (1)(viii) above shall be nominated by the Nominations Committee for their experience, expertise and representative roles, each person having the appropriate skills to serve on a trustee body. They shall normally serve, **subject to the provisions of clause (4)**, for a period of four years and may be appointed for a further period of up to two years.

(3) The Secretary of the Conference shall be the secretary of the council and shall be responsible for preparing the agendas of the meeting, for the publication and implementation of its decisions, and for ensuring that it reports annually to the Conference and submits such other reports as are necessary to comply with legal requirements.

***(4) (a) A person shall cease to be a member of the council where any of the following conditions are satisfied:***

- (i) the person ceases to be a member of the Methodist Church, or (except in the case of the President, Vice-President or Secretary of the Conference) becomes stationed to serve in or becomes employed in the connexional Team;***
- (ii) if appointed to the council under head (iii) or (viii) of sub-clause (1)(b) above, the person resigns from the council;***

- (iii) *if appointed to the council under head (i), (ii), (iv), (v), (vi) or (vii), the person ceases to hold the relevant office;*
- (iv) *if*
  - (A) *in the written opinion given to the council of a registered medical practitioner treating a person appointed to the council under clause (1) (viii) above that person has become mentally or physically incapable of acting as a trustee and may continue to be so for more than three months; or*
  - (B) *a person so appointed is absent from the meetings of the council for six months without the consent of the council*  
and in either case the council has resolved that the relevant person shall cease to be a member of the council;
- (v) *in the case of the chair or deputy chair of the council, the appointment has been terminated under the provisions of sub-clause (b) below.*

As to (iv), this provision was inserted, upon the recommendation of the Law and Polity Committee (2024 Agenda, report 49 at para. 24), that a provision similar to that in model governing documents produced by the Charity Commission should be adopted.

***(b) The appointment of the chair or deputy chair of the council may be terminated before the expiration of the period provided for by sub-clause (2)(a) above if the following conditions are satisfied:***

- (A) *at least 25 persons who were members of the previous Conference and who include 10 persons falling within the group of persons specified in sub-clause (c) below request the Secretary of the Conference to appoint a Termination Panel in accordance with sub-clause (d) below to consider the termination of the appointment of the chair or the deputy chair on the ground specified in sub-clause (e) below; and*
- (B) *the Termination Panel decides that the relevant appointment should be terminated.*

***(c) The persons specified for the purposes of sub-clause (b)(A) above are the following: the President, the Vice-President, the ex-President, the ex-Vice President, the President-designate, the Vice-President designate, the Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary, the District Chairs and the members of the council appointed under heads (iv) to (viii) of clause (1)(b).***

This provision was inserted, upon the recommendation of the Law and Polity Committee (2024 Agenda, report 49 at paras. 25-26), the committee having been directed, in response to Notice of Motion 101 of the Conference of 2023, to consider and advise the Conference upon the relationship between the Connexional Council and the Conference, particularly with regard to resolving any disputes between the bodies.

***(d) A Termination Panel shall consist of seven persons who were members of the Conference in at least one of the previous five years, of whom at least one shall be a deacon and at least three shall be lay people and shall include a past President or Vice-President who shall chair the panel.***

***(e) The ground on which the appointment of a Termination Panel may be requested is that the chair or the deputy chair (as the case may be) no longer commands the confidence of the council or (alternatively or additionally) of the Methodist Church in the exercise of the***



**functions of chair or deputy chair of the council.**

**(f) A request for the appointment of a Termination Panel shall be made in writing, shall be signed by the persons by whom the request is made and shall state the reasons which are alleged to give rise to the loss of confidence forming the ground for such a request.**

There are other situations where by virtue of general trust law a person becomes disqualified from being a trustee and therefore the appointment automatically comes to an end. Provision does not therefore need to be made explicitly in these Standing Orders. The website of the Charity Commission provides further information on these matters.

**(5) (a) Where a person ceases to be a member of the council under clause (4)(a), the council shall have authority to appoint to its membership with immediate effect until the end of the next Conference an eligible replacement for the relevant person but shall not be obliged to do so unless it is necessary to restore the membership of the council to 18.**

**(b) If the chair ceases to be a member of the council under clause 4(a) or the appointment of the chair is terminated under clause (4)(b) the deputy chair shall act as chair until the end of the next Conference. In that event, or if the deputy chair ceases to be a member of the council under clause (4)(a) or the appointment of the deputy chair is so terminated, the remaining members of the Council may, but need not, appoint a person from among their number to act as deputy chair until that time. If the appointments of both the chair and the deputy chair are terminated under clause 4(b) the remaining members of the council shall appoint persons from among their number to act as chair and deputy chair until that time.**

**(c) Any appointments made under this provision shall be reported by the council to the Conference.**

(6) The council shall normally meet at least six times a year, at appropriate times to enable the full participation of all those appointed to serve. Some, but not all, of these meetings may be held electronically or in hybrid form. Where urgent business requires it, the council shall have the power to make decisions electronically (by email or similar communication) between meetings.

(7) Except where a Standing Order requires otherwise, any resolution of the council is adopted if approved by a simple majority of those present and voting. In the event of a tied vote, the person chairing the meeting shall have a second, casting vote.

**(8) The council shall agree and publish a working document setting out the rules it has adopted from time to time relating to matters designed to regulate appropriately its conduct of its business.**

**201 Authority to Appoint Committees and Other Groups.** In addition to such committees as are prescribed by Standing Orders, the Connexional Council shall have power, for the purposes of fulfilling its responsibilities under the Deed of Union, Model Trusts and Standing Orders, to appoint committees, working parties or other such groups as necessary, in each case determining their powers and functions and clarifying where relevant the extent of any delegation.

**202 Chair's Executive Authority.** (1) The chair, or the deputy chair, of the Connexional Council may take executive action on behalf of the council where the

power to do so has been specifically delegated by the Council.

(2) In urgent matters requiring response that occur between meetings of the council and when members of the council cannot be quickly consulted, the chair, or in the chair's absence the deputy chair, may act in the name of the council and shall as soon as practicable report such actions to the council. They shall in all cases work within any guidelines for speaking and acting on behalf of the Methodist Church approved by the Conference.

**203 General Powers and Responsibilities as Trustee Body.** (1) In the exercise of its exclusive responsibility for the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church, as defined by clause 37B of the Deed of Union, and without prejudice to the generality of this responsibility as a trustee body, the Connexional Council shall have the powers and exercise the functions laid down in the following clauses of this Standing Order.

(2) The council shall have the direction and management of the members of the Connexional Team (as defined in Section 38 of Standing Orders) and be the employing body for those persons appointed to the Team under Standing Orders 380(3)(iii) and 384.

(3) It shall exercise oversight of the general work of the Connexional Team, including that of the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary, in providing an effective and efficient service on behalf of the Conference.

(4) It shall exercise oversight of the committees which have been appointed by the council under Section 30 or otherwise to undertake the various areas of work for which the council is responsible.

Section 30 provides for the 'main Council Committees' i.e. the Ministries, Mission and Resourcing Committees.

- (5) With regard to any connexional bodies, the council shall be responsible for
- (i) all matters relating to or arising out of the employment of persons by such bodies; and
  - (ii) compliance with legal requirements as to the conduct of such bodies, including but not limited to those listed in clause 37C(b)(iii) of the Deed of Union.

(6) (a) Without derogating from such responsibilities laid by Standing Orders upon other bodies, the council shall be responsible for recommending to the Conference the adoption of Standing Orders or guidance, as appropriate, affecting Districts, Circuits and Local Churches, in relation to matters of employment or compliance with other applicable legal requirements.

(b) If at any time legislation is enacted or judgment is delivered by a court of law in any territory within the Home Districts in consequence of which any Standing Orders or subsisting resolutions of the Conference are illegal, or no longer achieve their intended purpose, or fail to give effect to legal requirements, the council may, so far only as it judges necessary to meet any such defects within that territory before the next meeting of the Conference, revoke, amend, add to or suspend any such Standing Orders or

resolutions or take other actions which would, but for this sub-clause, be contrary to their effect.

(c) The council shall not delegate any powers exercisable only by virtue of sub-clause (b) above.

(d) If the council takes any action authorised only by sub-clause (b) above it shall be reported to the next Conference and shall cease to have effect at the close of that Conference unless meanwhile ratified by it.

(7) The council shall be the managing trustees of such property as is assigned to be its responsibility under the Model Trusts.

See the note at the beginning of this Section (20), for the rules applicable from 1 September 2024 in relation to the Model Trusts.

(8) The council shall be the trustee body for all connexional funds and have responsibility for the preparation and approval of the consolidated accounts.

See Section 37 below.

**204 Responsibilities for Finance and Property.** (1) The Connexional Council shall be responsible for:

- (i) presenting to the Conference the financial statements, for information; and
- (ii) presenting to the Conference the budget for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, for approval by the Conference.

See S.O. 362 for the respective responsibilities of the Resourcing Committee and Connexional Council.

(2) In order to assist the council in the exercise of its trustee functions, it shall receive and consider such advice and reports from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as are required in Standing Order 222 and shall ensure that the Conference is informed about any significant concerns raised by the committee.

(3) The council has responsibility throughout the home Districts, subject to the authority of the Conference as the governing body of the Methodist Church as set out in clause 18 of the Deed of Union, for all model trust property affairs and the building, legal and financial aspects of shared schemes under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, and for that purpose is empowered to draw up its own regulations, subject to the approval of the Conference.

(4) For the purposes of the Methodist Church Act 1976 and the Model Trusts the council is the connexional organisation authorised by the Conference to act generally on behalf of the Conference in relation to property affairs and constituted to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division.

As to (3) and (4) generally see the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2). See also the note at the heading of this Section 20 for the position from 1 September 2024 in relation to the Model Trusts.

(5) The council shall be responsible for the administration of a central scheme of Gift Aid recovery for the benefit of local church, circuit and other Methodist funds to which the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 applies.

For the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960, see Vol. 1, p.43.

**205 The Conference's Vision and Strategy.** (1) To enable the Church to fulfil its calling, the council shall seek to implement the vision, strategies, decisions and directions set by the Conference.

(2) In partnership with others in giving spiritual leadership in the Church, the Connexional Council shall keep in constant review the life of the Church, so as to assist in making its work and witness more effective. It shall receive and consider any representations which the Chairs' Meeting may from time to time submit upon matters of connexional or district concern.

For the Chairs' Meeting see S.O. 294.

(3) In fulfilment of these responsibilities, the council shall help to ensure that the Conference's decisions and objectives are implemented in a timely, cohesive and considered manner, and shall bring such proposals and reports to the Conference as will assist the Conference to determine the future policy and objectives of the Conference.

**206 Powers to Act on Behalf of The Conference.** (1) Between the close of any Conference and the opening of the next succeeding Conference the Connexional Council is authorised to act on behalf of the Conference, provided that with the exception expressed in Standing Order 203(6)(b) such action is not contrary to the Deed of Union or Standing Orders or to any subsisting resolution of the Conference.

(2) The Conference may, by Standing Order or otherwise, delegate to the council such duties and powers (not being those which in any case are exclusively the council's responsibility as the trustee body) as it deems appropriate.

**207 Reports.** (1) The Connexional Council shall annually report to the Conference on the discharge of its responsibilities.

(2) The council shall report, in accordance with their respective requirements, to all relevant regulatory bodies (including, but not limited to, the Charity Commission).

## Section 21 The Conference's Committees on Faith and Order and on Methodist Law and Polity

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**210 [330] Faith and Order Committee.** (1) The Conference shall appoint annually a Faith and Order Committee consisting of:

- (i) a senior member of the Connexional Team, representing the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the secretary of the committee, who shall be appointed in accordance with Standing Order 385 or 386;
- (iii) up to twenty other members.

(2) The secretary of the committee shall be a member of the Connexional Team.

For the Connexional Team, see S.O. 380.

(3) The committee shall appoint a Liturgy and Worship Sub-Committee, chaired and convened by members of the committee but including persons who are not members of the committee in order to assist the committee in the completion of its tasks.

(4) The committee shall encourage reflection on the theological implications of all the work undertaken by the Connexional Team, shall seek to stimulate theological reflection and study throughout the Church, and shall disseminate the results of its work as widely and accessibly as possible.

(5) The committee shall consider and report upon all matters remitted to it by the Conference touching the faith or order of the Church, and bring to the notice of the Conference any matter of faith or order to which it should give attention.

(6) The committee shall in particular consider and report upon all matters so remitted which arise in connection with proposals and projects for inter-communion or organic union between the Methodist Church and other Christian churches at home or overseas.

See also S.O.323 for the functions of the ecumenical officer and the Methodist members of the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission.

(7) When the Church is involved with another denomination in a local or area scheme for uniting congregations or groups of congregations or for sharing a building or personnel the faith and order aspects of the scheme shall be scrutinised by the committee.

(8) The committee shall consider and report upon all matters touching faith or order which concern the relations of the Conference with other Methodist and ecumenical bodies to which the Methodist Church relates.

(9) The committee is empowered to deal with any communication that may be received during any connexional year on the above-named and kindred subjects and

to report to the succeeding Conference what, if any, action it has taken with reference thereto.

(10) The committee is authorised to make proposals to the Conference for the revision from time to time of the forms of service authorised by the Conference for use in the Methodist Church, and forms of worship intended for regular and general use in Methodist public worship shall be submitted to the Conference for approval after a period of experimentation on the recommendation of the committee.

(11) **The committee shall be consulted on** all matters directly concerning the faith or order of the Church **that are to be** presented to the Conference by other bodies, **including the Connexional Council, or presented to the council for decision under the council's own powers, and shall in due course formally scrutinise the relevant reports.**

(12) The committee shall report annually to the **Conference [...]** and, whenever its business requires, to the **[...] Connexional Council.**

The Conference in 2007 resolved for the purpose of clarification that if a doctrinal matter arises in the course of complaints and discipline proceedings under Part 11 (at that time Section 02) of Standing Orders the Faith and Order Committee shall be consulted as appropriate but any decision in those proceedings themselves shall remain a matter for those authorised to take it under Part 11.

**211 [338] Law and Polity Committee.** (1) The **[...] Conference** shall annually appoint a Committee on Methodist Law and Polity. The Secretary of the Conference shall be ex officio a member of the committee **and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice shall be its convener.**

(2) The committee shall, as may be necessary, consider questions which concern the laws of the Connexion, together with other matters relating to Methodist legislation and administration which may require special attention.

(3) The committee shall advise the Conference **and, where requested to do so and where no conflict with the committee's duties to the Conference arises, the Connexional Council** as to the interpretation and application of **[...] the Conference's** laws and Standing Orders and, in case of necessity, suggest any alteration or modification or put forward other proposals for legislation.

See also S.O. 108 as to consultation by the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice before seeking external advice on any matter connected with or arising out of the relationship between the Conference and the Connexional Council.

(4) The committee is entrusted with the duty of examining and correlating the various elements of the constitution of the Church.

(5) The committee is charged in particular with the scrutiny of all new legislative and administrative proposals as to their coherence with existing usage and with other proposals which may at the same time be under consideration. **The committee shall be consulted upon all matters directly concerning the law and polity of the Church that are to be presented to the Conference by other bodies, including the Connexional Council, or to the council for decision under the council's own powers.**

By S.O. 122(3) and 126(1), (3) and (7) all resolutions requiring confirmation by a subsequent Conference must be submitted to the committee for consideration and report, except where S.O. 126(1)(c) applies.

As to its functions in relation to the correction of Conference records and rescission or amendment of resolutions of an earlier Conference, see cls. 25(b) and 36(f) of the Deed of Union and the notes to those

clauses (Book II, Part 1).

(6) With a view to the discharge of the committee's responsibilities during the periods of the Conference the committee shall annually appoint a Conference Sub-committee, which shall consist of the committee's [...] **convener** and other members of the next Conference, who need not be members of the committee.

See also S.O. 123(3), 126(1)(b) and 131(19), (25).

**(7) The committee shall report annually to the Conference and, whenever its business requires, to the Connexional Council.**

## Section 22 Nominations, Scrutiny and Risk Assurance

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**220 Nominations Committee.** (1) The Conference shall appoint annually a Nominations Committee with the responsibility and functions set out in this Standing Order, and such other functions as from time to time the Conference shall specify.

*The text of this Standing Order, apart from the amendments shown at (2) and (7) and the deletion of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee from the list in (4) (adopted in 2024), is as approved by the Conference of 2023.*

(2) The committee shall consist of a chair and up to six other members, **none of whom shall be members of the Connexional Council**. The members shall (subject to the need to ensure appropriate continuity and turnover) normally be appointed to serve for a maximum period of four years. The Secretary of the Conference shall act as its convener.

(3) It shall be the responsibility of the committee, acting in accordance with such terms of reference as are approved by the Conference from time to time, to ensure that the nominations which are made to the Conference or, as the case may be, the Connexional Council for appointment to the bodies referred to below are brought as a result of processes which conform to the requirements for the body concerned (as defined in Standing Orders, its terms of reference or elsewhere) and are in accordance with the church's principles for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity as laid down in Standing Order 330(1).

(4) The bodies referred to in clause (3) are:

- the Connexional Council
- the Ministries Committee
- the Mission Committee
- the Resourcing Committee
- **[deleted]**

together with any other bodies for whose nominations the Conference may from time to time require the committee to take responsibility.

See e.g. S.O. 221(2) below.

(5) In fulfilling its responsibilities, and acting in accordance with current best practice for recruitment to such appointments, the committee shall:

- (i) monitor and offer appropriate advice and recommendations to those responsible for the processes of approval of role descriptions for relevant appointments and of recruitment to those appointments;
- (ii) bring to the Conference or council, as required, the resulting nominations for appointment;
- (iii) work with the chairs of the bodies concerned on a periodic review of



those appointed to bodies in order to ensure that the body continues to function appropriately;

- (iv) advise the council on matters concerned with training and self-evaluation of all those appointed to such bodies.

(6) The committee shall report annually to the Conference on its work.

**(7) For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the Conference or any other body by the committee.**

See also S.O. 132(3).

**221 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.** (1) The Conference shall appoint a scrutiny group (“the JDS scrutiny group”) to provide strategic scrutiny of the implementation and embedding of the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy, and assurance that the strategy is implemented in the work for which the Connexional Council is responsible to the Conference.

As to Justice, Dignity and Solidarity, see S.O. 330.

(2) The group shall comprise three persons with relevant experience, knowledge and skills relating to the implementation of complex issues and understanding of the workings of the Methodist Church, who shall be nominated annually to the Conference by the Nominations Committee.

(3) The group shall operate under terms of reference agreed from time to time by the council.

(4) The group shall report annually to the Conference.

**222 [213A] Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.** (1) The Conference shall each year appoint, upon the nomination of the [...] **Connexional** Council, a connexional Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, having the constitution and responsibilities specified below, in order to assist the council in its functions under Standing Order 203 and 204.

(2) The committee shall consist of no fewer than three persons, including one appointed by the Conference to chair the committee **and, if the Conference thinks fit, one appointed as deputy chair**, all of whom shall be members of the Methodist Church and all of whom shall normally serve for an initial term of four years and thereafter on an annual basis for a maximum of three years. [...]

**(3) (a) With the exception of the person appointed to serve ex officio on the Connexional Council by virtue of Standing Order 200(1)(b)(vii), no member of the council shall be eligible to be a member of the committee.**

**(b) No member of the Connexional Team shall be eligible to be a member of the committee.**

**(4)** Any nomination for appointment which will result in a committee member serving for a continuous term exceeding seven years may only be made in exceptional circumstances and shall require a resolution of the council carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting.

(5) The committee shall meet as frequently as need be, but in any event at least three times a year and also whenever the auditors appointed under Standing Order 012 require it to do so.

(6) When required to do so by the committee, [...] any appropriate members of the Connexional Team shall also be in attendance at meetings.

(7) The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

- (i) to advise the council upon the appointment in accordance with Standing Order 012 of auditors for all the funds for which it is responsible, and (subject to that Standing Order) upon the nature and scope of the audit required;
- (ii) to review the **consolidated accounts [...]** required by Standing Order 203(8)
- (iii) to review, in direct consultation with the auditors, their annual report;
- (iv) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of the financial and other internal control systems with regard to moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible;
- (v) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of risk management processes and assurance reporting arrangements;
- (vi) to submit an annual report to the council.

(8) In carrying out its functions the committee shall have reference to the terms of reference for the committee provided by the council from time to time.

## Section 23 Safeguarding

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*The text in this section is essentially that which has been in effect for a number of years. The amendments shown in this 2024 edition generally relate to those which were necessary to be made, (e.g. as to appointment by the Conference, removing references to the Methodist Council and adoption of gender neutral language) by the Conference of 2024 in dealing with the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group Report (Agenda, 2024, report 50). As a consequence of this group of Standing Orders becoming a separate Section, they have been re-numbered (the previous numbering being indicated in square brackets). It is anticipated that proposals for further substantive changes will be brought in future years. In particular, the Conference of 2024 approved the principles of a proposed unified safeguarding structure as outlined in the Methodist Council Report (Agenda report 22, Section P) and directed the necessary Standing Order amendments to be brought to the Conference of 2025.*

**230 [232] Safeguarding Committee.** (1) The [...] **Conference** shall annually appoint a Safeguarding Committee consisting of:

- (i) a chair who shall be appointed for four years;
- (ii) up to 18 people who shall be appointed for six years who shall include:
  - a) at least five persons who, by virtue of their relevant experience, will in the judgment of the [...] **Conference** command wide respect;
  - b) at least ten other persons with relevant experience.

(2) The safeguarding officer and such other persons as deemed appropriate by the committee shall be able to attend as advisers and shall not be voting members.

(3) For the purposes of this Standing Order:

- (i) a 'blemished disclosure' is a disclosure document, received from any body with official responsibility for providing information about the criminal records of individuals, which contains convictions, cautions or any other adverse entry;
- (ii) 'the safeguarding officer' means the person or one of the persons in the Connexional Team responsible for issues relating to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- (iii) a 'relevant party' means any person who is the subject of a decision, determination or recommendation made by the committee in the exercise of its functions under clause (4) below or in relation to whom a risk assessment has been carried out for purposes connected with the exercise of those functions, and references to "the Superintendent" and "the District Chair" or "the District Safeguarding Officer" in relation to a relevant party are references to the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the relevant party is stationed or is a member and to the Chair or safeguarding officer of the District of which that Circuit forms part.

- (4) The functions of the Safeguarding Committee shall be:
- (i) to give directions to and offer guidance on the steps to be taken by the relevant appointing body in respect of any blemished disclosure or any related matter or application following referral of that disclosure, matter or application under Standing Order 234 and a risk assessment under Standing Order 235;
  - (ii) without prejudice to the provisions of Standing Orders 234 and 235, to make recommendations to the Secretary of the Conference as to the action to be taken in respect of any minister, local preacher or member of the Church who, pursuant to the Church's policy for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, signs a form in which [...] a conviction or caution in respect of an offence of the kind specified in sub-clause (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 010(2) **is declared**;
  - (iii) to determine whether to authorise the making of an appointment or entry into a contract following a reference under the provisions of Standing Order 010(5);
  - (iv) to act upon any referral to it by the safeguarding officer, following referral to that officer made under any of Standing Orders [...] **714A**, 725(6), 761(15) or 1102(9) or otherwise made as a result of the operation of any of the processes of the Church as determined by Standing Orders by carrying out such investigations and making such recommendations to the referring person or body as it thinks fit;
  - (v) without prejudice to the provisions of Standing Orders 234 and 235, to make recommendations to the Secretary of the Conference, upon a reference by the safeguarding officer, as to the action to be taken in respect of any minister, local preacher or member of the Church who has been the subject of a complaints and discipline process (whether under Part 11 of these Standing Orders or a previous form of process) and in respect of whom a safeguarding risk remains or where new information requires a reassessment of the risk;
  - (vi) without prejudice to paragraph (v) above, to recommend to the Secretary of the Conference that a direction under Standing Order 013C be given to any minister, local preacher or member of the Church and to review any such recommendation. Any such recommendation shall be in writing and may be made only on the ground that there is a safeguarding risk in respect of that person, and the reasons for which the committee believes that ground to exist shall be set out as part of the recommendation;
  - (vii) to recommend that a contract should be entered into for the purposes of Standing Order 690(2)(c) and make recommendations as to the terms of such a contract;
  - (viii) to make recommendations as to the terms of, or the continuance of, an existing contract under Standing Order 690(2)(c) following a review undertaken in accordance with Standing Order 690A;

- (ix) to approve annually a list of assessors who may be instructed to conduct a connexional risk assessment in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 235(5);
- (x) to be available for consultation by those members of the Connexional Team whose responsibilities include the Church's policy for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- (xi) to promote effective safeguarding practice and safe recruitment across the connexion;
- (xii) in response to developments in safeguarding practice and to concerns raised by the committee in fulfilling its functions, to **report and make recommendations to the [...] Conference and, as required, to the Connexional Council to enable the council to fulfil its trustee responsibilities;**
- (xiii) to ensure the sharing of information and close working relationships with statutory authorities and other denominations;
- (xiv) to carry out such other functions as the Conference by Standing Order or otherwise may direct or request.

(5) The chair of the committee shall nominate such members of the committee **([...] not being fewer than three in number and which may include the said chair)** as **[...] the chair** thinks fit to be the panel to make any determination or recommendation in discharge of the committee's functions set out in sub-clauses (ii) to (ix) of clause (4) above. For the purpose of giving directions or guidance under clause (4)(i) above, the safeguarding officer shall convene a panel of not fewer than three members of the committee having regard to the expertise required in the particular case.

A safeguarding panel under S.O. 230(5) may be held electronically or in hybrid form provided the person who is the subject of the safeguarding proceedings agrees or the chair of the relevant committee is satisfied that meeting in such a way would still be able to deal fairly with the proceedings. See S.O. 019B(7) and (8).

(6) (a) When discharging the functions specified under clause (4)(i) and (ii) to (ix) above, the panel nominated shall contain one person referred to in clause (1)(ii)(a) and two persons referred to in clause (1)(ii)(b).

(b) Requests for consultation by members of the Connexional Team under clause (4)(x) above shall be made to the chair in the first instance.

(7) (a) For the purpose of carrying out its functions under clause (4)(i) to (ix), a nominated panel (the members of which shall as far as possible act together) may make such inquiries, meet such persons and obtain such expert advice in each individual case as the panel thinks fit.

(b) The panel shall consider any risk assessment prepared in accordance with Standing Order 235 in connection with the exercise in the particular case of one of its functions under clause (2)(i) to (iv). Copies of any such risk assessment or a summary of the assessment shall be provided to other persons or bodies in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 235.

(c) A panel may choose to hold any meeting by telephone if so agreed by all members of the panel.

(8) A panel appointed in accordance with clause (7)(a) above shall send a written notice to the relevant party, informing [...] **that person** of the direction, recommendation or determination given or made by the panel. A copy of the notice shall be sent to the District Chair, the District Safeguarding Officer and the Superintendent and also to the relevant party's line manager where the relevant party is an employee of a church court and to any group appointed under Standing Order 690(2)(a).

(9) The committee shall report to the next ensuing Conference each determination or recommendation made under clause (4)(ii) to (ix) above. Any such report shall be made to the Representative Session in closed session and shall be confined to the number of appeals under each category of case, the number of persons concerned who were lay and the number who were ordained, the number of appeals allowed and dismissed, the number of authorisations given and refused and the number of recommendations made and their nature in each case.

(10) In addition to any report under clause (9) above, the chair shall make a general report to the Conference in its Representative Session at least once every three years. This report shall deal with any questions of principle raised in the matters dealt with, but without reference to any personal details, and it shall be open to the Conference to debate those questions.

**231 [233] Grounds of Appeal.** (1) A relevant party, that party's District Chair or Superintendent or the safeguarding officer may appeal against a direction or determination under Standing Order 230(4)(i) or (iii) and the effect of the direction or determination shall be suspended pending the hearing of the appeal. The person appealing is hereafter referred to as the appellant.

(2) The grounds of appeal for the purpose of this Standing Order are:

- (i) that there was a material irregularity in how the matter was dealt with by the safeguarding panel or the risk assessor appointed under Standing Order 230(7)(b);
- (ii) that the panel or the risk assessor failed to take into account all relevant matters or took into account irrelevant ones;
- (iii) that in the light of events occurring since the direction was given or the determination was made (as the case may be), or of evidence of which the appellant could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at the time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the direction or determination.

(3) The appellant shall within fourteen days of receiving written notice of the direction or determination give notice of the appeal in writing to the chair of the Safeguarding Committee.

(4) The notice of appeal shall be accompanied by a written statement indicating on which of the grounds in clause (2) the appeal is brought and the specific nature of any error, omission or other matter relied on. The chair of the Safeguarding Committee shall pass it to a safeguarding officer, as defined in Standing Order 230(3)(ii), who has not been involved in the direction or determination against which the appeal is brought. The safeguarding officer shall act as the convener of the panel hearing the appeal.

**232 [234] Appeal Process.** (1) The convener shall arrange for the appeal to be heard by an appeal panel which shall include one person referred to in Standing Order 230(1)(ii)(b) and two persons referred to in Standing Order 240(1)(ii)(a), and one of the latter shall chair the appeal panel. No member of the appeal panel shall have been involved in giving or making the direction or determination which is the subject of the appeal.

An appeal panel under S.O. 232 may be held electronically or in hybrid form provided the person who is the subject of the safeguarding proceedings agrees or the chair of the relevant committee is satisfied that meeting in such a way would still be able to deal fairly with the proceedings. See S.O. 019B(7) and (8).

(2) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under Standing Order 231(2)(iii) above. Any such evidence not already supplied with the notice of appeal shall be provided by the appellant to the convener no later than 14 days before the date of the meeting and copies shall be provided by the convener and the members of the appeal panel no later than seven days before the date of the meeting.

(3) At the meeting of the appeal panel a member of the safeguarding panel which gave the direction or made the determination appealed against shall first present that panel's report.

(4) The appellant shall have the right to attend and put forward [...] **the** case on the basis of the grounds of appeal specified, and to be accompanied by a friend or the relevant party (if not the appellant), who shall also have the right to speak.

(5) Members of the appeal panel who wish to raise any matter not referred to in the report given under clause (2) above shall do so before the appellant leaves the meeting and both the presenting member of the panel and the appellant shall be given an opportunity to deal with it (for which purpose the meeting shall be adjourned if necessary); no fresh matter shall be raised after the appellant has left.

(6) The convener shall make the appellant aware of the importance of attending the meeting. If [...] **the appellant** then refuses or fails to attend, the panel must consider the reason for [...] **the** absence and may adjourn for that purpose. The panel may then, if it thinks fit, hear the appeal and reach a decision in the absence of the appellant.

**233 [235] Appeal Decision.** (1) The panel shall decide whether to uphold or dismiss the appeal or refer the matter back to the Safeguarding Committee for further consideration or a further risk assessment. The decision of the appeal panel shall be reached solely on the basis of the documents relied upon by the original safeguarding panel or supplied in accordance with Standing Order 232(2), the submissions presented at the meeting and any other documents which both the person representing the original panel and the appellant agree the appeal panel may consider. The appeal panel shall give reasons for its decision and shall embody them in the document announcing the decision.

(2) The decision of the panel shall be communicated to the appellant (and the relevant party if not the appellant) in writing. If the appellant is the relevant party, a copy of the decision shall also be sent to the District Chair, district safeguarding officer and the Superintendent.

**234 [236] Safeguarding Concerns and Procedures.** (1) Every member of the Methodist Church has a responsibility to children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in the life of the Church to take all reasonable steps to protect them from the risk of harm.

(2) In order to discharge that responsibility the Church follows the procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns which are set out in clauses (5) to (10) below and in the safeguarding policies [...] from time to time adopted by the [...] **Connexional** Council.

(3) A safeguarding concern exists where:

- (i) the words, actions or behaviour of any person involved in the life of the Church may cause or may have caused children, young people or vulnerable adults to be abused, harmed or neglected;
- (ii) subject as provided in Standing Order 010(2), a person involved in the life of the Church has been convicted of or has received a simple or conditional caution in respect of an offence referred to in sub-clause (b) of that Standing Order; or
- (iii) a member of the Methodist Church may be failing or may have failed to exercise [...] **the responsibilities for which the member is accountable** in respect of the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults in the Church context.

(4) In relation to a safeguarding concern:

- (i) “the subject” means the person about whom the concern exists;
- (ii) “the relevant Circuit” means the Circuit in which the subject is stationed or is a member or with which, if the subject is not a minister or a member, [...] **the subject** has the closest connection;
- (iii) a “safeguarding officer” means the safeguarding officer as defined in Standing Order 230(3)(ii) or the District Safeguarding Officer of the District of which the relevant Circuit forms part;
- (iv) “the referring body” or “the referring person” means the body or person by whom the concern is referred to a safeguarding officer in accordance with clause (6) below.

(5) A member of the Church who becomes aware that a safeguarding concern exists must act on that concern in accordance with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(6) A body or person becoming aware of a safeguarding concern either in the context of a local church, circuit or district or in the exercising of a responsibility on behalf of the Church must refer that concern to a safeguarding officer.

(7) On receiving a referral under clause (6) above, the safeguarding officer in question must act in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 235 below and the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(8) The referring body or person and the subject of the safeguarding concern shall be given an adequate opportunity to respond to any information or reports gathered or made in connection with that concern.



(9) Subject to clause (10) below, the existence of and the materials relating to any safeguarding concern shall be confidential and any member of the Methodist Church breaching this confidentiality may be the subject of a complaint under Part 11.

(10) Clause (9) above is without prejudice to the obligation of any person engaged in the investigation of a safeguarding concern to pass information to statutory agencies in accordance with guidance adopted by the council.

**235 [237] Assessment of Risk.** (1) In this Standing Order:

- (i) "blemished disclosure" has the meaning given by Standing Order 230(3)(i);
- (ii) "the subject" and a "safeguarding officer" have the meanings given by Standing Order 234(4); and
- (iii) "the District Safeguarding Officer" means the safeguarding officer of the District of which the relevant Circuit forms part.

(2) When a safeguarding concern is referred to a safeguarding officer under Standing Order 234(6), the officer will undertake an initial exploration into that concern in order to determine whether a connexional or district risk assessment should be undertaken.

(3) A connexional or district risk assessment may be undertaken in relation to any person about whom a safeguarding concern exists in the context of a local church, circuit or district or in the exercising of a responsibility on behalf of the Church in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(4) A connexional safeguarding officer acting on behalf of the Safeguarding Committee may require a connexional risk assessment following a request from a District Safeguarding Officer or in any other case when:

- (i) a safeguarding concern exists about any person wanting to worship or continue to worship in a Methodist church;
- (ii) a person to whom Standing Order 690(1) applies wishes to worship or continue to worship in a Methodist church;
- (iii) a safeguarding concern exists about a person wishing to hold or continue to hold a role or responsibility to which Standing Order 010(3) applies;
- (iv) a request is made by a church court or body under Standing Order 010(5);
- (v) a blemished disclosure reveals a safeguarding concern about a person wanting to hold or continue to hold a role or responsibility to which Standing Order 010(3) applies;
- (vi) a referral is made to the committee under the provisions of any of Standing Orders [...] **714A**, 725(6) and 761(15);
- (vii) a referral is made to the committee under Standing Order 1102(9);
- (viii) a referral is made to the committee under Standing Order 690A in connection with the review of a contract;
- (ix) a statutory agency provides information which reveals a safeguarding concern or requests that a risk assessment be undertaken.

(5) A connexional risk assessment shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified assessor upon the instruction of a connexional safeguarding officer acting pursuant to clause (4) above and upon completion shall be provided to the Safeguarding Committee for use in the discharge of a function of the committee under Standing Order 230(4).

(6) When a connexional safeguarding officer determines that a connexional risk assessment is required, the officer shall consult with the referring person or body to determine the terms of reference for the risk assessment.

(7) A district risk assessment may be undertaken:

- (i) before a contract under Standing Order 690(2)(c) is entered into;
- (ii) (in conjunction with a connexional safeguarding officer) where a change in the terms of such a contract is sought;
- (iii) where the District Safeguarding Officer is informed of a blemished disclosure;
- (iv) at the request of a connexional safeguarding officer made in accordance with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the [...] **Connexional** Council as currently in place.

(8) A district risk assessment shall be undertaken by a safeguarding officer or a person in relation to whom that officer exercises the power to delegate that responsibility.

(9) Any person who is the subject of a safeguarding concern will be expected to participate in any risk assessment process required by a safeguarding officer pursuant to clause (4) or clause (7) above.

(10) If the subject of a safeguarding concern declines to participate in such a risk assessment, the assessment may continue without such participation.

(11) The subject, the District Chair, the District Safeguarding Officer (if not conducting the assessment) and the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit shall be given the opportunity to speak to the risk assessor.

(12) The risk assessor shall speak to such other person or persons as [...] **the assessor** reasonably considers necessary.

(13) The responsible officer as defined by Standing Order 013(2)(ii) shall be responsible for ensuring pastoral support is offered to the subject, such persons connected with the subject as the officer thinks fit and any person referring the safeguarding concern.

(14) Upon completion of the risk assessment, the risk assessor shall send a copy of the report to the subject. The subject shall have 14 days to provide any comments on the report before it is considered by the Safeguarding Committee in accordance with Standing Order 230(4) or by the District Safeguarding Officer for the purpose of giving directions or guidance or making recommendations.

(15) A copy of the risk assessment together with a copy of any comments provided by the subject shall be sent to the District Safeguarding Officer (in the case of a connexional risk assessment) and to the line manager of a subject who is employed by a church court (in any case). A summary of the risk assessment shall be sent to the

District Chair and Superintendent referred to in clause (11) above and, where relevant, to any group appointed under Standing **Order** 690(2)(a) in relation to the subject. The District Safeguarding Officer may provide copies of the risk assessment or the summary to other persons in accordance with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(16) When a blemished disclosure or any related matter or application is referred to a safeguarding officer, the officer may:

- (i) give directions to and offer guidance on the steps to be taken by any relevant appointing body in respect of that disclosure, matter or application; or
- (ii) refer that disclosure, matter or application to the Safeguarding Committee to give directions to and offer guidance on the steps to be taken by that appointing body following a connexional risk assessment.

(17) Instead of or prior to commissioning or carrying out a risk assessment, a safeguarding officer may take such other reasonable steps for the protection of children, young people or vulnerable adults as are consistent with the safeguarding policies and practice guidance adopted by the council as currently in place.

(18) In relation to a person employed under a contract of employment, this Standing Order shall apply only so far as consistent with the terms of that contract and employment legislation.

## Section 24 Methodist Children and Youth Assembly

Standing Order 240, previously 250, was considerably amended by the Conference of 2024, as appears below.

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**240 Methodist Children and Youth Assembly.** [250] (1) There shall be an annual Assembly of children and young Methodists known as the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly for the purposes of clause 14(2)(xA) of the Deed of Union.

(2) **The Assembly shall be:**

- (i) **A place of celebration, inspiration and empowerment for all children and young people associated with the life of the Methodist Church in Britain.**
- (ii) **A place where dialogue happens across generations.**
- (iii) **A place for the Christian discipleship of children and young people in the Methodist tradition.**
- (iv) **A place for the upskilling and inspiring of those with a ministry among children, young people and their households.**
- (v) **A place where vocational experiences and opportunities are presented for all attendees.**

(3) The Assembly shall be open to children and young people [...] **within the age range determined from time to time by the Mission Committee.**

(4) Any child or young person involved in the life of the Methodist Church within the relevant age range is eligible to [...] **attend** the Assembly.

(5) **[revoked]**

(6) Each District shall take appropriate steps, including financial help where possible, to ensure that children and young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church within that District attend the Assembly, and in so doing shall have regard for [...] **the principles of the Methodist Church's Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity.**

(7) **[revoked]**

(8) There shall be a Youth President elected in accordance with clause (10) of this Standing Order who shall be a member of the Conference and the Connexional Leaders' Forum as a representative of the Assembly [...] **and shall thereby be enabled to give effect to the two core purposes of advocacy and involvement in decision-making on behalf of all children and young people in the life of the Methodist Church. The Youth President shall also have such wider strategic role as may be determined from time to time by the Mission Committee.**

As to membership of the Conference, see cl. 14(2)(x) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 102(1)(viii). As to the Connexional Leaders' Forum, see S.O. 293 [currently suspended]. As to the Mission Committee, see S.O. 321(4).

**(8A) The Youth President shall additionally:**

- (i) **attend meetings of the Connexional Council, the Mission Committee and the Ministries Committee as appropriate in furtherance of the purpose of advocacy;**
- (ii) **meet regularly with those on youth representative programmes established from time to time by the Methodist Church in order to enable greater participation of children and young people generally;**
- (iii) **have power, subject to compliance with Standing Orders and the procedures of the Conference as applicable from time to time, to submit to the Conference reports and resolutions on any connexional matter if the Youth President considers it appropriate to do so in the representation of children and young people.**

As to the Connexional Council, see S.O. 200; as to the Mission Committee, see S.O. 321; as to the Ministries Committee, see S.O. 311.

**(9) [revoked]**

**(10) There shall be elected annually [...] a Youth President-designate, who will become the Youth President from the start of the next connexional year. To be eligible to be elected a person shall:**

- (i) **[deleted]**
- (ii) **if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member; and**
- (iii) **be aged 18 years or over but under 24 at the date of taking office as Youth President.**

If the Youth President-designate has not become a member of the Methodist Church by the date of taking office as Youth President **[...] that person** shall be disqualified from holding office **[...]**.

**(11) There shall be elected annually [...] the representative of the Assembly** to the next Conference required under Standing Order 102**[...](1)(viii)**. To be eligible to be elected, a person shall:

- (i) **[deleted]**
- (ii) **if not already a member of the Methodist Church, have signified the intention of seeking to become a member.**

**[...] If the person elected has not become a member of the Methodist Church by the opening of the Conference and so cannot take that place, the Youth President shall determine in consultation with the Conference Office the steps to be taken to appoint a substitute.**

**(11A) Those eligible to vote in elections under clauses 10 and 11 above shall be children and young people within the life of the Methodist Church, and do not need to be in attendance at the Assembly at which the relevant election takes place. The Mission Committee in consultation with children and young people shall from time to time determine:**

- (i) **criteria as to age and involvement in the church required for eligibility to vote;**
- (ii) **the voting procedure for the elections; and**

- (iii) **[...] if the Youth President-designate has not become a member of the Methodist Church by the date of taking office as Youth President, appropriate procedures for filling the vacancy arising as a result of the disqualification provided for by clause (10).**

As to the Mission Committee, see S.O. 321(4).

(12) **[revoked]**

(13) **[revoked]**

(14) The Connexional Team is responsible for assisting in the arrangements for the meetings of the **Assembly [...]**.

## Section 25 Committees for the Authorisation of Ordained Vocations

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**250 [320] Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation.** (1) There shall be a connexional Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation appointed annually by the Conference and consisting of:

- (i) two Team members responsible for initial presbyteral and diaconal training and candidates, and
- (ii) not more than eighty other persons nominated by the **[...] Ministries Committee** of whom not more than twelve shall be involved in initial ministerial training.

In addition the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall have the right to attend meetings of the committee but shall have no vote.

For the functions of the committee, see S.O. 714.

(2) If it becomes apparent that the number of members of the committee appointed under head (ii) of clause (1) above who are able to attend any of its meetings in a particular year will be insufficient for the proper conduct of the committee's business, the **[...] Ministries Committee** shall co-opt as necessary further members who have appropriate prior experience. Such co-opted members will be members of the committee for the year of co-option only. Any such co-options shall be reported to the subsequent Conference.

(3) **The committee's primary responsibilities are:**

- (i) **to [...]** recommend to the Conference Diaconal Committee the names of those to be accepted as candidates for the diaconate;
- (ii) **to [...]** recommend to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference the names of those to be accepted as candidates for the presbyterate.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee, see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

**(4) It shall discharge those responsibilities in accordance with the provisions laid down in section 71 of Standing Orders, and carry out such other functions as the Conference, by Standing Order or otherwise, requires it to fulfil.**

**251 [326A] Appeals.** The **[...] Ministries Committee** shall appoint an Appeals Panel consisting of persons who are not members of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation to deal with appeals under Standing Order 716 or 722(3). The **[...] Ministries Committee** shall also appoint a convener of Appeals Committees.

**252 [321] Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.**

(1) The [...] **Conference** shall annually appoint a connexional Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee consisting of:

- (i) no more than two representatives of oversight committees of training institutions;
- (ii) three persons each of whom has recent and relevant experience of discerning vocation for candidates;
- (iii) three persons each of whom is a current or recent member of a district Probationers Committee;
- (iv) one district Chair;
- (v) one recent ordinand in their third, fourth or fifth year of ministry;
- (vi) two of the Team members responsible for presbyteral candidates, initial presbyteral training and presbyteral probationers;
- (vii) further deacons where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two;
- (viii) further lay people where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two;
- (ix) further presbyters where necessary to ensure that the committee includes at least two;
- (x) the Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (xi) up to five further members, selected in collaboration with the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to ensure that leadership is offered regarding the concerns of justice, dignity and solidarity, having regard to the leadership also offered by other members of the committee;
- (xii) a further member to be the safeguarding adviser to the committee if no other member of the committee is able to act as the safeguarding adviser.

For the purposes of this sub-clause a person is a recent member of a committee or ordinand during the three years after membership ceased or after ordination (as the case may require).

For the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee and its functions, see S.O.330.

(2) The persons under heads (i) and (ii) of clause (1) above shall be nominated by the committees concerned by agreement among themselves as necessary.

(3) The committee shall be no smaller than 14 members and no larger than 20 members.

(4) The Secretary of the Stationing Advisory Committee shall be entitled to attend and speak at meetings as consultant to the committee when the business requires it.

(5) (a) The term of appointment will usually be six years, subject to agreement with the person concerned, but the person appointed under head (v) of clause (1) above shall be appointed for a term of three years only.

(b) A member of the committee appointed under heads (i), (ii), (v) to (viii) of clause (1) above is not required to vacate office if no longer eligible for initial appointment in the category in which that member was appointed or if an appointment in that category is no longer required.



(c) A member of the committee who has already served a six year term may only be appointed again if the nomination is supported by a minuted recommendation from the committee.

(6) The member appointed under head (iv) of clause (1) above shall chair the committee. The committee shall appoint two deputy chairs from among its members who shall serve for an initial period of three years, which may be extended.

(7) All members of the committee must have undertaken foundation level safeguarding training before their appointment takes effect. The committee must ensure that its members receive up-to-date training thereafter.

(8) In nominating members to the [...] **Conference** for appointment the **Ministries [...] Committee** must seek to ensure that the committee includes members from all of the stationing regions and that a balance of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and order of ministry is maintained.

(9) When the business so requires, a Welsh-speaking member of Wales Synod Cymru shall attend meetings as a consultant.

(10) Reporting to the Ministries Committee as provided in Standing Order 311 the committee shall be responsible for the recruitment of candidates for ordained ministry, the administration of the regulations for candidates, and decisions about training requirements. It shall have oversight of the whole period of a person's training from acceptance as a candidate by the Conference until reception into Full Connexion and ordination, and in particular shall perform the functions prescribed in Section 72.

(11) The committee shall appoint one or more student oversight committees for each training institution.

(12) (a) The committee shall co-ordinate and guide the work of the oversight tutors of the training institutions in so far as it relates to the oversight of student presbyters and deacons. The oversight tutors shall ensure that reports and other services for the connexional and local committees are provided as required.

(b) For every training institution, whether under the authority of the Conference or otherwise, the Conference shall appoint, upon the nomination of the [...] **Ministries Committee**, one or more oversight tutors to assist the student and connexional oversight committees in performing the functions specified in Standing Orders. Where more than one oversight tutor is appointed for the same institution one shall be identified as having oversight responsibility.

(c) In relation to institutions within sub-clause (b) above any reference in these Standing Orders to the principal shall, unless this clause is expressly excluded or the context otherwise requires, be construed as a reference to the relevant Methodist oversight tutor.

## Section 26 Stationing

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**260 [322] Stationing Committee.** (1) There shall be a connexional Stationing Committee appointed annually by the Conference, [...] which shall consist of:

- (i) a lay chair, being the person for the time being appointed to that office in accordance with clause (1A) below;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference who shall act as convener, and the assistant secretary of the Conference;
- (iii) seven district Chairs, one of whom shall be the district Chair appointed under Standing Order 286 to be a member of the Forces Board, and seven district Lay Stationing Representatives appointed with a view to the representation of suitable regional groupings of Districts;
- (iv) no more than two Team members with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection and training and for the stationing of probationers;
- (v) the chair of the Stationing Advisory Committee;
- (vi) the Warden or deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (vii) the chair and a lay member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee;
- (viii) the chair of the group responsible on behalf of the Stationing Committee for overseeing the matching of particular presbyters to appointments;
- (ix) the convener of the Stationing Action Group appointed in accordance with clause (8) below.

(2) A lay person shall be appointed by the Conference as chair of the committee. [...] **The chair** shall be appointed **for a period not exceeding six years** in the first instance [...] and may be appointed for further periods of one or more years thereafter. Any nomination for appointment beyond six years shall require a resolution of the [...] **Ministries Committee** carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting and reported, with a reasoned statement, to the Conference. No person shall hold office as chair for more than nine years consecutively.

(3) The chair of the committee and the Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference shall attend the committee only in their official character as specially charged with the general interests of the whole Church and shall not be eligible for appointment in any other capacity.

(4) The committee shall, as prescribed in Section 78, recommend to the Conference the stations for the ensuing year of presbyters, deacons and probationers to the several Districts and Circuits, including presbyters and deacons in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church. Reporting to the Ministries Committee as provided in Standing Order 311 it shall advise on stationing policy, and in particular shall assess priorities for the appointments to be made by the Conference of the next connexional year and, after appropriate consultation, for the appointment

of additional presbyters and deacons in the Circuits and Districts. It shall obtain and consider information and opinions offered by district Policy Committees and the Connexional Team. It shall keep under review the stationing code of practice and shall determine the number of stations available to ministers of other Conferences and Churches not already serving the Church.

As to the appointment of additional presbyters and deacons to Circuits, see S.O. 529, 438(1).

(5) Discussion in the committee about particular ministers and appointments shall be absolutely confidential.

(6) The committee shall appoint a Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee to advise the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order upon the recommendations to be made for diaconal stationing under Standing Order 783 and related matters.

(7) The committee shall appoint an Action Group to deal with stationing difficulties and emergencies as they arise.

(8) The committee shall have power to appoint other sub-committees to carry out aspects of its work, but all actions of such sub-committees shall be subject to the approval of the committee.

**261 [323] Stationing Advisory Committee.** (1) The [...] **Stationing Committee** shall annually appoint a Stationing Advisory Committee.

(2) The committee shall:

- (i) explore the opportunities for ministry in various areas of society and community life and in ecumenical agencies and, where appropriate, encourage presbyters and deacons with suitable qualifications to consider applying for such appointments;
- (ii) receive, co-ordinate and interpret reports of such ministries;
- (iii) consult with the members of the Connexional Team who have responsibilities for work done by presbyters and deacons in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church;
- (iv) consider applications from presbyters and deacons in Full Connexion and probationers for full-time service in chaplaincies and appointments not within the control of the Church, and from employing authorities;
- (v) report on such applications and opportunities with recommendations to the Stationing Committee to be presented, if they are approved, to the Conference as an integral part of the stations;
- (vi) advise on the movements of presbyters and deacons within such appointments and between them and Circuits in the light of the initial and subsequent reviews of deployment prescribed by Standing Order 781;
- (vii) perform the functions prescribed by Standing Order 802 in relation to part-time appointments;
- (viii) perform the functions prescribed by Standing Orders 790(3) and 793(1) in relation to applications to become a supernumerary or to return to the active work;

- (ix) advise the President or the Vice-President on [...] behalf **of the President** on recommendations which would involve a presbyter's or deacon's moving during the course of the connexional year;
- (x) perform such other functions as may be required from time to time by Standing Orders.

For the incorporation of the committee's recommendations into the draft of stations, see S.O.782(4).

As to (i) see S.O. 540(4).

As to (x) see e.g. S.O. 774(11).

(3) If any application or potential application under clause (2)(i) or (iv) above involves the possibility of the curtailment of a current period of invitation or appointment or deemed invitation or appointment of a person in a circuit appointment the committee shall consult the circuit Invitation Committee and take its views into account.

## Section 27 Educational Bodies

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**270 Inspiring Lives Education Trust.** *The Methodist Conference shall exercise any powers it may have in accordance with the Articles of The Inspiring Lives Education Trust to nominate and remove any member or members of the board of that body.*

This enacts the provision for the Inspiring Lives Education Trust, as reported to the Conference of 2023.

**271 [243A] The Epworth Education Trust.** The Methodist Conference shall exercise [...] *any powers it may have in accordance with the Articles of The Epworth Education Trust to nominate and remove any member or members of the board of that body.*

The Epworth Education Trust was formed following the merger of the Wesley Trust and the Acorn Trust in November 2020. The Wesley Trust was previously dealt with in Standing Order 243.

**272 [342] State Funded Schools (including academies, free schools and children's centres where appropriate).** (1) (a) The [...] **Connexional Council through the Ministries Committee** is responsible for the oversight of Methodist state funded schools and for Methodist responsibilities in the oversight of state funded schools which are ecumenical projects with other denominations.

(b) The [...] council shall also be responsible for matters within the state funded schools relating to standards, ethos and school improvement.

The Methodist Council, at its January 2012 meeting, with the support of the Education Commission, agreed to ratify the incorporation of a Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST) to carry out the Council's responsibilities towards state-funded schools under this Standing Order.

(2) The Connexional Team shall, as may be necessary, consider government legislation which affects the governance of these schools and any directive or proposal by a local authority or other body or denomination which may affect individual schools.

(3) The Team shall give information and counsel to the Policy Committee of each District in which schools are situated to enable it to carry out its responsibilities to watch over the interest of those schools.

(4) Any proposal to alter the category or status of a Methodist or ecumenical school must be reported by the governors to the trustees, the district Policy Committee and the Connexional Team member with responsibility for these schools.

(5) No Methodist state funded school may be discontinued at the instance of its governors or trustees until permission has been given by the [...] council. The governors

and trustees shall submit any recommendation for discontinuance to the district Policy Committee for its advice before seeking the permission of the council or taking any steps towards closure.

(6) Any proposal to promote a Methodist state funded school or to join in promoting an ecumenical school shall be reported by the Superintendent of the Circuit concerned to the district Policy Committee, the Connexional Team member with responsibility for these schools and the connexional Property Secretary.

As to the Property Secretary, see S.O. 006(2A).

(7) No arrangements for new leases of Methodist property to the Local Education Authority or to the governors of an ecumenical state funded school for the purpose of a school shall be made and no arrangements for the renewal of such leases shall be made until after consultation with the Connexional Team member with responsibility for these schools and the connexional Property Secretary.

As to the Property Secretary, see S.O. 006(2A).

(8) Trustees of Methodist property used as a state funded school shall ensure that the premises are adequately insured and, in the case of controlled schools, require that the trustees' interest in the property is safeguarded in the insurance policy taken out on the premises by a local education authority.

(9) Every Instrument of Government for a Methodist or ecumenical school shall include a place as ex-officio Foundation Governor for the Circuit Superintendent or [...] **the nominee of the said Superintendent**, and shall require to be approved by the Connexional Team member responsible for these schools.

(10) No proposal for a Methodist or ecumenical school shall receive approval unless the school's admissions policy complies with the Statutory Admissions Code and gives priority to children living nearest the school. All admissions policies for Methodist or ecumenical state funded schools require the approval of the Connexional Team member responsible for these schools.

**273 [244 and 343] Independent Schools.** (1) The Conference shall exercise its powers contained in the articles of Methodist Independent Schools Trust (a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales) ("the Company"), being the incorporated governing body of schools held on the trusts of The Methodist Independent Education Trust Deed of 1903 (as amended), to appoint the trustees of the Company, in accordance with and subject to the Company's articles, as follows:

- (i) the chair of the Company;
- (ii) three persons nominated by the Company on the recommendation of the Chairs of Governors of the schools held on the trusts of The Methodist Independent Education Trust Deed of 1903 (as amended);
- (iii) up to [...] **six** persons nominated by the [...] **Connexional** Council; [...]
- (iv) **one person nominated by the District Chairs; and**
- (v) up to [...] **six** persons nominated by the Company.

(2) The Company shall bring **the** nominations to the Conference for the appointments to be made under clause (1) above.

(3) The Company shall appoint one of its members to be the deputy chair of the Company in accordance with its articles.

(4) **The following clauses of this Standing Order relate [...]** to the schools subject to the Methodist Independent Education Trust Deed of 1903.

The schools affected are Ashville College, Culford, Farringtons, Kent College (Canterbury), Kent College (Pembury), Kingswood, Lorenden Preparatory, Moorlands, Queen's College Taunton, Rydal Penrhos, Truro, and Woodhouse Grove.

The Trust Deed provides that the schools shall be administered as to Ashville College, Kingswood School and Rydal Penrhos by Governing Bodies constituted in accordance with the Schemes relating respectively to those schools and as to the remaining schools by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust appointed annually by the Conference, as to which see clause (1) above.

(5) Connexional policy in relation to those schools shall be within the purview of the **[...] Connexional** Council.

(6) In recommending to the Conference the appointment of presbyters as chaplains to such schools the Stationing Committee shall take into consideration any invitations duly given and accepted. For that purpose Standing Orders 543 to 545 shall apply with the substitution of references to the school for those to the Circuit and with the following further adaptations:

- (i) The functions of the Circuit Meeting and its invitation committee shall be exercised by the head teacher or by the Governing Body or the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, as may be appropriate, having regard in particular to responsibility for making appointments to the teaching staff. Any doubt as to the appropriate person or body shall be resolved by the **Team member [...]** responsible for secondary education affairs. Whoever of the above exercises such functions shall at each stage inform and consult the other and the **[...] relevant Team member**.
- (ii) In clause (1)(a)(i) of Standing Order 544 delete 'after consulting the church stewards of the Local Churches in which the person concerned exercises pastoral responsibility'.
- (iii) For clause (1) of Standing Order 545 substitute '(1) No presbyter shall be appointed chaplain to the same school for more than five successive years except upon an invitation given in accordance with clause (2) or (3) of this Standing Order.'

(7) Every such chaplain shall act in respect of ministerial duties under the direction of the Chair of the District.

An instruction to this effect must be printed at the appropriate place in the stations (S.O. 785(7)).

**274 [343A] Methodist Schools Committee.** The **[...] Connexional** Council shall annually appoint the Methodist Schools Committee which shall:

- (i) encourage collaboration and the sharing of resources between all the bodies responsible for undertaking the council's responsibilities under Standing Orders 272 and 273;
- (ii) encourage the development of all the above bodies' and Methodist schools' understanding of the Methodist ethos;

- (iii) report annually to the Methodist Conference, through the [...]council, on behalf of all the bodies responsible for undertaking the council's responsibilities in respect of schools.

**275 [344] Institutions in the Higher Education Sector.** (1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of a presbyter as:

- (i) the chaplain to Southlands College; or
- (ii) the Westminster chaplain, Oxford Brookes University.

(2) In recommending to the Conference the appointment of such a presbyter the Stationing Committee shall take into consideration any invitations duly given and accepted. The invitation and re-invitation process shall follow, as closely as circumstances allow, the equivalent provision in Standing Orders and Guidance approved by the Conference as to circuit appointments. The functions which, in the case of a circuit appointment, would be performed by the circuit stewards, Circuit Meeting or invitation committee shall be performed:

- (i) as to the Southlands chaplain, by the Methodist members of the Southlands Liaison Group; and
- (ii) as to the Westminster chaplain, by the directors of Westminster College Oxford Trust Limited, acting in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Oxford Brookes University. In either instance the persons so acting shall appoint one or two of their number to fulfil the functions performed by the circuit stewards in such a case.

For the provisions as to circuit appointments, see Section 54.

(3) Those responsible for the process shall act in consultation with the relevant member of the Connexional Team.

(4) The initial invitation to a presbyter shall be for a period of five years, no annual invitation being necessary during that period.

(5) In the fifth year the invitation may be extended for a specified number of years not exceeding five, and in the final year of this extension, and of any subsequent agreed extension, shall be open to further extension, on each occasion for a specified number of years not exceeding five.

(6) No presbyter shall be appointed chaplain under this Standing Order for more than five successive years except upon an invitation given in accordance with clause (5) above.

(7) Standing Order 544 shall apply to appointments made under clause (2) above, with the following adaptations:

- (i) for references to the circuit Invitation Committee substitute as to the Southlands College chaplain: the Methodist members of the Southlands Liaison group; as to the Westminster chaplain: the directors of Westminster College Oxford Trust Limited (acting in consultation, as in clause (2)(ii));
- (ii) in clause (1)(a)(i) of Standing Order 544 delete 'after consulting the church stewards of the Local Churches in which the person concerned



exercises pastoral responsibility'.

(8) Each such chaplain shall act in respect of ministerial duties under the direction of the Chair of the District.

An instruction to this effect must be printed at the appropriate place in the stations (S.O. 785(7)).

**Section 28 Conference Properties and Other Bodies**

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**280 [220] The New Room, Bristol.** (1) The [...] **Connexional Council** shall, *in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts*, annually appoint managing trustees **as provided below** for **the Conference Property** at John Wesley’s Chapel (the New Room), and 4 Charles Street (Charles Wesley’s house) and 5 Charles Street, Bristol.

As to Conference property see paras.1, 2(1)(dA) and 11A of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

(2) The trustees shall be:

- (i) the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the Chair of the Bristol District;
- (iii) the Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit;
- (iv) the warden of the New Room;
- (v) not more than twenty other persons.

(3) The trustees shall appoint a chair, a secretary and a treasurer from among their own number, **with the agreement of the council**.

**281 [223] Westminster Central Hall.** (1) The **Connexional Council** [...] shall, *in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts*, annually appoint, **as provided below**, the managing trustees of Westminster Central Hall, **as a Conference Property**.

(2) The trustees shall be one of the Chairs of the London District, the Superintendent of the Westminster Circuit and not more than 22 other persons.

(3) The trustees shall appoint a secretary and a treasurer from among their own number.

(4) The chair of the trustees shall be **appointed by the council, upon the nomination of the Nominations Committee [...]**.

As to Conference property see paras.1, 2(1)(dA) and 11A of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2). For the Nominations Committee, see S.O. 220.

**282 [240] Action for Children.** The Conference shall exercise any powers it may have under the constitution of Action for Children to appoint and remove any member or members of the board of that body. [...] The names of members of the board appointed otherwise than by the Conference shall be reported to the Conference each year.

As to Action for Children (previously NCH), see S.O. 007(v).

**283 [241] Methodist Homes.** The Conference shall exercise its powers of nominating any member of the board of Methodist Homes in accordance with the constitution of that body as amended from time to time. [...]

**284 [242] Methodist Women in Britain.** (1) There shall be a body known as Methodist Women in Britain which shall encourage and support activities primarily but not exclusively by and among women which are within the purposes of the Methodist Church, subject to any Standing Orders applying to such activities.

(2) Without limiting the generality of clause (1) above the activities of Methodist Women in Britain shall include the furtherance of fellowship and training and of mission at home and overseas.

(3) [...] There shall be a president of Methodist Women in Britain, chosen biennially by consultation among district representatives of Methodist Women in Britain during the year next but one before the year of taking office. The president shall hold office as such for two connexional years and during the year before taking that office and also the year after leaving it is the vice-president.

(4) Methodist Women in Britain shall act on behalf of the women of the Church as the British unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women and through the [...] **Mission Committee** shall nominate to the Conference representatives to the assemblies of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.

**285 [245] Methodist Relief and Development Fund (“All We Can”).** The trustees of the fund shall be appointed by the [...] **Connexional Council**, and shall include at least one member of the council. The working relationship between the fund and the Connexional Team shall be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Fund was established by Declaration of Trust on 29th March 1985. The Declaration of Trust was amended by supplementary deed by the Conference in 2008, and the Memorandum of Understanding referred to above is now contained in a Framework of Commitment entered into in March 2019. The purposes of the Fund are to receive, hold and transmit moneys for relief, rehabilitation and development under Methodist, ecumenical or other appropriate oversight primarily overseas but, in cases of exceptional need, also in the United Kingdom.

The Conference of 2001 agreed that the Methodist World Development Action Fund should be wound up and that any amounts received for that fund after 31st August 2001 be treated as funds for the Methodist Relief and Development Fund and be used for development education and development projects.

From 8th April 2014 the Methodist Relief and Development Fund has operated under the name “All We Can”.

**286 [1007] The Forces.** (1) The [...] **Conference** shall annually appoint a Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force Board, (‘the Forces Board’) through which it shall exercise general oversight of:

- (i) the work of all ministers who are set apart to serve as [...] **both Regular and Reserve [...] Chaplains** to the forces;
- (ii) **missional activity which engages with the church’s commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, working closely with the Aldershot Methodist**

**Military Trust and other partners as appropriate [...].**(iii) **[deleted]**(iv) **[deleted]**

(2) The Forces Board shall also **support, encourage and promote [...]** the work of ministers appointed to serve as [...], Officiating Chaplains and Cadet Force Chaplains.

(3) The Forces Board shall consist of a chair and:

- (i) the secretary of the Forces Board, who shall be appointed in accordance with Standing Order [...] **385 or 386**, and be a member of the Connexional Team;
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference or a senior member of the Connexional Team to represent [...] **the Secretary**;
- (iii) the principal chaplains appointed and serving under clause (4);
- (iv) two chaplains, other than a principal chaplain, appointed and serving under clause (4), one of whom shall be serving as a chaplain to the cadet force;
- (v) a District Chair, who shall have responsibility for chaplains in stationing;
- (vi) two or more lay persons, one of whom shall oversee the provision in the forces of the training programmes prescribed by the [...] **Ministries Committee** under Standing Orders 565 and 680(1)(ii).

For representation on the Stationing Committee, see S.O. 260(1)(iii).

The prescribed training programmes under (vi) are for Local Preachers (S.O. 565) and Worship Leaders (680).

(4)(a) The secretary of the board shall be responsible for recommending both to the government department concerned and to the Stationing Committee the name of any person to be appointed as a chaplain to the forces, subject to any policy as to overall numbers of such chaplains agreed by the committee.

(b) Chaplains shall be regarded as ministers in the home work. [...]. They shall be members of the Synod of the District specified for that purpose in the stations and, in the case of presbyters, subject to its discipline, but each shall, nevertheless, attend the Synod of the District in which [...] **the presbyter** or [...] **deacon** is serving and shall be eligible for election by that Synod as a representative to the Conference.

(5) Such chaplains [...] are not appointed to the Circuits in which they are for the time being located, and their services may be utilised for Circuit purposes only so far as is consistent with the discharge of their proper duties. In order that opportunities of fellowship and service may be offered to them, the secretary of the board shall notify the Superintendents and Chairs involved of any change in the Circuit or District in which they are located.

*[The remaining clauses of the previous Standing Order, 1007, were revoked.]*

## Section 29 Connexional Panels and Connexional Leadership Meetings

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### **290 [231] Connexional Panel for Discipline, Pastoral and Appeal Committees.** (1)

The Conference shall annually appoint a Panel of persons from which members may from time to time be chosen to serve on:

- (i) connexional Discipline Committees convened under Standing Order 1131 or 1141, connexional Pastoral Committees convened under Standing Order 013 or 042 and connexional Pastoral Committees of Appeal convened under Standing Order 056 and
- (ii) connexional Appeal Committees convened under Standing Order 1141, 033 or 042(4).

(2) There shall be two conveners of the Panel, responsible respectively for each of the heads specified in clause (1) above, together with such number of deputy conveners as may be appropriate. All these persons shall be appointed from among the members of the Panel by the Conference or, if a casual vacancy occurs or those appointed are disqualified or, by reason of the number of cases to be dealt with, more require to be appointed, by the President after consultation with the Vice-President.

(3) The Panel shall include an appropriate number of persons selected for their qualifications or experience to chair Discipline and Appeal Committees and identified as such in the resolution of appointment.

(4) A deputy appointed under this Standing Order may exercise any power, fulfil any duty or function, and occupy any position conferred on the relevant convener or officer by any Standing Order.

**291 Connexional Panel for Review Groups.** The Conference shall annually appoint a Panel of appropriately qualified and experienced persons from which members may from time to time be chosen to serve on any group (whether referred to as a review group or otherwise) which is required by any Standing Order to be established for the purpose of considering and, as the case may be, making recommendations or decisions in relation to the matters specified in the relevant Standing Order. The Conference shall further appoint such number of conveners as are thought to be required to deal with the number of cases which are likely to arise.

The Conference of 2024, in the absence of initial nominations to this panel (which was first created as part of the 2024 Oversight and Trusteeship resolutions), directed that should the need arise for a connexional review group to be formed the Secretary of the Conference should invite suitable persons from the panel appointed under S.O. 290 above and/or past Presidents or Vice-Presidents to form such a group.

**292 [32A4] Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry.** (1) The Conference shall appoint annually a panel of persons, to be known as the connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry, upon the nomination of the Ministries Committee made in accordance with the terms of reference for the panel adopted from time to time, **after consultation with the Faith and Order Committee, by the Ministries Committee [...].**

(2) The panel shall have the responsibilities set out in such terms of reference, which shall include the arrangements, terms and conditions for the grant of authorisation of persons as practitioners in the field of deliverance ministry.

**293 The Connexional Leaders' Forum.** [230] (1) Leaders appointed by the Conference to exercise oversight in particular bodies or spheres of responsibility shall work together collegially in the oversight of the whole Church. The leaders listed in (2) below shall meet together as often as practicable to watch over one another in love in order to support each person in the exercise of [...] **the particular responsibilities of the office**, to engage in prayerful theological reflection, to share insights and develop vision, and to confer about how the vision and policies adopted by the Conference might be implemented in the Church.

The necessary consequential amendments (arising from the Conference's adoption in 2024 of the resolutions in the Oversight and Trusteeship Report (Agenda 2024, report 50)) are shown here, but a resolution was also adopted further to suspend the operation of this Standing Order with effect from the close of the Conference of 2024 until the close of the Conference of 2025, to enable further reflection and exploration of the way forward during the transitional period as the Connexional Council begins its work.

(2) The Connexional Leaders' Forum shall consist of:

- (i) the Secretary of the Conference;
- (iA) the assistant secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) the President, Vice-President, ex-President, ex-Vice-President, President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate of the Conference;
- (iii) the District Chairs;
- (iv) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (v) the Connexional *Secretary*[...] as defined in Standing Order 383;
- (vi) the members of the senior management group as defined in Standing Order 383 not otherwise forming part of the Connexional Leaders' Forum under this clause;
- (vii) the chair of the [...] **Connexional Council**;
- (viii) **the chair of the Ministries Committee**;
- (ix) **the chair of the Mission Committee**;
- (x) **the chair of the Resourcing Committee**;
- (xi) the Youth President.

(3) Other persons appointed by the Conference to fulfil connexional duties shall be invited to form part of the Forum on particular occasions, as appropriate.

**294 [230A] Chairs' Meeting.** There shall be a meeting of the Chairs of the home Districts not less than three times a year for the discussion of stationing issues and other matters of mutual concern, [...] reflection upon the work of God in the Districts and Connexion **and consideration of whether there are any matters that the meeting believes**

***it to be necessary or appropriate to bring to the Conference's or Connexional Council's attention.*** The expenses of these meetings shall be pooled and charged to the District Expenses Funds of the Districts, assisted by a grant from the Methodist Church Fund.





## Part 3 Connexional Council-Appointed Committees and Areas of Work

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*Part 2 (above) and this Part 3 were adopted as a whole by the Conference of 2024, finally to bring into effect the principal recommendations as to the connexional Oversight and Trusteeship of the Methodist Church, made in successive reports to the Conference [see in particular Section C of Conference Report 57 (2023): Oversight and Trusteeship]. This Part 3 deals with the work which is done by committees, bodies and Connexional Team members generally to support the fulfilment of the Connexional Council's responsibilities as the connexional trustee body (as provided in clauses 37A to 37C of the Deed of Union and Section 20 above). As indicated by the title, this Part therefore broadly contains the Standing Orders relating to the constitution and responsibilities of the main council committees (Ministries; Mission; Resourcing) and the bodies which operate under them to take forward specific areas of work. This is then followed by Section 38 which deals with the Connexional Team of which the Connexional Council has the management and direction under S.O. 203(3).*

*The Conference resolved that Parts 2 and 3 should come into effect on 1 September 2024, revoking the existing Parts 2, 3 and 10 of Standing Orders as of that date. It is anticipated that further proposals for changes may come in future years as the new constitutional arrangements take effect and areas of work are reviewed by those responsible. There are many groups whose work currently continues, although not specifically provided for in this Part 3. The Conference also confirmed the continuance beyond 31 August 2024 of appointments to committees and other bodies made previously by the Methodist Council (Daily Record, 7/7/9).*

*The text of many of the Standing Orders in this Part 3 has been retained at this stage with the Standing Orders simply being re-numbered; the numbers in square brackets indicate where the Standing Order substantially to the same effect was to be found previously. Although the whole of Parts 2 and 3 are technically new, for ease of reading they have been set out in plain text, with amendments to what appeared previously being indicated in the usual way by [...] and **bold italics**.*

**Section 30 The Main Council Committees: General Provisions**

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**300 The Main Council Committees: Appointment.** (1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of the following committees:

- the Ministries Committee
- the Mission Committee
- the Resourcing Committee

referred to here and elsewhere as ‘the main council committees’.

(2) The Connexional Council shall appoint the main council committees, to which the following clauses shall apply.

(3) Each such committee shall have a chair and a deputy chair (or more than one such deputy, if so approved by the council), all being appointed by the council.

(4) The council shall work in consultation with the Nominations Committee, in accordance with that committee’s responsibilities under Standing Order 220, to make the appointments under clauses (2) and (3) above. For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the council by the committee.

(5) All persons appointed to the main council committees shall initially be appointed for a period of three years and may be reappointed for a further period of no more than three years. The council may only extend the appointment for a further period beyond the initial reappointment if it is satisfied that there is good reason to do so in the light of a statement by the Nominations Committee as to the exceptional nature of the circumstances which have led the committee to make the further nomination.

(6) Each committee may invite such other observers or consultants, from within and beyond the Connexional Team, as are appropriate.

**301 Responsibilities.** (1) The respective general areas of responsibility of the main council committees shall be as delineated in Standing Orders 311, 321 and 361 below, together with any other Standing Orders which specifically allocate functions to any of those committees, but the Connexional Council shall have power, for the better fulfilment of its purposes, to redistribute particular areas of work between the committees, reporting such decisions to the Conference, with such recommendations as to the amendment of the Standing Orders as are necessary.

(2) The main council committees shall each work under the oversight of the council, and in accordance with any applicable Standing Orders and, subject to those Standing Orders, with such terms of reference as are approved from time to time by the council.

**302 Reporting.** Each main council committee shall report primarily to the Connexional Council, but where the matter being reported upon concerns the committee's direct responsibility to the Conference, as provided in the relevant Standing Orders, the committee shall report directly to the Conference.

**303 Authority to Appoint Groups.** In addition to any such appointments required by Standing Orders, the main council committees may appoint such sub-committees, task groups, working parties or other groups as are necessary to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities, in each case determining their powers and functions and clarifying where relevant the extent of any delegation of the committee's powers. Where it is intended that a group is intended to have responsibilities of a continuing nature rather than for a time-limited piece of work or where it is to have delegated powers, the permission of the Connexional Council to the inclusion of such terms shall be obtained.

## Section 31 The Church in Ministry and Mission: Ministries Committee and Training

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**310 [32A0(2)] Ministries Committee: Appointment.** In exercising its power of appointment of the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 300, the Connexional Council shall ensure that as far as possible the members of the committee between them shall represent the interests of:

- (i) the ordained and lay ministries and offices of the Church, including local preachers and stewards;
- (ii) the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation and the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and the Stationing Committee.

**311 [32A1] Ministries Committee: General Responsibilities.** (1) The committee shall **seek [...]** to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for the use of ordained, accredited, commissioned and informal ministries and offices throughout the Connexion.

(2) The committee shall be accountable to the Conference through the **Connexional Council** for:

- (i) developing and supporting the processes relating to the oversight, accountability and professional development of those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
- (ii) developing and supporting programmes for nourishing, equipping and resourcing those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
- (iii) developing and supporting the Church's structures, partnerships and resources for learning, training, quality assurance, scholarship, research and development;
- (iv) in collaboration with other bodies, supporting the development of structures that enable the use of various forms of ministry as resources for mission within Circuits and Districts;
- (v) overseeing connexional policy regarding its ordained ministries, including that relating to the processes for offering as a candidate, the oversight of students and probationers, and stationing, but without adjudicating on individual cases, which shall remain the task of the bodies appointed to fulfil that responsibility.

(3) The committee may, after consultation with the **[...]council**, report to the Conference on matters of policy or process requiring the attention of the Conference that have been identified by the committee or by the Committee for the Discernment of

Ordained Vocation, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, the Stationing Committee or the Stationing Advisory Committee.

(4) The committee shall recommend to the Conference, through the council, [...] **discernment** criteria for adoption under Standing Order [...]710(5) and, as required, amendments to those criteria.

**312 Ministerial and Lay Education and Training.** (1) [340A] The [...] **Connexional Council, acting through the Ministries Committee**, is responsible for the oversight of theological colleges and other training institutions and shall bring nominations to the Conference for the appointment of oversight tutors to carry out the functions described in Standing Order 252(12).

For the definition of 'theological college', 'training institution' and 'oversight tutor', see S.O. 007(ii).

The Conference of 2024 (Daily Record 5/3/3) received a report about the review of the resourcing of learning for ministry and authorised those responsible to make recommendations to the Ministries Committee for report to the Connexional Council and the Conference (which will receive an interim report in 2025).

There are other areas of training elsewhere in Standing Orders which come under the aegis of the Ministries Committee. See in particular Section 56 on Local Preachers and 56A on Local Lay-Pastors.

(2) [341] The [...] council shall appoint the Cliff College Committee to serve as the governing body of the college. The council and the committee shall maintain, administer and develop the work of the college in all its aspects in accordance with their respective powers under the trusts applying to the college and its associated property and funds.

The college, with associated property and funds, is held upon the trusts of two deeds dated the 30th December 1903 and 30th November 1930.

## Section 32 The Church in Ministry and Mission: Mission Committee and the Church's relationship with partners

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**320** [1000A0(2)] **Mission Committee: Appointment.** In exercising its power of appointment of the Mission Committee under Standing Order 300, the Connexional Council shall ensure that as far as possible a diversity of persons involved in varied missional activities in differing contexts is included.

**321** [1000 and 1000A1] **Mission Committee: General Responsibilities.** (1) The committee shall [...] **seek** to enable the Church to develop and maintain a strategic vision for mission.

(2) The committee shall be accountable to the Conference through the [...] **Connexional** Council for:

- (i) developing and supporting the mission of the Church both locally and globally, embracing the Conference's affirmation that (***whilst the terms 'overseas' and 'home' have the meanings and uses assigned to them in the Deed of Union and Standing Orders***) there is no distinction between the nature of mission exercised in different parts of the world;
- (ii) developing, supporting and reviewing initiatives for nourishing, equipping, resourcing and accompanying those engaged in the mission of the Church both locally and globally;
- (iii) overseeing connexional policy for mission;
- (iv) determining the processes, and overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the disbursement of grants or funds, for mission in Britain.

For oversight of, and administration and distribution of grants from, the World Mission Fund, see S.O. 322(1) and (2) and S.O. 373(2).

(3) The committee may, after consultation with the [...] council report to the Conference on matters of policy or process requiring the attention of the Conference.

**(4) Within its general responsibilities for the missional activity of the Church in its widest sense shall be included the functions specifically referred to in this section or elsewhere in Standing Orders, but also whatever wider areas of work will enhance and support God's mission in the world, for instance, through evangelism and growth; through embracing and advocating for justice in the Church and the world; through nurturing of work among children, young people and families.**

**322 Relationships with Global Partners and Partner Churches.** [335] (1) The [...] **Mission Committee** shall annually appoint a Global Relationships Committee consisting of not more than ten members which shall report to the Mission Committee.

[1002A] (2) ***In fulfilment of the commitment of the Methodist Church in Britain to work in partnership with Churches across the world, the Global Relationships Committee shall annually appoint the World Mission Fund Grants Committee, which shall include a representative of the Methodist Church in Ireland and with a majority of the committee having been nominated by partner Churches across the world. Its responsibility shall be, within the parameters set by the Connexional Council, to administer the grants allocated under Standing Order 373(2) below, reporting thereon annually to the Global Relationships Committee.***

(3) The [...] council shall provide reports to the Conference on global relationships.

(4) [1002(1) and (2)] ***The [...] council shall be responsible for implementing the declared commitment of the Conference [...] to the engagement of the Methodist Church in Britain with Churches across the world in a spirit of partnership, collaboration and mutuality through the sharing of resources of all kinds including the interchange of personnel. To that end it shall arrange for [...] the selection, training and appointment of men and women for service overseas as mission partners with an autonomous conference or united church or other agency in accordance with mutually agreed arrangements and shall make appropriate provision for their support in retirement.***

(5) Wherever possible lay persons appointed for service under clause (4) above shall for the duration of their service overseas transfer their membership to a Local Church in the place where they serve.

(6) Those appointed for service under clause (4) above serve at the invitation of and under the regulations and, subject to clause (7) below, the discipline of the church or agency concerned.

(7) The mutually agreed arrangements referred to in clause (4) above shall ensure that, in the event of disciplinary proceedings grave enough to call into question the status of a minister or probationer or the membership or local preacher status of a lay person so appointed:

- (i) such status shall not be removed by any court overseas;
- (ii) the case shall, whether or not the appointment is terminated, be reported to the appropriate member of the Connexional Team who shall ensure that whatever further action is required by or appropriate under the Standing Orders of the relevant home conference is taken;
- (iii) for that purpose the membership of any lay person whose status may be in question shall, where necessary, be transferred to [...] ***that person's*** home church.

See Part 11 of Standing Orders for matters relating to Complaints and Discipline.

**323 Local Ecumenical Development.** [334] (1) The [...] **Connexional Council, on the nomination of the Mission Committee,** shall annually appoint representatives to the Methodist-Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission, or such successor ecumenical body as

the council shall from time to time designate, to exercise the functions specified in this Standing Order. They shall include a member of the Connexional Team, designated as the ecumenical officer of the Methodist Church.

(2) The Methodist representatives to the Panel shall act on behalf of the [...]council in performing the following functions:

- (i) keeping under review the development of local ecumenical relationships in Britain and advising the Connexional Team accordingly;
- (ii) providing guidelines for use of the Synods in establishing ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance and in designating local ecumenical partnerships and other local schemes involving constitutions for shared churches, and monitoring their operation, and, through the ecumenical officer, receiving and scrutinising all proposals for new schemes;
- (iii) offering advice in new or difficult situations.

(3) By virtue of section 1, sub-sections (4) and (10), of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act, 1969, the consent of the ecumenical officer shall be required for the making or amendment of any sharing agreement under that Act or any legislation amending or replacing it. Where any such agreement requires consent to its termination to be given on behalf of the Church the ecumenical officer is authorised to give such consent.

(4) The ecumenical officer shall be responsible for providing information to the Conference and other bodies about ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance and for the making of recommendations to the Conference on applications for the designation of ecumenical areas under schemes involving partnership at circuit level, and on proposals to give or revoke a direction under Standing Orders 512 and 611, as to all of which the ecumenical officer shall first obtain the report of the district Policy Committee.

(5) The ecumenical officer shall compile a list of all new schemes approved by the Synods under Standing Order 412(2) and of all sharing agreements authorised or signed by [...] **the said officer**, and ensure that they are reported to the [...]council.

**324 [1005] New Towns and New Areas.** (1) In a new town or city officially designated as such by the appropriate government department or, at the request of the Chair or Chairs of the District or Districts concerned, in a new town not officially designated, or when an expansion scheme to house a population of 20,000 or more is planned by a local authority, the [...] **Connexional Council, on the nomination of the Mission Committee**, may appoint a New Town or New Area Commission to encourage the Methodist Church towards policies of imaginative experiment and ecumenical co-operation and to reinforce all such sound planning and effective action as will build up the Church and extend its outreach into the life of the new communities.

(2) A commission shall include representatives of the Connexional Team and of the District or Districts and Circuit or Circuits concerned, as well as other persons with appropriate expertise, and its chair shall be the Chair or one of the Chairs of the District or Districts concerned.



(3) The commissions shall meet at least annually during the planning and major development phases of the new towns and new areas. They shall act as advisory committees to the Circuit Meetings, district committees and connexional bodies concerned.

(4) When the planning and major development phases in a new town or new area are completed the commission may resolve that the work of the Church there shall in future be under the supervision of the district Policy Committee for such time as the committee judges it necessary. While a new town or new area is under the supervision of the district Policy Committee it shall submit an annual report on its progress, approved by the district committee, together with complete copies of accounts to the [...]council.

(5) A commission may be reconstituted at any time if the district Policy Committee considers it advisable.

## Section 33 The Church in Ministry and Mission: a Justice-Seeking Church

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**330 [336] Justice, Dignity and Solidarity.** (1) The Methodist Church seeks to become a church in which God's unconditional love is expressed in word and actions, and where all are fully able to play their part in the church's life. In working to achieve that aim it follows the principles of justice, dignity and solidarity, which require that:

- (i) diversity is reflected in all aspects of leadership in the church through the adoption of policies and procedures which avoid all unjust discrimination and enable all people to use their gifts in God's service through their service to the church;
- (ii) the church treats all people with respect, recognising them as made in the image of God and avoiding any form of conduct which might undermine their dignity and worth;
- (iii) the church is committed to the support of those who have suffered or may suffer any form of unjust discrimination and to standing in solidarity with them in asserting and maintaining their rights to be treated with justice and respect for their dignity.

(2) The [...] **Connexional Council, on the nomination of the Mission Committee**, shall annually appoint a Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee, to discharge the following duties:

- (i) making strategic recommendations and giving support and guidance to the council in all matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion;
- (ii) maintaining an overview of policies and procedures to ensure that matters of justice, dignity and solidarity are addressed;
- (iii) assisting the council in identifying and responding to emerging risks, challenges and opportunities in relation to matters of justice, dignity and solidarity;
- (iv) supporting the council in taking steps to implement any policies adopted by the Conference in relation to matters of justice, dignity and solidarity, and in promoting and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across the Connexion;
- (v) nominating one of **either** the committee's [...] **chair[...] or deputy chair** to act as adviser to the Conference on matters of justice, dignity and solidarity [...] **(the committee's deputy chair or chair, as the case may require, being able to act as an alternate).**

(3) The committee shall report annually to the [...] council.

(4) (a) The committee shall consist of;

- (i) [...] **a chair and a deputy chair** appointed in accordance with sub-clause (c) below

- (ii) [...] **one member** of the [...] council;
- (iii) up to eight other persons.

(b) A member of the Connexional Team shall be the convener of the committee but not a voting member. Other members of the Connexional Team with responsibility for matters of equality, diversity and inclusion may attend committee meetings by invitation of the **chair or, when deputising for the chair, the deputy chair, [...]** and shall have a right to speak but not to vote.

(c) The [...] **chair and deputy chair** shall be appointed by the [...] council to serve for six years.

(d) The members of the committee shall not normally serve for more than six years in succession.

(5) The committee shall be responsible for making nominations to the council for persons to fulfil Standing Order 102(1)[...](vii).

**331 [1004] Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice.** (1) The Conference has declared its commitment that the Methodist Church, in faithfulness to its missionary calling to evangelism, social caring and political justice, will strive to use its resources for all in society, recognising that this will mean especially taking sides with those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources, and has challenged the Methodist people to respond seriously and imaginatively to the issues raised by that commitment. To give expression to its commitment the Conference has instituted and continues Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice.

The predecessor of Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice was the Mission Alongside the Poor Programme, the new name being adopted in 2016.

(2) The purposes of Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice are:

- (i) advocacy of the Church's commitment to those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources;
- (ii) assistance by way of grants for personnel or property schemes, primarily to Local Churches and Circuits, to assist them in supporting those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources.

(3) Grants from Methodist funds for Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice, whether for personnel or property schemes, must be wholly for a purpose or purposes of the Methodist Church, and shall meet the following criteria:

- (i) there must be evidence of insufficient resources to meet the material needs of individuals whether in an urban or a rural setting;
- (ii) there must be a commitment to work alongside those experiencing poverty and inequality of resources, thereby enabling them better to respond to their own sense of God's calling.

As to grants from the Methodist Church Fund see S.O. 371(4), from the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund S.O. 373(3)(i), from the Methodist Fund for Property S.O. 373(5)(b), from the London Mission Fund S.O. 374(6), and from the Connexional Priority Fund S.O. 974(1A).

## Section 34 The Church in Ministry and Mission: Methodist Heritage

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**340 [337] Methodist Heritage Committee.** (1) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall annually appoint a Methodist Heritage Committee, to discharge the following responsibilities:

- (i) to protect, advocate and advance the interests of Methodist heritage throughout the Connexion;
- (ii) to give directions that artefacts, publications and records which are model trust property and which the committee judges to be of historic significance to the Church and specifies for this purpose individually or by category shall not be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of or parted with except as provided by Standing Order 936, to establish and maintain a list of the property so specified, and to monitor and report to the council on compliance with any such directions and with Standing Order 936;
- (iii) to formulate and keep under review a policy for the development and advancement of Methodist heritage, with a particular focus on the role of Methodist heritage as a tool for the contemporary mission aims of the Methodist Church;
- (iv) to oversee all Methodist archives and other historical material and to advise managing trustees and others responsible for such material;
- (v) to give general support to the development, interpretation and promotion of sites of historic importance to the Church;
- (vi) to give support specifically to those which have been identified as being of particular significance to the wider Connexion, namely:
  - The Old Rectory, Epworth, Lincolnshire
  - The New Room (John Wesley's Chapel), Bristol
  - Wesley's Chapel, John Wesley's House and the Museum of Methodism, City Road, London
  - Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism;
- (vii) to act as the Committee of the World Methodist Historical Society (British Section).

(2) (a) The committee shall consist of:

- (i) the chair, appointed as such in accordance with sub-clause (b) below;
- (ii) four trustee representatives, one each appointed by the respective trustee bodies of the sites referred to in clause (1)(vi) above;
- (iii) the two liaison officers for Methodist archives and collections appointed under clause (4) below;
- (iv) [...] **the** Connexional Secretary (or [...] **a** representative);

- (v) up to 6 other persons chosen to ensure that the committee has expert knowledge, experience and skills recognised as desirable, in areas which may include:
- theology
  - historical research
  - archiving and record management
  - care and conservation of historical buildings, artefacts and records
  - heritage and museum work outside the Church
  - funding, fundraising and marketing
  - heritage tourism
  - the World Church
  - information technology in heritage and education contexts
  - education and lifelong learning
  - events and activity programming.

*The [...] member of the Connexional Team with responsibility for Methodist Heritage shall be the convener of the committee but not a voting member.*

(b) The chair shall be appointed by the [...] council to serve for six years.

(c) The other members of the committee, except where appointed ex officio under head (iii) or (iv) of sub-clause (a), shall not normally serve for more than six years in succession.

(3) [...] **The [...] Connexional Team member referred to in clause (2)(a) above** shall share with the Methodist Heritage Committee overall responsibility for the coordination of the Church's interest in and work relating to Methodist heritage and its links to the Church's contemporary mission aims.

(4) (a) The committee shall appoint a liaison officer for Methodist archives, who shall oversee, advise, support and connect the various bodies responsible for the production, supervision, deposit and safekeeping of Methodist archives, other historical material and modern records across the whole Connexion, and in particular the Connexional Team and District Archivists.

(b) The committee shall appoint a liaison officer for Methodist collections, who shall oversee, advise and support the various bodies responsible for the acquisition, disposal, interpretation and safekeeping of Methodist historical collections across the whole Connexion, and in particular the Connexional Team, the curators of the sites identified in Standing Order 340(1)(vi) and District Archivists.

(5) The committee shall also appoint a specialist group with expertise in the archiving of historical material and in modern records management to advise it upon the discharge of its responsibilities under clause (1)(iv) above, and may appoint such other groups as are deemed appropriate to enable it generally to fulfil its responsibilities.

As to connexional, circuit and local records see S.O. 015, 125, 473.

This Standing Order (then 337) was adopted by the Conference in 2010 (and has been subject to later modifications), as a replacement of the previous Standing Order dealing with the Archives and History Committee.

**(6)(a) [221] The committee shall be responsible, on behalf of the council as the**

**connexional trustees, for appointing a group to oversee** the affairs of the Aldersgate Memorial and such other assets and funds as are related to it. [...] **The members of the group (who need not be members of the committee) shall include the Superintendent of the City Road (Leysian Mission/Wesley's Chapel) Circuit and other persons with appropriate links with civic life, Methodist heritage and the London Committee.**

(b) The memorial and any related assets or funds shall, without restricting or excluding the provisions of the Model Trusts otherwise applicable, be held for the following connexional purposes:

- (i) the commemoration of the Aldersgate conversions of John and Charles Wesley in May 1738;
- (ii) the purposes of the Methodist Church with particular reference to the City of London.

In consequence, the Aldersgate Memorial is connexional property (see para. 1 of the Model Trusts, Book II, Part 2).

**341 [332] Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.** (1) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall annually appoint as one of its committees a Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, which shall have the responsibilities and functions prescribed in Section 98.

(2) The committee shall be constituted in such a way as to have expert knowledge of historic church buildings, and shall consist of a convener, as specified in clause (3) below, together with not less than eight other persons chosen with the above object in view and having among them in particular:

- (i) knowledge of the history, development and use of Methodist chapels;
- (ii) knowledge of Methodist liturgy and worship;
- (iii) knowledge of archaeology;
- (iv) knowledge of the history and development of architecture and the visual arts; and
- (v) experience of the care of historic buildings and their contents.

(3) The convener shall be the Property Secretary.

As to the Property Secretary see S.O. 006(2A)

(4) The Connexional Team shall keep a register of all chapels, ancillary premises and manses which are listed buildings or in a conservation area, and shall supply to managing trustees, for inclusion in the relevant log books, to the appropriate bodies specified in Standing Order 930(5)(a), and to district archivists copies of the relevant parts of the register, giving them the necessary information and guidance to enable the significance of such listing to be taken into account whenever a scheme involving a listed building or property in a conservation area is under consideration.

See Section 98 as to listed buildings and S.O. 943(4) as to the treatment of their contents on sale.

## Section 35 The Church in Ministry and Mission: Chaplaincy

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**350 [1006] Prison Chaplaincy.** (1) The Connexional Team shall have the oversight of all work done by persons appointed as chaplains in pastoral care of Methodist inmates of prisons and prison staff. Such chaplains shall send a report of their work to the Synod and to the Superintendent Chaplain of prisons, appointed by the [...] **Connexional** Council.

(2) The Team shall be responsible for the nomination of prison chaplains. The Superintendent Chaplain of prisons shall consult with the Chair of the District in which a prison or young offenders institution is situated concerning a suitable nomination to be forwarded to the Prison Governor for appointment as Methodist chaplain.

(3) In the case of any presbyter to be appointed to full-time chaplaincy, the Superintendent Chaplain shall first secure the agreement of the Stationing Committee to the opening or continuation of a station for such an appointment, and after selection has been made by the appropriate authority shall forward the name of the person to be appointed to the Stationing Committee.

**351 [1008] Workplace Chaplains.** The Connexional Team member responsible for work relating to industry, business and commerce shall be responsible for securing the agreement of the Stationing Committee to the opening of stations for the appointment of workplace chaplains and for recommending to the committee the name of any presbyter or deacon to be appointed as such a chaplain. In the case of a deacon, any such recommendation shall be made after consultation with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

## Section 36 Resourcing the Church

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**360 Resourcing Committee: Appointment.** In exercising its power of appointment of the Resourcing Committee under Standing Order 300, the Connexional Council shall ensure that the persons to be appointed shall cover the range of skills, experience and availability necessary to fulfil its responsibilities for the proper care and use of the Church's resources.

In the following Standing Orders, the text which is shown as unamended reflects the previous Standing Orders applying to the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council and the Connexional Allowances Committee.

**361 Resourcing Committee: General Responsibilities.** [213(2B)] (1) The committee shall advise and assist the Connexional Council, **and where required act under delegated authority**, in fulfilling the council's responsibilities for the strategic oversight and use of resources with regard to personnel, finance and physical assets which are within the purview of the council.

(2) [213(2C)] It shall further advise and assist the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary as they devise strategic policies for presentation to the council or the Conference.

**362 Resourcing Committee: Particular Responsibilities.** (1) Without limiting the ambit of its general responsibilities as outlined in Standing Order 361, the committee's responsibilities shall include those listed below.

(2) [213(3)] The committee shall be responsible for

- (i) **the detailed examination of the accounts required by Standing Order 370 to be prepared [...]** and for recommending [...] **their** adoption by the **Connexional [...]**Council; and
- (ii) **the preparation of summary accounts to be presented for information to the Conference.**

(3) [213(4)] To enable the council to fulfil its responsibilities under Standing Order 204(1) and Section 37, the committee shall [...] propose to the council, **for presentation to the Conference for its approval**, the budget for **the connexional funds** for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, together with a rationale for it in terms of the priorities and mission strategies of the Methodist Church, recommending the total amount required to be levied by the Conference for the next connexional year and the payments to be made from the fund, taking into account the priorities judged necessary by the council.



(4) [213(4B)] The committee shall act to advise and enable the council to fulfil its legal duties and obligations as an employer. It shall have responsibility for all personnel matters for those with [...]council employment contracts, and shall act as the responsible body for implementing the Church's duty of care towards those ministers appointed to serve in appointments under the direction of the council and those ministers appointed as officers of the Conference and located in the Connexional Team.

**(5) *The committee shall, on behalf of the council, oversee and administer the funds referred to in Section 37 below, and all other connexional funds of which the council is trustee.***

**(6) *The committee shall make recommendations to the council, to be brought to the Conference, as to ministerial stipends and related matters. These shall include (but not be limited to) recommendations as to: minimum stipends to be paid to ministers and probationers; the amount of any additional allowances and initial payments; the level of travel expenses payable; financial arrangements for ministerial sabbaticals; expenses incurred and any additional allowances payable on removal between circuits.***

This clause summarises the main responsibilities of the previous Connexional Allowances Committee as previously laid down in S.O. 212(3) and (4).

(7) [212(4)] The committee shall produce guidance for ministers, probationers and students as to grants, loans and allowances available to them (particularly where stationed in one of the Island districts, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, Malta or Gibraltar).

**(8) *The committee shall be responsible for making recommendations as to any other terms under which ministers and probationers serve within their covenant relationship with the Conference.***

## Section 37 Resourcing the Church: Finance

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**370 [360] Accounts.** (1) The [...] *Connexional* Council shall [...] *ensure accounts are prepared*, clearly distinguishing between restricted and unrestricted funds and conforming to the law and accounting regulations, so as to give an overall view of those moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible.

(2) The general or other funds formerly administered by or in connection with a Division or connexional committee which ceased to exist on or before the 31st August 1996 and for which thereafter there are no separate trustees or other body with responsibility to administer the same and dispose of their assets shall be administered by the [...]council[...].

**371 [361] Methodist Church Fund.** (1) The [...] *Connexional* Council shall *raise [...] and as the trustee body be responsible for the administration of* the Methodist Church Fund.

(2) The fund shall be maintained by an assessment levied by the Conference on each Circuit in the home church through the several Districts, by contributions from Methodist colleges and schools and other organisations, by donations and legacies for the general purposes of the Methodist Church and by dividends and interest.

As to the assessment see S.O. 432(3), 515(3), 532(2), 635(2).

(3) Out of the fund shall be met:

- (i) the expenses necessary to give effect to the decisions of the Conference;
- (ii) the expenses of the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference;
- (iii) costs incurred in guarding the rights and privileges of the Conference, so far as not chargeable to another fund;
- (iv) grants, not otherwise provided for, to Districts, Circuits and Local Churches;
- (v) grants in support of ecumenical work and dues and subscriptions to ecumenical bodies;
- (vi) payments in accordance with Standing Order 376;
- (vii) allocations or grants as required by Standing Order or determined by the [...]council for any connexional purpose;

- (viii) the cost of the work of the Connexional Team;
- (ix) all other connexional expenses not chargeable to other funds.

As to (ii) see S.O.113.

(4) Provision shall be made for grants from the fund to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331.

**372 [361A] Racial Justice.** (1) As part of the Church's witness to the gospel and in order to promote racial justice, provision shall be made from any appropriate funds for grants to Methodist and ecumenical bodies and projects and to other organisations (whether local or national) in order to support work against discrimination and marginalisation on racial grounds.

See S.O. 013B for the Church's declaration as to racism.

(2) To the extent that the trusts affecting the funds referred to in clause (1) above so require, grants may be made only to bodies having charitable status.

See also S.O. 330.

**373 [362] Specified Funds.** (1) The [...] *Connexional* Council shall raise [...] **and, as the trustee body, be responsible for the administration of** the four restricted funds specified in clauses (2) to (5) below, for which contributions, including public collections, subscriptions, donations and legacies, shall be invited for particular aspects of the work of the Church.

(2) (a) The purposes of the Methodist World Mission Fund shall be:

- (i) to promote and encourage Christian mission overseas;
- (ii) to encourage the establishment of churches overseas which will themselves undertake that mission within and beyond their own borders;
- (iii) to engage in relationships of mutual help and enrichment with churches and ecumenical bodies overseas;
- (iv) to foster and take part in ecumenical relationships in the field of world mission, including the work of the World Council of Churches;
- (v) in furtherance of these purposes to engage in education, advocacy, recruitment and fundraising.

(b) In the allocation of grants from the World Mission Fund the council shall **work through** the World Mission Fund Grants Committee appointed under Standing Order 322(2) above to have responsibility, through the Global Relationships Committee, to the council for the administration of the grants so allocated, in line with the policy adopted by the [...] council Council in relation to such grants.

(3) The purposes of the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund shall be

- (i) the support of work in furtherance of the Church's mission, including grants to Local Churches and Circuits, in the home Districts. Provision shall be made for grants to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331; and

- (ii) to bear witness to the global character of Christian mission by supporting work with and among ethnically diverse communities in Britain and Ireland which have their origin in other countries.
- (4) The purposes of the Methodist Fund for Training shall be:
- (i) the provision of initial and further training for presbyters, deacons, lay employees and other lay persons;
  - (ii) the provision of maintenance grants for persons undergoing such training and their dependants;
  - (iii) the improvement and maintenance of trust property, management and staffing of the Methodist training institutions;
  - (iv) contributing to the improvement and maintenance of property, management and staffing of joint theological colleges;
  - (v) the examination of candidates for the presbyterate and the diaconate and of presbyteral and diaconal probationers.

See Section 25 and Section 72.

- (5) (a) The purposes of the Methodist Fund for Property shall be:
- (i) the support of work in aid or on behalf of trustees of Methodist property;
  - (ii) grants and loans for property purposes to trustees of Methodist property in the home Districts.

See the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2), S.O. 204(3) and (4) and Part 9.

(b) Subject to sub-clause (a) above provision shall be made for grants to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331.

(6) The income of Junior Mission for All shall be allocated as to four fifths to the Methodist World Mission Fund and as to one fifth to the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund.

**374 [363] London Mission Fund.** (1) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall raise [...] **and as trustees be responsible for the administration of** the London Mission Fund as a restricted fund and shall appoint [...] **a committee**, to be known as the London Committee, **which may act on its behalf [...]**. In making the appointments, the council shall ensure that the area of each of the four former London Districts is fairly represented.

(2) There shall be advocacy of the fund in each Circuit within the area of the former four London Districts and in such chapels and preaching-places as have been assisted by the fund.

(3) Income shall be solicited by way of donations and subscriptions.

(4) The consent of the trustees shall be obtained to the erection of any buildings or the purchase of any site for which aid is sought from the fund.

(5) No help from the fund shall be given to Circuits which neglect to comply with the foregoing requirements.

(6) Provision shall be made for grants from the fund to support Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice in accordance with Standing Order 331.

(7) This Standing Order does not apply to the Malta United Area or to the Gibraltar

Circuit, which are not eligible for any grant from the London Mission Fund.

The Malta United Area is a designated ecumenical area within the South-East District. The Gibraltar Circuit is in the South-East District.

(8) In this Standing Order 'the four former London Districts' means the London North-East District, the London North-West District, the London South-West District and the London South-East District as those Districts were constituted immediately prior to 1st September 2006.

**375 [364] Other Restricted Funds.** (1) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall raise [...] **and as trustees be responsible for the administration of** the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons, the objects of which shall be to provide assistance at the discretion of the council, or of any committee or officer to whom it may delegate its powers in this behalf, to **the persons listed below:**

- (i) supernumeraries;
- (ii) persons who have been permitted or directed to become supernumerary;
- (iii) ministers in the active work or without appointment, persons recognised and regarded as ministers by virtue of clauses 43 to 45A of the Deed of Union, probationers and student ministers who, in any such case, are in acute financial need;
- (iv) ministers who are in need as a result of illness or impairment or the illness or impairment of any member of their immediate household, for the purpose of enabling them to continue in or resume the active work;
- (v) probationers who are in need as a result of illness or impairment or the illness or impairment of any member of their immediate household, for the purpose of enabling them to continue on or resume probation or to complete probation and enter the active work;
- (vi) student ministers who are in need as a result of illness or impairment, or the illness or impairment of any member of their immediate household, for the purpose of enabling them to continue their ministerial formation and training; and
- (vii) the spouses or civil partners of deceased ministers and probationers and other members of their immediate households who, in any such case, are in need;

**and to make such grants or payments as appear in clauses (2) and (3).**

(2) **It shall be an object of the fund** to make grants to the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society.

The Methodist Ministers' Housing Society is a charitable company limited by guarantee, Company Number 11929754 and Charity Numbers 1186758 (England and Wales) and SC050661 (Scotland).

See also the note as to the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme at S.O. 790(1D).

It was envisaged that, following the revocation of the then S.O. 773 and 751(6) by the 2001 Conference, eligible persons might wish to make an application to this fund in relation to the cost of removal to their permanent residence.

**(3) The objects of the fund shall further include making the following payments:**

- (i) **payments to circuits seeking reimbursement from connexional funds of payments made by them under the provisions of clauses (1) or (4) of Standing Order 376;**
- (ii) **payments to the relevant person or persons under clause (3) of Standing Order 376.**

(4) The council shall administer the sabbatical fund which shall be raised by means of an annual levy on each Circuit or other body responsible for payment of the stipend of any presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion appointed to a station within the control of the Church. The amount of the levy shall be that from time to time prescribed by the Conference.

See S.O. 744.

(5) In pursuance of its powers under the Deed Poll dated the 5th June 1882 establishing the Necessitous Local Preachers Fund the Conference directs the trustees of that fund to pay the income of the fund to the [...] council to be applied according to the trusts of the above Deed. The council shall have power to delegate to any two or more persons, whether or not members or a committee of the council, decisions as to the application or distribution of such income according to the said trusts.

The income of the fund is directed by the Deed to be applied for the benefit of such necessitous local preachers according to such rules and in such manner as the Conference may from time to time direct.

**376 [365] Reimbursements and other Special Payments.** (1) If at any time (subject to clause (2) below) a circuit minister or probationer has by reason of illness or injury been unable for a total of 26 weeks during the preceding 24 months to discharge the responsibilities of [...] **the appointment to which the minister or probationer is stationed** any Circuit involved shall on application be reimbursed out of **connexional funds [...]** for all sums (less the credit for Social Security benefits and statutory sickness pay) paid by the Circuit to that person under Standing Order 801(4) in respect of any continued or further periods of incapacity during the next twelve months (any such twelve months being referred to in clause (2) below as an 'eligible year').

(2) (a) In calculating the total of 26 weeks referred to in clause (1) above there shall be disregarded:

- (i) individual periods of incapacity of four weeks or less each;
- (ii) after the occurrence of an eligible year, any incapacity occurring before or during that year.

(b) The fund shall not in any event be liable to reimburse the same Circuit in respect of any payments made to the same minister or probationer for the next twelve months following an eligible year.

(3) If a circuit minister or probationer dies after the end of February in any connexional year leaving a spouse or civil partner and/or dependants entitled under Standing Order 801(5)(a) to remain in the manse until the end of that connexional year a sum shall be paid out of [...] **connexional funds** to that spouse or civil partner and/or dependants equal to rent at the rate then currently charged by the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for the period from the end of that connexional year until the date six months after the death.

(4) Any Circuit involved shall on application be reimbursed out of [...] **connexional funds** for all sums (less the credit for Social Security benefits) paid by the Circuit to a circuit minister or probationer under Standing Orders 807A(5)(a), 807B(4) and 807C(5).

S.O.s 807A(5)(a), 807B(4) and 807C(5) concern payment of stipend while on, respectively, maternity leave, paternity leave and adoption leave.

(5) Payment shall be made out of [...] **connexional funds** of all sums required to be so paid:

- (i) to any person by virtue of any Standing Order relating to disciplinary proceedings or of any direction given by a competent body and authorised by any such Standing Order;
- (ii) as determined under Standing Order 774(9) by the Stationing Committee or the President or Vice-President, in respect of any minister or probationer for whom no appointment can be found; and
- (iii) as determined by a district Consultative Committee under Standing Order 040(8) or by a connexional Pastoral Committee under Standing Order 042(5).

As to (i) see Part 11.

(6) Payment may also be made out of [...] **such funds** at the discretion of the council or of any committee or officer to which the council may delegate this discretion:

- (i) to reimburse any person or body for or discharge any payments, expenses or liabilities incurred or arising in connection with any actual or potential disciplinary proceedings against any person, whether or not a charge is brought, or in connection with any other case involving financial irregularity or improvidence on the part of a minister or probationer or where an application is made under Standing Order 013(11) **or Standing Order 1105(10)**; or
- (ii) in accordance with any recommendation of the Stationing Advisory Committee or the connexional Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee under Standing Order 774(6); or
- (iii) in accordance with any recommendation of an advisory committee under Standing Order 042(6).

As to (i) see Part 11.

**377** [367]. **Accounts: date for closure.** All accounts submitted to the Conference shall, except by approval of the Conference, be closed for each year on the 31st August.

**378** [368] **Central Finance Board.** Pursuant to section 5(3) of the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 the Conference [...] authorises the [...] **Connexional** Council and connexional committees to seek the advice of the Central Finance Board as to investments and empowers that board to give such advice to them and to any other body administering any funds or finances of the Church or any part of the Church or any charity connected with the work of the Church. [...]

The Central Finance Board was incorporated by the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 (Vol. 1, p. 43) and the membership of the board itself is prescribed by the Second Schedule to the Act. Note that the

Conference of 2002 approved amendments to regulations 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of that Schedule, dealing with the membership of the board's council (Agenda pp. 109–110) and in 2004 a minor amendment was made to regulation 2 (Agenda pp.462–3).

The board is responsible for administering the scheme scheduled to the Act (s. 5(1)) and is enabled to perform within certain limits such additional functions as the Conference resolves (s. 5(3)).



## Section 38 The Connexional Team

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**380 [302] The Connexional Team.** (1) There shall be a Connexional Team whose members work collaboratively to provide [...] **an efficient** and effective service on behalf of the Conference **and the Connexional Council**.

(2) The work of the Connexional Team, the assignment of particular tasks and the co-ordination of the work shall be supervised by the [...]council [...].

(3) The Connexional Team shall consist of:

- (i) the [...] **Connexional Secretary** as defined in Standing Order 383, who shall work under the direction of the Secretary of the Conference;
- (ii) all other ministers appointed under Standing Order 385 or stationed under Standing Order 387 to work as members of the Team;
- (iii) all other persons employed by the [...]council to work as members of the Team;
- (iv) all other persons specified in Standing Orders as members of the Team.

As to (iv), see e.g. S.O. 210(2).

**381 [303] Purposes of the Connexional Team.** (1) The overall task of the Connexional Team is to assist the Church in furthering the purposes of the Methodist Church, in particular enabling it better to fulfil its calling of responding to God's love in Christ and working out its discipleship in mission and worship.

(2) The Team is charged with providing appropriate support for Local Churches, Circuits and Districts as they work to fulfil the purposes of the Methodist Church. Such support shall include acting on their behalf or offering them such services and resources as the Team can **efficiently and effectively [...]** provide. In providing such support the Team shall act in accordance with Standing Orders and any directions of the Conference given from time to time.

(3) The Team is authorised to act on behalf of the Church in relation to national institutions and public issues in harmony with the existing statements and resolutions of the Conference.

See also S.O. 206(1).

(4) The Team is responsible for assisting the [...] **Connexional Council** in considering future policies.

(5) The Team shall have particular responsibility for the areas of work which are prescribed in the Deed of Union or specified in Standing Orders, or approved from time to time by the Conference and the [...] council.

**382** [305] and [329] **The Connexional Team: other specific responsibilities.** (1) The Connexional Team is authorised by the Conference, as occasion may require, to obtain from Chairs and Superintendents such statistical returns and other information as are necessary for the business of the Team and Chairs and Superintendents shall furnish all such information in due form.

(2) The Team shall prepare every three years a report on the membership returns for presentation to the Conference in the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions. The Conference, on the advice of the [...] **Connexional Council**, shall determine the frequency of the collection of the membership returns.

(3) The Team shall keep under review all arrangements for the employment of lay persons in the light of developments in employment law and good employment practice.

(4) The Team shall provide standard terms and conditions for contracts of employment within Standing Order 438A, standard conditions of occupancy and such other guidance as may from time to time be required, including any special terms and conditions to be included in contracts of employment of workers under Standing Order 570.

**383** [304] **The Connexional Secretary[...] and the Senior Management Group of the Connexional Team.** (1) The Connexional Team shall include a **Connexional Secretary[...]**, appointed to that office, who shall assist the Secretary of the Conference in the execution of [...] **the overall responsibilities of the Secretary of the Conference.** Under [...] **the direction of the Secretary of the Conference [...] the Connexional Secretary** shall have responsibility, together with the other members of the senior management group defined in clause (2) below, for the work of the Team and ensure that it is effectively carried out, in accordance with the Deed of Union, Standing Orders and the directions from time to time of the Methodist Conference and the [...] **Connexional Council**, and, with the wider senior leadership of the Church, shall support [...] **the Secretary of the Conference** in leading the development of the Church's vision of unity, mission, evangelism and worship. [...] **The Connexional Secretary is** authorised when so required to act as [...] **the representative of the Secretary of the Conference. The Connexional Secretary is further authorised to delegate from time to time the performance of such of the functions of the office, including attendance and (where the Connexional Secretary has the right to vote) voting at meetings, to such person or persons as are appropriate to the particular function concerned, but without derogation from the ultimate responsibility of the Connexional Secretary for the proper performance of the duties of the office.**

(2) The senior management group of the Connexional Team shall consist of the Secretary of the Conference, the assistant secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary[...], and such other members of the Connexional Team as the **council [...]** shall approve.

**384 [312] Contracts of Employment of Connexional Team members and tutors.**

(1) This Standing Order applies to the engagement for remuneration of any person within either of the categories specified in clause (2) below to serve in a post which is within the Connexional Team, or as a tutor in a theological college.

(2) The categories referred to in clause (1) above are:

- (i) ministers and deacons of other churches (whether or not recognised and regarded as presbyters or deacons of the Methodist Church under clause 44, 45 or 45A of the Deed of Union), other than ministers of the Irish Conference; and
- (ii) all other persons not within Standing Order 385 or 387.

(3) In every such case there shall be a contract of employment in writing between the **Connexional council** and the employee, complying with the law and with Standing Order 386 where applicable, and containing such other provisions as the council considers proper.

**385 [313] Ministerial Designations and Appointments by the Conference.**

(1) When it is proposed to appoint or re-appoint a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, minister of the Irish Conference or probationer to serve, full time or part time, as [...] the Connexional Secretary or secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, the [...] **Connexional Council** shall submit a nomination for that office to the Conference, accompanied by a reasoned statement indicating the qualifications of the person nominated. The nomination shall be printed in the Agenda if possible, or failing that shall be circulated at or before the opening of the Representative Session, and no other names may be brought to that Conference.

For the Connexional Secretary, see S.O. 383(1) and for the Faith and Order Committee, S.O. 210(2). See also S.O. 114, 116A and 116C for the application of this clause to the appointment of Secretary and assistant secretary of the Conference and Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice, respectively.

For the Agenda of the Conference, see S.O. 121.

(2) For designation to a new appointment, which shall in the first instance be for a specified period not exceeding six years, the nomination by the council and the designation by the Conference shall each require a simple majority of those present and voting.

(3) For designation to a re-appointment, which shall be for a specified period not exceeding five years, the nomination by the council and designation by the Conference shall each require a 75% majority of those present and voting. The council shall vote by ballot.

(4) A designation under the provisions of this Standing Order is a statement by the Conference of its intention that, if later Conferences concur, a presbyter or deacon be

appointed to the office concerned:

- (i) with effect from the beginning of the connexional year after the year immediately following the designation, unless the resolution of designation otherwise provides; and
- (ii) annually for the period of designation, but subject always to the provisions of clause (9) below.

(5) Where the majority required under clause (2) or (3) (as the case may be) is not obtained in the Conference, the Conference shall determine its own procedure, which may include requiring the council to submit a new nomination to the following Conference, and shall include appropriate arrangements for ensuring the performance of the duties of the office until an appointment is made (whether after designation under this Standing Order or by the procedure specified).

(6) When new appointments or re-appointments are under consideration in the council they shall be discussed in the absence of the persons concerned.

(7) The council shall complete its work as early in the connexional year as possible and shall notify the Circuit or other authority responsible for the person's current station that the designation is to be proposed.

(8) When it is proposed to nominate a deacon or diaconal probationer for an appointment under this Standing Order the [...] council shall consult the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, before submitting the name to the Conference.

(9) Appointments to be made pursuant to designations under this Standing Order shall be included in the stations and nothing in this Standing Order shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

**386 [314] Other Appointments authorised by the Conference.** (1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of a person within either of the categories specified in clause (2) of Standing Order 384 as [...] **the** Connexional Secretary or as secretary of the Faith and Order Committee.

For the Connexional Secretary, see S.O. 383(1) and for the Faith and Order Committee S.O. 210(2). See also S.O. 116C for the application of this clause to the appointment of the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice.

(2) The provisions of Standing Order 384 shall apply to all appointments under this Standing Order.

(3) Subject to clause (7) below the appointment by the [...] **Connexional** Council of [...] **the** Connexional Secretary or the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice requires the prior authority of a resolution of the Conference on the recommendation of the council, specifying the name of the appointee, the date upon which the appointment is to take effect and the period (if any is to be fixed) for which it will continue unless earlier terminated under any contractual provision in that regard.

(4) The provisions of clause (3) above apply also to the appointment of the secretary of the Faith and Order Committee, with the omission of the word 'prior', but any such appointment made, and any related contract of employment entered into by the [...] council before obtaining the authority of the Conference, shall be expressly conditional upon obtaining such authority at the next annual meeting of the Conference and shall

be void if such authority is declined.

(5) The Conference shall not authorise the making of an appointment under this Standing Order except upon the recommendation of the [...] council, and no further names may be added in nomination, by Notice of Motion or otherwise, or considered.

(6) If an appointment is terminated for any reason before the end of the period (if any) specified in the resolution of authority or otherwise than by notice given by either party the [...] council shall report the event in appropriate terms to the next meeting of the Conference.

(7) If because of the termination of the appointment of [...] the Connexional Secretary for any reason it is not practicable to comply fully with the requirements of clause (3) above the [...] council shall nevertheless have power to appoint a **replacement** Connexional Secretary despite such non-compliance. In that event as many of the provisions of clause (3) above shall be implemented as is practicable.

**387 [315] Other Ministerial Staff Appointments.** (1) The [...] Connexional Council may recommend that a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, minister of the Irish Conference or probationer be stationed to serve, full-time or part-time, in the Connexional Team in an appointment other than those within Standing Order 114, 116A, 116C or 385, or as a member of staff in a training institution or other body within the control of the [...] council or (if a deacon in Full Connexion) as the deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. Such a recommendation shall be for an initial specified period not exceeding six years. The appointment shall be included in the stations in the same way as an appointment to a Circuit and no separate resolution of appointment by the Conference shall be required.

For the Connexional Team, see S.O. 380.

As to 'training institution', see definition in S.O. 007(ii)(a).

(2) The council may recommend a re-appointment for one or more further specified periods, each not exceeding five years. Such a recommendation shall be determined as soon as possible in the final year of the current period and shall require the votes of not less than 75% of those present and voting.

(3) Nothing in this Standing Order shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

**388 [316] Curtailment.** (1) This Standing Order shall apply whenever it is desired on either side to curtail the period of [...] designation or recommendation of a minister for appointment to a station under Standing Order 116A, 116C, 385 or 387 [...] and the person appointed and the body designated in the relevant Standing Orders as being responsible for making, recommending or nominating to the appointment are unable to agree or when a connexional complaints team appointed under Standing Order 1122 considers that the question whether such a period should be curtailed should be examined. When requested to do so by the person appointed or by the officer specified in clause (2) below or by a team so appointed the President or the Vice-President on [...] the President's behalf shall appoint a curtailment committee to consider the matter.

The committee shall consist of the President or [...] **the President's** representative, who shall preside, and six other **persons chosen by the President from the panel appointed under Standing Order 291.** [...] The committee's judgment shall be reported to the body responsible for the appointment and as further required in clause (4) below.

(2) Clause (8) of Standing Order 544 shall apply to the constitution of the curtailment committee appointed under clause (1) above, and clause (10) of that Standing Order to its procedure, in each case with any necessary adaptations.

(3) The officer referred to in clause (1) above shall be:

- (i) in the case of the assistant secretary of the Conference, the Conference officer for legal and constitutional practice or [...] **the** Connexional Secretary, the Secretary **of the Conference;**  
[...];
- (ii) in all other cases, the Connexional Secretary [...].

(4) In the case of a minister appointed to a station, the judgment of the curtailment committee shall be reported to the Stationing Committee, and in the case of a diaconal appointment also to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. In the case of such an appointment under Standing Order 116A, 116C or 385 a report shall also be made by the curtailment committee in appropriate terms to the Conference [...].

(5) Nothing in this Standing Order shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

## Part 4 The Districts

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For the meaning of the word 'District' see cl. 1(xii) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

cl. 38 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides for the home Circuits to be arranged in Districts as directed by the Conference, and by cl. 39(b) the Conference may constitute Districts overseas.

**Section 40 General Provisions**

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**400 Constitution.** Subject to Standing Order 401 the names and enumeration of the Districts shall be set out year by year in the stations appointed by the Conference and they shall be composed of the Circuits there specified.

See the note above as to cls. 38 and 39 of the Deed of Union.

**400A Nature and Purposes.** (1) The primary purpose for which the District is constituted is to advance the mission of the Church in a region, by providing opportunities for Circuits to work together and support each other, by offering them resources of finance, personnel and expertise which may not be available locally and by enabling them to engage with the wider society of the region as a whole and address its concerns. The District serves the Local Churches and Circuits and the Conference in the support, deployment and oversight of the various ministries of the Church, and in programmes of training. It has responsibility for the evaluation of applications by Local Churches and Circuits for approval of or consent to their proposals, when required, or for assistance from district or connexional bodies or funds. Wherever possible the work of the District is carried out ecumenically. The District is thus an expression, over a wider geographical area than the Circuit, of the connexional character of the Church.

(2) *[revoked]*

**401 Changes in Composition.** (1) In this Standing Order any reference to a change in the composition of Districts is to a change in [...] **a particular District or Districts** in which one or more Circuits are placed. This Standing Order applies to all such changes, except [...] to transfers of Local Churches from one District to another arising solely out of changes, within Standing Order 501(4), in the composition of Circuits which themselves remain within their respective Districts. If proposals involve both a change within this Standing Order and a change within Standing Order 501 each such change shall be dealt with under the relevant Standing Order.

(2) All proposals for the division or amalgamation of Districts or other changes in their composition shall be considered by the [...] **Connexional** Council, which shall consult the Synods and Circuit Meetings involved, formulate a draft recommendation, obtain the resolutions of the Synods and Circuit Meetings on that draft and report those resolutions to the Conference with its own substantive recommendation.



(3) When any recommendation for change in the composition of Districts is before the Conference any Synod or Circuit Meeting involved has the right to make **formal** representations **in writing** to the Conference **in advance of the meeting of the Conference**.

(4) Upon making any change in the composition of Districts the Conference may give consequential directions, in particular as to transitional arrangements, including directions as to the making of appointments to district committees and offices.

**(4A) If in addition to the proposed changes in composition of a District or Districts it is also proposed to modify the standard constitution of the District, this shall be dealt with according to the provisions of Section 48A of Standing Orders either contemporaneously or subsequently.**

(5) **The determination of any change in district composition is ultimately a matter for the Conference, but [...]**if, in the judgment of the Conference, any change resolved upon by the Conference is substantially out of accord with the reported resolution of any Synod involved it shall take effect only if confirmed by the Conference of the year next following.

**402 District Committees.** (1) Each district Synod shall annually appoint a district Policy Committee, and may determine the name by which it is to be known in the District. The committee, by whatever name, shall fulfil the functions assigned to the district Policy Committee in the Deed of Union and Standing Orders and such other duties as the Synod may from time to time direct. In addition to the Chair of the District and the secretary of the Synod [...], the committee shall consist of a secretary and such other persons as the Synod shall determine.

(2) Notwithstanding clause (1) above the Synod may determine that particular functions assigned to the Policy Committee shall be fulfilled by some other committee or by an officer appointed by the Synod.

(3) Each district Synod shall annually appoint the other committees specified in Standing Orders and such additional committees as in its judgment will best serve the purposes of the District and fulfil the functions required by Standing Orders. Details shall be published annually and reported to the Secretary of the Conference.

As to other committees required by Standing Orders see S.O. 440(4) (city centre church or project management committee), 445 (M.I.H.), 472 (manses) and 484 (probationers).

(4) In the following clauses of this Standing Order 'district committee' means any committee appointed in accordance with clauses (1) and (3) above.

(5) The Chair of the District and, unless the Conference otherwise directs, the secretary of the Synod shall be, ex officio, members of every district committee. If there is an assistant secretary of the Synod, he or she may attend any meeting of any such committee in the place and with the rights of the secretary in the latter's absence.

Subject to certain exceptions described in cl. 42(bb), by cl. 42(b) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) the Chair of the District is, ex officio, the chair of all district meetings having relation to the Synod.

(6) The persons who are eligible to be members of district committees are those who, if ministers or probationers, are members of or (in the case of forces chaplains [...]) entitled to attend the Synod or, if not ministers or probationers, are members in the

District or members of other communions involved in partnership schemes within the District which have been approved by the Conference.

As to the entitlement of forces chaplains to attend the Synod see S.O. 286(4)(b).

(7) *[revoked]*

(8) Except where membership of a committee is determined by district, circuit or local church office, all members of district committees shall be elected by the Synod and the election shall have effect for a term of one year or the life of the committee, whichever is the shorter.

(9) The elected members of a district committee may be re-elected annually. After six years' continuous service they shall not be eligible for re-appointment before the expiry of one year, except that (i) secretaries and treasurers shall not of necessity relinquish their committee membership until they have completed a term of six years in office, and (ii) where special experience and exceptional service on the part of a committee member or officer makes it desirable, the Synod may by the votes of not less than three fourths of those present and voting re-appoint annually beyond six years.

(10) The appointment of elected members shall take effect from the close of the Synod at which they are appointed and in clause (8) or (9) above 'year' means the period from appointment or re-appointment until the close of the Synod at which appointments are made in the next following connexional year.

**403 Connexional Affairs.** (1) Each district Synod shall annually appoint a treasurer or treasurers for the District Expenses Fund and all other funds for which it is responsible, the other officers required by Standing Orders and such additional officers as will in its judgment best serve the purposes of the District and fulfil its obligations to the Connexion.

(2)–(3) *[revoked]*

(4) The appointment of the above officers shall take effect from the 1st September next following. After six years' continuous service an officer shall not be eligible for re-appointment before the expiry of one year, except that where special experience and exceptional service make it desirable the Synod may by the votes of not less than three fourths of those present and voting re-appoint annually beyond six years.

**404 Expenses.** (1) All district expenses, including those of the Synod secretary, shall be paid out of the District Expenses Fund.

(2) Subject to clause (3) below payment of the travelling expenses of members attending district committees shall be at the discretion of the Synod.

For expenses of attending Synod see S.O. 416.

(3) The travelling expenses of members attending the Synod or district committees from the Malta United Area or the Gibraltar Circuit shall be a charge on the Methodist Church Fund.

The Malta United Area is a designated ecumenical area within the South-East District. The Gibraltar Circuit is in the South-East District.

## Section 41 The Synod

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For the definition of the word 'Synod' see cl. 1(xxxiv) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides for the establishment of district Synods and by that clause the Synods are to be so constituted and to have such powers as the Conference may provide.

**410 Constitution.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 785(8) and clause (6) below the Representative Session of the district Synod shall consist of:

- (i) the Vice-President and all ex-Vice-Presidents of the Conference, being eligible;
- (ii) all ministers and probationers stationed in the District, all ministers residing for the purposes of the stations in the District and any other minister or probationer entered in the stations as a member of the Synod;
- (iii) *[deleted]*
- (iv) one circuit steward of each Circuit in the District, or a substitute elected by the Circuit Meeting;
- (v) lay representatives (which may include other circuit stewards) or their substitutes elected by the Circuit Meeting of each Circuit in the District, the total number for each Circuit being determined by the Synod;
- (vi) all members of the district Policy Committee;
- (vii) *[...]* the district Lay Stationing Representative, the district property secretaries appointed under Standing Order 470 and any officers appointed to the Synod to be responsible for World Church affairs;
- (viii) two persons appointed by the last preceding meeting of the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly from the young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church in the District who attended that Assembly and who are members of the Methodist Church;
- (ix) **[deleted]**
- (x) all lay representatives elected by the Synod to the last preceding or next following Conference;

- (xi) in Districts in which there is a training institution, representatives elected by the student ministers in each institution from among their own number, two for up to thirty such persons, three for up to sixty and four for more than sixty;
- (xii) such lay district officers as the Synod may determine;
- (xiii) Synod-elected lay members, in numbers determined by the Synod;
- (xiv) such numbers of eligible local lay-pastors and lay employees appointed in the District under Standing Order 56A1 or 570, as may be determined by the Synod;
- (xv) the secretary of the Synod;
- (xvi) the assistant secretary of the Synod (if appointed).

For eligibility of lay persons see cl. (3) below.

As to the dates of appointment of members of the Policy Committee see S.O. 402(10).

As to ministers without appointment see S.O. 774, 775.

For the Policy Committee see S.O. 402(1).

For the district Lay Stationing Representative, see S.O. 417B.

For the Children and Youth Assembly, see Section 24 and S.O. 417A.

For the election of district representatives to the Conference, see S.O. 417.

For training institutions, see S.O. 007(ii).

For the secretary see S.O. 414.

(2) A minister or probationer may be a member of more than one Synod when appointed to serve in more than one District, save that for matters of presbyteral discipline a minister or presbyteral probationer shall be accountable to one of those Synods designated for that purpose on the Stations, and for matters of diaconal discipline a deacon or diaconal probationer shall be accountable to the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Warden of the Order.

For the position of forces chaplains, see S.O. 286(4)(b).

(3) Subject to head (xi) of Standing Order 410(1) a lay person is eligible to be a member of the Synod only if he or she is:

- (i) a member in the District; or
- (ii) a member of another Christian communion who holds office or is an elected member of a meeting under the constitution of a partnership scheme in the District authorised by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod; or
- (iii) an officer appointed on behalf of the District who is a member of the Methodist Church or of another Christian communion.

(4) A circuit steward entitled to attend the Synod as such may not decline to do so while claiming the right to attend and vote in some other capacity.

(4A) In exercising its discretion under heads (v), (xii), (xiii) and (xiv) of clause (1) above the Synod shall secure that the total number of lay members shall be not less than the total number of ministers in the District in the active work.

(5) In appointing Synod-elected members the Synod shall consider its own composition as a whole with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin. They shall be

appointed by the Synod in its Representative Session and serve for three years, one third retiring each year. Upon retirement they may be re-appointed once only for a further three years, after which they shall not be eligible for a further appointment to take effect before the expiry of one year. When a casual vacancy occurs during a three-year term (whether first or second) the Synod may fill the vacancy with immediate effect, but the person then appointed shall serve in the first instance only until the end of that three-year term, when he or she shall be treated for all the purposes of this clause as having completed a first three-year term.

(6) In the Shetland District and the Isle of Man District the Representative Session of the Synod shall consist of the persons specified in heads (i) and (ii) of clause (1) above, together with all other members of the Circuit Meeting of the Lerwick and Walls Circuit and the Isle of Man Circuit respectively.

(7) The constitution of the Synod shall be published annually and reported to the Secretary of the Conference, sufficient notice of any changes being given to enable Circuit Meetings to elect their representatives under head (v) of clause (1) above.

#### **411 Meetings.**

Meetings may be held physically, electronically or in hybrid form (S.O. 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate see Book VII B, Part 6A.

(1) The Synod shall meet at least once in each connexional year in Representative and Presbyteral Sessions, and not later than the second Saturday of May.

For the constitution and functions of the Presbyteral Session see Section 48.

For the duty of ministers and probationers to attend see S.O. 741, and, as to supernumerary ministers, S.O. 791(5).

For the circumstances when a postal ballot may be conducted see S.O. 417(2B).

(1A) Subject to clause (1B) below, before the first meeting of each connexional year the Chair and Synod secretary shall make out and distribute to all members of the Synod a list, by name, of those members of the Synod who, to the best of their knowledge, have duties or loyalties within Standing Order 019A(7), identifying the other bodies involved, provided that every member of the Synod shall be taken to have such duties or loyalties to the Circuit Meeting of the Circuit in which he or she is stationed or a member unless named as an exception. At the opening of each meeting in that year the Chair shall call upon members to disclose any additions or other corrections, and those members on the corrected list who are present shall be called upon to confirm the disclosure of their relevant duties or loyalties. This clause does not derogate in any way from the obligations of members in respect of interests, duties or loyalties under Standing Order 019A but not within clause (7) thereof.

(1B) The Synod may resolve not to follow the process set out in clause (1A) above but instead to adopt an alternative process for ensuring that the duties or loyalties within Standing Order 019A(7) of Synod members are disclosed in such a manner and at such a point in any meeting of the Synod that the Synod is able satisfactorily to manage conflicts of interest and duty. Such a resolution may include a resolution retrospectively dispensing with the requirements of clause (1A) above so far as otherwise applicable to

the meeting at which the resolution is passed and shall remain in force for such period as the Synod may determine.

See S.O. 019A(9) for the position in jurisdictions outside England and Wales.

(2)–(3) [*revoked*]

(4) Where the Synod meets in Presbyteral Session more than once in the connexional year the earlier meeting shall, so far as the Chair at his or her discretion thinks practicable, deal with all the business of the Presbyteral Session except (i) that from the district Probationers Committee and (ii) such matters for report as are not known at the date of that meeting.

(5) The Chair shall have authority to call an additional meeting of the Synod on any application by members of the Synod which appears to him or her to require it.

(6) The Chair shall send to all members of the Synod notice requesting their attendance on the days appointed for every meeting of the Synod, specifying the business to be brought forward and making particular mention of any subject remitted by the Conference to the consideration of the Synod.

(7) The Synod in its Representative Session may admit visitors, if it so desires.

**412 Functions.** (1) The Synod is the policy-making court of the District, serving as a link between the Conference and the Connexional Team on the one hand and the Circuits and Local Churches on the other. It shall have oversight of all district affairs. It shall formulate and promote policies, through its various officers and committees, to assist the mission of the Church, to give inspiration to the leaders in the Circuits and to ensure the interrelation of all aspects of the Church's life throughout the District. It is a forum in which issues of public concern relevant to the witness of the Church may be addressed. The Synod's business is the work of God in the District, expressed in worship, conversation, formal business, the communication of Conference matters to the Circuits and the submission of memorials to the Conference.

As to memorials see S.O. 419.

As to district property see S.O. 910(2), 913(2), 966(2).

For the functions of the Presbyteral Session see S.O. 481.

For the guidelines as to the business of the Representative Session of the Synod, see Book VII B, Part 6.

(2) The Synod has authority to establish ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance, to designate local ecumenical partnerships within the District and to approve the constitution of any of the latter such partnerships, such designation being made where possible in conjunction with a Sponsoring Body on which the Methodist Church is represented.

(3) No such approval shall be given unless the district Policy Committee has complied with S.O. 434(3)(v) and so reported to the Synod. After the Synod has given its approval its decision shall be reported to the ecumenical officer and a copy of the constitution shall be sent to him or her.

See S.O. 323.

**413 Procedure.** (1)–(3) [*revoked*]

(4) Notices of motion must be submitted in writing to the Chair and secretary of the Synod fourteen days before the date of the Synod, and the secretary shall see that they are printed and distributed to the members of the Synod not later than its opening. Only on matters of urgency and by express permission of the Synod may notices of motion be submitted during a session of the Synod.

(5) The rules comprising clauses (6) to (25) of this Standing Order shall be the rules of debate regulating the proceedings of the Synod, except that since much of the business of the Synod may be conducted in the form of conversations clauses (8) to (21) shall apply only when a formal resolution is under consideration. In these rules 'Chair' includes any person presiding in accordance with clause 42(b) of the Deed of Union or Standing Order 414(1).

(6) Any member who wishes to speak shall catch the Chair's eye but shall not proceed further until called upon by the Chair.

(7) Every speaker shall address the Chair.

(8) No member may speak more than once on the same question without leave of the Synod, except in the exercise of a right of reply under Clause (21) below. For this purpose an amendment or procedural motion raises a fresh question.

For procedural motions see clause (15) below.

(9) Unless previously presented every resolution or amendment shall be produced in writing when proposed, and shall immediately be handed to the secretary.

(10) Every resolution or amendment requires to be seconded in order to be submitted to the Synod.

(11) When a resolution or amendment has been duly submitted it may not be withdrawn without the leave of the Synod.

(12) The seconder of a resolution or amendment may reserve the right to speak.

(13) (a) Any amendment of the terms of a resolution may be proposed if it is relevant to the subject-matter of the resolution, unless the same result could be achieved by the rejection of the resolution.

(b) If an amendment is carried the resolution as amended becomes the substantive motion, and as such may itself be amended under this clause.

(c) When an amendment has been duly submitted no other amendment may be moved until it has been disposed of, but any member may give notice of a proposed amendment and may state whether it is to be moved in any event or if not in what circumstances.

(14) A resolution may be disposed of by adoption (with or without amendment), rejection or withdrawal. Until it has been so disposed of no other resolution may be submitted except a procedural motion.

(15) The following are procedural motions, which may be adopted by the Synod at any time:

- (i) that the vote be now taken;

- (ii) that the question be not put;
- (iii) that the question be referred to a committee;
- (iv) that the debate be adjourned;
- (v) that the Synod adjourn.

(16) If a resolution and amendment are before the Synod:

- (i) a motion that the vote be now taken relates only to the amendment;
- (ii) a motion that the question be referred or that the debate be adjourned relates to both;
- (iii) a person moving that the question be not put must state whether that motion relates to both or only to the amendment.

(17) A motion that the vote be now taken requires a majority of two thirds and shall be voted upon without discussion, but the Chair shall not be bound to put it to the vote if of the opinion that there has not been adequate opportunity for necessary debate.

(18) A motion that the question be not put may be discussed concurrently with the question to which it relates.

(19) A motion that the debate be adjourned may specify the time of resumption or be a motion for adjournment to a time to be resolved upon later.

(20) A motion for the adjournment of the Synod shall specify the time of resumption.

(21) (a) When a vote falls to be taken, whether or not by the adoption of a motion under clause (15)(i) above, the following persons have a right to speak, and if more than one in the following order:

- (i) the seconder of the resolution or amendment to be put, if he or she has reserved the right to speak and has not already exercised that right;
- (ii) the mover of the substantive resolution, unless the question to be put is an amendment to which he or she has already spoken;
- (iii) if the question to be put is an amendment, the mover of the amendment.

(b) The person entitled to speak last under sub-clause (a) above may deal only with questions or arguments put during the debate.

(c) Before putting the question the Chair shall call the Synod to order and read the resolution or amendment to be put. Except on a point of order no member shall speak after the question has been put until the vote has been taken.

(21A) If there is a tie in the voting on a resolution to be decided by a simple majority the Chair shall have a casting vote, whether or not he or she has already voted.

(22) A resolution to rescind a decision of the current meeting of the Synod shall not be adopted unless at least two thirds of the members present and voting vote in its favour.

(23) The Chair shall call to order any speaker who departs from the question or violates the courtesies of debate.

(24) Any member may raise a point of order on the ground that these rules of debate or the regulations of the Conference have been violated. The speaker then addressing the Synod shall give way until the point of order has been decided. The Chair decides all



questions of order.

(25) A member who thinks himself or herself misrepresented may, by leave of the Chair, interrupt the speaker to correct the misstatement, but must not enter into argument nor speak to the merits of the question under discussion.

**414 Officers.** (1) When the Chair of the District is unable to attend any meeting of the Synod a chair for the occasion shall, unless the President or, in the case of the Representative Session, the Vice-President is present as a member of the Synod, be elected by the Synod from among the presbyters then present.

cl. 42(b) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part I) provides that the Chair of the District is, ex officio, the chair of the Synod, except that the President of the Conference is to preside when present at meetings of the Synod of which the President is a member.

For the power of the President to assist at any Synod, if requested, see S.O. 111(1).

(2) There shall be a secretary of the Synod elected by the Synod for the next connexional year.

(3) When a lay person or deacon is elected as secretary, the Synod shall also elect a presbyter as presbyteral secretary, who shall act as secretary of the Presbyteral Session, and shall fulfil in respect of that session the duties specified in Standing Orders 415 and 419(1).

(4) The district Policy Committee shall nominate one or more persons for the office of secretary and (if required) presbyteral secretary.

(5) The Synod may also elect an assistant secretary.

**415 Minutes and Records.** (1) The secretary of the Synod shall provide three complete copies of the minutes of every meeting of the Synod, duly signed by the Chair and the secretary.

(2) The Chair and the secretary of the Synod shall each retain one of these copies until no longer required for current reference in the conduct of business; the third with a copy of the agenda shall be sent no later than the third Monday of May to the Secretary of the Conference.

See S.O. 125(4) as to the custody of this third copy.

(3) The secretary of the Synod shall be responsible for supplying to the Secretary of the Conference the information as to elections and other matters required for the business of the Conference.

**416 Expenses.** (1) Ministers in the active work and probationers are entitled to receive from their circuit stewards the amount of their expenses of attending the Synod.

(2) Supernumeraries and ministers without appointment are entitled to receive from the secretary of the Synod the amount of their expenses of attending the Synod.

(3) Lay representatives of Circuits attending the Synod may, if they desire it, claim their travelling expenses from the circuit stewards.

**417 Conference Representatives.** (1) Except as provided in Standing Order **286(4)** (b) district representatives elected to the Conference must be:

- (i) ministers who are members of the Synod; or
- (ii) ministerial probationers who are members of the Synod; or
- (iii) persons who are members in the District or members of the Synod under Standing Order 410(3)(iii); or
- (iv) persons who are members of other communions who hold office or are elected members of meetings under the constitution of partnership schemes in the District authorised by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod.

Ministerial probationers elected under head (ii) above are elected as lay members of the Conference.

All members of the Conference not otherwise specified are to be elected by the Synods in Representative Session (Deed of Union, cl. 14(6) (Book II, Part 1)).

For district allocations see S.O. 105.

For expenses see S.O. 141.

S.O. 286(4)(b) concerns forces chaplains.

(2) Subject to clause (2B) below the election shall be made by the Synod by ballot vote after nomination. In electing such representatives members of the Synod shall have regard for the composition of the membership of the District as a whole with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin.

(2A) All nominations made under clause (2) above shall be signed by at least two members of the Synod and shall include the nominee's:

- (i) Circuit in which he or she is stationed or a member, or, if falling under head (iv) of clause (1), partnership scheme;
- (ii) current appointments or offices within the Church, if any;
- (iii) age at the date fixed for the opening of the Representative Session of the Conference, in one of the following groups: under 26; 26 to 44; 45 to 64; 65 and over; and
- (iv) ethnic origin;

and up to 25 words of relevant additional information, and shall be made available to all members of the Synod before the ballot vote takes place. The second sentence of clause (2) above shall be quoted on all nomination and ballot papers.

(2B) The secretary of the Synod shall notify to the Secretary of the Conference and the secretary of the Conference Arrangements Committee the names of those elected by the Synod no later than the 31st October in the calendar year preceding the meeting of the Conference. If there is no meeting of the Synod at which an election can be held before the due date the election shall be conducted by postal ballot.

(3) Any person elected as a district representative to the Conference who cannot attend shall immediately inform the Chair. Vacancies arising for that reason or by the availability of additional places shall be filled by election at the Synod, or, if arising after the Synod by the person or persons (among those who can be chosen without departing from the allocation specified under Standing Order 105) in the appropriate category who received the highest number of votes next to those who were elected, or, if the election was by single transferable vote, by the person or persons who would,

in the opinion of the Chair, have been the most likely to be elected had the vacancy occurred before the election, having regard to the votes actually cast.

See cl. 17 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and cl. (3A) and (3B) below for the power of the Conference itself to appoint substitutes for district representatives.

(3A) If a vacancy, other than one to which clause (3B) below applies, arises which cannot be filled under clause (3) above, the Chair and the secretary of the Synod shall, within the terms of the allocation specified under Standing Order 105(1B), nominate in writing a person to be appointed by the Conference as a representative of that District under clause 17(a) of the Deed of Union.

(3B) Where the vacancy arising under clause (3) above requires to be filled by a deacon and it cannot be filled under that clause, the Chair shall inform the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The Warden shall nominate in writing a deacon to be appointed by the Conference under clause 17(a) of the Deed of Union, seeking first one who is a member of that Synod but, failing that, some other deacon.

(4) The secretary of the Synod shall inform the Secretary of the Conference which representatives of the District will be aged under 26 at the date fixed for the opening of the Representative Session of the Conference.

(5) The district representatives shall meet the Chair at least once before the date of the Conference at a briefing meeting which shall:

- (i) cover the procedures and ways of working of the Conference;
- (ii) include agenda information on major items of business; and the meeting shall be held sufficiently in advance of the Conference to facilitate attendance and other members of the Conference resident or stationed in the District shall be invited to attend.

**417A Children and Youth Assembly Representatives.** (1) The Synod shall make provision for ensuring that children and young people connected with the life of the Methodist Church within the District attend the Children and Youth Assembly in accordance with Standing Order **240**.

For the Children and Youth Assembly and as to who are eligible members for this purpose, see S.O. 240. As to the reimbursement of their expenses, see cl. (5) below.

(2)–(4) *[revoked]*

(4A) *[revoked]*

(5) The Synod shall make provision for contributing towards the reimbursement of the costs of attending the Children and Youth Assembly incurred by those who do so under clause (1) above.

**417B Lay Stationing Representative.** The Synod shall annually appoint a district Lay Stationing Representative to share with the Chair the responsibility for matters related to the stationing of presbyters and deacons in the District.

**418** *[revoked]*

**419 Memorials and Resolutions to the Conference.** (1) The Synod may in either of its sessions make memorials to the Conference on any connexional subject. A memorial, if approved by a majority of those present and voting, shall be signed by the secretary of the Synod and a note shall be added stating the number of persons voting for and against the resolution. Memorials shall be sent immediately to the convener of the Memorials Committee. Memorials received by the convener later than the Wednesday next after the second Saturday in May will not be presented to the Conference.

For procedure of the Memorials Committee see S.O. 138.

(2) The Synod may in either of its sessions submit a resolution to be moved in the Conference on any matter of connexional interest. Such a resolution shall be accompanied by a reasoned statement and shall reach the Secretary of the Conference by the Wednesday next after the second Saturday in May if it is to be considered by the Conference of that year. The Chair of the District shall determine which of the district representatives should move and second the resolution in the Conference.

For the procedure in the Conference see S.O. 134.

## Section 42 The Chair

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By cl. 42(a) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) the Chair of each District is to be a presbyter elected by the Conference by a clear majority. The Chair of the District is the chair of the Synod and almost all meetings connected with it (cl. 42(b), (bb)). Cl. 42(c) provides that in the home Districts the appointment shall run from the 1st September following election and continue while the Chair is appointed to the station, and deals with disqualifications and the filling of casual vacancies.

The Conference of 2024 received a report (2024 Agenda, Report 28) from the Faith and Order Committee entitled *The Role of a District Chair*. See also Section 4 of the report of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group on District Leadership referred to under S.O. 426 below.

**420 Qualification.** A presbyter appointed to be the Chair of a District shall be a presbyter in the active work.

**421 Term of Service.** (1) A Chair shall initially be designated for appointment for a specified period, not exceeding six years.

(2) Every designation for an extended appointment shall be for a specified period, each not exceeding five years.

(3) The provisions as to curtailment in Standing Order 544 shall apply to such periods as they apply to the period of invitation of a presbyter, reading 'District' for 'Circuit' where appropriate, and with the following further adaptations:

- (i) The functions of the circuit Invitation Committee shall be exercised by the panel constituted under Standing Order 421A(2).
- (ii) The functions of the Chair of the District under clauses (5) and (11) of Standing Order 544 shall be exercised by the President.
- (iii) The committee appointed under clause (6) shall not include the Lay Stationing Representative of the relevant District.
- (iv) Provisions which can have no application shall be ignored, including (without necessarily being exhaustive) those relating to church stewards, deacons or presbyteral or diaconal probationers and the last sentence of clause (9).

The provisions in this Standing Order are to be read in the light of the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually, S.O. 423B(5).

**421A Nomination Committee.** (1) A nomination committee shall be appointed in the last year but one of the existing Chair's current term of service or if the Chair has given notice of an intention to become supernumerary at the end of the next year or of a wish not to remain in the appointment after the end of the current term.

(2) Where an extension of that term is being considered, the committee shall consist of a panel of nine persons, including a convener, appointed annually by the Synod, which shall also appoint at least three substitutes.

(2A) A designation under the provisions of this Standing Order is a statement by the Conference of its intention that, if later Conferences concur, a presbyter be appointed to the office concerned:

- (i) with effect from the beginning of the connexional year after the year immediately following the designation, unless the resolution of designation otherwise provides; and
- (ii) annually for the period of designation, but subject always to the provisions of Standing Order 423B(5).

(3) Where a new appointment is being made, the committee shall be the members of the panel appointed by the Synod (whether original or substituted), together with five persons chosen by the Secretary of the Conference from a panel appointed annually by the Conference, not being members or stationed within the District, and, as chair of the committee, the President or, on his or her behalf, the Vice-President, an ex-President or an ex Vice-President.

(4) In any case in which the need for a new appointment becomes apparent during the last year of the existing Chair's current term of appointment, the provisions of these Standing Orders shall be followed as nearly as the Secretary of the Conference may judge to be possible.

**422 Extended Appointments.** (1) In the existing Chair's last but one year of service (unless the existing Chair has given notice of an intention to become supernumerary or of a wish not to remain in the appointment after the end of the current term) the nomination committee constituted as set out in Standing Order 421A(2) above shall convene to consider whether or not to recommend an extension. The advice on consultation contained in the guidance as to the invitation of presbyters from time to time approved by the Conference shall be followed as far as the circumstances permit.

(2) The convener of the nomination committee shall notify the Secretary of the Conference of the result of the committee's consideration.

(3) If a recommendation for an extension is made by a majority of not less than 75% of those present and voting, the convener of the nomination committee shall notify the convener of the district Policy Committee. Any such recommendation shall state the proposed period of years of the extension.

(4) Where no such recommendation is made, the Secretary of the Conference shall convene a nomination committee constituted as set out in Standing Order 421A(3)

above, which shall consider whether or not to recommend an extension. If it decides not to do so, it shall proceed to propose a fresh nomination in accordance with Standing Order 423.

**423 New Appointments.** (1) Where a new appointment is to be made, the Policy Committee shall prepare for consideration by the nomination committee a district statement of needs and opportunities and, based upon it, a person specification indicating the qualities required of the person to be appointed. The existing Chair shall be consulted, as shall leaders of such other churches as the Policy Committee believes appropriate. The statement and person specification shall be sent to the Secretary of the Conference for circulation to the nomination committee before its meeting.

(2) The task of the nomination committee is to seek to discern the will of God through a process that is accountable and just, while respecting the proper confidences required to enable presbyters to offer their gifts and graces in the service of the Church. To assist in this process, the district members of the nomination committee may meet the existing Chair to gain a better understanding of the particular requirements of the office.

(3) The Secretary of the Conference shall ensure that the vacancy is widely known in the Connexion and the secretary of the Synod shall publish it within the District and notify members of the Synod. The dates when the nomination committee is to meet and the means by which a nomination or expression of interest may be made or shown shall also be published.

(4) Nominations or expressions of interest shall be made or shown using standard forms obtained from the Secretary of the Conference, who shall at the same time supply a copy of the district statement and person specification.

(5) For each candidate, the Secretary of the Conference shall obtain on a standard form:

- (i) A statement of personal information;
- (ii) A reference from the candidate's district Chair;
- (iii) A reference from the candidate's circuit stewards or other appropriate person where the candidate is not in a circuit appointment.

No other information shall be sought at this point.

(6) The nomination committee shall proceed, by a process of shortlisting and interview conducted in confidence but in an atmosphere of mutual accountability, to the point where it is able to bring a recommendation to the district Policy Committee.

**423A Voting in the District.** (1) The recommendation of the nomination committee under Standing Order 422(3) or (4) or 423(6) shall be brought to the district Policy Committee, together with a reasoned statement. District members of the nomination committee shall be called to the meeting and may contribute to the discussion, but shall not vote unless the member concerned is also a member of the Policy Committee. Where a new appointment is being recommended, the presbyter proposed shall be invited to meet the Policy Committee but the meeting shall in no circumstances be seen to be a further interview.

(2) A recommendation for an extension of the current Chair's appointment is adopted if approved by a majority of 75% of those present and voting.

(3) A recommendation for a new appointment is adopted if approved by a simple majority of those present and voting.

(4) Where the recommendation is not adopted the Secretary of the Conference shall begin the full nomination process again.

(5) Where the recommendation is adopted the secretary of the Synod shall ensure that the recommendation of the Policy Committee, whether for an extended appointment or a new appointment, together with the reasoned statement, is printed in the Agenda of the ensuing Synod. No other names may be brought to that Synod.

(6) In all cases the Synod shall vote by ballot and the Secretary of the Conference shall be informed of the result. In the case of nomination to a new appointment, a simple majority of those present and voting is required. For nomination to an extended appointment, the required majority shall be 75% of those present and voting. Where the required majority is not obtained, the Secretary of the Conference shall convene a new nomination committee which shall follow the process set out in Standing Order 423, consulting the district Policy Committee as necessary.

**423B Voting in the Conference.** (1) The nomination of the Synod, together with the reasoned statement, shall be printed in the Agenda of the forthcoming Conference and no other names may be brought to that Conference. The majority required shall be that specified in clause (2) below.

(2) In cases of extended appointments, the required majority for approval is 75% of those present and voting. In cases of new appointments, a simple majority of those present and voting is required.

(3) Where the required majority is not obtained, the Secretary of the Conference shall as soon as possible convene a new nomination committee which shall follow the process set out in Standing Order 423, consulting the district Policy Committee as necessary. The process set out in Standing Order 423A shall then be followed, in order that a name may be brought for approval at the next Conference. Clauses (1) and (2) above shall apply, except that the required majority shall in all cases be a simple majority.

(4) *[revoked]*

(5) References in Standing Orders 421 to 423B to designation or service for periods of years operate only to obviate any need for earlier application of the procedure under those Standing Orders and do not derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually. A proposed appointment approved under this Standing Order shall accordingly be embodied in the stations presented for adoption to the current meeting of the Conference (if clause (3) above applies) or to the next following annual meeting (in all other cases) and the adoption of the stations shall constitute the election of the Chair for the purposes of clause 42 of the Deed of Union.



**424 Responsibilities.** (1) The prime duty of a Chair is to further the work of God in the District; to this end he or she will use all the gifts and graces he or she has received, being especially diligent to be a pastor to the ministers and probationers and to lead all the people of the District in the work of preaching and worship, evangelism, pastoral care, teaching and administration.

For the specific functions and duties of the Chair see the references in the Index. See also the report of the Faith and Order Committee referred to at the beginning of this Section.

For the Chair's rights in relation to certain appointments see S.O. 545(4)(a) and 574.

(2) The Chair, in conjunction with the members of the Synod in its respective sessions, shall be responsible to the Conference for the observance within the District of Methodist order and discipline.

(3) It is the duty of the Chair to exercise oversight of the character and fidelity of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District.

The Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, acting in conjunction with the Convocation, is responsible for the oversight of the character and fidelity of the deacons and diaconal probationers (S.O. 754(2)).

See S.O. 1110(4) for situations where the Chair may be required to act as 'local complaints officer' for the purpose of the complaints and disciplinary process.

**425 The Circuits.** (1) Chairs are directed to visit at least once a year, if possible at the time of holding a Circuit Meeting, each Circuit within their respective Districts to which only one presbyter is appointed, or to arrange for a Superintendent in the same District to do so in their stead.

(2) It is the responsibility of the Chair to uphold the authority and rights under the Methodist constitution of the Superintendent, and to offer oversight and support as appropriate in the fulfilment of his or her responsibilities. To this end the Chair will endeavour to establish close relationships with all the Superintendents in the District, that they may have the benefits of his or her wider experience of the District and knowledge of connexional decisions and policy.

(3) Each Chair is authorised to visit officially any Circuit in the District in order to share in the exercise of oversight with the Superintendent, circuit staff, circuit stewards and other members of any circuit leadership team, and the Circuit Meeting, and to offer appropriate leadership and support. He or she shall do so with due notice to the Superintendent and others concerned. The Chair of the District may preside at any meeting for circuit or local church purposes at the invitation of the Superintendent, but, subject to Standing Order 545(4)(a), may not do so without his or her consent unless, in special circumstances, the Synod or district Policy Committee so directs, and in that event the Superintendent shall take all necessary steps to give effect to the decisions of that meeting.

S.O. 545(4)(a) deals with the District Chair's right to be invited to and chair a Circuit Meeting where the extension or expiration of the period of invitation of the Superintendent is under consideration.

For the rights of the President in circuit affairs see S.O. 111(2).

**426 Permanent Deputies, Temporary Deputies and Assistants.** (1) The Synod may appoint a person to the office of deputy to the Chair.

(2) Any appointment made under clause (1) above shall comply with the following requirements:

- (i) the appointment shall be on terms that the deputy is to perform the duties specified in a description of the deputy's role which has been approved by the Synod;
- (ii) the person appointed shall be a presbyter in the active work who is stationed in the District;
- (iii) the appointment shall be for a specified period not exceeding three years in the first instance (but capable of extension for a further period or periods each of which shall not exceed three years) and upon terms that it shall terminate if the person appointed ceases to be qualified under (ii) above;
- (iv) the duties to be performed by the deputy shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts.

(3) The Synod may appoint more than one person to hold office as a deputy at the same time, but each appointment shall comply with the requirements set out in clause (2).

(4) If the Chair of a District or a deputy appointed under the preceding clauses of this Standing Order is temporarily unable to fulfil all or any of the duties of the office because of accident, illness, absence from the country, sabbatical leave or other cause, the Synod or the district Policy Committee, or in cases of emergency the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf, may appoint a person, being a presbyter in the active work stationed in the District, with authority to fulfil such of those duties which the Chair or deputy is unable to perform as may be specified in the appointment. An appointment made by the President or Vice-President shall continue only until such time as the Synod or district Policy Committee is able to confirm the appointment or to appoint another person under the provisions of this clause.

(5) A Chair may at any time appoint a person to assist him or her in such way as he or she may think fit.

(6) Unless the assistance is purely clerical or administrative, any appointment made under clause (5) above shall comply with the following requirements:

- (i) the person appointed shall reside in the District for the purposes of the stations or shall be a member in the District and the terms of appointment shall provide for it to terminate if this requirement ceases to be satisfied;
- (ii) if the person appointed is to act publicly on behalf of the Chair, the appointment shall not take effect until it has been approved by the Synod or the district Policy Committee;
- (iii) the duties to be performed by the person appointed shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts.

(7) Nothing in this Standing Order infringes upon the provisions in the Deed of Union for filling casual vacancies.

See cl. 42(c) of the Deed (Book II, Part 1).

See Section 4 of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group Report (2024 Agenda, Report 50), which included a number of indicative amendments to this Standing Order (not being brought for adoption at this stage). The Conference provisionally adopted an amendment to the Deed of Union providing for a deputy to be entitled to be a member of the Conference under cl. 14(2)(v) of the Deed of Union where the District Chair is unable to attend. After the appropriate consultation, it will return to the Conference of 2025 and if confirmed the amendment will come into effect for the Conference of 2026..

**427 Scotland.** (1) The Scotland District may also be known as the Methodist Church in Scotland.

(2) The Chair of the Scotland District may be known as the Chair of the Methodist Church in Scotland.

- (3)
- (i) The same person shall be appointed concurrently as Chair of the Scotland District and Chair of the Shetland District.
  - (ii) There shall be a deputy to the Chair of the Shetland District within the terms of Standing Order 426, except that only clauses (2)(i) and (iv) and (4) of that Standing Order shall apply. The deputy to the Chair shall also be the Superintendent of the Lerwick and Walls Circuit.
  - (iii) The deputy to the Chair shall on a new appointment be nominated by a process that follows as closely as is practicable that set out in Standing Order 423. The Synod shall vote on the nomination of the nominations committee and the appointment shall be included in the stations in the same way as an appointment to a Circuit and no separate resolution of appointment by the Conference shall be required. For the purposes of Standing Orders 544 and 545 the deputy to the Chair shall be deemed to have been invited to the Lerwick and Walls Circuit as Superintendent.

(4) Nothing in this Standing Order shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

**428 Stipends and Allowances.** (1) Subject to clauses (1A) and (1B) below, the stipend of a Chair set apart to that office is a charge on the Methodist Church Fund.

(1A) Where a District (other than the London District) has appointed more than one Chair, the stipend of one only of the Chairs is a charge on the fund, unless the [...] **Connexional** Council agrees otherwise.

(1B) The stipends of two of the Chairs of the London District are a charge on the fund. The stipend of a third Chair of the London District is a charge on the London Mission Fund.

For the London Mission Fund, see S.O. 374.

(2) There shall be paid out of the Methodist Church Fund to the Chairs of the Island Districts allowances each equal to the special allowance for a Superintendent for the time being recommended by the [...] **Connexional** Council.

(3) All expenses incurred by Chairs in the discharge of their responsibilities as such are district expenses within the provisions of Standing Order 404(1).

## Section 43 District Policy Committee

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For the appointment of a district Policy Committee or its equivalent see S.O. 402(1) and (2).

### 430 [revoked]

**431 General Responsibilities.** It shall be the responsibility of the district Policy Committee:

- (i) to formulate and promote policies which will advance the mission of the Church in the Circuits and Local Churches, and in particular to supervise the use of resources of personnel, property and finance and to assist Local Churches and Circuits having exceptional problems;
- (ii) to encourage inter-circuit and ecumenical co-operation;
- (iii) to act in an executive capacity in matters remitted to the committee by the Synod;
- (iv) to keep within its purview all district concerns not dealt with elsewhere;
- (v) to contribute and respond, as the case may be, to the development of connexional policies as reflected in the work of the Conference and the **[...] Connexional** Council, and to carry out its other responsibilities with any such development in mind.

**432 Funds.** (1) Contributions payable to and grants received from connexional funds within the District shall be within the purview of the committee.

See Section 37.

(1A) The committee shall oversee and administer the District Advance Fund and present a report of its oversight at least annually to the Synod.

For the District Advance Fund see S.O. 963.

(1B) The committee shall ensure that any allocation received from the Methodist Mission in Britain Fund for use by a Local Church, Circuit or District is applied only for purposes specified in the relevant strategy approved by the Conference from time to time, and shall present a report on the subject at least annually to the Synod.

(2) The committee shall administer the District Expenses Fund.

See S.O. 012 for general provisions relating to accounts.

(3) The district treasurer for the Methodist Church Fund shall remit to the Connexional Team by the 15th day of each quarter all contributions to the fund received from the Circuits.

See S.O. 532(2) as to payment by Circuits.

See S.O. 012A for the duties of treasurers generally.

**432A** *[revoked]*

**433 Travel Allowances.** (1) *[revoked]*

(2) The committee shall adjudicate upon any claim for mileage reimbursement concerning which any difference has arisen between the minister or probationer and the circuit stewards.

(3) Every claim for a mileage allowance shall be substantiated by a log showing all mileages travelled on circuit business.

**434 Ecumenical Relationships.** (1) *[revoked]*

(2) The committee is responsible for the consideration of making financial provision in the district budget for an adequate Methodist contribution to the expenses of ecumenical councils and for any other payments required for the carrying on of ecumenical work (including, where appropriate, the support of ecumenical Housing Associations) or otherwise for the fulfilment of the responsibilities specified in clause (3) below.

(3) The committee shall:

- (i) assist in the furtherance of ecumenical understanding in all areas of the Church's activity; promote, develop and co-ordinate ecumenical work within the Circuits; report annually, or as required, to the ecumenical officer;
- (ii) communicate the concerns and encourage the study of the reports of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Churches Together in England, Action of Churches Together in Scotland, Cytun (Churches Together in Wales) and the World Council of Churches and encourage Methodist participation in local councils of churches;
- (iii) endeavour to ensure that all extension work within the District, including the redevelopment of existing work and properties, is initiated ecumenically or after full consultation with the responsible officers of other denominations (major expenditure on the renovation of existing properties shall be deemed to come within these categories; in the furtherance of this endeavour the committee shall take into consideration such ecumenical background information as will assist its judgment on policy and building projects);
- (iv) be responsible for making recommendations to the ecumenical officer on applications for sharing agreements under the terms of the Sharing

- of Church Buildings Act 1969, or any legislation amending or replacing that Act;
- (v) be responsible for recommending to the Synod the establishment of ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance, the designation of local ecumenical partnerships and the approval of local constitutions, but only after submitting each such constitution to the ecumenical officer and the Faith and Order Committee and taking into account their advice;
  - (vi) consider and report to the ecumenical officer on all applications for the designation of ecumenical areas;
  - (vii) consider and report to the Synod or the ecumenical officer, as appropriate, on all proposals for the issue or revocation of directions under Standing Orders 512 and 611.

For the ecumenical officer see S.O. 323(1). The ecumenical officer should be consulted in the designation and inauguration of all ecumenical partnerships and in any revision of their constitutions.

For the relevant functions of the Faith and Order Committee see S.O. 210(7).

S.O. 512 and 611 concern the constitution of the Circuit Meeting and Church Council, respectively, in certain ecumenical situations.

(3A) The committee may delegate any or all of the above responsibilities to an officer appointed by the Synod.

(4) The fulfilment of the responsibilities of the committee and the Synod specified in or appearing from clause (3) above is part of the purposes of the District.

**435 Nominations.** (1) The committee shall nominate persons to the Synod for appointment as district officers and as members of district committees.

(2) The committee shall nominate persons to the Synod for election as Synod-elected members of the Synod.

See S.O. 410(1)(xiii) and (5).

(3) **[revoked]**

(4) The committee shall also submit a nomination to the Synod for the appointment of a district Lay Stationing Representative.

See S.O. 417B.

**435A People with Disabilities.** The committee shall nominate for appointment by the Synod an adviser in respect of people with disabilities, who shall be responsible for encouraging the inclusion of people with disabilities within the worship, work, fellowship and outreach of the Church, by raising awareness of the issues and offering practical advice to Circuits and Local Churches in the District. Whenever possible the adviser shall be a disabled person.

**436 [revoked]**

**437 Redevelopment and Circuit Model Trust Money.** (1) The committee shall carry out the functions specified in Standing Order 962, appointing as necessary for that purpose ad hoc or regional groups, which shall report to the committee.

(2) The committee shall carry out the functions in relation to circuit model trust money prescribed by Standing Order 955, assessing needs and resources of property, personnel and money as aspects of one totality.

**438 Presbyteral and Diaconal Appointments.** (1) The committee shall consider and make recommendations to the Synod on all applications from Circuits for additional appointments or withdrawals of itinerant presbyters, deacons or probationers. The applications shall proceed from the Synod through the Stationing Committee to the Conference.

See S.O. 529.

(1A) Every scheme for the appointment of a presbyter on a part-time basis under Standing Order 780(2)(a) or without stipend under Standing Order 801(6) shall be submitted to the committee, which shall consider it and make recommendations to the Synod. No such appointment shall be made without the approval of the Synod.

(1B) The committee shall consider any proposals or provisional proposals submitted under Standing Order 545(4) and make recommendations to the invitation committee and Circuit Meeting of the Circuits concerned and to the Synod.

(2) The committee shall ensure that all the obligations and regulations concerning the appointments of presbyters, deacons and probationers in the District have been observed.

See, e.g. S.O. 540.

(2A) In duly constituted ecumenical areas and Circuits where an application for an additional appointment of a deacon or diaconal probationer under Standing Order 529 relates to an approved local ecumenical partnership, the Chairs shall confer with the sponsoring body or, if none exists, with the appropriate authorities of the other communion involved and report the results of such consultation to the committee.

**438A Employment.** (1) This Standing Order applies whenever a lay person is employed under a contract of service by a district, circuit or local body of the Church or (unless excluded by its constitution) a Local Ecumenical Partnership.

(2) The district Policy Committee shall appoint a Lay Employment Sub-committee to be responsible for the oversight of the management of all lay employments to which this Standing Order applies within the District. The sub-committee shall, in addition to the ex-officio members, comprise or have ready access to persons of sufficient breadth of knowledge and current experience of employment law and personnel management to enable the sub-committee competently to discharge its functions and shall, if reasonably practicable, include a person employed under a contract to which this Standing Order applies. There shall be a chair and a secretary of the Lay Employment Sub-committee appointed by the district Policy Committee.

(3) The Connexional Team shall, at no charge to employing bodies, provide such guidance on personnel management law and practice as may from time to time be required, and shall publish for downloading by district Lay Employment

Sub-committees lay employment document packs including, in particular, standard forms of:

- (i) application for employment;
- (ii) contract of employment, including general terms and conditions of employment;
- (iiA) special terms and conditions of employment for particular appointments or circumstances;
- (iii) conditions of occupancy by lay employees of residential property provided by or on behalf of employing bodies;
- (iv) statements of general employment policy, including a commitment to equality in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Conference;
- (v) any model code of conduct for employees adopted by the **[...]** **Connexional** Council.

See also the note to S.O. 018(3).

(4) *[revoked]*

(5) The Lay Employment Sub-committee shall discharge the following functions:

- (i) scrutinise and make recommendations upon all district, circuit and local proposals for schemes of appointment for lay employees under Standing Order 570, as required by Standing Order 575;
- (ii) make available as necessary to district, circuit or local employing bodies proposing to enter into contracts of employment the standard forms and notices required under clause (3) above, together with such other notices and forms for guidance as may be expedient for the efficient conclusion of the proposed contract and management of the employment;
- (iii) give or withhold approval in accordance with clause (6) below to all proposed contracts of employment to which this Standing Order applies, and maintain a register of all such contracts made;
- (iv) *[deleted]*
- (v) advise employing bodies in the District on all matters concerning contracts of employment and management of lay employees including, in particular, those relating to disciplinary proceedings;
- (vi) give or withhold approval in accordance with clause (9) below to all proposals to terminate contracts of employment on any grounds;
- (vii) be responsible for drawing the attention of employing bodies to good employment practice and procedures, and to the desirability of complying with them.

(6) Every new contract of employment to which this Standing Order applies shall:

- (i) require the prior approval of the Lay Employment Sub-committee;
- (ii) unless the sub-committee consents to any variation, be in the standard form;
- (iii) unless the relevant member of the Connexional Team consents to any variations, include any relevant special terms and conditions published under clause (3)(iiA) above;



- (iv) if the employee is to occupy residential property provided by or on behalf of the employing body, and unless the relevant member of the Connexional Team consents to any variation, include the standard conditions of occupancy.

As to (iv) see also S.O. 929(5).

(6A) The Lay Employment Sub-committee shall have the power to delegate to its chair or secretary, for urgent cases, the power to give or withhold approval in accordance with clauses 5(iii) and (6) above.

(7) Any requirement of Standing Orders for consultation with another body in relation to terms and conditions of employment to which this Standing Order applies shall be deemed to be satisfied if the contract is in the standard form and includes any relevant terms and conditions published under clause (3)(iiA) above, and in that event approval shall not be withheld by the sub-committee and shall be deemed to have been granted if no decision is given within fourteen days after the application has been lodged.

(8) No formal disciplinary proceedings shall be taken in respect of a lay employee, nor letters of warning written, except after consultation with the Lay Employment Sub-committee or its chair or secretary, provided that in cases of emergency a lay employee may be suspended, in accordance with disciplinary procedures, from employment pending such consultation.

(9) No contract of employment to which this Standing Order applies shall be terminated unilaterally by the employing body without the prior approval in writing of the Lay Employment Sub-committee.

(10) The approval of the Lay Employment Sub-committee shall be sufficiently evidenced by the signature of its chair or secretary.

For other provisions affecting employment see S.O. 018, 443, 570–5 and 670–2.

**439 Grants.** (1) The committee shall consider and make recommendations to the Synod and the Connexional Team on all requests from Circuits for grants, except that where a project is being dealt with under Standing Order 960 any applications for grants in connection with that project shall be dealt with under that Standing Order along with the project.

(2) Grant applications may be made for periods of between one and five years. Where grants are awarded for periods greater than one year they will normally be on a diminishing basis, and a review and satisfactory report from the committee, at a frequency and in a form specified by the Connexional Team, will be a condition of the grant being continued.

(3) Forms of application for grants shall be completed in duplicate and forwarded by Circuits to the district secretaries concerned not later than the end of December.

(4) The Superintendent and one other representative of each Circuit applying for a grant shall be invited to attend the committee when its application is being considered, but shall have no vote.

(5) The committee shall ensure that the purposes for which grants have been obtained have been fulfilled.

## Section 44 District Life

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**440 City Centres.** (1) (a) A Synod may, after consultation with the [...] **Mission Committee**, designate a church or project within the District for inclusion on the official city centre list in accordance with guidelines approved from time to time by the Conference and shall notify the Connexional Team of each church or project so designated. The Team shall maintain the official list accordingly.

As to the Mission Committee, see S.O. 321.

(b) A Circuit (including a single-church Circuit) may be similarly designated and listed if in the judgment of the Synod, after consultation with the [...] **Mission Committee** it is suitable for inclusion as an entity.

(2) The Church Council or Circuit Meeting of each church or Circuit designated under clause (1) shall consult with the district Policy Committee about the most effective way in which the interests of other Circuits in the city, the District and ecumenical partners may be involved in the work of the Church Council or Circuit Meeting, as appropriate.

(3) Each project designated under clause (1) shall be a mission or ministry project carried on by a Church Council, a Circuit Meeting or a Synod in furtherance of the purposes of the relevant body.

(4) The relevant Church Council, Circuit Meeting or Synod, after consultation with the district Policy Committee, shall appoint a management committee for each project designated under clause (1). The committee shall be large enough to encompass the interests of the Circuit or Circuits which cover the city, the District and ecumenical partners and to include a range of appropriate professional expertise, but small enough to be effective.

(5) [*revoked*]

(6) (a) It shall be a district purpose of any District in which capital money arises from the disposition of any property subject to Standing Order 944 to apply such capital money and its income in continuing the work of God in the relevant city centre, as directed by the Synod. Any such money is model trust property.

Any such money is district property and the managing trustees are the district trustees; see para. 2(1) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) and the definitions of 'district property' and 'district purposes' in para 1.

S.O. 944 concerns disposals of city centre premises.

(b) The district Policy Committee shall in full consultation with the Circuit in which the property was located, (if still constituted as such with one or more remaining Local Churches), bring to the Synod proposals for the application of capital money and income.

(7) Any decision to remove a city centre church, Circuit or project from the official list shall be made by the Synod after consultation with the [...] **Mission Committee** and notified to the Connexional Team.

(8) Where a Synod carries on a city centre project, the provisions of Standing Order 534 and Section 54 shall apply, as closely as circumstances allow, to invitations and appointments to serve in such a project as if it were a circuit appointment. The management committee appointed under clause (4) above shall exercise the functions of the Circuit Meeting and its invitation committee, and the management committee shall appoint two of its members to exercise the functions of the circuit stewards in relation to the invitation process.

This clause applies where the Synod carries on the project. Where it is carried on by a Church Council or Circuit Meeting, the normal provisions referred to in the clause apply.

**441** [revoked]

**442 Chaplaincies.** The district Policy Committee shall arrange for the Synod to be informed of the work of all chaplains serving in the District.

**443** [revoked]

**444 Formal Education.** (1) The district Policy Committee shall, where applicable, have charge of the interests of Methodist state funded schools within the District and shall consider any application for a loan for the building or repair of any such school, including those which are joint projects with other denominations, and submit its judgment on every such application to the Connexional Team, reporting to the Synod.

For the responsibilities of the Team in relation to state funded schools see S.O. 272.

For the functions of the committee in relation to any proposal to transfer or discontinue such a school see S.O. 272(5).

(2)–(3) [revoked]

(4) The committee, in consultation with circuit officers wherever appropriate, shall nominate to the Synod one or more ministers for appointment as being responsible for the oversight of Methodist students in universities and other institutions of higher and further education in the District. The name of any person so nominated shall be notified immediately to the member of the Connexional Team responsible.

For consultations before the invitation of ministers in such cases see S.O. 540(1).

(5) The committee shall take all possible steps to ensure that parents and those having pastoral responsibility report to the responsible minister the arrival of Methodist students at universities and other institutions.

The Conference has directed that it shall be understood that, in fulfilling these regulations regarding work among students, the committee is to ensure that the Methodist Church within the District takes its place, alongside other denominations, in ministering to the student population at large, including overseas students whether there is a Methodist International House or not. Circuits concerned are urged to seek the stationing of persons who are particularly suitable for this task and so to organise the work of the circuit staff that the person responsible has adequate time for pastoral and evangelistic work among students.

**445 Methodist International Houses.** In Districts, other than the London District (where special arrangements obtain), where there are Methodist International Houses, the Synod shall appoint a Methodist International House Management Committee, which shall be responsible, both to the Synod and to the [...] **Resourcing Committee** for the oversight of the day to day running of the House in harmony with the aims approved by the Conference and for ensuring its economic viability. It shall report to the Synod and, as required, to the Connexional Team.

Each Methodist International House outside London is district property (S.O. 966(4)) and the district trustees are accordingly its managing trustees (Model Trusts, Book II, Part 2).

As to the Resourcing Committee see Sections 36 and 37 of Standing Orders.

**[Section 45 – this section (District Candidates Committee) was revoked by the Conference in 2023].**

**[Section 46 – this section was deleted in 1998/1999 following the extensive review of the Districts at that time.]**

## Section 47 Property

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This section enacts certain specific provisions in relation to property matters within the District. However, in addition, Part 9 of Standing Orders provides for the general exercise within the District of very significant functions in relation to property projects of Circuits and Local Churches, and therefore Part 9 should also be consulted. See in particular the definition of 'the appropriate district authority' in S.O. 960(1).

**470 Responsibilities.** The Synod shall appoint a secretary or secretaries for property affairs (to whom, whether one or more, the expression 'district property secretaries' in this Section and Section 96 refers) to be responsible, in association with the district Policy Committee, the district Manses Committee and such other committees, if any, as may be appointed, for the matters specified in Standing Orders 472, 473 and 474 and in Section 96.

See S.O. 961(2), 964, 966.

**471 Advisory Panel.** The Synod may appoint an advisory panel of persons qualified and experienced in property matters, estate management, town planning, administration or building design, to be consulted as desired.

**472 Manses.** The Synod shall appoint a district Manses Committee to carry out the functions specified in Standing Order 965 and generally to consider all matters relating to the decoration, sanitation, fittings and general suitability of all manses in the District, and to all furnishings required by Standing Order 803.

**473 Archives.** The Synod shall appoint a district archivist whose concern shall be to advise Circuits and Local Churches as to the proper custody or disposal of all documents and records. Special attention should be given to cases where properties are passing out of Methodist use. The archivist shall be responsible for monitoring the proper deposit of records locally, for keeping lists of items deposited and for notifying the liaison officer for Methodist archives of any deposit of material which appears to be of wider connexional significance.

For provisions as to the disposal of records no longer in current use see S.O. 015.

For the liaison officer for Methodist archives see S.O. 340(4)(a).

**474 New Chapels.** The district property secretaries shall call for and consider reports on the progress of the work and the state of the structure of those chapels

within the District which have been opened, and the shared schemes which have been inaugurated, within the previous five years and, if necessary, refer such reports to the Connexional Team.

**475** *[revoked]*

**476 Scotland.** (1) The General Committee of the Relief and Extension Fund for Methodism in Scotland shall consist of the members of the District Policy Committee of the Scotland District.

The fund is governed by a Deed of Trust registered in the books of the Lords of Council and Session at Edinburgh on the 4th November 1869. The constitution of the committee has from time to time been altered by the Synod, with the consent of the Conference, as authorised by the Deed. The Deed narrates resolutions of the Conference of 1869 as to the raising, administration and purposes of the fund, constitutes and appoints trustees, declares the trusts on which they are to hold the fund and makes ancillary provisions. The following summary of some of these narratives and provisions is set out here for convenient reference only and has no authority:

- (1) The purposes of the fund are to assist, by way of grants and loans without interest, in
  - (a) the liquidation of debts on chapels and manses in Scotland,
  - (b) the purchase or erection of places of worship or sites,
  - (c) the acquisition of manses or investment of money to meet rents.
- (2) Money from the fund is to be granted only to projects given the necessary consent under S.O. 930.
- (3) The trustees are to submit to the committee an annual report and statement of accounts, which the committee is to transmit to the President, and the committee is to report annually to the Synod and the Conference.
- (4) The committee is to meet in connection with the spring and autumn Synods and at other times if the Chair of the District thinks fit.
- (5) The committee is at its autumn meeting to appoint one or more secretaries and one or more treasurers.

(1A) The Official Trustees of the fund shall be the Chair of the Scotland District, the Treasurer of the Scotland District, the secretary of the Scotland District Grants Committee and a Superintendent from the Scotland District nominated annually by the Superintendents in the Scotland District.

(2) Annual collections on behalf of the fund shall be taken in all places of worship in Scotland on a Sunday, in addition to donations and subscriptions received from trust funds and personal contributions.

(3) The arrangements for raising the fund shall not interfere with the Standing Orders relating to the Methodist Fund for Property, collections and subscriptions for which shall be gathered and forwarded as though no separate fund for Scotland existed.

See S.O. 373(5).

(4) In the Synod of the Scotland District the business of the fund shall be considered in connection with that of the connexional funds.

## Section 48 Presbyteral Session of Synod

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**480 Constitution.** The Presbyteral Session of the Synod shall consist of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers who are members of the Representative Session. Probationers have not the right to vote.

For the membership of the Representative Session see S.O. 410, 785(8), 791(4)-(5).

As to forces chaplains see S.O. 286(4)(b).

For meetings see S.O. 411(1), (4).

**481 Functions.** (1) The members of the Presbyteral Session meet to recall and reflect upon their ministerial vocation, to watch over one another in love, to make recommendations to the Conference concerning presbyteral probationers and to consider the work of God in the District. To that end they shall deal with the business contained in the agenda in Standing Order 488.

For the specific functions and procedure of the Presbyteral Session in relation to probationers see S.O. 728(2).

Either session of the Synod may submit memorials and resolutions to the Conference (S.O. 419).

(2) The Presbyteral Session may invite deacons and diaconal probationers who are members of the Representative Session of that Synod to attend for all or part of its business and to speak but not to vote.

**482–483** [revoked]

**484 Probationers Committee.** (1) Subject to clause (4) below, the Synod shall appoint a district Probationers Committee consisting of the Chair of the District, the secretary and (if appointed) the presbyteral secretary of the Synod, a district probationers secretary and between seven and eleven other persons of whom one shall be a deacon, at least two and up to four shall be presbyters and at least four lay.

(2) When a presbyteral or diaconal probationer is being discussed the following persons shall have the right to attend the committee and to speak, but not to vote, namely the Superintendent and a circuit steward from the Circuit in which the probationer is stationed and their Minister in Oversight (if other than the Superintendent) appointed under Standing Order 723(2A).

(3) A deacon nominated by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall have the right to attend the committee when a diaconal probationer is being discussed and to speak, but not to vote.

For the functions and procedure of the committee see S.O. 725(4), 728(1).

For the provisions governing diaconal probationers see S.O. 725(5).

(4) Two or more Synods may together appoint a Probationers Committee which shall fulfil the functions of and shall be the district Probationers Committee for both or all participating Districts, and shall consist of the Chairs of each of the Districts, the secretaries and (if appointed) the presbyteral secretaries of the Synods, a district probationers secretary from each District plus eleven other persons in the categories prescribed by clause (1) drawn from the participating Districts.

#### 485 [revoked]

**486 Supernumeraries.** Applications from presbyters for permission to become supernumeraries and from supernumeraries to return to the active work shall be presented to the Presbyteral Session of the Synod.

See S.O. 790, 793.

**487 Obituaries.** (1) The Superintendent shall immediately inform the Chair of the death of any presbyter or presbyteral probationer occurring within the Circuit.

(2) The Chair shall instruct the Superintendent to prepare, or to arrange for the preparation of, an obituary for inclusion in the *Minutes of Conference* and to forward a copy to the Chair for presentation to the Presbyteral Session of the Synod. It shall be within the competence of the Synod to make any modification of the obituary which it may consider desirable.

(3) Upon the motion for the approval of the obituary opportunity shall be afforded to members of the Synod of paying personal tribute to the deceased presbyter or probationer.

(4) Immediately after the Synod its secretary shall forward all obituaries to the Secretary of the Conference.

For procedure in the Conference see cl. 23(j) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 153.

(5) The Superintendent of any presbyter or presbyteral probationer who dies between the Synod and the close of the Conference shall prepare an obituary and forward copies to the Chair of the District and to the Secretary of the Conference.

#### 488 Synod – Presbyteral Session Agenda.

##### Reference

The questions in this agenda may be taken in whatever sequence best suits the requirements of the Synod. Some questions should prompt reflection upon ministerial vocation and should not simply be seen in connection with the Synod's decisions upon the particular cases concerned. When the Presbyteral Synod meets on two days it is recommended that sections B and C should be dealt with on the occasion which offers the greater opportunity for unhurried reflection, sharing and prayer, normally on the earlier of those two days (see S.O. 411(4)).

The entries in the column headed 'Reference' below identify Deed of Union clauses and Standing Orders by number, and are inserted for information and assistance where an item in the agenda is required or authorised by or directly related to a particular provision in Standing Orders. Where no reference is given there may be no such direct relation.



**(A) Attendance**

- 741 (1) What presbyters and probationers are present? What dispensations have been granted? Are any absent without dispensation?

**(B) Ministerial Vocation**

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

These questions shall be answered by means of a service arranged under the direction of the Chair. The Conference commends for this purpose *Holy Communion for Use at the Ministerial Session of a Synod*<sup>1</sup>.

- (3) *[deleted]*

- (4) What is the testimony of those who are now recommended for reception into Full Connexion with the Conference?

Testimony will also be made in the public service as required by S.O. 728(3).

- 486, 790 (5) What is the testimony of those who are now applying for permission to become supernumeraries?

An opportunity shall be given to presbyters applying to become supernumeraries briefly to address the Synod, and for others to speak of their ministry, as the Chair may direct.

- (6) What is our understanding of the ministry we have received in the world today?

An opportunity may be given here for a devotional address to the Synod, or for reports on further training courses or sabbatical study in which members of the Synod have been involved, or for general discussion of ministerial vocation, in full Synod or in groups.

- (7) Have any presbyters or presbyteral probationers died since the last Synod? What is our testimony concerning their ministry?

The obituary prepared for the Conference, in respect of each, if not already published, shall be read and opportunity given for tributes in memory.

**(C) The State of the Work of God in the District**

- (8) What is the state of the work of God in the District?

Aspects of the life and mission of the Church may be considered in connection with particular topics, or Circuits or areas within the District, or reports published by the Conference or other bodies, with discussion in full Synod or in groups. It will be appropriate for this stage of the Synod's business to conclude with intercessory prayer.

**(D) Matters for Decision**

- (9) *[deleted]*

- 725, 728 (10) What is the report of the district Probationers Committee? What is our judgment upon it? Whom do we recommend to be admitted as presbyters into Full Connexion with the Conference? Whom do we recommend to be continued on probation?

The questions required by S.O. 728(2)(b) shall be put to the ordinands at this point.

<sup>1</sup> Following the decisions of the Conference in 2012, any future edition of this service will be known as *Holy Communion for Use at the Presbyteral Session of a Synod*. Details can be found on the Methodist Church website ([www.methodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.methodistchurch.org.uk)).

- 122(5) (11) What resolutions of the last Conference, adopted as provisional legislation, are submitted to this session of the Synod? What is our judgment upon them?
- D15(a)(ii)(12) What presbyters apply for permission to attend the Presbyteral Session of the ensuing Conference under their own arrangements?  
What permissions do we grant?
- 419(1), (2) (13) Has this session of the Synod any memorial or resolution to offer to the ensuing Conference?
- (14) Has this session of the Synod any recommendations to make to the Representative Session of the Synod at its next meeting?
- (15) Has any communication been received from the Representative Session of the Synod?
- (E) Matters for Report**
- (16) Has any presbyter ceased to be in Full Connexion with the Conference, or any presbyteral probationer withdrawn from training or ceased to be recognised as such?
- (17) What early retired presbyters reside in the District? What presbyters are without appointment? Is everything being done to ensure their full fellowship with us? Are they being invited to help in the Circuits and District in ways which make creative use of their abilities?
- 793 (17A) What Supernumeraries are now applying to return to the active work? What recommendation is being made to the Conference?
- (18) Are there any presbyters or presbyteral probationers residing in the District other than those whose names appear in connection with the District in the *Minutes of Conference*?
- 521(2), 523 (19) Have the directions of the Conference as to interchanges and meetings for fellowship and consultation been duly observed?
- (20) What ministers of other churches are recognised and regarded or authorised to serve as Methodist presbyters or are associate presbyters within the District?
- (21) *[deleted]*
- (22) What other matters ought to be reported to this session of the Synod?  
The opportunity may be taken here to refer to any developments in the District which are of particular interest to the presbyters.

## Section 48A Districts with Modified Constitutions

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### 48A0 Definitions. In this Section:

- (i) an 'adoption resolution' means a resolution for the adoption of this Section passed in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 48A1 below;
- (ii) a 'Section 48A District' means a District in respect of which an adoption resolution is in force;
- (iii) a 'modified constitution', in relation to any Section 48A District, means the constitution by which the affairs of that District are governed.

**48A1 Adoption resolutions.** (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, a District may at any Synod pass a resolution that this Section shall apply to that District, **or to a District to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 401 of which it will become a part**, with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify and that the affairs of the District shall thereafter be governed by a modified constitution in the form of a draft identified in the resolution.

(2) A resolution under clause (1) above must be brought on behalf of the district Policy Committee by two of its members and notice of the resolution must be given to all members of the Synod no later than **two [...]** months before the date of the Synod at which the resolution is to be debated. A copy of the draft modified constitution must be supplied free of charge to any member of the Synod who requests one.

### (3) **[revoked]**

(4) In the debate on a resolution under clause (1) above, no proposal for the amendment of the draft modified constitution shall be considered unless written notice of the proposed amendment has been given to the Synod secretary no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant Synod, unless the Synod otherwise agrees. **If the draft modified constitution relates to a District to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 401, such notice must be given to the secretaries of the relevant Synods involved no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant Synod, unless the Synods otherwise agree.**

(5) A resolution under clause (1) above is only valid if it is passed by three quarters of those present and voting at the relevant meeting of the Synod **or, [...]** if the draft modified constitution **relates to a District to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 401 [...]**, the resolution is only valid if it is passed by **[...] three quarters** of those present and

voting at the meeting of the Synod of each [...] District **involved** and the terms of the draft modified constitution identified by the resolution passed by each District are identical.

(6) A resolution under clause (1) above will only take effect according to its terms if the **Connexional Council, on the advice of the** Secretary of the Conference confirms before the relevant 1st September that the draft modified constitution complies with the requirements of this Section. Such confirmation may be given prior to the passing of the resolution but if the draft modified constitution is passed in an amended form after confirmation has been given, a further confirmation must be obtained. If no such confirmation has been given before the relevant 1st September, the resolution will not take effect until 1st September next following such confirmation.

(7) if a draft modified constitution [...] **relates to a District to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 401, the resolution under clause (1), if validly passed under clause (5), will take effect on the date specified in the resolution (or the later date resulting from the operation of clause (6)) only if that date is approved by the Connexional Council and otherwise will take effect on the alternative date which the council specifies. [...]** The form in which the constitution and enumeration of the Districts is set out pursuant to Standing Order 400 shall reflect [...] **the amalgamation from the date so approved or specified.**

**48A2 Termination of effect of adoption resolutions.** (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, the Synod of a Section 48A District may at any time pass a resolution that with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify this Section shall cease to have effect in relation to that District, **after which the affairs of the former Section 48A District will be governed by the provisions of Part 4 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time.**

(2) The modified constitution of a Section 48A District must specify by which officers or members of the Synod a resolution under clause (1) above may be moved, what period of notice of such a resolution must be given and by what majority such a resolution must be passed. The modified constitution (whether as originally agreed or as amended in accordance with Standing Order 48A3 below) may specify additional requirements in relation to such a resolution.

(3) **Where [...]** the modified constitution of a Section 48A District **relates to a District created by an amalgamation of previous Districts** in accordance with Standing Order 401 [...], the coming into force of a resolution under clause (1) above will not reconstitute [...] **any of the** Districts which existed prior to the coming into force of the adoption resolutions [...], **and the provisions of Standing Order 401 would again need to be applied to reconstitute any of the previous Districts if desired [...].**

(4) **[revoked]**

**48A3 Amendment of modified constitutions.** (1) The modified constitution of a Section 48A District must specify the procedure by which the modified constitution may be amended.

(2) The procedure specified under clause (1) above must include a provision that any amendment to the modified constitution will not come into force until the **Connexional Council, on the advice of the** Secretary of the Conference has confirmed that the modified constitution in its amended form will continue to comply with this Section.

**48A4 Continuing application of existing constitutional provisions.** (1) Nothing in this Section affects the provisions of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts ('the overriding legislation') and a modified constitution must conform to the requirements of the overriding legislation.

For the Methodist Church Act 1976 see Vol. 1 p. 2, for the Deed of Union Book II, Part 1 and for the Model Trusts Book II, Part 2.

(2) While an adoption resolution is in force the provisions of Part 4 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time shall continue to apply to the relevant Section 48A District except as otherwise provided by the District's modified constitution.

(3) A modified constitution may not contain provisions contrary to the following provisions:

- (i) Standing Order 400A (nature and purposes of a District);
- (ii) Standing Order 501(2) to (7) (composition of Circuits);
- (iii) Standing Order 403 (connexional affairs);
- (iv) Standing Order 404 (expenses);
- (v) Standing Order 411 (meetings of the Synod);
- (vi) Standing Order 412 (functions of the Synod);
- (vii) Standing Order 413 (procedure at the Synod);
- (viii) Standing Order 415 (minutes and records of the Synod);
- (ix) Standing Order 416 (expenses);
- (x) Standing Order 417 (Conference representatives);
- (xi) Standing Order 417A (Children and Youth Assembly representatives);
- (xii) Standing Order 417B (lay stationing representative);
- (xiii) **[deleted]**
- (xiv) Standing Order 419 (memorials and resolutions to the Conference);
- (xv) Section 42 (the Chair) other than Standing Order 426 (Permanent Deputies, Temporary Deputies and Assistants);
- (xvi) Standing Order 440 (city centres); and
- (xvii) Section 48 (Presbyteral Session of the Synod).

(4) A modified constitution may not contain provisions varying any other Standing Orders except as provided in Standing Order 48A5 below.

**48A5 Further provisions relating to modified constitutions.** (1) A modified constitution may contain provisions varying the provisions specified in clause (2) below, but if such provisions are included the modified constitution shall also include provisions to secure the effective carrying out within the Section 48A District of the areas of work covered by the Standing Orders and Sections listed, taking into account also the need to comply with any other Standing Orders applicable to such work and the need to ensure consistent and fair treatment of all people across the connexion.

(2) The provisions referred to in clause (1) above are the following:

- (i) *[deleted]*
- (ii) Section 43 (District Policy Committee);
- (iii) Standing Order 442 (chaplaincies);
- (iv) *[deleted]*
- (v) Standing Order 444 (formal education); and
- (vi) *[deleted]*
- (vii) Section 47 (property).

(3) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that as respects all the functions given by the overriding legislation (as defined in Standing Order 48A4(1) above) and Standing Orders to the district Policy Committee there is an identified body responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever name that body or (if more than one) those bodies may be known.

(4) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that as respects all the functions given by the overriding legislation and Standing Orders to the Synod secretary there is an identified individual responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever title that individual or (if more than one) those individuals may be known.

(5) A modified constitution shall contain provisions for the appointment of District trustees.

(6) Subject to the foregoing provisions of this Section, a modified constitution may make such provision as the Synod approves with regard to:

- (i) *[deleted]*
- (ii) the constitution of the Synod;
- (iii) the functions, powers, duties and membership of the committees or other bodies constituted to carry out the purposes of the Section 48A District;
- (iv) the functions, powers, duties and terms of employment (if applicable) of the officers of the District.

## Section 49 Yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd yng Nghymru/ The Methodist Church in Wales

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494 <b>[revoked]</b> .....	477
495 Ordination .....	477
498 Joint Local Churches .....	478

**490 Definitions.** (1) The work and witness of Yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd yng Nghymru/The Methodist Church in Wales shall be carried on in one District Wales Synod Cymru, comprising the Cymru Circuit working in the Welsh language and other Circuits working generally in the English language.

(1A) The Cymru Circuit may be divided geographically into areas, each called an Ardal. The Local Churches within an Ardal shall meet together from time to time as they may agree.

(2) The term 'Wales Synod Cymru' shall in these Standing Orders refer to the District, or, where the context so dictates, to the Synod of that District.

(3) The name 'Yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd yng Nghymru/The Methodist Church in Wales' shall refer to the work and witness of Wales Synod Cymru.

**491** *[revoked]*

**494** *[revoked]*

This provision, dealing with a candidate for the presbyterate in the Welsh language work seeking to pursue a university course, was suspended by the Conference in 2022, and finally revoked in 2024, as a separate provision was no longer required, the matter now being able to be dealt with according to general connexional policy and provisions.

**495 Ordination.** (1) (a) When all the requirements of presbyteral training have been fully met those preachers on trial for the Welsh language work who have completed their probation may be ordained during the meeting of Wales Synod Cymru in a service at which the President or a deputy, being a presbyter, shall preside.

(b) Those so ordained shall be proposed to the next Conference for admission into Full Connexion.

(c) The ordinations authorised by sub-clause (a) and the proposal to the Conference required by sub-clause (b) above shall require a resolution giving a direction to that effect by the Representative Session of the Synod, on the recommendation of the Presbyteral Session.

(d) Before the meeting of the Presbyteral Session the district Probationers Committee shall consult the connexional Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, and the secretary of the connexional committee shall be entitled to attend the meeting of the district committee at which the recommendation to the Synod required by clause (1) of Standing Order 728 is made.

(e) In the event of any disagreement between the Synod and the connexional committee in relation to a particular probationer his or her ordination shall be postponed until the Conference has resolved the matter. Thereafter, if there is to be an ordination service, it shall be held in accordance with sub-clause (a) above.

(2) Each ordinand shall be ordained by the laying-on of hands with prayer by the President or a deputy, being a presbyter, assisted by other ministers in accordance with Standing Order 729, one of whom may be nominated by the ordinand.

**496** *[revoked]*

**497** *[revoked]*

**498 Joint Local Churches.** (1) A joint Local Church may be formed, with the consent of the relevant Circuit Meetings, by the amalgamation of one or more Local Churches or Classes in the Cymru Circuit with one or more Local Churches or Classes in another Circuit within Wales Synod Cymru Standing Order 605 shall apply, with any modifications necessary for compliance with this Standing Order.

(2) Such a church shall be in both the Cymru Circuit and another Circuit within Wales Synod Cymru and their chapel or chapels shall appear in the preaching plans of each and clauses (3) to (5) below shall apply.

(3) The ministers, probationers, circuit stewards and members in both Circuits in which such a joint church lies shall owe a collective responsibility for supporting it; and its church stewards and members shall owe a collective responsibility for representing the church in and contributing to the life of both Circuits.

(4) There shall be local negotiation to agree the details of how Standing Orders are to be applied, including agreements on whether the Cymru Circuit or the other Circuit in Wales Synod Cymru shall act in respect of local property schemes, the route through which pastoral discipline is to be exercised, how membership is to be returned and how the joint church is to contribute fairly to both assessments.

(5) If agreement under clause (4) above cannot be reached locally, the Chairs of Wales Synod Cymru shall together determine procedure.



## Part 5 The Circuits

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For the meaning of the word 'Circuit' see cl. 1(v) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) as applied by S.O. 002(iv).

Cl. 38 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides for the home churches to be formed into Circuits as directed by the Conference.

**Section 50 Principles and General Provisions**

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**500 Nature and Purposes.** (1) The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help. It is in the Circuit that presbyters, deacons and probationers are stationed and local preachers are trained and admitted and exercise their calling. The purposes of the Circuit include the effective deployment of the resources of ministry, which include people, property and finance, as they relate to the Methodist churches in the Circuit, to churches of other denominations and to participation in the life of the communities served by the Circuit, including local schools and colleges, and in ecumenical work in the area including, where appropriate, the support of ecumenical Housing Associations.

(2) [*revoked*]

**501 Constitution and Changes in Composition.** (1) Subject to the following clauses of this Standing Order, the names and enumeration of Circuits shall be set out year by year in the stations appointed by the Conference.

(2) In this Standing Order any reference to a change in the composition of Circuits is to a change in [...] **a particular Circuit or Circuits** in which one or more Local Churches are placed, and this Standing Order applies to all such alterations.

(3) All proposals for the division or amalgamation of Circuits or other changes in their composition [...] shall be considered by the district Policy Committee, which shall consult the Circuit Meetings and Church Councils involved. [...] The committee shall formulate a draft recommendation, obtain the resolutions of the Circuit Meetings and Church Councils on that draft and report those resolutions to the Synod with its own substantive recommendation. The Synod shall make its own recommendation to the Conference, reporting with it the resolutions received by the district Policy Committee [...].

(4) Where changes within this Standing Order involve Circuits in more than one District the relevant district Policy Committees and Synods shall consult, with a view to making joint recommendations where possible.

(5) When any recommendation for change in the composition of Circuits is before the Conference any Circuit Meeting or Church Council involved has the right to make **formal** representations **in writing** to the Conference **in advance of the meeting of the Conference**.

(6) Upon making any change in the composition of Circuits the Conference may give consequential directions, in particular as to transitional arrangements, including directions as to the making of appointments to circuit committees and offices.

**(6A) *If in addition to the proposed changes in composition of a Circuit or Circuits it is also proposed to modify the standard constitution of the Circuit, this shall be dealt with according to the provisions of Section 58 of Standing Orders either contemporaneously or subsequently.***

**(7) *The determination of any change in circuit composition is ultimately a matter for the Conference, but [...]***if, in the judgment of the Conference, any change resolved upon by the Conference is substantially out of accord with the reported resolution of any Circuit Meeting involved, or, where more than one District is involved, with the recommendation of any Synod, it shall take effect only if confirmed by the Conference of the year next following.

**502 Chairing, Form and Notice of Meetings.** (1) (a) The Superintendent has the right to preside at every official meeting (however described) connected with the Circuit, or with any Local Church included within the Circuit, or with any committee, institution or organisation having official connection with the Circuit or with any of its Local Churches.

(b) The Superintendent shall appoint annually in writing:

- (i) a deputy, being in ordinary circumstances a presbyter or deacon appointed to the Circuit or to an adjoining Circuit or a lay person who is a member in the Circuit and in the opinion of the Superintendent and circuit stewards is suitably qualified, with the right to preside over the Circuit Meeting as and when requested by the Superintendent and the circuit stewards;
- (ii) deputies, being each in ordinary circumstances a presbyter or deacon stationed in the Circuit or a lay person who is a member in the Circuit and in the opinion of the Superintendent and circuit stewards is suitably qualified, each with the right to preside over one or more specified Church Councils in the Circuit as and when requested by the Superintendent and circuit stewards after consultation with the stewards of the relevant Local Church.

(c) The Superintendent may additionally appoint in writing, subject to the same qualifications and conditions as in (b)(i) or (b)(ii) above as appropriate, a deputy for a particular meeting of the Circuit Meeting or a Church Council, if that should prove necessary.

(d) The appointment of a deputy under (b) or (c) above shall specify whether or not the right extends to presiding over the meeting during the transaction of its business as managing trustees.

(e) In the absence of the Superintendent or a deputy appointed under (b) or (c) above, the Superintendent's colleagues as defined by clause (9) below have the right to preside at official meetings within (a) above, beginning with those persons who fall within category (i) of Standing Order 785(4)(a), followed by those within category (ii).

(f) The provisions of Standing Order 520(2) in relation to church courts apply as much to those exercising the right to preside at official meetings within (a) above as to the Superintendent.

(g) Where a diaconal or lay deputy appointed in writing by the Superintendent presides at an official meeting within (a) above the Superintendent shall ensure that:

- (i) if the meeting is a Circuit Meeting, a presbyter appointed to the Circuit is present, whether or not the meeting is dealing with the transaction of business as managing trustees;
- (ii) if the meeting is a Church Council, a presbyter appointed to the Circuit is present when it is dealing with the transaction of business as managing trustees, and a presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in the Circuit is present when it is dealing with the transaction of other business;

unless, in either event, no such person is available.

(h) Failure to comply with (g) above shall not invalidate the meeting or any decision taken at it.

(2) Circuits and Local Churches may appoint lay persons or deacons as chairs of committees, who shall preside unless on any occasion any right conferred by clause (1) above is exercised.

(3) Such appointments, when required, shall be made by the Circuit Meeting in the case of circuit committees and by the Church Council in the case of local church committees.

(4) (a) Any body to which this Standing Order applies may fix the date, time, form (subject to [...] **sub-clause (b)** below) and place (where appropriate) of its next meeting, and if it does so no further consultation or consent under the provisions of this Standing Order is required for the calling of that meeting as so fixed.

(b) In the case of the Circuit Meeting or a Church Council, the relevant body must take into account when fixing the form of the next meeting the need to ensure that as many members and persons invited to attend as possible are able to attend and to participate effectively. If necessary, a decision as to the form of the next meeting must be deferred to enable the requirements of clauses (5) and (6) to be satisfied.

(c) The chair of the Circuit Meeting or a Church Council may in case of emergency change the form of a meeting if the chair reasonably believes that the attendance at a meeting in the original form will not be sufficient to enable good decision-making, but must adjourn the meeting if the attendance at the meeting in its new form is not reasonably representative of those entitled to attend.

Meetings may be held physically, electronically or in hybrid form (S.O. 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate, see Book VII B, Part 6A.

(5) Subject to clause (4) above official meetings shall be convened and held only after consultation (in the case of circuit meetings or committees) with the Superintendent or (in the case of local meetings or committees) with the presbyter who is in pastoral charge of the Local Church, with any presbyteral probationer or any person authorised to serve the Church as a presbyter under Standing Order 733 who is (in either case)

exercising pastoral responsibility in it, and with any local lay-pastor appointed under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in it, and (as to both circuit and local bodies) with the appropriate chair where one has been appointed under clause (2) above.

(6) Subject to clause (4) above such a meeting shall be called only by, or with the consent of, its chair or the Superintendent or (in the case of local meetings or committees) the presbyter who is in pastoral charge of the Local Church in consultation with any local lay-pastor appointed under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in that church or, if a chair has been appointed under clause (2) above, that chair, except that if they all refuse to call or consent to the calling of a meeting required by the Deed of Union or Standing Orders, or requested in writing by not less than one third of the persons entitled to attend as members of that meeting, then that meeting may be called by its secretary or convener, or by any three other members.

(7) In all cases due care shall be taken to ensure that notice of meetings to which this Standing Order applies, including notice of the place of the meeting or its form if not physical, reaches all persons entitled to be present sufficiently in advance of the meeting to make it reasonably practicable for them to attend if they wish to do so and that decisions and recommendations of the meetings are notified to the person or persons entitled under clause (5) above to be consulted before the relevant meeting is convened. Fourteen days' written notice shall be given to every member of meetings of the Circuit Meeting or a Church Council at which the business includes annual appointments, the approval of budgets, the appointment of church stewards or decisions to be taken as managing trustees of model trust property.

Cl. 41 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) contains provisions for preventing proceedings from being invalidated by absence, informality or lack of due notice.

Meetings may be held physically, electronically or in hybrid form (S.O. 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate, see Book VII B, Part 6A.

(8) If the person whose duty it is to preside at any such meeting fails to attend it, the meeting having been properly called on due notice in accordance with clauses (4) to (7) above, the Superintendent or one of his or her colleagues, if present, shall preside; otherwise those present shall elect a chair from amongst themselves.

(9) For the purposes of clauses (1) and (8) above a Superintendent's 'colleagues' are the persons, being presbyters and presbyteral probationers, listed in category (i) of Standing Order 785(4) and any persons listed in category (ii) authorised to serve the Church as presbyters.

(10) The above provisions of this Standing Order are subject to those of Standing Order 019A. If, in compliance with that Standing Order, the person presiding over a meeting vacates the chair for any business it shall be taken by the person (or next person) present who is entitled to preside under clause (1) or (2) above, is not debarred from doing so by Standing Order 019A and is willing to serve; failing any such person those present shall elect a chair from amongst themselves.

(11) Clauses (1), (5), (6), (8) and (9) of this Standing Order are subject to the provisions of Standing Orders 512B(6)(ii) and 611A(6)(ii).

**503 Eligibility for Appointment.** (1) The provisions as to eligibility for appointment to any office or membership of any official meeting, committee or other body (however described) in the Circuit shall be those set out in relation to the office or body in question, and may incorporate by reference one or more of the following categories of persons:

- (i) ministers, probationers and other persons (including those authorised to serve as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733) stationed in the Circuit in accordance with clauses (3) and (4) of Standing Order 785, so far as not otherwise eligible;
- (ii) subject to Standing Order 010, members of other communions who hold office or are elected members of a meeting under the constitution of a local ecumenical partnership in the Circuit authorised by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod, if they would have been eligible had they been members of the relevant Local Church;
- (iii) subject to Standing Order 010, persons named on the community roll of a Local Church in the Circuit.

S.O. 010(1) prescribes the doctrinal qualification for office in the Methodist Church, and the remainder of S.O. 010 deals with disqualification from appointment on the basis of convictions or cautions in relation to the criminal offences specified there.

(2) In a duly constituted ecumenical area authorised by the Conference eligibility for office or for membership of official meetings, committees or other bodies connected with the area shall, subject to Standing Orders 512, 530 and 553, but notwithstanding any other provisions of Standing Orders, be governed by the constitution of the area, so far as it makes provision for such matters.

**504 Duration of Appointments.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 512B(6)(iii) and to clauses (2) and (5) below all appointments and elections connected with the Circuit shall unless otherwise prescribed by Standing Orders be for one year and shall take effect from the date specified in the resolution of appointment.

(2) If a casual vacancy occurs the meeting with authority to appoint shall fill the vacancy with immediate effect for the remainder of the term of the appointment vacated.

(3) Subject to clause (4) below no person shall hold the office of circuit steward, or of secretary of the Circuit Meeting, the Local Preachers' Meeting or the circuit Pastoral Committee for more than six successive years.

(4) If the operation of clause (3) above would make it impossible adequately to fill an essential office in the Circuit, the Circuit Meeting or other appointing body may, by a 75% majority of those present and voting on a ballot vote, re-appoint annually beyond the sixth year.

(5) This Standing Order does not apply to the appointment of persons employed or engaged under a contract, or appointed as local lay-pastors under Section 56A of Standing Orders, nor to ex-officio membership, nor to the office of local preacher.

**505 Connexional Funds.** (1) The Circuit Meeting shall appoint a connexional funds treasurer, who shall receive from the Local Churches and private subscribers collections and gifts for those connexional funds for which no treasurer with specific responsibility is appointed.

(1A) The connexional funds treasurer shall be a member in the Circuit or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or be within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 503(1).

(2) A report on each connexional fund, by way of audited accounts, shall be presented to the Circuit Meeting by the treasurer specifically responsible for that fund, or if there is none then by the connexional funds treasurer.

**Section 51 The Circuit Meeting**

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For the meaning of the expression 'Circuit Meeting' see cl. 1(vi) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1), as applied by S.O. 002(v).

Cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides that Circuit Meetings shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as the Conference may provide.

For guidelines for the business and form of the meeting see Book VII B, Parts 6 and 6A.

**510 Constitution.** (1) Subject to clause (2) below and to Standing Orders 511, 512, 512A and 512B the Circuit Meeting shall consist of:

- (i) the ex-officio members specified in Standing Order 552;
- (ii) any other persons who are stationed or residing for the purposes of the stations in, or whose names appear under the number of, the Circuit in accordance with clause (4) of Standing Order 785, and who have informed the Superintendent of their wish to be members of the Circuit Meeting for the ensuing connexional year, except that any person stationed in one circuit but residing in another for the purposes of the stations is eligible to be a member, under this head, of the Circuit Meeting of the latter Circuit only;
- (iii) the local lay-pastors appointed by the meeting under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders;
- (iv) such other persons, if any, as the Circuit Meeting judges it appropriate to appoint from among those employed by the meeting under Standing Order 570;
- (v) the secretary of the meeting;
- (vi) the secretary of the Local Preachers' Meeting;
- (vii) from each Local Church one church steward and the church treasurer;
- (viii) representatives elected by the Church Council of each Local Church from its own members in numbers specified by the Circuit Meeting;
- (ix) additional persons as the Circuit Meeting may desire and appoint to ensure that all areas of the life of the Circuit are adequately represented, provided that the total number appointed under this head shall not



exceed the total of the numbers specified by the Circuit Meeting for the purposes of head (viii);

- (x) in Circuits in the London District one of the Chairs of that District.

As to the listing of presbyters, deacons and probationers in Circuits in the stations see S.O. 785(4).

As to head (viii) see clauses (4) to (6) below.

The insertion of paragraphs 2(2) and 16(1)(p) in the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) in 2020 means that Circuit employees may now be trustees of the Circuit Meeting (and vice versa) in England and Wales without the need for Charity Commission consent, provided any conflicts of interest are managed appropriately. In other jurisdictions restrictions on employees being trustees (and vice versa) may apply, and the consent of the relevant charity regulator may be required. As to conflicts of interest, see S.O. 019A.

(2) The persons eligible for appointment under heads (iii), (iv), (v) and (ix) of clause (1) above or heads (v) and (viii) of Standing Order 511(2) are those who are members in the Circuit or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 503(1).

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) If a representative appointed under head (viii) of clause (1) ceases to be a member of the Church Council a vacancy occurs.

(5) Decisions under head (viii) of clause (1) shall be taken before the beginning of the year to which they relate.

(6) In Circuits consisting of more than one Local Church the number of representatives appointed under head (viii) of clause (1) for each church shall be allocated in such a way that no church has more representatives than another church with a greater membership and that there is at least one representative and no more than eight per church.

(7) A Church Council may, when electing its representatives under head (viii) of clause (1), appoint not more than two of its own members to attend a meeting of the Circuit Meeting in place of representatives who cannot do so. Such persons are not members of the meeting. They may speak, but not vote nor propose or second any resolution.

**511 Single-Church Circuits.** (1) In Circuits which comprise only one Local Church the Circuit Meeting and the Church Council may elect to have the same constitution, and if both bodies so elect then both shall be constituted as set out in clause (2) below.

(2) A Circuit Meeting or Church Council constituted under this clause shall consist of:

- (i) the persons who are members of the Circuit Meeting under heads (i) to (iv), (vi) and (x) of Standing Order 510(1);
- (ii) the persons who are members of the Church Council under head (vii) of Standing Order 610(4);
- (iii) the church stewards;
- (iv) the church treasurer;
- (v) the secretary of the Circuit Meeting and the secretary of the Church Council, who may be the same person;
- (vi) the secretary of the local Pastoral Committee;
- (vii) not less than six nor more than fifteen representatives elected annually by the General Church Meeting, or, where the membership does not

- exceed 49 and the joint meeting so resolves, all members of the Local Church who are willing to serve;
- (viii) additional persons as the joint meeting may desire and appoint to ensure that all areas of the life of the church and Circuit are adequately represented, provided that the total number appointed under this head shall not exceed the maximum number who can be elected to or become members of the joint meeting under head (vii) above.

(3) Standing Orders 510(2) and 610(2) shall apply to both bodies when they are constituted under clause (2) above, so as to achieve identity of membership.

(4) When the Circuit Meeting and Church Council are constituted under clause (2) above meetings of the two bodies may be convened separately or, if required by the business or so desired, together, but in every case distinct and identified minutes shall be maintained for the business of each. Decisions which under heads (vii) and (viii) of clause (2) above are to be taken at joint meetings and any other decisions at joint meetings which properly relate to the responsibilities of both bodies shall be identified as such. Invitations under Standing Order 510(3) or 610(3) may be given by the appropriate body for a separate meeting or by the joint body for a joint meeting.

(5) In no circumstances may local and circuit funds, model trust property or other assets be mixed or confused or decisions in relation to them be taken or recorded as having been taken by other than the body having jurisdiction to do so.

(6) The Circuit Meeting and the Church Council shall cease to be constituted under clause (2) above if at any time either body so resolves.

(7) Decisions under clause (1), clause (2)(vii) or (viii) or clause (6) shall be taken before the beginning of the year to which they relate.

**512 Ecumenical Areas and Partnerships.** (1) Where an Ecumenical Area has been duly constituted it shall appear in the stations as a Circuit. If the Conference so directs, when designating the area or later, the meeting responsible under its constitution for the general management of the area shall become the Circuit Meeting for the purposes of clause 40 of the Deed of Union, sub-paragraph 2(1) of the Model Trusts, Section 54 of Standing Orders and Standing Orders 553 and 566 to 566B and for any other purpose for which a Methodist Circuit Meeting may be required. During the currency of such a direction, which the Conference may at any time revoke, there shall be no other or separate Circuit Meeting constituted under Standing Order 510 or 511.

Cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) gives the general power to the Conference to constitute and regulate official meetings of the Church, including Circuit Meetings. Paragraph 2(1) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) provides that Circuit Meetings are the managing trustees of circuit property. Section 54 relates to invitations, S.O. 553 to the appointment of a circuit Pastoral Committee in certain situations, and S.O. 566 to 566B to the admission of local preachers.

As to invitations in ecumenical areas see S.O. 547(2).

(2) In each designated Ecumenical Area, the Conference shall encourage the appointment of one of the ministers (from any of the participating Churches) as the 'Lead Minister' in the ministerial team which shares in the oversight of the churches in the area. Where the Lead Minister is a Methodist presbyter in Full Connexion

or a minister recognised and regarded as such a presbyter, he or she shall be the Superintendent of the Circuit constituted by the Ecumenical Area. In other cases, whilst leadership of the Ecumenical Area remains with the Lead Minister (if any), the Conference shall appoint a Methodist presbyter, who may be a presbyter appointed to the Circuit concerned or a presbyter stationed elsewhere, to undertake the duties of a Superintendent that cannot be or are not fulfilled by that Lead Minister.

(3) (a) This clause applies to a Circuit in which:

- (i) there is a local ecumenical partnership (designated as such by the Synod under Standing Order 412(2));
- (ii) it is the policy of the Circuit that the minister with pastoral charge of the local ecumenical partnership is also the Superintendent of the Circuit;
- (iii) the minister who will have pastoral charge of the local ecumenical partnership from the 1st September next following will not be a Methodist presbyter in Full Connexion or a minister recognised and regarded as such a presbyter; and
- (iv) it is impractical, in the judgment of the Chair of the District and the Circuit Meeting, for another presbyter appointed to the Circuit to be also the Superintendent of the Circuit.

(b) In a Circuit to which this clause applies:

- (i) the Conference shall encourage the appointment of the minister who will have pastoral charge of the local ecumenical partnership as the 'Lead Minister' of the Circuit; and
- (ii) the Conference shall appoint a Methodist presbyter stationed elsewhere to undertake the duties of a Superintendent that cannot be or are not fulfilled by that Lead Minister.

**512A City Centre Circuits.** (1) For the purposes of this Standing Order an 'eligible Circuit' is one in which the Circuit itself, a project carried on by the Circuit Meeting, or a project carried on in the Circuit by the Synod, is designated under Standing Order 440.

(2) This Standing Order applies where the Circuit Meeting of an eligible Circuit resolves that by reason of constraints on the human and other resources available to it, and of the opportunities for mission and ministry presented to the Circuit, the responsibilities of a Circuit Meeting would more appropriately be discharged by a body constituted under this Standing Order and the Conference at the request of the Synod directs that this Standing Order shall apply to that Circuit.

(3) When this Standing Order applies:

- (a) the Circuit, including the designated project, if any, hitherto carried on in it, shall continue to exist as a Circuit but shall be treated for the purposes of Standing Orders 440 and 944 as if it were a single designated project carried on by the Synod, save that Standing Order 440(8) shall not apply;
- (b) the management committee appointed by the Synod under Standing Order 440(4) shall include the ex-officio members specified in Standing Order 552 and the persons specified in heads (ii) (iv) and (vi) to (viii)

of Standing Order 510(1) and shall become the Circuit Meeting for the purposes of clause 40 of the Deed of Union, Section 54 of Standing Orders, Standing Orders 553 and 567, and for any other purpose for which a Circuit Meeting may be required;

- (c) for the avoidance of doubt, the purposes for which all model trust property in the Circuit, other than local property, is held, used and applied shall be district purposes;
- (d) the Synod, in exercising its powers under Standing Order 966(1), shall appoint as district trustees for the district property in the Circuit all such members of the management committee as are eligible for appointment under that Standing Order.

(4) During the currency of a direction under clause (2) above there shall be no other or separate Circuit Meeting constituted under Standing Order 510, 511 or 512.

(5) The Conference may at any time revoke such a direction and make transitional and consequential provisions.

**512B Exceptional Cases.** (1) This Standing Order applies when in the judgment of the authorised body the Circuit Meeting constituted under Standing Order 510 or 511 (whether or not modified under Section 58) has committed, is committing, or is threatening to commit, a serious breach of trust or of Methodist discipline, and if:

- (i) it is incapable of remedy; or
- (ii) it is capable of remedy, and the Circuit Meeting has been requested to remedy it but has refused or neglected to do so; or
- (iii) it has not been committed, and the Circuit Meeting has been requested to desist but has failed to undertake to do so;

Provided that the requirement in (iii) of a request to desist need not be fulfilled in cases of emergency, as judged by the authorised body.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of clause (1) above, examples of breaches which are capable, if the authorised body so judges, of being within that clause are:

- (i) ones which have caused, or will if committed or continued cause, significant harm to model trust property or other church funds or to the work of the Church; and also
- (ii) any which involve:
  - (a) permitting any use contrary to paragraph 14 of the Model Trusts or Section 92 of Standing Orders;
  - (b) taking any step requiring consent under Standing Order 930(4) or 931(1) or Section 98 without that consent;
  - (c) non-compliance with Standing Order 515(4);
  - (d) non-compliance with a statutory notice;
  - (e) non-compliance with a requirement of charity law or of the Charity Commission; or
  - (f) spending funds outside their permitted purposes.

(3) For the purposes of this Standing Order the “authorised body” is the district Policy Committee of the District in which the Circuit concerned lies, the “old Circuit Meeting”

is the meeting as constituted under Standing Order 510 or 511 and the “new Circuit Meeting” is the meeting as constituted under clause (4) below.

(4) When this Standing Order applies the authorised body may by a direction in writing replace the old Circuit Meeting by a new Circuit Meeting, consisting of seven or more members of the Methodist Church of full age appointed by the authorised body who may, if the authorised body thinks fit, include persons who were among the members of the old Circuit Meeting.

(5) Any such direction may specify the date on which it is to take effect, and if no other date is specified shall take immediate effect.

(6) As from the date on which such a direction takes effect, and while it continues in effect:

- (i) subject to clauses (7) and (10) below the old Circuit Meeting shall be dissolved and the new Circuit Meeting shall succeed to all its powers and responsibilities, including its powers and responsibilities as managing trustees, but not so as to relieve the members of the old Circuit Meeting of any personal liability which they may have incurred while in office;
- (ii) Standing Orders 514(2) and 552 shall cease to apply to that Circuit and Standing Order 502, clauses (1), (5), (6), (8) and (9), shall cease to apply to circuit bodies in that Circuit except to the extent that the direction applies them, which it may do with or without amendment. The direction shall in any event make provision for the chairing of circuit bodies;
- (iii) notwithstanding Standing Order 504(1) the new Circuit Meeting may forthwith terminate any appointment made by the old Circuit Meeting and make a fresh appointment in its place for the residue of the term of the appointment terminated;
- (iv) notwithstanding Standing Order 530 the new Circuit Meeting may appoint as a circuit steward any member of the Methodist Church.

(7) The old Circuit Meeting may appeal [...] against a direction of the authorised body under clause (4) above, but until the appeal is determined the direction shall remain in effect. Any such appeal shall be brought by notice in writing signed by the chair and at least two other members of the old Circuit Meeting with the authority of the members of that Circuit Meeting given at a meeting convened for the purpose. **The appeal shall be determined by a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel.** The old Circuit Meeting shall be treated as remaining in existence solely for the purpose of holding such a meeting and deciding whether or not to appeal. The membership of the old Circuit Meeting for this purpose shall consist of the persons who constituted the members of the Circuit Meeting immediately prior to the making of the direction.

(8) While such a direction is in effect the authorised body may at any time dismiss one or more of the members of the new Circuit Meeting or appoint additional qualified persons as members, ensuring that there are at all times (apart from any unavoidable gaps following death or resignation) not less than seven.

(9) The authorised body shall keep under review the question whether any such direction need remain in effect and if satisfied that it need no longer do so shall withdraw it in writing. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the authorised body shall in any event withdraw the direction no later than the end of the connexional year following the year in which the direction was made unless it resolves that the direction remains necessary, in which case it shall provide the members of the old Circuit Meeting, as far as reasonably possible, with a written copy of the resolution and an explanation of the reasons for it. The same procedure shall be followed in the next and each subsequent connexional year until the direction is withdrawn.

(10) The members of the old Circuit Meeting, or any three of them, may at any time apply to the authorised body to withdraw such a direction, except that:

- (i) no such application shall be made within three months of a previous application;
- (ii) no application by three members shall be entertained if it is made within three months after the old Circuit Meeting decided not to make such an application at a meeting held for the purpose of considering whether or not to do so.

The old Circuit Meeting shall be treated as remaining in existence solely for the purpose of holding such a meeting and deciding whether or not to apply to withdraw the direction. The membership of the old Circuit Meeting for this purpose shall consist of the persons who constituted the members of the Circuit Meeting immediately prior to the making of the direction.

(11) If a direction is withdrawn the old Circuit Meeting shall be treated as reconstituted with a membership consisting as far as possible of those persons who constituted the membership of the Circuit Meeting prior to the making of the direction and so that any persons who would have ceased to be members by effluxion of time shall be treated as remaining members until the end of the connexional year in which the direction is withdrawn.

(12) At all times when a direction is in effect, the members of the old Circuit Meeting are obliged to do everything which may reasonably be required by the new Circuit Meeting to enable it effectively to exercise all its powers and discharge all its responsibilities.

**513 Composition of Meeting.** In making appointments under Standing Order 510(1)(ix) or 511(2)(viii) the meeting shall consider its own composition as a whole with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin.

**514 Meetings.** (1) The meeting shall be held at least twice a year.

For chairing, form and notice of meetings see S.O. 502. Meetings may be held physically, electronically or in hybrid form (S.O. 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate see Book VII B, Part 6A.

(2) Before each meeting the Superintendent and the secretary of the meeting shall make out a list, by name, of the persons who are in their opinion members of the meeting under Standing Order 510, 511 or 512 as the case may be distinguishing those, if any, who are not of full age. At the meeting, before any other business is transacted,

that list shall be laid before the meeting which shall, after making any correction which seems to the meeting necessary, adopt it, and the list as thus adopted shall be final and conclusive as to the persons of whom the meeting then consists.

Note also S.O. 510(7) as to substitutes.

(2A) Before each meeting the Superintendent and the secretary of the meeting shall also make out a list, by name, of those members of the meeting who, to the best of their knowledge, have duties or loyalties within Standing Order 019A(7), identifying the other bodies involved, provided that every lay member of the meeting shall be taken to have such duties or loyalties to the Church Council of the church in which he or she is a member unless named as an exception. Immediately after the membership of the meeting has been adopted under clause (2) above that list shall be laid before the meeting, the chair shall call upon members to disclose any additions or other corrections, and those members on the corrected list who are present shall be called upon to confirm the disclosure of their relevant duties or loyalties. This clause does not derogate in any way from the obligations of members in respect of interests, duties or loyalties under Standing Order 019A but not within clause (7) thereof.

See S.O. 019A(9) for the position in jurisdictions outside England and Wales.

(3) (a) In this clause “closed session” means a meeting of the Circuit Meeting, or part of a meeting, at which only persons who are members of the Circuit Meeting for the business in hand are present, and “open session” means one open also to other members of the Circuit, to non-members active in its life and to any other person specifically invited by the Circuit Meeting to attend a particular meeting or for particular business.

(b) Except as provided in sub-clause (d) below meetings of the Circuit Meeting are in open session.

(c) In open session persons who are not members of the Circuit Meeting may speak but not vote nor propose or second any resolution. The Circuit Meeting shall in particular encourage young people to attend its open sessions.

(d) The Circuit Meeting may at any time resolve that a particular meeting or meetings be held, or particular business dealt with, in closed session, and shall do so whenever considering ministerial invitations or any other business on which it is required, or decides, to vote by ballot. It shall consider carefully whether to do so before embarking upon or continuing any business which may occasion statements which should be kept in confidence or which involve personal criticism.

**515 Responsibilities.** (1) The Circuit Meeting is the principal meeting responsible for the affairs of the Circuit and the development of circuit policy. It shall exercise that combination of spiritual leadership and administrative efficiency which will enable the Circuit to fulfil its purposes as set out in Standing Order 500, and shall act as the focal point of the working fellowship of the churches in the Circuit, overseeing their pastoral, training and evangelistic work.

The Circuit Meeting approves preachers on trial for admission as local preachers on the recommendation of the Local Preachers’ Meeting (S.O. 566(5)) and arranges for their admission at a public service (*ibid.*, cl. (6)).

(2) The meeting shall encourage leadership within the Circuit which involves the circuit stewards and other lay persons along with the ministers appointed to the Circuit.

(3) It shall be the responsibility of the Circuit Meeting to assess the contribution to be made by each Local Church towards the general expenditure of the Circuit, including the circuit contribution to the Methodist Church Fund, the sums required for the payment of stipends and allowances for ministers and probationers, and other expenditure budgeted by the Circuit Meeting. The Circuit Meeting shall assess the contribution of each Local Church in a manner that is appropriate in all the circumstances, taking into account the needs and ability to pay of each Local Church and not merely their respective membership figures.

(4) Without prejudice to its general responsibility for the conduct of circuit affairs the meeting shall in particular ensure that the circuit stewards fulfil their obligations under Standing Order 532(1) and (2).

For other functions of the meeting not prescribed or noted elsewhere in this Section see S.O. 011 (authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper), S.O. 605A(8) (provision of worship for churches with multiple sites) and S.O. 950 (management of circuit property).

**516 Memorials.** (1) The meeting may, subject to the provisions of this Standing Order, address to the Conference a memorial on any connexional subject.

For procedure of the Memorials Committee see S.O. 138.

(2) Notice of a memorial must be given in writing to the Superintendent not less than seven days before the date of the meeting at which it is to be brought forward.

(3) The memorial, if approved by a majority of the persons present and voting, shall be signed by the chair of the meeting and a record shall be taken and added of the number of persons present and entitled to vote and of the numbers voting for and against the memorial.

(4) A copy of the memorial shall be sent so as to reach the convener of the Memorials Committee immediately after the Circuit Meeting. Memorials received later than the 31st March will not be presented to the Conference. A copy shall also be sent to the secretary of the Synod for the information of the Synod.

(5) A memorial from an overseas Circuit may be submitted to the Conference only if it has been previously reported to and considered by the Synod.

(6) The meeting may also receive and vote upon any proposed resolution addressed to the Synod.

**517 Procedure.** (1) Voting shall be open, except that voting by ballot shall be used on the following occasions only:

- (i) when these Standing Orders so provide;
- (ii) if the Conference so directs;
- (iii) if the meeting by the votes of two thirds of those present so resolves.

Standing Orders provide for voting by ballot when extending local or circuit appointments beyond six years (S.O. 607(4), 504(4)), and when extending presbyteral and diaconal invitations under S.O. 545(3H) or 546(12)).



(2) Subject to clause (1) the meeting may regulate its own procedure, but except in so far as it adopts other rules of debate, and subject to Standing Orders 545(3H) and 546(12) the rules comprising clauses (5) to (7) and (10) to (25) of Standing Order 413 shall apply, with the necessary substitutions.

(3) Notwithstanding clause (1) above and any applicable rules of debate any member who maintains that a decision is or may be illegal or in contravention of the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts or Standing Orders or (in the case of managing trustees' business) otherwise a breach of trust shall be entitled to have his or her dissenting vote recorded by name.

See e.g. S.O. 985, in particular cls. (5) and (6).

**518 Irregularities.** (1) When the rules of debate in clauses (5) to (7) and (10) to (25) of Standing Order 413 apply in accordance with Standing Order 517(2) they shall take effect subject to the provisions of this Standing Order.

(2) No resolution or other act or proceeding of the meeting shall be rendered invalid, void or voidable by reason of any non-compliance with any of the provisions of clauses (6), (7), (10), (11), (16), (20), (21), (23), (24) or (25) of Standing Order 413.

As to the validation of proceedings see also cl. 41 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 126(2).

(3) If before any resolution or other act or proceeding of the meeting has been acted upon, or the minute recording it approved and signed, it comes to the attention of the chair that there was any irregularity of a kind described in clause (5) below in or leading to the making of that decision, then unless satisfied that the irregularity could not have affected or influenced the decision the chair shall ensure that the decision is not irrevocably acted upon until the meeting has been reconvened to reconsider the question and come to a regular decision upon it.

(4) If any such irregularity does not come to the attention of the chair until after the decision has been acted upon, or the minute recording it approved and signed, or if the chair is satisfied that the irregularity could not have affected or influenced the decision, then the decision shall be as valid as if regularly made in all respects.

(5) The irregularities referred to in clauses (3) and (4) above are the following:

- (i) failure to achieve the majority required by clause (17) or (22) of Standing Order 413, where applicable;
- (ii) an incorrect ruling that a greater majority is required than is the case;
- (iii) miscounting of votes;
- (iv) failure to put to the meeting a resolution, amendment or procedural motion which the mover and seconder are entitled to have put;
- (v) failure to comply with clause (18) of Standing Order 413 by requiring unnecessarily an immediate decision on a motion that the question be not put.

**Section 52 Circuit Ministry**

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For invitations see Section 54.

**520 Responsibilities.** (1) The presbyter or presbyters appointed to the several Circuits are appointed by the Conference to preach and exercise pastoral charge in those Circuits on behalf of the Conference as set out in Standing Order 700(7). In so doing they shall exercise their particular responsibilities in conjunction with those of the appropriate courts, local lay-pastors and lay officers in the Circuit to which they are appointed and in the constituent Local Churches of that Circuit. With them they shall act in accordance with Standing Orders 515, 531, 614 and 633 to uphold Methodist discipline and to exercise oversight of the worship, pastoral care and mission policy of the Circuit, and the allocation of specific pastoral work and responsibilities to particular ministers and lay officers.

As to local lay-pastors see Section 56A. As to the position of forces chaplains see S.O. 286(5).

For specific responsibilities of the Superintendent see S.O. 521 below and the references in the Index.

(2) It is the duty of the Superintendent appointed to each Circuit to enable the relevant courts, officers and ministers to fulfil their specific responsibilities under Standing Orders and to ensure that they do so.

(3) It is the duty of presbyters in Full Connexion to be willing to baptize infants in appropriate circumstances.

**521 The Plan.** (1) It is the responsibility of the Superintendent in consultation with his or her colleagues to make the circuit plan of preaching appointments.

As to the duties of local preachers see S.O. 563.

(2) The Chair shall keep under review the single-presbyter Circuits within the District, and where appropriate encourage, in consultation with the circuit stewards, the presbyter or presbyteral probationer appointed to such a Circuit to exchange regularly for Sunday preaching appointments with the presbyter or presbyters of an adjoining Circuit or Circuits. The expense of these interchanges shall be met by the Circuits concerned.

(3) The ministers' names shall be listed on the circuit plan in the order in which they are required to appear in the stations in accordance with Standing Order 785(4)(a).

**522 Visitation.** (1) The Superintendent shall also visit all the Local Churches in the Circuit to provide encouragement, challenge and support.

(2) The Superintendent is further encouraged to gather, in conjunction with the Circuit Meeting, a group of people, who, in the name of the Circuit, may visit a Local Church which needs help in fulfilling its ministry in any way more effectively.

**523 Meetings.** (1) Ministers and probationers appointed to the same Circuit, stationed in the Circuit in appointments not within the control of the Church or without appointment shall meet together once a week, or as often as is practicable, in order to take counsel together respecting the affairs of the Circuit, and persons residing in the Circuit who are authorised to serve the Church as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733 and forces chaplains and deacons and lay workers serving in support of forces chaplains located for the time being in the Circuit shall be invited to attend.

For the consideration in such meetings of the need for doctrinal preaching see S.O. 524 below.

As to meetings with the circuit stewards see S.O. 531(3)(ii).

As to circuit leadership see S.O. 515(2).

As to forces chaplains see S.O. 286(5).

(2) The ministers and probationers of different Circuits within the same town or neighbourhood shall meet together monthly, or at frequent intervals, for the purpose of mutual conference and prayer and for consultation on subjects of common concern in their respective Circuits. All ministers and probationers in single-presbyter Circuits shall be involved in such meetings unless, in the judgment of the Synod, geographical conditions render this impossible, and persons residing in any such Circuit who are authorised to serve the Church as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733 shall be invited to attend.

**524 Doctrinal Preaching.** There is urgent need that the main doctrines of the Christian faith should be more plainly and systematically set forth in public preaching, so that the Methodist people may be established in the faith and better defended against error and uncertainty. Ministers and probationers are directed to consider together how this may be arranged.

**525 Preparation for Membership.** It is part of the pastoral duty of a presbyter or presbyteral probationer in consultation with any deacon working pastorally in the Local Church, any local lay-pastor appointed under Section 56A of Standing Orders, or the secretary of the Pastoral Committee appointed under Standing Order 644(6):

- (i) to encourage those within the pastoral care of the Local Church who are not members to become candidates for membership;
- (ii) to ensure that the review of the community roll to that end under Standing Order 054(8) occurs, and to join in that review;

- (iii) to meet every candidate for membership and bring before him or her the basis of membership in the Methodist Church as set out in clause 8(a) of the Deed of Union and the solemn affirmations made in the service of reception into membership and confirmation;
- (iv) to lead or otherwise participate in the preparation classes for membership, as arranged by the Church Council or Pastoral Committee, and to render any help to candidates which sympathy and confidence in Christ may supply;
- (v) to report to the Church Council, in conjunction with any other person responsible for doing so, when it considers whether to approve the admission of candidates into membership, on the matters of which it must be satisfied under Standing Order 050(4).

As to the procedure for admission into membership see cl. 8 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 05 of Standing Orders.

**526 Pastoral Care.** (1) The presbyters and presbyteral probationers appointed to a Circuit are responsible for visiting the Classes at least once in each quarter and for issuing the tickets of membership to all members.

As to membership tickets, the Classes and pastoral care generally see cl. 9 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 054 to 056.

For the pastoral duties of class leaders and pastoral visitors see S.O. 631.

As to the roll of church members see S.O. 054(5) and (6).

(2) The pastoral oversight of Methodists in hospitals shall be regarded as part of their duty by the ministers and probationers stationed in Circuits in which such institutions are situated.

For part-time appointments as hospital chaplains see S.O. 802.

For pastoral care of Methodists in prison see S.O. 350, in the forces S.O. 286, and in educational establishments S.O. 273(6),(7), 275(2), 631(3), 444(4) and 050(3).

**527 Benevolence Fund.** (1) The purposes of the Circuit include the relief of poverty and distress and to that end the Circuit Meeting may maintain a circuit Benevolence Fund and invite contributions to it or collections for it, and shall maintain such a fund if moneys are allocated to it out of any local Benevolence Fund in the Circuit. The circuit stewards shall be the treasurers of the fund.

For the local Benevolence Fund see S.O. 651.

(2) The fund shall be applied, at the confidential discretion of the Superintendent, and the other ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit, in consultation with any local lay-pastor appointed under Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in the Circuit and the circuit stewards, for the relief of poverty and distress in the congregations and neighbourhood of the Circuit or, if so recommended by the Chair, of some other Circuit or Circuits in the Districts, and allocations may also be made out of the fund to a district Benevolence Fund, applicable at the confidential discretion of the Chair for the relief of poverty and distress in the District.

**528 Removals.** (1) Subject to clause (4) below ministers and probationers appointed by the Conference to a Circuit or required to move within the Circuit to which they are appointed shall receive from that Circuit the amount of expenses incurred by their travelling and removal and any additional allowances set on the recommendation of the [...] **Resourcing** Committee.

For the Resourcing Committee's functions in relation to this Standing Order, see S.O. 362(6).

(2) Student ministers and probationers sent as supplies shall receive from the Circuit to which they are sent their travelling and removal expenses.

See S.O. 720(3).

(2A) Subject to clauses (2B) and (2C) below ministers stationed by the Conference under Standing Order 780(1)(i)-(iii) shall, upon becoming supernumeraries, receive from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons the amount of expenses incurred by their travelling and removal and any additional allowances set on the recommendation of the [...] **Resourcing** Committee.

(2B) A supernumerary minister who has returned to the active work under Standing Order 793 shall not receive expenses or allowances under clause (2A) upon returning to the status of supernumerary.

(2C) In the case of persons recognised and regarded as ministers by virtue of clauses 43 to 45A of the Deed of Union any payment under clause (2A) above shall be discretionary and shall not normally exceed the cost of travel and removal within the mainland of Great Britain.

(3) Any application for a grant from the Methodist Church Fund toward the cost of a removal shall be made by the Circuit Meeting and recommended by the district Policy Committee.

See S.O. 371(3)(iv).

(4) In the case of removals in either direction between the mainland of Great Britain on the one hand and one of the Island Districts, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, Malta or Gibraltar on the other hand that part of the cost which is incurred on the mainland shall be borne under clause (1) above by the Circuit to which the minister or probationer is removing, the remainder being met by the Methodist Church Fund, in addition to any grant made under clause (3) above.

**529 Appointments.** When a Circuit desires an additional appointment, or the withdrawal, of an itinerant presbyter, deacon or probationer, application shall be made through the district Policy Committee in accordance with Standing Order 438 (1). Where a diaconal appointment is involved, the Circuit shall send a copy of the application to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

As to the district committee see S.O. 438(1), (2).

## Section 53 The Circuit Stewards

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As to membership of the Synod, see S.O. 410(1)(iv) and (v).

The circuit stewards are, ex officio, members of all official meetings and committees of the Circuit (S.O. 552).

**530 Appointment.** Subject to Standing Order 512B(6)(iv), the Circuit Meeting shall annually appoint as circuit stewards two or more persons who are members in the Circuit or supernumeraries stationed there.

**531 Responsibilities.** (1) The circuit stewards are responsible, with the Superintendent and the ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit, for the spiritual and material well-being of the Circuit, and for upholding and acting upon the decisions of the Circuit Meeting.

(2) They also have the particular rights and duties set out in Standing Orders 532 to 534, 540, 552 and 610 and elsewhere.

S.O. 540 concerns the consultations to be held by circuit stewards in connection with presbyteral and diaconal invitations and appointments, as to which see also the code of practice produced annually by the Stationing Committee. S.O. 552 concerns the circuit stewards' ex-officio membership of all official meetings and committees of the Circuit. S.O. 610 concerns membership of the Church Council.

See also S.O. 527 (circuit Benevolence Fund), 802(5) (part-time appointments), 803 (accommodation and furniture), 954(viii) (circuit property reports), 965(2), (3), (4) (manse visitation reports).

The senior circuit steward of each Circuit involved is to receive notification of the final changes to the stations (S.O. 785(2)).

(3) In discharging those responsibilities and duties it is desirable that the circuit stewards shall:

- (i) be sensitive to the needs of the ministers and probationers and their families;
- (ii) meet with the ministers and probationers at least twice each year, before the Circuit Meeting;
- (iii) keep themselves informed of the activities of each Local Church in the Circuit; and
- (iv) be aware of district and connexional policies as they affect the Circuit and its Local Churches.

As to (iii) and (iv) one of the circuit stewards is to be appointed to membership of each local Church Council (S.O. 610 (1)(xii)).

As to circuit leadership see S.O. 515 (2).

**532 Circuit Fund.** (1) The circuit stewards are the treasurers of the circuit fund and shall:

- (i) obtain from the treasurer of each Local Church in the Circuit the contribution assessed by the Circuit Meeting on that Local Church towards the general expenditure of the Circuit, including the circuit contribution to the Methodist Church Fund and the fulfilment of the other obligations specified in heads (ii) to (iv) below;
- (ii) provide the sums required for payment of the stipends of the ministers and probationers and authorise the collection by the Connexional Team of those sums by direct debit in accordance with Standing Order 801(3);
- (iii) pay to the ministers and probationers any other allowances due to them and all sums required to defray their expenses in accordance with Standing Order 801(2);
- (iv) discharge all other claims upon the circuit fund in accordance with the budget agreed by the Circuit Meeting, including budgeted payments for ecumenical work.

See S.O. 012A for the duties of treasurers generally.

As to the method of assessment of the contribution referred to in (i) see S.O. 515(3).

As to the Methodist Church Fund see S.O. 371.

See also S.O. 376 (reimbursements and special payments), 801(4) (payment of allowances during illness).

(2) The circuit stewards shall, by the seventh day of each quarter, pay to the district treasurers of the Methodist Church Fund and the District Expenses Fund the amounts which have been allocated to the Circuit by the Synod for those funds respectively.

As to the District Expenses Fund see S.O. 432(2).

As to the collection of the Methodist Church Fund contributions by the district treasurer see S.O. 432 (3) and as to payment by the church treasurer S.O. 635(2).

(3) The circuit account shall be closed annually on the 31st August and an annual report shall be made to the Circuit Meeting. The accounts shall clearly indicate the financial position of the fund at the 31st August each year, including all investments, and loans due to and from the fund.

**533 Manses.** The circuit stewards shall be responsible for the interior decoration, furnishing and energy efficiency of the manses.

For minimum furnishing requirements see S.O. 803(6).

As to energy efficiency see also the guidance in Book VII A, Parts 1 and 2. The Conference of 2010 directed that Circuits should endeavour to use model trust money to put in place these high standards of energy efficiency. It also directed that Circuits should endeavour to provide smart meter devices to enable ministers to control their electricity use.

**534 Invitations.** The circuit stewards are responsible for bringing to the Invitation Committee and/or the Circuit Meeting, as appropriate, proposals for invitations to presbyters to serve or for presbyters or deacons to continue serving in the Circuit, and for conveying such invitations to the presbyters or deacons concerned. In the case of initial invitations, the circuit stewards are responsible for conducting, on behalf of the Circuit, negotiations with presbyters as initiated by the Chair.

See also Section 54 below and the guidance as to procedure in the code of practice produced annually by the Stationing Committee.

## Section 54 Circuit Invitations and Appointments

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For guidance to circuit stewards, ministers and Chairs see the code of practice produced annually by the Stationing Committee.

**540 Consultations.** (1) In Circuits where an appointment has to be made which falls in one of the categories specified in clause (2) below the Chair of the District shall, in the course of considering with which presbyters to initiate negotiations by the circuit stewards, confer with the appropriate member of the Connexional Team.

See also S.O. 444(4).

- (2) The categories referred to in clause (1) above are:
- (i) an appointment which carries chaplaincy in higher or further education;
  - (ii) an appointment to the pastoral oversight of a church using premises that have received capital grants from government sources for youth and community work and where a covenant to do such work has been entered into, or where a full-time worker with children or young people is employed;
  - (iii) an appointment to a team ministry recognised as such by the Connexional Team.

(3) Where the stationing of a deacon is being considered for an appointment falling into one of the categories specified in clause (2) above, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall confer with the appropriate member of the Connexional Team.

(4) In duly constituted ecumenical areas and in Circuits where an appointment has to be made in an approved local ecumenical partnership, the Chair of the District shall, in the course of considering with which presbyters to initiate negotiations by the circuit stewards, confer with the sponsoring body or, if none exists, with the appropriate authorities of the other communions involved. Where the appointment of a deacon is involved, the Chair shall similarly confer and report the results of such consultation to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

See also S.O. 547.

(5) In Circuits where an appointment has to be made to the pastoral oversight of a city centre church or project on the official list kept under Standing Order 440(1) or in a city centre Circuit on that list the Chair of the District shall in the course of considering



with which presbyters to initiate negotiations by the circuit stewards, confer with the district Policy Committee, and with the Connexional Team member responsible for the maintenance of that list. Where the appointment of a deacon is to be made in connection with such a church or project, the Chair shall similarly confer and report the results of such consultation to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

See S.O. 440 and 512A for city centre churches, Circuits and projects. The above clause applies to circuit appointments; where the appointment is to a project carried on by the Synod, see S.O. 440(8).

(6)–(7) [revoked]

(7A) All negotiations between presbyters and a Circuit shall be initiated only by the Chair of the District containing the Circuit. Negotiations shall be understood as beginning at the point when an arrangement is made for a presbyter to visit a Circuit.

For guidance to circuit stewards, presbyters and Chairs see the code of practice produced annually by the Stationing Committee.

(8) When a presbyter visits a Circuit at the invitation of the circuit stewards or the Stationing Committee in connection with a vacancy or potential vacancy, the Circuit shall defray all expenses reasonably incurred. In cases of visits to the Island Districts or the Isles of Scilly, and exceptionally in other cases, a grant may be made from the Methodist Church Fund towards the costs, on application by the Circuit Meeting.

(9) The provisions of clause (8) shall apply where a deacon visits a Circuit at the suggestion of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order or the Stationing Committee in connection with a vacancy or potential vacancy.

**541 The Committee.** (1) The Circuit Meeting shall annually appoint an Invitation Committee.

In appointing the Committee, it is important – particularly so that the Committee carries the necessary authority if required to act under S.O. 544 – to ensure adequate representation of the whole Circuit and not simply those churches likely to be directly affected by possible staff changes. In addition to those appointed by name, the Committee will include those who are members ex officio under S.O. 552.

(2) In any Circuit in the London District one of the Chairs of that District shall be a member of the committee.

(3) Subject to Standing Order 503(2) and to clause (2) above the members of the committee shall all be members in the Circuit or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist Church or be within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 503(1).

S.O. 503(2) concerns ecumenical areas.

(4) The committee shall meet to receive the circuit stewards' proposals before the Circuit Meeting at which invitations are to be considered.

For guidance to circuit stewards, presbyters and Chairs see the code of practice produced annually by the Stationing Committee.

(5) All invitations given or recommendations made by the committee are provisional in character and must be submitted to the Circuit Meeting for its consideration and decision, except that, in the case of initial presbyteral invitations only, the Circuit Meeting may delegate the decision to the Invitation Committee. Any invitation issued by the committee by virtue of such a delegation shall be reported to the next Circuit Meeting.

(6) Only the recommendations and decisions of the committee shall be recorded.

(7) Where power to issue initial invitations has not been delegated to the Invitation Committee, a special Circuit Meeting shall be called as soon as practicable to consider any such invitation.

**542 Initial Diaconal Appointments.** (1) No initial invitation to serve in a Circuit shall be offered to or accepted by a deacon, diaconal probationer or student deacon, such persons being entirely at the disposal of the Stationing Committee, acting in the light of the recommendations made by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

(2) By a date determined by the Stationing Committee each year the Superintendent of any Circuit in which a deacon is sought to be stationed in the next connexional year shall supply to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order the required details of the appointment, by completing the form provided for the purpose by the Stationing Committee and available from the Warden. The Superintendent shall also send copies of the completed form to the Chair of the District and the district Lay Stationing Representative.

(3) By a date determined by the Stationing Committee the Warden shall send to the Chair of each District a copy of the list of anticipated diaconal stations and available deacons and diaconal probationers, and invite their comments to be submitted by the 17th October.

(4) The initial appointment of a deacon to a Circuit shall normally be for a period of five years, but, where the Warden judges it appropriate, he or she may, with the agreement of the Circuit Meeting and the deacon concerned, recommend to the Stationing Committee that the initial appointment be for a period of either three or four years.

(5) A diaconal probationer appointed to a Circuit shall be treated for all the purposes of Standing Orders 544 and 546 as if he or she had been subject to an initial appointment for the period prescribed by clause (4) above.

**543 Initial Period: Presbyteral Appointments.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 547(2) the initial invitation to a presbyter shall normally be for a period of five years, no annual invitation being necessary during that period.

S.O. 547(2) relates to ecumenical areas.

(2) A presbyter or presbyteral probationer appointed to a Circuit without prior invitation shall, subject to clause (3) below, be treated for all the purposes of Standing Orders 544 and 545 as if he or she had received an initial invitation for the period prescribed by clause (1) above or Standing Order 547(2), as the case may be.

As to presbyteral probationers' appointments see also S.O. 548(1).

(3) The Stationing Committee may, in respect of any appointment to which clause (2) above applies, direct that the deemed period of initial invitation shall be a lesser number of years than that provided for by clause (2), as specified in the direction, which shall be communicated in writing to the presbyter and circuit stewards concerned. That lesser number of years shall then be the initial period of invitation for the purposes of

Standing Order 544, and that number and its ordinal shall be substituted for 'five' and 'fifth' (or where Standing Order 547 applies, for 'seven' and 'seventh') in Standing Orders 545(1) and (2) respectively (but not for 'five' in Standing Order 545(2)). In the case of a probationer no such direction shall be given except by agreement with the Circuit.

**544 Curtailment.** (1) (a) Subject to sub-clauses (b) and (c) of this clause and to clause (2) below this Standing Order applies when:

- (i) the circuit Invitation Committee, after consulting the church stewards of the Local Churches in which the person concerned exercises pastoral responsibility, wishes the current period of invitation or deemed invitation to the Circuit (whether the initial period or an extension) of a presbyter, deacon or probationer to be curtailed; or
- (ii) subject to clause (3) below, a presbyter, deacon or probationer wishes his or her current period of invitation or deemed invitation to the Circuit (whether the initial period or an extension) to be curtailed; or
- (iii) a connexional complaints team appointed under Standing Order 1122 considers that the question whether such a period shall be curtailed should be examined.

(b) References in this Standing Order to periods of invitation or deemed invitation apply also, in the case of deacons or diaconal probationers, to their initial period or deemed period of appointment.

(c) References in this Standing Order to probationers apply only to curtailments which would take effect after the end of their period of probation.

For the circuit Invitation Committee see S.O. 541.

(1A) When either through the procedure prescribed by clauses (6) to (11) below or through agreement between the parties concerned it is decided that the current period of invitation or deemed invitation be curtailed, a report to that effect shall be signed by the presbyter, deacon or probationer concerned, by a member of the circuit Invitation Committee on behalf of that committee, and by the Chair of the District, and submitted to the Secretary of the Conference.

(2) If the circuit Invitation Committee and the presbyter, deacon or probationer concerned agree, whether before or after the procedure prescribed by clauses (6) to (11) below has begun, that such a period shall be curtailed by one or more years then their agreement shall have effect and clauses (6) to (11) of this Standing Order shall not apply, or shall cease to apply, as the case may be.

For the circuit Invitation Committee see S.O. 541.

(3) This Standing Order does not apply by virtue of clause (1)(a)(ii) above if the possibility of curtailment arises because the person concerned is being considered for an appointment to the Connexional Team, or for some other appointment by the Conference for which the [...] **Connexional** Council is required to submit a nomination, or as a district Chair, or has been requested by the Stationing Committee or any sub-committee or group acting on its behalf to accept a change of station, or has applied to the Stationing Advisory Committee under Standing Order **261(2)(iv)**, or is being encouraged by that committee to apply under Standing Order **261(2)(i)**.

(4) In each group of Districts designated by the Secretary of the Conference for this purpose there shall be established and maintained a panel of ministers and lay members fit to serve on committees acting under clauses (6) to (11) below. Appointments to such panels shall be made by the Synods of the constituent Districts.

(5) When this Standing Order applies the person or persons raising the matter under clause (1) above shall so inform the Chair of the District and, if a deacon or diaconal probationer is involved, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The Chair, or the Chair and the Warden jointly, as the case may be, shall then request the Chair of another District in the same group to appoint a committee to consider the case unless, in a case arising under clause (1)(a)(i) or (ii) above, they are able without undue delay to achieve agreement between the parties.

(6) The Chair so requested shall appoint a committee consisting, subject to clause (7) below, of a chair and six other persons. The chair shall be the appointor or another Chair or Lay Stationing Representative of one of the Districts in the group, not being the Chair of the District containing the relevant Circuit. The other appointees shall be chosen from the members of the relevant panel constituted under clause (4) above and shall consist of three lay members and (if the case concerns a presbyter or presbyteral probationer) two presbyters and one deacon or, (if it concerns a deacon or diaconal probationer) two deacons and one presbyter.

For the Lay Stationing Representative see S.O. 417B.

(7) In the case of a minister, deacon or probationer of another conference or of an overseas church whose appointment has been negotiated with that conference or church, the committee shall also include a member of the Connexional Team, being if possible the person responsible for such appointments.

(8) (a) Notwithstanding anything contained elsewhere in this Standing Order no person shall act as the appointing Chair under clause (6) above or as a member of the committee constituted in accordance with clauses (6) and (7) above who:

- (i) is a member, or stationed, in the Circuit in question; or
- (ii) in a case arising under clause (1)(iii) above is or has at any material time been a member of the relevant connexional complaints team; or
- (iii) has any personal interest in the outcome; or
- (iv) has received in confidence information relevant to the issues; or
- (v) by reason of close friendship or relationship with a person involved in any of the above ways, or for any other reason, might or might reasonably be supposed to be open to partiality or embarrassment in carrying out his or her responsibilities under this Standing Order.

(b) The appointing Chair shall promptly inform the persons concerned of the names of the persons appointed to the committee, so that they may inform him or her of any objection under sub-clause (a) above.

(9) The committee shall investigate the question whether the relevant invitation or deemed invitation should be curtailed and make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee. The circuit Invitation Committee or the presbyter, deacon or probationer involved, if dissatisfied with the recommendation, may make representations to the

Stationing Committee, but there shall be no other appeal against the committee's conclusions. The committee may in addition refer the case to a district Consultative Committee under Standing Order 040.

See S.O. 260 for the Stationing Committee. Any representations to that committee should be submitted to the Secretary of the Conference, as its convener.

S.O. 040 concerns failure by a minister to fulfil the obligations of that minister's appointment.

(10) (a) In its investigation the committee shall give the circuit Invitation Committee and the presbyter, deacon or probationer involved the opportunity of making representations and of knowing the substance of, and dealing with, any representations or other material before the committee adverse to their case. The committee shall not, in the course of its deliberations, take into account any point which the party affected has not had an opportunity of meeting.

(b) Subject to sub-clause (a) above the committee shall determine its own procedure.

(11) The chair of the committee shall forthwith inform the Chair of the District containing the relevant Circuit and, if the person concerned is a deacon or a diaconal probationer, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, of its recommendation. The Chair or Warden, as appropriate, shall inform the presbyter, deacon or probationer involved, and the Chair shall inform the circuit Invitation Committee, which shall be responsible for ensuring that the nature and effect of the recommendation are adequately known and understood by the members of the Circuit.

**545 Extensions: Presbyteral Appointments.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 547(2) and 548(1) no presbyter shall be appointed to the same Circuit for more than five successive years except upon the invitation of the Circuit Meeting, given in accordance with clause (2) or (3) of this Standing Order.

(2) Subject to Standing Order 547, at a Circuit Meeting in the fifth year of a presbyter's service in the Circuit the invitation or deemed invitation may be extended for a specified number of years, not exceeding five.

S.O. 547 relates to ecumenical areas.

For guidance to circuit stewards, presbyters and Chairs see the code of practice produced annually by the Stationing Committee.

(3) If a presbyter's initial invitation or deemed invitation has been extended under clause (2) above or this clause and is open to further extension as provided in clause (3B) below, then at a Circuit Meeting in the last year of the current period of invitation the invitation may be extended for a specified number of further years, not exceeding five.

(3A) Any Circuit Meeting to consider extending an invitation or deemed invitation under clause (2) or (3) above shall be held on or before the 20th September.

(3B) Any extension under clause (2) or (3) above may, if the presbyter and Circuit Meeting agree, be understood as final, but otherwise shall be open to further extension.

(3C) Prior to any Circuit Meeting where the extension of an invitation or deemed invitation is to be considered, the circuit stewards shall ensure that appropriate consultations take place according to guidance issued from time to time on behalf of

the Conference.

(3D) If, on the completion of those consultations, the presbyter concerned informs the circuit Invitation Committee that he or she is seeking an extension, the committee shall prepare a statement giving its recommendation and the reasons for it, for presentation to the Circuit Meeting. The reasoned statement shall be circulated in confidence to the members of the Circuit Meeting two weeks in advance of the meeting.

(3E) If an extension is not recommended by the circuit Invitation Committee, the presbyter may prepare a statement giving reasons why an extension should be granted, and of what length and if an extension is recommended but the presbyter wishes to advance reasons why it should be of a different length he or she may prepare a statement to that effect. Any such statement shall be circulated in confidence to members of the Circuit Meeting no later than a week in advance of the meeting. The Circuit Meeting shall receive both the statement of the presbyter and that of the circuit Invitation Committee, together with any response from the committee to the presbyter's statement (in writing or made orally), and then consider the matter and proceed to vote.

(3F) If an extension is recommended by the circuit Invitation Committee, there shall be circulated with the recommendation a notice in writing giving the name of the person who will be chairing the relevant Circuit Meeting and requiring members of the Circuit Meeting to inform the chair of the meeting in written form no later than one week before the time fixed for the commencement of the meeting if they intend to oppose the recommendation or move an amendment, with the substance of their grounds for doing so. If no such intention has been notified by the time allowed then no vote shall be taken on the recommendation and the extension recommended by the committee shall be taken as offered by the meeting.

(3G) If such an intention has been notified by one or more members by the time allowed, the written grounds for opposing or proposing an amendment to the recommendation shall be circulated no later than 24 hours before the meeting and the meeting shall hear the member or members concerned, a response by or on behalf of the circuit invitation committee and any response by the presbyter and shall then consider the matter and proceed to vote.

(3GA) During any discussion while the meeting considers the matter under clause (3E) or (3G) above after the presbyter has withdrawn the chair shall not permit any new ground against extension, or in favour of altering its length, to be advanced. Should that nevertheless happen the presbyter must be informed and given the opportunity of responding.

(3H) The voting on any resolution in the Circuit Meeting under clause (2) or (3) above, or on an amendment to any such resolution, shall be by ballot. A resolution for the extension of an invitation shall require for adoption a majority of 60% of those present and voting or, if for an extension which would include any period beyond a total appointment of ten years, 75%. Unless the meeting, in exercise of its power to regulate its own procedure, decides otherwise, the same majority shall be required for an amendment altering the length of the proposed extension, and if varying lengths are for consideration they (including that proposed in the original resolution) shall be voted

on in descending order, the first (if any) to receive the required majority being deemed to have been adopted as a substantive resolution. The number of votes for and against and the total number of persons present and entitled to vote shall be recorded.

Note in particular, in the guidance referred to in the second note to cl. (2) above, the provisions in relation to the procedure at the meeting.

(4) (a) Whenever the question is under consideration of the extension or expiration of the period of invitation or deemed invitation of a Superintendent, the Chair of the District shall be invited to be present or represented. The Chair of the District or his or her representative shall have the right to take the chair.

(b) Whenever the question is under consideration of the extension or expiration of the period of invitation of a presbyter stationed in an appointment on a part-time basis under Standing Order 780(2)(a) or without stipend under Standing Order 801(6) the circuit stewards shall in all cases, before the Invitation Committee decides upon its recommendation to the Circuit Meeting, submit their proposals or provisional proposals to the district Policy Committee.

**546 Extensions: Diaconal Appointments.** (1) No deacon shall be appointed to the same Circuit beyond the initial period provided for by Standing Order 542 except upon the invitation of the Circuit Meeting, given in accordance with clause (3) or (4) of this Standing Order.

(2) When the question of such an invitation is under consideration the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall be informed, and consulted as necessary throughout the process by the Circuit and the deacon.

(3) At a Circuit Meeting in the last year of a deacon's initial appointment to the Circuit an invitation may be given to extend the period for a specified number of years, not exceeding five.

(4) If the initial period has been extended under clause (3) above or this clause and is open to further extension as provided in clause (6) below, then at a Circuit Meeting in the last year of the current period of invitation the invitation may be extended for a specified number of further years, not exceeding five.

(5) Any Circuit Meeting to consider offering an invitation under clause (3) or (4) above shall be held on or before the 20th September and the Warden shall be informed of its decision by the 5th October.

(6) Any extension under clause (3) or (4) above may, if the deacon and Circuit Meeting agree, be understood as final, but otherwise shall be open to further extension.

(7) Prior to any Circuit Meeting where the extension of an invitation is to be considered, the circuit stewards shall ensure that appropriate consultations take place according to guidance issued from time to time on behalf of the Conference.

(8) If, on the completion of those consultations, the deacon concerned informs the circuit Invitation Committee that he or she is seeking an extension, the committee shall prepare a statement giving its recommendation and the reasons for it, for presentation to the Circuit Meeting. The reasoned statement shall be circulated in confidence to the

members of the Circuit Meeting two weeks in advance of the meeting.

(9) If an extension is not recommended by the circuit Invitation Committee, the deacon may prepare a statement giving reasons why an extension should be granted, and of what length and if an extension is recommended but the deacon wishes to advance reasons why it should be of a different length he or she may prepare a statement to that effect. Any such statement shall be circulated in confidence to members of the Circuit Meeting no later than a week in advance of the meeting. The Circuit Meeting shall consider both the statement of the deacon and that of the circuit Invitation Committee, together with any response from the committee to the deacon's statement (in writing or made orally), and then receive the matter and proceed to vote.

(10) If an extension is recommended by the circuit Invitation Committee, there shall be circulated with the recommendation a notice in writing giving the name of the person who will be chairing the relevant Circuit Meeting and requiring members of the Circuit Meeting to inform the chair of the meeting in written form no later than one week before the time fixed for the commencement of the meeting if they intend to oppose the recommendation or move an amendment, with the substance of their grounds for doing so. If no such intention has been notified by the time allowed then no vote shall be taken on the recommendation and the extension recommended by the committee shall be taken as offered by the meeting.

(11) If such an intention has been notified by one or more members by the time allowed, the written grounds for opposing or proposing an amendment to the recommendation shall be circulated no later than 24 hours before the meeting and the meeting shall hear the member or members concerned, a response by or on behalf of the circuit invitation committee and any response by the deacon and shall then consider the matter and proceed to vote.

(11A) During any discussion while the meeting considers the matter under clause (9) or (11) above after the deacon has withdrawn the chair shall not permit any new ground against extension, or in favour of altering its length, to be advanced. Should that nevertheless happen the deacon must be informed and given the opportunity of responding.

(12) The voting on any resolution in the Circuit Meeting under clause (3) or (4) above, or on an amendment to any such resolution, shall be by ballot. A resolution to offer an invitation shall require for adoption a majority of 60% of those present and voting or, if for an extension which would include any period beyond a total appointment of ten years, 75%. Unless the meeting, in exercise of its power to regulate its own procedure, decides otherwise, the same majority shall be required for an amendment altering the length of the proposed extension, and if varying lengths are for consideration they (including that proposed in the original resolution) shall be voted on in descending order, the first (if any) to receive the required majority being deemed to have been adopted as the substantive resolution. The number of votes for and against and the total number of persons present and entitled to vote shall be recorded.

Note in particular, in the code of practice produced annually by the Stationing Committee, the guidance in relation to the procedure at the meeting.



**547 Ecumenical Partnerships.** (1) Whenever a question arises as to the curtailment, extension or expiration of the period of invitation or appointment of a presbyter or deacon participating in an approved local ecumenical partnership the circuit stewards shall confer with the sponsoring body, or, if none exists, with the appropriate authorities of the other communions involved in the partnership.

As to ecumenical areas and partnerships see also S.O. 512.

See also S.O. 540(4).

(2) In a Circuit which is a duly constituted ecumenical area the provisions of Standing Orders 543(1) and 545 shall, where the constitution of the area allows, apply with the amendments set out in clause (3) below, so as to provide for an initial invitation of seven years.

As to ecumenical areas see also S.O. 512.

(3) The amendments referred to in clause (2) above are as follows:

- (i) in Standing Orders 543(1) and 545(1) for 'five' substitute 'seven';
- (ii) in Standing Order 545(2) for 'fifth' substitute 'seventh'.

**548 Exceptions from Presbyteral Invitation.** (1) No initial invitation shall be offered or accepted in respect of an appointment as a presbyteral probationer, such appointments being entirely at the disposal of the Stationing Committee, but Standing Order 543(2) and (3) shall apply.

(2) *[revoked]*

(3) Persons applying to be received into Full Connexion as presbyters under Standing Order 730, 731, or 761 shall not be offered or accept an invitation to serve in a Circuit for their first appointment, which shall be at the disposal of the Stationing Committee, but Standing Order 543(2) and (3) shall apply.

**549 Authority of the Conference.** Subject to Standing Orders 545(1) and 546(1) nothing in this Section shall derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over appointments annually.

See cl. 20 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

**Section 55 Other Officers and Committees**

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**550 Obligatory Appointments.** The Circuit Meeting shall appoint circuit stewards and, where Standing Order 553 applies, a circuit Pastoral Committee, together with any other officers or committees who may for the time being be required by Standing Orders, each with the responsibilities and powers prescribed by the Deed of Union or Standing Orders.

As to circuit stewards see S.O. 530.

See S.O. 410(1)(v) as to circuit representatives to Synod, S.O. 505(1) as to the connexional funds treasurer and S.O. 541 as to the Invitation Committee.

**551 Discretionary Appointments.** (1) The Circuit Meeting may appoint such other officers and committees, and with such responsibilities, as in its judgment are required for the furtherance of the work of the Circuit and for the effective communication with the District and the Conference in areas of special concern such as world mission and social responsibility.

(2) The meeting may delegate to any of its committees any of its powers, except appointments under Standing Order 550 or the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders and the approval of persons for admission as local preachers.

(3) The above powers of delegation are subject, in the case of the meeting’s functions as managing trustees, to the provisions of the Model Trusts and Standing Order 911.

(4) The persons eligible for appointment under this clause are those who are members in the Circuit or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i), (ii) or (iii) of Standing Order 503(1).

**552 Ex-Officio Membership.** Subject to Standing Order 512B(6)(ii) the Superintendent, all ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit, all persons authorised to serve the Church as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733 and appointed to fulfil presbyteral or diaconal duties in the Circuit and the circuit stewards shall, ex officio, be members of and entitled to attend all official meetings (however described) connected with the Circuit, except that circuit stewards shall not be members of the Local Preachers’ Meeting unless they are local preachers.

The Superintendent is separately named because it is possible that they may not be appointed to the Circuit; see S.O. 785(3)(b).

**553 Pastoral Committee.** In ecumenical areas and other Circuits containing local ecumenical partnerships (except where every local ecumenical partnership in the Circuit has a local Pastoral Committee constituted under Standing Order 644(1)),

the Circuit Meeting shall appoint a circuit Pastoral Committee consisting entirely of members of the Methodist Church and comprising the ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit, local lay-pastors appointed under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders, a circuit steward (if any) and not less than six class leaders or pastoral visitors who are members in that or a neighbouring Circuit.

For the functions of this committee see S.O. 644(11)(iii).

## Section 56 Local Preachers

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For disciplinary proceedings involving local preachers see Part 11.

In this Section, note that, as a result of the report of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group to the Conference of 2024 (2024 Agenda, report 50) various functions previously exercised by the Methodist Council are, with effect from 1 September 2024, to be exercised by the Ministries Committee, as to which see Section 31 of Standing Orders.

### **560 Local Preachers' Meeting.** (1) The Local Preachers' Meeting shall consist of:

- (i) the ex-officio members specified in Standing Order 552;
- (iA) the ministers, presbyteral probationers, student presbyters and persons authorised to serve the Church as ministers under Standing Order 733 who are, in each case, eligible under Standing Order 510(1)(ii) to join the Circuit Meeting, whether or not they have elected to do so and, in the case of deacons authorised to serve under Standing Order 733, who have authority to preach under clause (7)(b) thereof;
- (ii) any diaconal probationers and students being eligible to be members of the Circuit Meeting but not previously admitted as local preachers, who shall be entitled to attend but not to vote;
- (iii) all local preachers who are members in the Circuit;
- (iiiA) any local preachers who are employed by the Circuit under Standing Order 570 to perform duties which include preaching or assisting in preaching (who shall be primarily accountable to the Local Preachers' Meeting of the Circuit in which they are employed); and
- (iv) any persons who are for the time being authorised to serve as local preachers in the Circuit under Standing Order 566B(1) or (2).

Cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides that Local Preachers' Meetings shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as the Conference may provide.

For the ministers, probationers etc., who are members of the Circuit Meeting see S.O. 510(1)(i) and (ii).

(2) Persons on trial who are members in the Circuit are expected to attend but they are not entitled to vote. This clause takes effect with any modifications made under Standing Order 564B(2), where it applies. Such persons should normally remain during reports on services, discussions of such reports, and interviews, in order to benefit from the training opportunities afforded, but not when the meeting is considering or reaching any decision affecting the continuation or change of status of any local preacher or person on note or on trial, or any similar decision.

(3) The meeting shall be held at least once in every quarter.

(4) In this Section, unless the context otherwise requires, the word 'preacher' without qualification means a person who is a voting member of the relevant Local Preachers' Meeting.

(5) A Circuit may work together with one or more other Circuits in carrying out the functions given to the meeting and may make joint decisions accordingly, but the final authority of the Circuit Meeting as contained in this Section is not thereby affected.

(6) The meeting should invite others who contribute to worship in the Circuit (for example, church stewards, worship leaders, musicians, those who conduct reader services) to attend the meeting at appropriate times.

**561 Functions.** The meeting shall:

- (i) be an opportunity for all its members to worship together and share fellowship;
- (ii) consider the state of the work of God in the Circuit so far as the role of local preachers and worship are concerned, and in particular communicate to the Superintendent its views on issues of policy affecting the circuit plan of preaching appointments and to the Circuit Meeting its views on circuit policy relating to worship;
- (iii) hold local preachers accountable for their ministry, considering in particular their character, their fidelity to doctrine and their fitness for the work;
- (iv) perform the functions prescribed by Standing Orders 563 to 568 and 680 to 685;
- (v) initiate and oversee a programme of continuing development so that the local preachers and others who contribute to worship in the Circuit may be the better equipped for their work;
- (vi) deal with the business in accordance with any guidelines approved from time to time by the Conference or issued by the Connexional Team.

For the jurisdiction of the meeting over lay employees see S.O. 570(7).

**562 Secretary.** (1) The meeting shall appoint one of its members as its secretary, who shall:

- (i) record decisions, advice and recommendations of each meeting held;
- (ii) carry out such functions in relation to the training and oversight of persons on note and on trial in accordance with guidance issued by the Connexional Team, as the Connexional Team may from time to time require;
- (iii) ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all local preachers (including persons on note or on trial);
- (iv) help members of the meeting to obtain appropriate assistance and support, in conjunction with the Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Trust;
- (v) encourage members of the meeting to support local action and fund-raising for the Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Trust.

The Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Trust was created in 2005 and is the successor body (meeting a wider range of need) to the Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association.

(2) The meeting may appoint an assistant secretary to assist the secretary in such manner as the meeting may determine.

**563 Duties and Rights of Local Preachers.** (1) Preachers are called of God, to be worthy in character, to lead God's people in worship and to preach the gospel. This places duties on, and gives rights to, local preachers.

(2) As to worship, it is the duty of local preachers:

- (i) to lead worship and preach with knowledge, conviction and competence;
- (ii) to preach nothing at variance with our doctrines (the term 'our doctrines' refers to those truths of salvation which are set forth in the Methodist doctrinal standards);
- (iii) to be available for an appropriate number of appointments each quarter, having regard to the situation of the local preacher and of the Circuit;
- (iv) to inform the Superintendent of any occasions on which they cannot be available for appointments on the forthcoming circuit plan;
- (v) to fulfil all appointments given on the circuit plan;
- (vi) if unable to fulfil an appointment, to arrange if possible for a suitable substitute, whilst informing the Superintendent and a church steward of the Local Church concerned, or, where unable through illness or other significant reason to arrange a suitable substitute, to notify this to the Superintendent (or their delegate), who shall then arrange for a suitable substitute and inform a church steward of the Local Church concerned;
- (vii) to take overall responsibility for an act of worship when appointed on the circuit plan;
- (viii) to seek to work collaboratively with others in leading worship.

For the doctrinal standards see cl. 4 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

For the circuit plan see S.O. 521.

(3) As to fellowship and training, it is the duty of local preachers:

- (i) to attend the Local Preachers' Meeting on each occasion (or to tender an apology for absence to the secretary if unable to attend for good reason);
- (ii) to continue to develop in their personal spiritual life, in knowledge and understanding, and in preaching and leading worship;
- (iii) to regularly review their ministry and to participate in a programme of continuing local preacher development which reflects the guidelines annually produced by the Ministries Committee;
- (iv) to attend a class, housegroup, or similar fellowship group if possible;
- (v) to attend an annual Service of Reaffirmation of their call to preach.

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

(5) It is the right of local preachers:

- (i) to retain local preacher status while they remain members of the Methodist Church (this right continues if they are no longer able to lead worship and preach by reason of age or infirmity, but is subject to Sections 113 to 115);
- (ii) upon removal from one Circuit to another, upon production of a copy of the current circuit plan from their former Circuit, to be received in the new Circuit as local preachers;
- (iii) to have the year of their admission as a local preacher recorded by the Circuit.

Sections 113 to 115 of Standing Orders, in Part 11 below, concern disciplinary proceedings.

As to transfers generally see S.O. 055.

**564 Candidates [for local preaching].** Those who wish to train to become local preachers must be and remain members. They must in the first place be recommended to the Local Preachers' Meeting by the Church Council of the Local Church in which they are members, or by a minister, probationer or local preacher present in the meeting. They should, before the meeting, have shared in an interview with the Superintendent, who should also have consulted as necessary with the candidate's Local Church and the presbyter having pastoral charge of that church in such manner as he or she thinks fit.

**564A Persons on Note.** (1) Candidates approved by the meeting shall meet the Church's safeguarding requirements and shall then receive from the Superintendent a written note authorising them to assist a preacher in the conduct of services within the Circuit. The Superintendent shall make them aware of the duties placed on local preachers by Standing Order 563.

(2) Where persons on note are primarily involved in a Circuit or Circuits other than that in which their membership is held, their note may be implemented and their initial

training supervised in that other or one of those other Circuits (as the case requires) by mutual arrangement between the Local Preachers' Meetings of the Circuits concerned.

(2A) *[revoked]*

(3) Those on note shall follow a training programme approved by the [...] **Ministries Committee** in accordance with Standing Order 565 below. They shall be required to make a firm commitment to training and study.

(4) The written note shall be valid for three months and if it is deemed advisable may be renewed for a further such period or periods.

(5) Every person on note shall have a mentor, who must be a preacher, appointed to give oversight. The mentor, or another preacher, should be in charge of every service in which the person on note takes part and the mentor should continue to give oversight during the period on trial.

(6) Reports shall be submitted to the Local Preachers' Meeting by the mentor and any other preacher or preachers who have been present at any service in which the person on note has taken part. All formal reports shall use the report form provided by the Connexional Team. Those who are submitting a formal report to the Local Preachers' Meeting shall discuss the report with the person concerned before it is presented to the Local Preachers' Meeting.

(7) Before persons on note are passed to 'on trial' status by the Local Preachers' Meeting they shall conduct a full service on their own in the presence of two preachers, one of whom may be the mentor. The preachers shall present a report on the service and sermon, on the form provided by the Team, to the meeting. If that report and the report of the local tutor are satisfactory persons on note shall then be advanced by the meeting to the next stage of training, during which they are approved by the meeting to take responsibility for the conduct of worship and preaching and are said to be 'on trial'.

**564B Persons on Trial.** (1) Before persons on trial are finally admitted as local preachers they shall have not less than one nor (subject to clause (3) below) more than five years on trial.

(1A) The Local Preachers' Meeting shall decide each quarter whether each of the persons on trial shall be continued in that status.

(2) Where persons on trial are primarily involved in a Circuit or Circuits other than that in which their membership is held, their training may be supervised in that other or one of those other Circuits (as the case requires) by mutual arrangements between the Local Preachers' Meetings of the Circuits concerned. The arrangements shall specify which Local Preachers' Meeting they are expected to attend.

(2A) *[revoked]*

(3) Applications to extend the period on trial beyond five years must be to the district Policy Committee. Such applications should be granted only in very exceptional circumstances. The Superintendent and the person on trial have the right to be present and to speak to the case.



(4) A person on trial who removes to a new Circuit shall be received as on trial in that Circuit and the Superintendent of the former Circuit shall report progress in the training programme and other relevant information.

As to the training programme see S.O. 565.

(5) For at least the first six months of the period on trial services and sermons should be prepared in consultation with the mentor, who should be present at each service and give a report to the Local Preachers' Meeting. Thereafter, and until the final trial service, persons on trial shall each quarter conduct a service in the presence of at least one preacher, and a brief report of this service shall be presented to the next Local Preachers' Meeting.

For the final trial service see S.O. 566(4)(i).

(6) All reports on services conducted by persons on trial shall be discussed with the person concerned before being presented to the Local Preachers' Meeting.

**564C Local Tutorial Arrangements.** (1) Every Local Preachers' Meeting shall appoint a local tutor, who shall oversee the studies of those on note and on trial in the Circuit and, by arrangement, those on note and on trial in any adjoining Circuits. Such appointments shall be notified to the Connexional Team. Every help possible shall be afforded to those on note and on trial in their studies and training.

(2) Where there are a number of persons on note and on trial the Local Preachers' Meeting may appoint a training sub-group to oversee their studies and receive the reports required under this Standing Order. If a sub-group is so appointed, the Local Preachers' Meeting may agree to receive the report of the sub-group in place of individual reports on each person on note or on trial.

(3) Where a person on note or on trial is undertaking a training programme supervised by a training institution approved for that purpose by the[...] **Ministries Committee**, the Local Preachers' Meeting may agree with the training institution that the institution will provide the mentor, tutor and reports to the meeting required under Standing Orders for or in respect of that person.

**565 Training Programmes.** (1) Persons on trial shall, unless granted exemption under Standing Order 565B below, successfully complete the training programme prescribed by the [...] **Ministries Committee** or an alternative training programme validated in advance by the [...] **Ministries Committee** in accordance with Standing Order 565A.

S.O. 565A lays down the procedure for validation of an alternative course, enabling, where appropriate, approval in advance if a person is seeking to undertake that course. Where a person applies, on the basis of a course already undertaken, for exemption from some or all of the prescribed training course, S.O. 565B applies.

(2) The [...] **committee** may delegate some or all of its responsibilities under this Standing Order to a committee or member of the Connexional Team.

(3) The Circuit is responsible for enabling the reimbursement of local tutors and those on note and on trial for the cost of basic study material and registration fees.

(4) The training programme assessment results of persons on trial shall be reported to the Local Preachers' Meeting.

**565A Validation of Training Programmes.** (1) All applications for validation of a training programme for the purposes of Standing Order 565(1) must be made to a validation panel, to be appointed by the [...] **Ministries Committee**, and shall be made by a person appointed for the purpose by the institution or body seeking validation of the particular training programme.

(2) The application for validation must include full details of course content, learning methods employed and the methods and criteria for assessment.

(3) The validation panel may grant validation if it is satisfied that:

- (i) the training programme meets the [...] **committee's** training specification; and
- (ii) appropriate arrangements have been agreed for the periodic inspection and review of the training programme to ensure it continues to meet the [...] **committee's** training specification.

(4) Validation may be withdrawn if it appears to the panel upon such inspection and review that the [...] **committee's** training specification is not being met. All reasonable steps shall be taken by the panel to assist any person affected by such withdrawal to complete his or her training by other means.

(5) Any institution or body seeking validation for any training programme shall pay [...] the prescribed fee to meet the costs of the validation process (whether or not the application for validation is successful).

An application for validation is to be made where it is proposed, under Standing Order 565(1), that a course other than the prescribed local preachers' training course be approved as suitable to be undertaken instead of that course.

**565B Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning.** It is general policy that the interests of local preaching are best served if all those who wish to become local preachers follow a programme prescribed or validated in advance by the [...] **Ministries Committee**. However, in very exceptional circumstances, for example if another comparable training course has been undertaken and successfully completed, total or partial exemption from the prescribed training programme may be granted by the council at its discretion after consideration of the following material:

- (i) a completed application form, obtained from the Connexional Team;
- (ii) a detailed reasoned statement, approved by the Local Preachers' Meeting, in support of the application;
- (iii) any additional evidence required by the [...] **committee**.

**566 Admission Procedure.** (1) Before persons on trial are recommended for admission as local preachers they must successfully complete two circuit interviews. The first interview shall be held after the person on trial has successfully completed at least half the training programme. The second interview shall be held after the person on trial has successfully completed the entire training programme. In cases where prior

experience and learning have been accredited by the [...] **Ministries Committee** under Standing Order 565B, the timing of the interviews shall be at the discretion of the Local Preachers' Meeting.

(2) The interviews referred to in clause (1) above shall be conducted either by the Superintendent or (at his or her request) by other preachers at the Local Preachers' Meeting. The local tutor or the person's mentor would each be appropriate people to conduct the interviews. For each interview guidelines from the Connexional Team shall be supplied by the circuit Local Preachers' Secretary to the person on trial, the Superintendent and the interviewer.

(3) For the purposes of the first interview persons on trial:

- (i) shall, during the quarter preceding the interview, conduct a full service in the presence of two preachers and a church steward who is not a local preacher, who shall together prepare a report for the meeting, written on the form provided by the Team;
- (ii) shall have the opportunity to share the story of their Christian experience; their call to preach; and any insights, challenges or difficulties experienced during the period on trial to date.

(4) For the purposes of the second interview the person on trial:

- (i) shall, during the quarter preceding the interview, conduct a full service in the presence of two preachers (one of whom should under normal circumstances be a minister) and a church steward who is not a local preacher, who shall together prepare a report for the meeting, written on the form provided by the Connexional Team;
- (ii) shall have the opportunity to speak of his or her growth in knowledge and understanding of the faith, and maturing of Christian experience;
- (iii) must satisfy the meeting that he or she is faithful to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith and to Methodist doctrinal standards;
- (iv) must assure the meeting that he or she will accept and observe the duties of a local preacher as described in Standing Order 563(1)-(4), which may, for this purpose, be read at the meeting.

(5) If, after this second interview, the meeting is satisfied that the person on trial should be admitted as a local preacher it shall so recommend to the Circuit Meeting which, if it agrees, shall approve the person on trial for admission as a local preacher.

(6) After being approved under clause (5) above the person on trial shall be admitted as a local preacher at a public religious service to be arranged by the Circuit Meeting. At that service a letter and Bible signed by the President and Vice-President of the Conference shall be presented to each local preacher so admitted.

(7) Local preachers, before or soon after being admitted, shall be encouraged to proceed to an induction course.

(8) The names of local preachers who are members in the Circuit shall appear in the list of local preachers in the circuit plan with their year of admission as a local preacher.

**566A Preachers and Readers from Other Churches who have become Members.**

(1) Local Preachers' Meetings can recommend to the Circuit Meeting that it approve the admission as local preachers of lay preachers and readers of other churches (including officers of the Salvation Army) who have become members of the Methodist Church, provided the training procedures they have undergone meet the [...] **Ministries Committee's** training specification. Before recommending admission the Local Preachers' Meeting must satisfy itself on the following points:

- (i) the standing of the candidate in the other church;
- (ii) that its training procedure was successfully completed, as to which, if possible, written evidence shall be required;
- (iii) that satisfactory information has been obtained on the circumstances in which the candidate may have ceased to be a preacher in the other church (if that is the case);
- (iv) that the candidate will not preach anything at variance with our doctrines;
- (v) that the candidate satisfies the safeguarding requirements of the Methodist Church;
- (vi) that the candidate is known to other members of the meeting who can support the application to become a local preacher.

(2) Pending a decision of the Circuit Meeting on a recommendation made under clause (1) above candidates may at the discretion of the Local Preachers' Meeting be granted 'on trial' status, but they shall be subject to the requirements of this clause and clauses (1) above and (3) below in place of those of Standing Orders 564A(7), 564B, 565 and 566(1) to (4) above.

(3) In every case there shall be a conversation at the Local Preachers' Meeting conducted by the Superintendent or a preacher appointed by him or her to satisfy the meeting on the points referred to in clause (1) above. In particular the candidate shall have read *A Catechism for the use of the People called Methodists* and this document should form the basis of the conversation.

(4) Any person approved by the Circuit Meeting under clause (1) above shall be admitted as a local preacher at a public religious service to be arranged by the Circuit Meeting and Standing Order 566(6) and (7) above shall apply.

As to lay preachers and readers who do not become members of the Methodist Church see S.O. 566B.

**566B Preachers and Readers of Other Churches.** (1) Where there is a local ecumenical partnership scheme approved by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod any lay preacher or reader of another church participating in the scheme who has not become a member of the Methodist Church may apply to be authorised to serve as a local preacher in accordance with this clause, and in that event the following provisions shall apply:

- (i) the application shall be considered by the Local Preachers' Meeting;
- (ii) the training procedures undergone by the applicant must meet the [...] **Ministries Committee's** training specification;

- (iii) the meeting must be assured that the applicant will not preach anything at variance with our doctrines;
- (iv) the candidate must satisfy the safeguarding requirements of the Methodist Church;
- (v) if satisfied as to (ii), (iii) and (iv) above the meeting may recommend to the Circuit Meeting the acceptance of the application and the Circuit Meeting, if it approves, shall authorise the applicant to serve as a local preacher in the Circuit, subject to and in accordance with this clause;
- (vi) persons so authorised are members of the Local Preachers' Meeting and shall be subject to the duties of a local preacher as set out in Standing Order 563(1)–(4), and their names shall appear in the circuit plan;
- (vii) Part 11, so far as it relates to local preachers, shall apply to such persons, but so as to affect only their status under this clause in relation to the Methodist Church;
- (viii) Standing Order 563(5) shall not apply to such persons and their authorisation in a Circuit shall cease if they remove, or cease to have authority to preach in their own church, or if their church or the Methodist Church ceases to participate in the partnership scheme, but without prejudice to further applications under this clause or clause (2) below.

As to lay preachers and readers of other churches who become members of the Methodist Church see S.O. 566A above. See cl. (2) below for those who may be authorised to serve in circumstances where no partnership scheme exists.

(2) An accredited lay preacher or reader of another church recognised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland who is neither a member of the Methodist Church nor within the scope of clause (1) above, but who is available for regular appointments on a circuit plan, may apply to be authorised to serve as a local preacher.

(3) Where an application is made under clause (2) above, the provisions of clause (1) above apply except that the authorisation of such persons in a Circuit shall cease if they remove, or cease to have authority to preach in their own church, or cease to be available for regular appointments on the circuit plan, but without prejudice to further applications under this clause or clause (1).

As to lay preachers and readers of other churches who become members of the Methodist Church see S.O. 566A above.

**567 Accountability and Review.** (1) Local preachers shall be held accountable to the Local Preachers' Meeting for their ministry, their character, their fidelity to doctrine and their fitness for the work by reference to the respective duties set out in Standing Order 563 above and any further material specified by the Connexional Team.

(2) If a question or concern is raised about the conduct of a local preacher, or if a complaint within the meaning of Part 11 is made about any member of the meeting, the provisions of that Part apply.

(2A) A local preacher found by the meeting to be unable or unwilling to fulfil the duties set out in Standing Order 563 shall not be planned to preach. Any local preachers unavailable for that reason to be planned shall be identified in the circuit plan, either by a mark in the full list of preachers or in a separate list. The meeting shall regularly review their status in that regard.

(3) Subject to clause (2) above, if a question or concern is raised about the fidelity to doctrine of a local preacher or his or her fitness for the work (including his or her calling, commitment to fulfil his or her duties or his or her competence as a local preacher) the meeting shall follow the guidelines for such circumstances produced by the Connexional Team. The guidelines shall include guidance on the circumstances in which Part 11 applies and on the operation of clause (2A) above.

(4) Questions or concerns about the fidelity to doctrine of a person on note or on trial or his or her fitness for the work (including the matters specified in clause (3) above) shall be addressed by the meeting as part of the training process.

**568 Reinstatement.** (1) Unless Standing Order 761(14) applies, a former local preacher who is a member may be reinstated as a local preacher with the approval of the Circuit Meeting of the Circuit in which he or she is a member on the recommendation of the Local Preachers' Meeting.

S.O. 761(14) concerns the reinstatement as local preachers of former presbyters and deacons.

(2) Before recommending reinstatement the meeting shall:

- (i) carefully consider the circumstances in which the applicant ceased to be a local preacher and in all cases where an applicant ceased to be a local preacher as a result of a decision of a connexional Discipline Committee or Appeal Committee or the Conference under Part 11 or any previous Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline, the Chair of the relevant District or the Secretary of the Conference (as the case may require) shall be consulted before the applicant is reinstated;
- (ii) make such enquiries as it thinks fit;
- (iii) if the applicant was formerly a local preacher in another Circuit, obtain information, if possible in writing, from the current Superintendent of that Circuit;
- (iv) conduct such examination of the applicant as it thinks fit;
- (v) require such refresher study as it deems necessary.

(3) Pending a decision of the Circuit Meeting applicants may at the discretion of the Local Preachers' Meeting be granted 'on trial' status, but they shall be subject to the requirements of this clause in place of those of Standing Orders 564A(7), 564B, 565, and 566(1)–(4).

(4) Persons formerly on note or on trial who are members may be reinstated to their former status by the Local Preachers' Meeting after enquiry and examination similar to that in clause (2) above.

**569 Services not led by a Presbyter or Local Preacher.** (1) A service described on the preaching plan by the words 'Local Arrangements' or any similar expression shall be arranged by church stewards and led by persons from the local congregation and shall not normally include a preaching element. Local preachers and worship leaders may be invited to take part in such a service but are neither required nor expected to do so and are free to decline any request to participate.

(2) Those responsible for a local arrangements service by and for a particular group (such as children, young people, elderly people or those with special educational needs) shall receive encouragement and guidance from persons working with the group and an appropriate member of the Local Preachers' Meeting. The service should enable members of the group to discover and develop creative and culturally appropriate ways for them to meet with God in worship.

## Section 56A Local Lay-Pastors

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**56A0 The Office of Local Lay-Pastor.** (1) Circuits may appoint lay persons to the office of local lay-pastor in a Local Church or Churches in accordance with the requirements of Standing Order 56A1, and in this Section “the relevant Local Church” means the Local Church or Churches to which the appointment relates.

(2) The duties of a local lay-pastor shall be:

- (i) to work under the oversight of the presbyter exercising pastoral charge in the relevant Local Church;
- (ii) to undertake such specific pastoral work as is agreed when the initial appointment is made or may subsequently be agreed between the Circuit Meeting and the local lay-pastor;
- (iii) to exercise leadership in relation to other office-holders, volunteers and workers (including class leaders and pastoral visitors) who are exercising pastoral care in the context of the relevant Local Church; and
- (iv) to share pastoral responsibility with those mentioned in head (iii) above and with the presbyter exercising pastoral charge, between whom and the local lay-pastor there shall be appropriate mutual consultation on all matters concerning the relevant Local Churches.

(3) In undertaking their office, local lay-pastors shall exercise a form of ministry complementary to but distinct from the ministries of presbyters, deacons and other lay officers in enabling the Church’s mission for the sake of the world. They shall provide a focused and recognised presence among a congregation or gathered community and in the wider community. They shall care for, enable, lead and represent the relevant Local Church, and shall represent the wider Church to it. They shall not by virtue of this office be authorised to preach or lead worship, preside at the Lord’s Supper, or administer baptism.

(4) Any work (however described) the duties of which substantially consist of the duties set out in clause (2) above shall be deemed to constitute the office of local lay-pastor and the provisions of this Section shall apply to the office and any holder of it.

(5) Those who undertake this office may do so full-time or part-time, and in a voluntary capacity or as a paid employee. Where the office-holder is also a paid employee the provisions of clauses 2(c), (e), (3) and (4) of Standing Order 570 and any additional connexional requirements and guidance shall apply in addition to the provisions of this Section.



(6) Any person appointed under this Section who is a local preacher or for whom preaching or assisting in preaching is part of their terms of appointment within the Circuit shall for such preaching be subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Preachers' Meeting of that Circuit. The name of any such person who is not a local preacher shall appear on the circuit plan, but not among the names of the preachers.

**56A1 Appointment.** (1) Those who are appointed to this office shall be lay members of the Methodist Church.

Local lay-pastors must be lay members of the Methodist Church, but their membership does not have to be held in the churches of the circuit in which their appointment is located. A complaint may be brought under Part 11 of Standing Orders regarding a local lay-pastor's conduct in that role (whether employed or serving in a voluntary capacity), as to which see S.O. 1120(7).

(2) Appointment shall be authorised by the Circuit Meeting for an initial period not exceeding five years in accordance with the requirements of these Standing Orders and following any connexional requirements and guidance, to which end the District Policy Committee shall monitor and support the Circuit's processes for the first five years after the Circuit first begins to appoint local lay-pastors.

(3) Before deciding to undertake a local lay-pastor recruitment and appointment process, and in any case where the stationing of ministers in the Circuit is under consideration, the Circuit Meeting shall consider the needs and opportunities in the Circuit and its mission in the world and develop a model for its future use of ministries. When developing that model the Circuit Meeting shall consider specifically whether it should include the appointment of one or more local lay-pastors in the light of the description of that office in Standing Order 56A0. If the model includes such an appointment, the Circuit Meeting must also arrange for that appointment to be reviewed whenever the stationing of ministers in the Circuit is considered subsequently and in any event no later than five years after the date of any appointment to this office.

(4) Where the model adopted requires the appointment of one or more persons who will exercise the office of local lay-pastor, the Circuit Meeting shall:

- (i) approve a written description for each such appointment which shall clarify the parameters and expectations of the appointment in accordance with connexional requirements and guidance and ensure that the agreed number of hours to be worked include adequate time for preparation, training, administration, management and support as well as for the work proposed to be undertaken;
- (ii) identify in relation to each such appointment by reference to competencies approved by the Ministries Committee under Standing Order 56A2(1) the initial competencies which must be possessed by any applicant for appointment and prepare a written statement of those competencies; and
- (iii) agree, following connexional requirements and guidance, the proposed arrangements for the support, line management and review of the local lay-pastor in each such appointment, which shall include identifying a line manager.

(5) (a) In the light of the documents produced pursuant to clause (4) above, the Circuit shall devise an open recruitment and appointment process.

(b) The Chair of the District shall be notified of the meeting of the selection committee, interview panel or other body responsible for selection, and shall have the right, personally or by a representative, to attend as a member.

(c) When the process has been completed and a proposed appointee has been identified, the Circuit Meeting shall issue a provisional licence for that person to serve as a local lay-pastor for a probationary period of six months.

(d) If it is judged by the circuit leadership team or other body appointed by the Circuit Meeting to make such a judgment that the probationary period has been undertaken satisfactorily and the initial training specified in Standing Order 56A2(2) below has been completed successfully, the Circuit Meeting shall confirm the licence for a period no longer than five years from the start of the probationary period but subject to the further provisions of Standing Order 56A4.

(6) After the probationary period the office-holder's performance shall be kept under review under Standing Order 56A3(2) until the Circuit has reviewed its model of mission and ministries as set out in clause (3) above.

(7) The start of an appointment shall normally be marked by an appropriate form of commissioning service.

**56A2 Training.** (1) The Ministries Committee shall approve generic competencies for both early and later stages of exercising the office of local lay-pastor. It shall also approve a training pathway for those who exercise it, and shall ensure that connexional training records are kept in accordance with clause (3) below.

(2) Training shall consist of:

- (i) initial connexional core training in Methodist identity, issues of safeguarding and boundaries, pastoral care and theology;
- (ii) initial specific training approved by the Ministries Committee after consultation with the particular Circuit and in the light of the prior knowledge and experience of the local lay-pastor to ensure that the person concerned is equipped for the particular appointment; and
- (iii) continuing development and training through programmes approved by the Ministries Committee.

(3) The Ministries Committee shall ensure that for each local lay-pastor a connexional training record is created and kept up to date, listing all additional training and engagement in supervision (including both supervision as part of line management and reflective supervision) after that person has completed the core training. Local lay-pastors will be expected at least annually to demonstrate that they have engaged in some continuing development and have kept their supervision record up to date. If the record does not show that that expectation has been met within the past year and the person subsequently wishes to undertake the office of local lay-pastor in a new appointment then further training requirements shall be identified and a programme for meeting them drawn up.

**56A3 Support and Accountability.** (1) Overall responsibility for the initial appointment, support and line management of the local lay-pastor shall lie with the relevant Circuit Meeting. In fulfilling those tasks the meeting shall follow connexional requirements and guidance and may share resources with other Circuits in its own or neighbouring Districts, and where available draw on any connexional resources.

(2) The local lay-pastor's progress in development and training, needs and hopes for continuing development and training, and performance of the duties of the office shall be kept under review in accordance with the arrangements initially agreed or as subsequently varied (if at all).

**56A4 Termination of Appointment.** (1) Whenever the Circuit has reviewed its overall consideration of mission and ministries as required by Standing Order 56A1(3) it shall proceed in accordance with connexional requirements and guidance to review each particular appointment of a local lay-pastor to determine:

- (i) whether there is a continuing need for such an appointment in its original or some revised form; and
- (ii) if so whether it is appropriate to issue a revised licence for the current appointee to continue in such a role.

(2) An appointment may be terminated by procedures that are in accordance with connexional requirements and guidance at the end of the probationary period referred to in Standing Order 56A1(5), or after any review of the model of ministry in the circuit conducted under Standing Order 56A1(3), or, if judged necessary by the Circuit Meeting, at some other time. In all cases termination shall be on one or more of the following grounds:

- (i) the post is judged to be redundant following the review of the Circuit's mission and its future use of ministries;
- (ii) the appointee has reached the end of the relevant period of licence and it is not judged that there are exceptional circumstances requiring the issue of a further licence;
- (iii) the appointee has not completed the probationary period successfully;
- (iv) the appointee has not completed required training successfully;
- (v) the appointee has not developed the necessary competencies or engaged in continuing development and training or supervision;
- (vi) the appointee is judged through the appropriate procedures for that case as specified in connexional requirements and guidance to have engaged in conduct which warrants termination of the appointment.

**Section 57 Lay Employment**

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The insertion of para. 16(1)(p) in the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) in 2020 means that managing trustees in England and Wales may now be employed by their managing trustee body without the need for Charity Commission consent, provided any conflicts of interest are managed appropriately. In other jurisdictions restrictions on employing trustees may apply, and the consent of the relevant charity regulator may be required. As to conflicts of interest, see S.O. 019A. As to employees being trustees, see para. 2(2) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

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

**570 Lay Employees.** (1) (a)–(c) [*revoked*]

(d) Employing bodies are encouraged to devise appropriate ways in which lay people may be employed in the light of a review of the mission policy in the Local Churches, the Circuit or the District and an analysis of their need for lay and ordained staff as part of the response of the whole people of God to its mission. The employing bodies shall ensure that it is clear how each employee will relate to any existing or expected staff team on appointment. Evidence of this shall be included in the scheme submitted for approval under Standing Order 575, except that where the review leads to a proposal that a local lay-pastor should be appointed, the provisions of Section 56A should be followed.

(e) [*revoked*]

(2) (a) Any such appointment must be by the District Trustees (in the case of a district appointment), the Circuit Meeting (in the case of a circuit appointment) or the Church Council (in the case of a local church appointment) or their equivalents for Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

(b) A proposed appointment by a Local Church shall be submitted to the Circuit Meeting for approval and a proposal from a Circuit or District shall be submitted to the District Policy Committee for approval. No appointment shall be made until the required approval has been received.

(c) Appointments made under this Standing Order shall, where Standing Order 438A applies, comply with its provisions and obtain the prior approval of the district Lay Employment Sub-committee under that Standing Order.

(d) A Circuit Meeting may appoint a person to provide liaison between the district Lay Employment Sub-committee and the employing bodies within the Circuit so as to co-ordinate documentation and promote good employment practice throughout the Circuit.

(e) The District Chair shall be notified by the employing body of all appointments that include work of a pastoral, evangelistic, children’s or youth work nature.

(3) (a) Employing bodies preparing to recruit for appointment shall:

- (i) prepare an appropriate job description and person specification;
- (ii) prepare a contract of employment;
- (iii) give details of management and support arrangements, provision for training and working hours;
- (iv) state in writing that any living accommodation provided will be occupied only on the standard conditions of occupancy published under Standing Order 438A(3)(iii) or on other terms specifically approved in writing by the Connexional Team member authorised so to approve;

The documents shall be in accordance with any relevant guidelines from the Connexional Team and shall be sent to the District Lay Employment Sub-committee prior to advertisement.

(b) Post titles for appointments shall reflect the nature of the work that is being undertaken.

(c) Employing bodies shall always advertise, either locally or more widely, and interview candidates before making an appointment. These processes shall be carried out in accordance with such guidelines as shall be issued from time to time by the Connexional Team. The District Lay Employment Secretary shall be notified of the successful candidate.

(4) Employing bodies shall have regard to advice and guidance issued from time to time by the Connexional Team as to salary arrangements.

(5) For posts where it is deemed necessary for the employee to be a member of a Christian Church and the employee is not a member of the Methodist Church, then the requirements of clause (6) below must be met.

(6) If the person proposed is not a member of the Methodist Church, then he or she:

- (i) must be a practising member in good standing of another Christian church (and the employing body must be satisfied of that fact by appropriate evidence); and
- (ii) must have given undertakings that during the currency of the appointment he or she will not do or say anything contrary to the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church and will abide by its discipline;

and the employing body shall include the evidence of compliance with this clause in the scheme submitted for approval under Standing Order 575.

(7) Any person appointed under this Standing Order who is a local preacher and for whom preaching or assisting in preaching is part of their terms of employment within the Circuit shall for such preaching be subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Preachers' Meeting of that Circuit. The name of any such person who is not a local preacher shall appear on the circuit plan, but not among the names of the preachers.

(8) If appropriate, a service shall be held at the start of the appointment, to commission the post holder.

(9) Any person appointed under this Standing Order shall act under the direction and pastoral care of the committee appointed for the purpose by the relevant employing body. The committee may appoint one of its members as supervisor to oversee day to

day matters. It shall liaise with the Superintendent (in the case of circuit or local church employees) or the district Chair (in the case of district employees).

For the Commissioning service, see *Methodist Worship Book* p. 336. The Conference of 2003 authorised for use the text of a service for the Commissioning of Evangelists, available from Methodist Publishing.

**571–573** *[revoked]*

**574 Chair's Rights.** When an appointment is to be made under Standing Order 570, the Chair of the District shall be notified of the meeting of the selection committee, interview panel or other body responsible for selection, and shall have the right, personally or by a representative, to attend as a member.

**575 Schemes of Appointment.** (1) This Standing Order applies to all paid appointments made by a District, Circuit, Local Church or Local Ecumenical Partnership under Standing Order 570.

(2) In this Standing Order 'the sub-committee' means the district Lay Employment Sub-committee.

(3) The sub-committee shall receive from the employing body the material specified in Standing Order 570(3)(a).

(4) Before the documents are approved, the sub-committee shall be satisfied that the provisions of Standing Order 570 are being complied with and that the agreed number of hours to be worked include adequate time for preparation, training, administration, management and support as well as for the work proposed to be undertaken.

(5) Posts which include pastoral work, evangelism, youth work and children's work shall be notified to the Connexional Team by the employing body so that appropriate training and good practice in these areas can be offered.

(6)–(9) *[revoked]*

(10) The provisions of this Standing Order are additional to and not in place of those of Standing Order 438A, which must be complied with in every case to which it applies.

## Section 58 Circuits with Modified Constitutions

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Section 58 was adopted by the Conference in 2011.

### 580 Definitions. In this Section:

- (i) an 'adoption resolution' means a resolution for the adoption of this Section passed in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 581 below;
- (ii) a 'Section 58 Circuit' means a Circuit in respect of which an adoption resolution is in force;
- (iii) a 'modified constitution', in relation to any Section 58 Circuit, means the constitution by which the affairs of that Circuit are governed.

**581 Adoption resolutions.** (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, a Circuit may at any Circuit Meeting pass a resolution that this Section shall apply to that Circuit, **or to a Circuit formed by amalgamation under [...] Standing Order 501 of which it will become a part**, with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify and that the affairs of the Circuit shall thereafter be governed by a modified constitution in the form of a draft identified in the resolution.

(2) A resolution under clause (1) above must be brought by two members of the Circuit Meeting who are

- (i) ministers appointed to the Circuit; or
- (ii) circuit stewards; or
- (iii) other lay persons appointed by the Circuit Meeting to give leadership within the Circuit in accordance with Standing Order 515(2).

Notice of the resolution must be given to all members of the Circuit Meeting no later than **two [...]** months before the date of the Circuit Meeting at which the resolution is to be debated. A copy of the draft modified constitution must be supplied free of charge to any member of the Circuit Meeting who requests one.

### (3) **[revoked]**

(4) In the debate on a resolution under clause (1) above, no proposal for the amendment of the draft modified constitution shall be considered unless written notice of the proposed amendment has been given to the Circuit Meeting Secretary no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant Circuit Meeting, unless that Circuit Meeting otherwise agrees. **If the draft modified constitution relates to a Circuit to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 501, such notice must be given to the secretaries of the relevant Circuit Meetings involved no later than 14 days before the date of the relevant**

**Circuit Meeting, unless the Circuit Meetings otherwise agree.**

(5) A resolution under clause (1) above is only valid if it is passed by three quarters of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting **or [...] if the draft modified constitution relates to a Circuit to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 501 [...] above, the resolution is only valid if it is passed by [...] three quarters** of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting of each Circuit concerned and the terms of the draft modified constitution identified by the resolution passed by each Circuit are identical.

(6) A resolution under clause (1) above will only take effect according to its terms if the [...] district Policy Committee [...] **on the advice of** the Secretary of the Conference confirms before the relevant 1st September that the draft modified constitution complies with the requirements of this Section. Such confirmation may be given prior to the passing of the resolution **by the Circuit Meeting, or if the draft modified constitution relates to a Circuit to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 501 by each Circuit Meeting concerned**, but if the draft modified constitution is passed in an amended form after confirmation has been given, a further confirmation must be obtained. If no such confirmation has been given before the relevant 1st September, the resolution will not take effect until 1st September next following such confirmation.

**(7) (a) The district Policy Committee shall report to the Synod and to the Conference Office the passing of any resolution under clause (1) above which relates to an existing Circuit and the date on which, subject to the provisions of clause (6) above, the modified constitution is to take effect.**

**(b) If a draft modified constitution [...] relates to a Circuit to be formed by amalgamation under Standing Order 501, the Synod, when making its recommendation to the Conference under that Standing Order, shall also state whether or not it approves the draft modified constitution and the Conference shall consider the draft amended constitution in making any directions or passing any resolutions in connection with the proposed amalgamation. If the Conference decides to give effect to the proposed amalgamation, the relevant resolution under clause (1), if validly passed under clause (5), will take effect on the date specified in the resolution (or the later date resulting from the operation of clause (6)) only if that date is approved by the Conference and otherwise will take effect on the alternative date which the Conference specifies. [...] The form in which the constitution and enumeration of the Circuits is set out pursuant to Standing Order 501(1) shall reflect [...] the amalgamation from the date so approved or specified.**

**582 Termination of effect of adoption resolutions.** (1) Subject to the further provisions of this Section, the Circuit Meeting of a Section 58 Circuit may at any time pass a resolution that with effect from the beginning of such connexional year as the resolution may specify this Section shall cease to have effect in relation to that Circuit, **after which the affairs of the former Section 58 Circuit will be governed by the provisions of Part 5 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time.**

(2) The requirements of clause (2) of Standing Order 581 above shall apply to



determine by which officers or members of the Circuit a resolution under clause (1) above may be moved and what period of notice of such a resolution must be given, unless the modified constitution of the Section 58 Circuit (whether as originally agreed or as amended in accordance with Standing Order 583 below) contains more stringent requirements. Any such resolution is only valid if it is passed by three quarters of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting.

(3) **Where [...]** the modified constitution of a Section 58 Circuit **relates to a Circuit** created in accordance with Standing Order 581(7) [...], the coming into force of a resolution under clause (1) above will not reconstitute **any of the Circuits** which existed prior to the coming into force of the adoption resolutions leading to the creation of that Circuit, **and the provisions of Standing Order 501 would again need to be applied to reconstitute any of the previous Circuits if desired [...].**

(4) **[revoked]**

**583 Amendment of modified constitutions.** (1) The modified constitution of a Section 58 Circuit may be amended by a resolution passed by a simple majority of those present and voting at the relevant Circuit Meeting, but the requirements of clause (2) of Standing Order 581 shall apply to determine by which officers or members of the Circuit such a resolution may be moved and what period of notice of such a resolution must be given.

(2) The procedure specified under clause (1) above must include a provision that any amendment to the modified constitution will not come into force until **the district Policy Committee on the advice of** the Secretary of the Conference has confirmed that the modified constitution in its amended form will continue to comply with this Section.

**584 Provisions relating to modified constitutions.** (1) Nothing in this Section affects the provisions of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts ('the overriding legislation') and a modified constitution must conform to the requirements of the overriding legislation.

For the Methodist Church Act 1976 see Vol. 1 p. 2, for the Deed of Union Book II, Part 1 and for the Model Trusts Book II, Part 2.

(2) A modified constitution may not contain provisions contrary to the following provisions:

- (i) Standing Order 500 (nature and purposes of a Circuit)
- (ii) Standing Order 502 (chairing, form and notice of meetings)
- (iii) Standing Order 503 (eligibility for appointment)
- (iv) Standing Order 504 (duration of appointments)
- (v) Standing Order 505 (connexional funds)
- (vi) Standing Order 514(2) (list of members of the Circuit Meeting)
- (vii) Standing Order 515 (responsibilities)
- (viii) Standing Order 516 (memorials)
- (ix) Standing Order 517 (procedure at the Circuit Meeting)
- (x) Standing Order 518 (irregularities)
- (xi) Section 52 (Circuit ministry)

- (xii) Section 54 (Circuit invitations and appointments)
- (xiii) Standing Order 550 (obligatory appointments)
- (xiv) Standing Order 552 (ex-officio membership)
- (xv) Section 56 (local preachers)
- (xvi) Standing Order 574 (Chair's rights on appointment of lay employee)

(3) While an adoption resolution is in force the provisions of Part 5 (other than this Section) as amended from time to time shall continue to apply to the relevant Section 58 Circuit except as otherwise provided by the Circuit's modified constitution.

(4) A modified constitution may contain provisions varying the provisions of Standing Order 510 (constitution of the Circuit Meeting), but the spirit of Standing Order 513 shall be observed and any such modification shall contain provisions to ensure that:

- (i) a meeting is clearly designated as the Circuit Meeting for the purposes of clause 40 of the Deed of Union, sub-paragraph 2(1) of the Model Trusts, Section 54 of Standing Orders and Standing Orders 553 and 566 to 566B and for any other purpose for which a Methodist Circuit Meeting may be required;
- (ii) the Local Churches in the Circuit are represented on the Circuit Meeting either through each Local Church being separately represented by such person or persons as the modified constitution may provide or through all the Local Churches being constituent members of and separately represented on groups of Local Churches that are so represented;
- (iii) where the Local Churches are not separately represented on the Circuit Meeting, each Church Council shall have the right to make representations to the Circuit Meeting about any proposal that would directly affect its financial or other resources before the decision on that proposal is made, or to submit a resolution to that meeting on any other matter relevant to the work of the Circuit and attend the meeting to present and speak to the resolution.

(5) Subject to clause (2) above, a modified constitution may contain such other provisions varying the provisions of Part 5 as may be agreed, but in that event shall also include provisions to secure the effective carrying out within the Section 58 Circuit of the areas of work covered by the provisions so varied, taking into account also the need to comply with any other Standing Orders applicable to such work and the need to ensure consistent and fair treatment of all people across the Connexion.

(6) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that all the functions given by the overriding legislation (as defined in Standing Order 584(1) above) and Standing Orders to the Circuit Meeting as managing trustees shall be undertaken by that meeting, and that as respects all other such functions given by the overriding legislation to the Circuit Meeting there is an identified body responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever name that body or (if more than one) those bodies may be known.

(7) A modified constitution shall contain provisions to ensure that as respects all the functions given by the overriding legislation and Standing Orders to an officer or the officers of the Circuit there is an identified individual or there are identified individuals

responsible for the performance of each of those functions, by whatever title that individual or (if more than one) those individuals may be known.

(8) Subject to the foregoing provisions of this Section, a modified constitution may make such provision as the Circuit Meeting approves with regard to:

- (i) the functions, powers, duties and membership of the committees or other bodies constituted to carry out the purposes of the Section 58 Circuit;
- (ii) the functions, powers, duties and terms of employment (if applicable) of the officers of the Circuit.



## Part 6 The Local Churches

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For the meaning of the expression 'Local Church' see cl. 1(xv) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) as applied by S.O. 003(vii). For exceptions see S.O. 605A, 612 and 942. As to a joint Local Church in Wales Synod Cymru, see S.O. 498.

## Section 60 Principles and General Provisions

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The provisions of S.O. 502 for the chairing, form and notice of all official meetings apply to Local Churches as well as to Circuits.

**600 The Nature of the Local Church.** (1) The Church exists to exercise the whole ministry of Christ. The Local Church, with its membership and larger church community, exercises this ministry where it is and shares in the wider ministry of the Church in the world. In this one ministry worship, fellowship, pastoral care, mission and service are essential elements. Administration and training enable their fulfilment. In the Methodist Church these various tasks are undertaken by the Local Church, through its Church Council and committees, in union with the ministry of the Circuit of which it is a constituent. It is represented in the Circuit Meeting and represents it locally. It engages in ecumenical work including, where appropriate, the support of ecumenical Housing Associations.

For the meaning of the expression 'Local Church' see cl. 1(xv) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) as applied by S.O. 003(vii). For exceptions see S.O. 605A, 612 and 942. As to a joint Local Church in Wales Synod Cymru see S.O. 498.

As to the purposes of the Local Church see also S.O. 650(6).

(2) *[revoked]*

**601 Its Size.** (1) If a church is too small, by itself, to fulfil its functions it is encouraged to seek association with its neighbours for the discharge together of the things that cannot be attempted by one church alone.

See also S.O. 605A, 612, 613(4).

(2) The minimum number of members for a self-governing church in the terms of Standing Orders 605 and 605A is set at a low figure to meet the need of sparsely populated areas; in general it is to be desired that much larger numbers be achieved.

**602 Its Government.** In the government of the Local Church the several responsibilities must be exercised without the loss of the unity of the one ministry. The Church Council is constituted to unite those who hold responsibility in the church in one working community. It has the authority to take decisions for the church and to

manage its affairs to this same end. The General Church Meeting has a responsibility to consider the whole ministry of the church and every part of it and in making appointments to ensure the co-operation of the whole church in that ministry. This requires a proper representation of all the diversities present in the Local Church, including those who are newcomers to it.

**603 The Church Council.** The Church Council has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church, including the management of its property. Aims and methods, the determination and pursuit of policy and the deployment of available resources are its proper responsibility. In many cases it will appoint committees which will have authority, in their own areas of responsibility, to initiate action, co-ordinate the work done in the church, advise the Church Council and report to it, being subject to its authority and oversight.

For the constitution and specific functions of the Church Council see Section 61.

**604 The Committees.** The appointment of committees or officers is dictated by the need to express the variety of function in the ministry of the Local Church. The whole church family of all ages, whether members of the Church or not, needs pastoral care, worship, fellowship, training and opportunities for service. The church has a responsibility for its neighbourhood, involving evangelism, service, participation in the life of the community and co-operation with statutory, private sector and voluntary agencies serving human needs; where possible it engages in these activities ecumenically. The church is committed to the whole world, in service and mission, in prayer and giving and the help of those in need, at home and overseas. In the proper care of its property the church has to ensure that its work is neither hindered by inadequate or unworthy buildings nor embarrassed by the support of unnecessary ones, while its proper stewardship of finance means the right raising of money and the right spending of it, so that the one is seen as an invitation to Christian commitment and the other as an opportunity for real choice in the life of the Church.

See Section 64.

**605 Formation.** (1) No new Local Church shall be formed, nor former church reconstituted, having less than twelve persons who are locally resident and will either be members of that church or be actively committed to its life as ministers not in the active work. Any such person who is not a minister must be a member of an existing Local Church or in another Methodist Connexion, or must be a candidate for membership who has successfully completed training.

(2) *[revoked]*

(3) For the purpose of clause (1) and of Standing Order 605A(1) a person is locally resident if resident in such a place that the Local Church in question is a natural centre for worship or fellowship.

(4) When the requirements of clause (1) above are met, and the Circuit Meeting of the Circuit in which the proposed Local Church will be located is also satisfied that suitable arrangements are in place or can be made for its worship, the Circuit Meeting may by

resolution form it, and those persons within clause (1) above who can be transferred as members shall thereby be transferred to the new church.

(5) Upon forming a new church under clause (4) above the Circuit Meeting shall have power to, and shall, despite any conflicting powers of appointment in Section 61, 62 or 63, appoint its first Church Council, with a membership complying with Standing Order 610 or 612(1), as the case may be.

(6) That Church Council shall forthwith consider under clause 8, (b) and (e)(ii), of the Deed of Union and Standing Order 050(4) and 051(3) the admission of any candidates for membership, and if thought fit approve.

(7) It shall continue in office only until the new church can, by the ordinary procedures and through the ordinary appointing bodies, make the appointments necessary for the formation of a normal Church Council.

### **605A Cessation and Merger.**

In response to a review of local church trusteeship and the minimum size for a Local Church, this S.O. 605A was adopted by the Conference of 2021 as a new Standing Order. See Conference Report 30 (2021): *Oversight and Trusteeship*. For guidance on applying S.O.605A in practice see Guidance on church mergers and amalgamations on the Methodist Church website.

All changes to Local Church structures (whether by closure or merger) should be notified to the Connexional Team to enable the central database to be updated.

(1) When, in any Local Church, the number of locally resident persons who are members or are actively committed to its life as ministers not in the active work falls below twelve, and so continues for four successive quarters, that church shall cease to be entitled to be recognised as a Local Church and the Circuit Meeting shall at its next meeting close it and transfer any remaining members to another designated Local Church in that or (by agreement with the other Circuit Meeting) another Circuit.

For the meaning of 'locally resident' see S.O. 605(3).

This 'closure' or cessation of the Local Church (i.e. its membership) should be clearly distinguished from closure of its chapel, which is an entirely separate matter, and may or may not be happening. For closure of chapels see S.O. 943.

The reference to 'remaining' members recognises that when cessation under this provision is imminent some members may choose to be transferred to a Local Church other than that designated.

See also S.O. 612.

(2) Whether or not clause (1) above would or might otherwise apply any Local Church may, under a scheme agreed between its Church Council, the Church Councils of any other Local Churches involved and their Circuit Meeting or Circuit Meetings, merge with one or more other Local Churches to form a single Local Church consisting of all the members of the constituent former churches. Such a scheme shall come into effect when adopted by resolutions of all those bodies.

Such a scheme may take a variety of forms. In particular it may provide for the church formed by the merger to continue to worship in one or more of the existing chapels, and if more than one the scheme will in that respect be similar to one under S.O. 942(1). If any existing chapels are closed then (although it need not be formally provided for in the scheme) members who formerly worshipped there may still wish to meet from time to time for consultation, fellowship, worship or other purposes at some suitable location. See Guidance on church mergers and amalgamations on the Methodist Church website.

For closure of chapels see S.O. 943.



(3) Where possible the merger shall be effected by the transfer to one of the constituent former churches (which may be suitably renamed) of the members of all the others, in which case the transferee church shall be one whose chapel, whether existing or new, continues to be in regular use for worship.

It is also desirable that the transferee church shall, where that is possible and is compatible with other requirements, be one already registered as a charity under any applicable legislation.

(4) Where clause (1) or (2) above applies the provisions of the following clauses shall have effect, and in them “the new church” means the transferee church under clause (1) or the merged church under clause (2)

(5) Each former church shall retain its pastoral identity for so long as is deemed appropriate, and in any event for so long as its chapel continues to be in regular use for worship, by the continuation of its constituent Class or Classes under their leaders or pastoral visitors and in other appropriate ways.

(6) The members of full age of the Church Council of the new church shall, in accordance with Standing Orders 940 and 941, exercise their responsibilities as managing trustees of all its chapels and other local property and the Church Council and church treasurer shall exercise their responsibilities for all the finances of the new church, but consideration shall be given to the delegation of other specified functions to bodies representing the members of one or more of the constituent former churches, in particular where more chapels than one continue to be in regular use for worship, and where appropriate provision shall be made for such delegation in the scheme agreed under clause (2) above or by the Church Council itself.

(7) In electing church stewards the General Church Meeting of the new church shall take into account the scope for representation across the membership of former churches, and in particular the desirability of there being at least one steward from each chapel.

As to the appointment of church stewards generally, see S.O. 632.

(8) The provision of opportunity for public worship for all the members of the new church shall be kept under review by the Circuit Meeting which, in deciding whether or how often to sustain services in each chapel, shall take into consideration the possibilities of growth in the area, the ecumenical situation, the sufficiency of numbers to form a worshipping congregation, facilities for travel and the stewardship of the resources of the Circuit and of the services of preachers.

**606 Eligibility for Appointment.** (1) The provisions as to eligibility for appointment to any office or membership of any official meeting, committee or other body (however described) in the Local Church shall be those set out in relation to the office or body in question, and may incorporate by reference one or more of the following categories of persons:

- (i) ministers, probationers and other persons (including those authorised to serve as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733) who are stationed in the Circuit in accordance with clauses (3) and (4) of Standing Order 785 and are active in the life and work of the Local Church, so far as not otherwise eligible;

- (ii) where there is a local ecumenical partnership approved by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod, and subject to Standing Order 010, members of any communion participating in the partnership;
- (iii) subject to Standing Order 010, persons named on the community roll of the Local Church.

S.O. 010(1) prescribes the doctrinal qualification for office in the Methodist Church and the remainder of S.O. 010 deals with disqualification from appointment on the basis of convictions or cautions in relation to the criminal offences specified there.

(2) In a duly constituted local ecumenical partnership having a Church Council constituted in accordance with Standing Order 611(1) eligibility for office or for membership of official meetings, committees or other bodies connected with the partnership shall, subject to Standing Orders 611, 630(1) and 644, but notwithstanding any other provisions of Standing Orders, be governed by the constitution of the partnership, so far as it makes provision for such matters.

**607 Duration of Appointments.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 611A(6)(iii) and to clauses (2) and (5) below all appointments and elections connected with the Local Church shall unless otherwise prescribed by Standing Orders be for one year and take effect from the date specified in the resolution of appointment.

(2) Subject to Standing Order 632(3), if a casual vacancy occurs the meeting with authority to appoint shall fill the vacancy with immediate effect for the remainder of the term of the appointment vacated.

S.O. 632(3) concerns casual vacancies among the church stewards.

(3) Subject to clause (4) below no person shall hold the office of church steward, church treasurer or secretary of the Church Council or Pastoral Committee, or be elected to the Church Council under Standing Order 623, for more than six successive years.

(4) If the operation of clause (3) above would make it impossible adequately to fill an essential office in the Local Church the Church Council or General Church Meeting, as the case may be, may by a 75% majority of those present and voting on a ballot vote re-appoint annually beyond the sixth year.

(5) This Standing Order does not apply to the appointment of persons employed or engaged under a contract, nor to ex-officio membership.

Note that local lay-pastors are circuit appointments, so are governed in this respect under S.O. 504.

**608 Annual Covenant Service.** An annual covenant service shall normally be held in every Local Church. At these services the sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated. In churches where it is not possible to arrange for the annual covenant service to be held on a Sunday early in the new year the service may be held on a weeknight or, failing this, a service may be held for the members of two or more churches at one conveniently situated chapel.

**609 Extended Communion.** (1) Presbyters, deacons stationed in the Circuit and persons authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper under Standing Order 011 may lead acts of worship in homes (including nursing and retirement homes), hospitals and hospices during which elements set aside at a previous celebration of the Lord's Supper are received. In addition a Church Council may annually appoint local lay-pastors or other lay persons to lead such acts of worship.

For local lay-pastors see Section 56A.

(2) Persons so appointed by the Church Council shall, unless already instructed in the conduct of such services, be instructed by the Superintendent or by a presbyter appointed by him or her, the form of service for 'Extended Communion' authorised by the Conference being used as a basis of instruction.

## Section 61 The Church Council

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For the meaning of the expression 'Church Council' see cl. 1(iii) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) as applied by S.O. 002(1)(ii).

Cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides that Church Councils shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons, and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as the Conference may provide.

As to chairing of the council see S.O. 502(1).

For guidelines for the business of the council see Book VII B, Part 6.

**610 Constitution.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 511, 611 and 611A, the Church Council shall consist of:

- (i) the ministers, probationers and workers listed in clause (4) below;
- (ii)–(v) *[deleted]*
- (vi) the church stewards;
- (vii) the church treasurer;
- (viii) the secretary of the Pastoral Committee, where the committee is appointed;
- (ix) the secretary of the council;
- (x) not less than six representatives nor more than fifteen elected annually by the General Church Meeting, or, where the membership does not exceed 49 and the Church Council so resolves, all members of the Local Church who are willing to serve;
- (xi) up to fifteen additional persons appointed by the council to ensure that all areas of the church's life are adequately represented and in particular that, wherever possible, young people are included in its membership;
- (xii) one circuit steward appointed by the circuit stewards.

S.O. 511 concerns single-church Circuits.

For the church stewards see S.O. 632–634.

For the church treasurer see S.O. 635.

For the General Church Meeting see Section 62.

The insertion of paragraphs 2(2) and 16(1)(p) in the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) in 2020 means that Local Church employees may now be trustees of the Church Council (and vice versa) in England and Wales without the need for Charity Commission consent, provided any conflicts of interest are managed appropriately. In other jurisdictions restrictions on employees being trustees (and vice versa) may apply, and the consent of the relevant charity regulator may be required. As to conflicts of interest, see S.O. 019A.

(2) Where all members of the Local Church who are willing to serve are to be members of the council under head (x) of clause (1) above the council shall annually enquire which of them are so willing and the result of that enquiry shall establish, for the ensuing year, the list of persons who, while they remain members of the Local Church, are members of the council under that head.

(2A) (a) The persons eligible for appointment under head (x) of clause (1) above are those who are members in the Local Church or are within category (i) of Standing Order 606(1).

(b) The persons eligible for appointment under heads (ix) and (xi) of clause (1) above and head (vii) of clause (4) below are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 606(1).

There is no lower age limit for membership of the council, but persons under the age of 18 (16 in Scotland) cannot legally become managing trustees of model trust property, and so are not eligible to vote on managing trustee business.

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) The ministers, probationers and workers referred to in clause (1)(i) above shall be:

- (i) the Superintendent and any other presbyters and presbyteral probationers appointed to the Circuit or, if there are more than two such other presbyters and presbyteral probationers, two of them, selected by the Circuit Meeting, but so that the presbyter in pastoral charge shall always be a member;
- (ii) any presbyter or presbyteral probationer not so appointed who has entered into an arrangement to have pastoral responsibility in the Local Church, including any supernumerary undertaking pastoral work under Standing Order 792(2);
- (iii) any person residing in the Circuit for the purpose of the stations who is authorised to serve the Church as a presbyter under Standing Order 733 and who has been appointed to exercise pastoral charge in the Circuit or pastoral responsibility in that Local Church, and any person having the status of associate presbyter under Standing Order 733A whose functions include the exercise of pastoral responsibility in that Local Church;
- (iv) if any deacons or diaconal probationers are appointed to the Circuit, and if the Circuit Meeting considers it appropriate for the council in question, up to two of them, selected by the Circuit Meeting;
- (v) any deacon or diaconal probationer not so appointed who has entered into an arrangement to exercise leadership of the pastoral care, worship and mission in the Local Church, including any supernumerary undertaking pastoral work under Standing Order 792(2);
- (vi) any person residing in the Circuit for the purpose of the stations who is authorised to serve the Church as a deacon under Standing Order 733 and who has pastoral responsibility in that Local Church, and any person having the status of associate deacon under Standing Order

733A whose functions include undertaking pastoral work in that Local Church; and

- (vii) (a) any local lay-pastor appointed under the terms of Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in the Local Church;
- (b) such other persons, if any, as the Church Council judges it appropriate to appoint from among those employed under Standing Order 570 by the council, or by the Circuit Meeting in work in the Local Church.

The Superintendent is separately named because it is possible that they may not be appointed to the Circuit; see S.O. 785(3)(b).

**611 Local Ecumenical Partnerships.** (1) In local ecumenical partnerships, if the Synod so directs when designating the partnership or later, the Church Council for the purposes of clauses 8 and 40 of the Deed of Union and of sub-paragraph 2(1) of the Model Trusts and for any other purpose for which a Methodist Church Council may be required shall consist of the members of the ecumenical church council or other meeting (by whatever title) responsible for the general management of the partnership, together with (so far as not already members) a circuit steward and the ministers and probationers who would have been members of the council in accordance with clause (4)(i) to (vi) of Standing Order 610 had it been constituted under that Standing Order.

Cl. 8 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) concerns admission to membership and cl. 40 gives the general power to the Conference to constitute and regulate official meetings of the Church, including Church Councils. Para. 2(1) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) provides that Church Councils are the managing trustees of local property.

(2) During the currency of such a direction, which the Synod may at any time revoke, there shall be no other or separate Church Council constituted under Standing Order 610.

(3) The Synod may exercise its powers under this Standing Order whether or not it was the body which originally designated the local ecumenical partnership in question.

**611A Exceptional Cases.** (1) This Standing Order applies when in the judgment of the authorised body the Church Council constituted under Standing Order 610 or 611 has committed, is committing, or is threatening to commit, a serious breach of trust or of Methodist discipline, and if:

- (i) it is incapable of remedy; or
- (ii) it is capable of remedy, and the Church Council has been requested to remedy it but has refused or neglected to do so; or
- (iii) it has not yet been committed, and the Church Council has been requested to desist but has failed to undertake to do so;

Provided that the requirement in (iii) of a request to desist need not be fulfilled in cases of emergency, as judged by the authorised body.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of clause (1) above, examples of breaches which are capable, if the authorised body so judges, of being within that clause are:

- (i) ones which have caused, or will if committed or continued cause, significant harm to model trust property or other church funds or to the work of the Church; and also
- (ii) any which involve:
  - (a) permitting any use contrary to paragraph 14 of the Model Trusts or Section 92 of Standing Orders;
  - (b) taking any step requiring consent under Standing Order 930(4) or 931(1) or Section 98 without that consent;
  - (c) non-compliance with Standing Order 650(4);
  - (d) non-compliance with a statutory notice;
  - (e) non-compliance with a requirement of charity law or of the Charity Commission; or
  - (f) spending funds outside their permitted purposes.

(3) For the purposes of this Standing Order the “authorised body” is the district Policy Committee of the District in which the Local Church concerned lies, the “old Church Council” is the council as constituted under Standing Order 610 or 611 and the “new Church Council” is the council as constituted under clause (4) below.

(4) When this Standing Order applies the authorised body may by a direction in writing replace the old Church Council by a new Church Council, consisting of seven or more members of the Methodist Church of full age appointed by the authorised body who may, if the authorised body thinks fit, include persons who were among the members of the old Church Council.

(5) Any such direction may specify the date on which it is to take effect, and if no other date is specified shall take immediate effect.

(6) As from the date on which such a direction takes effect, and while it continues in effect:

- (i) subject to clauses (7) and (10) below the old Church Council shall be dissolved and the new Church Council shall succeed to all its powers and responsibilities, including its powers and responsibilities as managing trustees, but not so as to relieve the members of the old Church Council of any personal liability which they may have incurred while in office;
- (ii) Standing Orders 612, 613(2), 623 and 643(1) shall cease to apply to that Local Church and Standing Order 502, clauses (1), (5), (6), (8) and (9), shall cease to apply to local bodies in that Local Church except to the extent that the direction applies them, which it may do with or without amendment. The direction shall in any event make provision for the chairing of local bodies in that Local Church;
- (iii) notwithstanding Standing Order 607(1) the new Church Council may forthwith terminate any appointment made by the old Church Council or General Church Meeting and make a fresh appointment in its place for the residue of the term of the appointment terminated;
- (iv) notwithstanding Standing Order 632(1) appointments of church stewards shall be made by the new Church Council, which may appoint as a church steward any member of the Methodist Church.

(7) The old Church Council may appeal [...] against a direction of the authorised body under clause (4) above, but until the appeal is determined the direction shall remain in effect. Any such appeal shall be brought by notice in writing signed by the chair and at least two other members of the old Church Council with the authority of the members of that Church Council given at a meeting convened for the purpose. **The appeal shall be determined by a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel.** The old Church Council shall be treated as remaining in existence solely for the purpose of holding such a meeting and deciding whether or not to appeal. The membership of the old Church Council for this purpose shall consist of the persons who constituted the members of the Church Council immediately prior to the making of the direction.

(8) While such a direction is in effect the authorised body may at any time dismiss one or more of the members of the new Church Council or appoint additional qualified persons as members, ensuring that there are at all times (apart from any unavoidable gaps following death or resignation) not less than seven.

(9) The authorised body shall keep in review the question whether any such direction need remain in effect and if satisfied that it need no longer do so shall withdraw it in writing. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the authorised body shall in any event withdraw the direction no later than the end of the connexional year following the year in which the direction was made unless it resolves that the direction remains necessary, in which case it shall provide the members of the old Church Council, as far as reasonably possible, with a written copy of the resolution and an explanation of the reasons for it. The same procedure shall be followed in the next and each subsequent connexional year until the direction is withdrawn.

(10) The members of the old Church Council, or any three of them, may at any time apply to the authorised body to withdraw such a direction, except that:

- (i) no such application shall be made within three months of a previous application;
- (ii) no application by three members shall be entertained if it is made within three months after the old Church Council decided not to make such an application at a meeting held for the purpose of considering whether or not to do so.

The old Church Council shall be treated as remaining in existence solely for the purpose of holding such a meeting and deciding whether or not to apply to withdraw the direction. The membership of the old Church Council for this purpose shall consist of the persons who constituted the members of the Church Council immediately prior to the making of the direction.

(11) If a direction is withdrawn the old Church Council shall be treated as reconstituted with a membership consisting as far as possible of those persons who constituted the membership of the Church Council prior to the making of the direction and so that any persons who would have ceased to be members by effluxion of time shall be treated as remaining members until the end of the connexional year in which the direction is withdrawn.

(12) At all times while a direction is in effect, the members of the old Church Council are obliged to do everything which may reasonably be required by the new



Church Council to enable it effectively to exercise all its powers and discharge all its responsibilities.

**612 Minimum Size.** (1) When it is impossible to make up the number of members of the Church Council to include seven persons other than those qualified under head (i) of Standing Order 610(1) who are able and willing to act the Superintendent shall be informed. He or she shall nominate to the Circuit Meeting sufficient members of other churches in the Circuit, able and willing to act, to make up the number to seven. The Circuit Meeting shall then appoint that number of members to the Church Council for the ensuing year.

The minimum size for a Church Council should not be confused with the minimum size for a Local Church, as to which see S.O. 605A.

(2) When the procedure in clause (1) above has been followed for two successive years the Circuit Meeting may apply to that church the procedure set out in Standing Order 605A(1), so that the members will be transferred to another church. The Church Council of the church thus united will take on all the responsibilities of both Church Councils.

**613 Meetings.** (1) The Church Council shall meet at least twice in each year on the date, at the time and in the format determined in accordance with Standing Order 502 and upon the notice required by Standing Order 502(7).

Meetings may be held physically, electronically or in hybrid form (S.O. 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate see Book VII B, Part 6A.

(2) Before each meeting the presbyter in pastoral charge or Superintendent and the secretary of the council shall make out a list, by name, of the persons who are in their opinion members of the council under Standing Order 511, 610, 611 or 612, as the case may be, distinguishing those, if any, who are not of full age. At the meeting, before any other business is transacted, that list shall be laid before the council which shall, after making any correction which seems to the council necessary, adopt it, and the list as thus adopted shall be final and conclusive as to the persons of whom the council then consists.

(2A) Before each meeting the presbyter in pastoral charge or Superintendent and the secretary of the council shall also make out a list, by name, of those members of the meeting who, to the best of their knowledge, have duties or loyalties within Standing Order 019A(7), identifying the other bodies involved. Immediately after the membership of the council has been adopted under clause (2) above that list shall be laid before the council, the chair shall call upon members to disclose any additions or other corrections, and those members on the corrected list who are present shall be called upon to confirm the disclosure of their relevant duties or loyalties. This clause does not derogate in any way from the obligations of members in respect of interests, duties or loyalties under Standing Order 019A but not within clause (7) thereof.

See S.O. 019A(9) for the position in jurisdictions outside England and Wales

As to chairing, form and notice of meetings see S.O. 502. See the note to S.O. 610(2A) as to persons who are not of full age.

(3) (a) In this clause “closed session” means a meeting of the Church Council, or part of a meeting, at which only persons who are members of the council for the business in hand are present, and “open session” means one open also to other members of the Local Church, to non-members active in its life and to any other person specifically invited by the council to attend a particular meeting or for particular business.

(b) Except as provided in sub-clause (d) below meetings of the Church Council are in open session.

(c) In open session persons who are not members of the council may speak but not vote nor propose or second any resolution. The Church Council shall in particular encourage young people to attend its open sessions.

(d) The Church Council may at any time resolve that a particular meeting or meetings be held, or particular business dealt with, in closed session, and shall do so whenever considering admission to membership or any other business on which it is required, or decides, to vote by ballot. It shall consider carefully whether to do so before embarking upon or continuing any business which may occasion statements which should be kept in confidence or which involve personal criticism.

(4) The Church Councils of more than one church may meet jointly from time to time without infringing the authority of each individual Church Council.

Such a joint meeting could not exercise the functions of the Church Council as managing trustees of property.

**614 Responsibilities.** The general oversight of the Local Church shall be undertaken by the Church Council, exercising leadership over the whole field of the church’s concern.

See also S.O. 602, 603.

For the council’s functions in relation to property see S.O. 940 and 941.

**615 Procedure.** (1) Voting shall be open, except that voting by ballot shall be used on the following occasions only:

- (i) when these Standing Orders so provide;
- (ii) if the Conference so directs;
- (iii) if the meeting by the votes of two thirds of those present so resolves.

S.O. 607(4) provides for a ballot vote when re-appointing to an essential office beyond the sixth year.

(2) Subject to clause (1) the meeting may regulate its own procedure, but unless it adopts other rules of debate the rules comprising clauses (5) to (7) and (10) to (25) of Standing Order 413 shall apply, with the necessary substitutions.

(3) Notwithstanding clause (1) above and any applicable rules of debate any member who maintains that a decision is or may be illegal or in contravention of the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts or Standing Orders or (in the case of managing trustees’ business) otherwise a breach of trust shall be entitled to have his or her dissenting vote recorded by name.

See, e.g., S.O. 985, in particular cls. (5) and (6).

**616 Irregularities.** (1) When the rules of debate in clauses (5) to (7) and (10) to (25) of Standing Order 413 apply in accordance with Standing Order 615(2) they shall take effect subject to the provisions of this Standing Order.

(2) No resolution or other act or proceeding of the council shall be rendered invalid, void or voidable by reason of any non-compliance with any of the provisions of clauses (6), (7), (10), (11), (16), (20), (21), (23), (24) or (25) of Standing Order 413.

As to the validation of proceedings see also cl. 41 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 126(2).

(3) If before any resolution or other vote or proceeding of the council has been acted upon, or the minute recording it approved and signed, it comes to the attention of the chair that there was any irregularity of a kind described in clause (5) below in or leading to the making of that decision, then unless satisfied that the irregularity could not have affected or influenced the decision the chair shall ensure that the decision is not irrevocably acted upon until the council has been reconvened to reconsider the question and come to a regular decision upon it.

(4) If any such irregularity does not come to the attention of the chair until after the decision has been acted upon, or the minute recording it approved and signed, or if the chair is satisfied that the irregularity could not have affected or influenced the decision, then the decision shall be as valid as if regularly made in all respects.

(5) The irregularities referred to in clauses (3) and (4) above are the following:

- (i) failure to achieve the majority required by clause (17) or (22) of Standing Order 413, where applicable;
- (ii) an incorrect ruling that a greater majority is required than is the case;
- (iii) miscounting of votes;
- (iv) failure to put to the council a resolution, amendment or procedural motion which the mover and seconder are entitled to have put;
- (v) failure to comply with clause (18) of Standing Order 413 by requiring unnecessarily an immediate decision on a motion that the question be not put.

## Section 62 The General Church Meeting

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Cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II Part 1) provides that General Church Meetings shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons, and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as the Conference may provide.

As to chairing, form and notice of the meeting see S.O. 502.

For guidelines for the business and form of the meeting see Book VII B, Parts 6 and 6A.

**620 Constitution.** (1) In addition to the ex-officio members under Standing Order 643(1), the voting members of the General Church Meeting are any local lay-pastors appointed under the terms of Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in the Local Church, the members of the Local Church and persons within category (i) of Standing Order 606(1).

(2) The meeting is also open to all other persons on the community roll of the Local Church.

**621 Functions.** The meeting shall be held for fellowship, for mutual counsel respecting the condition of the Local Church, including its financial affairs, for the election of church stewards and representatives and for any other purpose which the Conference may direct. In churches with members who are pupils in a Methodist independent school particular care shall be taken to ensure their inclusion in appropriate ways in the life of the meeting.

As to the election of church stewards see S.O. 632.

As to the election of representatives see S.O. 623.

As to the last sentence see also S.O. 630(1A), 631(3) and 050(3).

**622 Meetings.** (1) Subject to clause (2) below the meeting shall be held at least once in each year for the purpose of electing church stewards and representatives and as often in addition as the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church, in conjunction with the Church Council, may think fit, and fourteen days' notice shall be given by such means as are calculated to ensure that the meeting is brought to the attention of the members of every meeting at which an election is to be held.

(2) If under Standing Order 511(2)(vii) or 610(1)(x) no representatives are to be elected by the meeting in any year and if the Church Council is satisfied that the functions of the meeting can be adequately discharged by the council and that there will be adequate opportunities for fellowship and consultation available to everyone on the community roll, the Church Council may decide that the General Church Meeting be not convened in that year, in which case its functions shall be discharged by the council.

**623 Election of Representatives.** (1) Nominations for the election or re-election of representatives to the Church Council may be made by anyone who is entitled to vote. Notice of such nominations should be given in writing, not less than seven days before the meeting at which the election is to be held, to the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church, who shall also have the right to nominate. If insufficient nominations have been received, further nominations may be made at the meeting. All nominations must have the previous consent of the persons nominated.

Such elections are not required in certain small churches; see S.O. 610(1)(x).

Under S.O. 610(2A)(a), representatives must be members in the Local Church or eligible under S.O. 606(1)(i). There is no lower age limit, but see the note to S.O. 610(2A).

For those entitled to vote see S.O. 620(1).

(2) Voting shall be open or by ballot, as the meeting determines.

For the number to be elected see S.O. 610(1)(x).

(3) Casual vacancies occurring during the course of a year owing to death, resignation, removal or lapse of membership may be filled at a meeting specially convened for the purpose.

(4) *[revoked]*

(5) In nominating and electing representatives the members of the General Church Meeting shall consider the composition of the Church Council as a whole with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin and shall in particular seek to include, wherever possible, young people in its representation.

(6) Where the Circuit Meeting and the Church Council are constituted under Standing Order 511(2) the provisions of this Standing Order and of Standing Order 620(1) as to the election of representatives apply to both bodies and there shall be only one such election for both.

(7) This Standing Order is subject to the provisions of Standing Order 611A(6)(ii).

## Section 63 Principal Officers

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As to the duration of appointments to the offices referred to in this Section see S.O. 607.

**630 Class Leaders – Appointment.** (1) The Church Council shall annually appoint class leaders and pastoral visitors to share in the pastoral care of all those whose names are on the community roll of the Local Church.

Cl. 9 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides that all members are to have their names entered on a class book and be placed under the pastoral care of a class leader or pastoral visitor.

(1A) A person appointed as a class leader or pastoral visitor shall be a member in the Local Church of 18 years of age or more or a minister or probationer who is stationed or residing in the Circuit or is the chaplain to a Methodist independent school with pupils who are members in the Local Church, and where there are such pupils the chaplain shall in all cases be so appointed.

See also S.O. 631(3) and 050(3).

(2) Newly appointed class leaders and pastoral visitors shall be publicly recognised and commissioned at a service arranged for that purpose.

**631 Class Leaders – Responsibilities.** (1) It is the duty of a class leader:

- (i) to exercise pastoral care over those committed to his or her charge;
- (ii) to meet the Class regularly;
- (iii) to visit those on his or her pastoral list regularly;
- (iv) to encourage members to fulfil their commitments as set out on the ticket of membership, and where appropriate to encourage others to consider the claims of membership;
- (v) to inform the minister or probationer having pastoral responsibility of any special need or change of address;
- (vi) to pray regularly for those on his or her pastoral list.

For the duty of the circuit ministers to visit the Classes see S.O. 526(1).

As to meetings of class leaders see S.O. 644(7).

(2) A pastoral visitor undertakes the duty of a class leader, except that he or she will not be expected to meet a Class.

(3) The Pastoral Committee shall allocate pastoral responsibility among the class leaders and pastoral visitors. Members who are pupils in a Methodist independent school shall be allocated to the chaplain of the school.

See also S.O. 621 and 050(3).

(4) The Conference recognises that there may be variation in local procedure, but the spirit of the above clauses of this Standing Order is to be observed.

**632 Church Stewards – Appointment.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 611A(6)(iv) the General Church Meeting shall annually appoint as church stewards two or more persons who are members of the Local Church or supernumeraries stationed in the Circuit.

It should be noted that a church steward who is under the age of 18 is precluded by S.O. 644(5) from being a member of the Pastoral Committee (as to whose significant functions see S.O. 644 below).

For appointments following a merger of two or more Local Churches, see S.O. 605A(7).

As to re-appointments see S.O. 607(3).

(2) Any member of the meeting entitled to vote may make a nomination if notice of such nomination has been given in writing to the presbyter having pastoral charge of the Local Church not less than seven days before the meeting. The chair of the meeting may, however, nominate without previous notice.

For entitlement to vote see S.O. 620 (1).

(3) Should a casual vacancy occur during the course of the year owing to the death, resignation or removal of a church steward or his or her ceasing to be a member a successor may be appointed in accordance with the provisions of clause (2) above at any regular meeting of the Church Council or at a special Church Council summoned for the purpose, and fourteen days' notice shall be given of any such business.

**633 Church Stewards – General Responsibilities.** The church stewards are corporately responsible with the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church for giving leadership and help over the whole range of the church's life and activity. They are particularly charged to hold together in unity the variety of concerns that are contained within the one ministry of the Church. To this end it is their responsibility to uphold and act upon the decisions and policies of the Church Council. In the discharge of their responsibilities they are encouraged wherever possible to draw other members with appropriate gifts and skills into a leadership team to be appointed by the Church Council.

The church stewards are entitled to appoint one of their number to any official meeting connected with the Local Church (S.O. 643(2)).

**634 Church Stewards – Particular Duties.** (1) The church stewards shall be responsible for seeing that all services, meetings and other engagements appointed on the circuit plan in connection with the Local Church are duly held, ensuring that the preacher is welcomed before the service and attended afterwards, that whenever necessary, hospitality is arranged for him or her and that his or her expenses are paid and, in the unforeseen emergency of a failure on the part of a preacher or other responsible person to keep the appointment, for seeing that a service or meeting suitable to the occasion is actually held.

For the circuit plan see S.O. 521.

(2) It shall be the duty of the church stewards to oversee the preparation and delivery of necessary public announcements and to ensure that no announcement is made save such as is in accord with the general usage of the Methodist Church.

As to political matters see S.O. 921.

(3) The church stewards shall ensure that due notice of all public collections is given, the taking of the collections is arranged, the amounts collected are entered in a book or other form of record kept for the purpose and that they are remitted to the treasurer or other persons authorised to receive them without delay.

All moneys collected for local church funds will be paid over to the church treasurer (S.O. 635(2)).

(4) The church stewards shall ensure that all necessary arrangements are made for the administration of the sacrament of baptism after due notice has been given to the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church, in the case of children by the parents or guardians, in other cases by the candidate for baptism.

As to baptism in relation to membership and to infants see cl. 6 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

As to baptism generally see S.O. 010A.

**635 Treasurer.** (1) The Church Council shall annually appoint a church treasurer, who shall be a member in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or be within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 606(1).

As to re-appointment see S.O. 607(3).

(2) The church treasurer shall receive all collections, gifts, donations, subscriptions and other moneys raised for the general church fund, the benevolence fund or the model trust fund and any money arising for such other accounts as the Church Council may direct. He or she shall meet all financial obligations on behalf of the Church Council and present a statement of all such funds and accounts to the Church Council and to such committee or committees (if any) as the council may direct. While it is not necessary for the general, model trust and benevolence funds each to have its own separate bank account, the treasurer must ensure that these funds are accounted for separately, for example by means of a suitable system of column analysis in the cash book. On behalf of the Church Council he or she shall, eight working days before the beginning of each quarter, pay to the circuit stewards the sum required of the Local Church by the assessment of the Circuit Meeting.

See S.O. 012A for the duties of treasurers generally.

As to assessments on Local Churches by the Circuit Meeting see S.O. 515(3), 532(1)(i), 650(4). The assessment includes the local contribution to the Methodist Church Fund.

For the general church fund, benevolence fund and model trust fund see S.O. 650, 651 and 652 respectively.

For general provisions as to the administration of church accounts see S.O. 012.

**636 Auditor.** The Church Council shall appoint an auditor or independent examiner, as appropriate, annually for the general, model trust and benevolence funds and all other funds under its jurisdiction. The auditor or examiner for the general, model trust and benevolence funds shall be the same person unless those funds have separate bank accounts and are accounted for separately. The appointment shall comply



with the provisions of Standing Order 012(3) and the auditor or examiner shall report annually to the Church Council in accordance with the provisions of that Standing Order.

**637 Communion Stewards.** (1) The Church Council may annually appoint persons to serve as communion stewards or may assign the duties set out in clauses (2) to (4) below in other ways, and in those clauses 'communion stewards' includes any persons assigned to carry out those duties.

(1A) The persons eligible for appointment are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 606(1).

(2) It shall be the duty of the communion stewards to make provision for the proper celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and for the holding of love-feasts whenever appointed.

(3) The communion stewards shall attend at the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and shall be responsible for directing the approach of communicants to the Lord's Table in an orderly and expeditious manner.

(4) Where a separate collection is taken at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or a love-feast, additional to the general collection at the service, if any, of which such a celebration forms part, the communion stewards shall take and record it and hand it to the church treasurer. All such collections shall be for the local benevolence fund unless, under the direct or delegated authority of the Church Council, a collection is made for some other charitable purpose and the congregation have been informed of that purpose before contributing.

For the local benevolence fund see S.O. 651.

As to what are charitable purposes see the note to S.O. 650(5) and the text of S.O. 650(6).

**Section 64 Other Officers and Committees**

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**640 Principles.** (1) The ministry of the Local Church, with the leadership of its Church Council, is to care for the worship of God, for the church family, for its neighbourhood and for world service and mission and to exercise responsible stewardship of its property and its finance. Whatever committees or other official bodies are constituted for the government of the Local Church, their constitution and agenda shall express those functions and tend to their fulfilment, at the same time ensuring their inter-relation.

See also S.O. 600 and 604.

(2) While the establishment of committees is largely at the discretion of the Church Council, larger churches are encouraged to make as much use of committees as possible in order that every area of the church's life and witness may receive examination and encouragement, and to enable as many people as possible to make a contribution to the leadership of the Local Church.

(3) In making appointments to local committees and other official bodies, or to offices which carry membership of them, appointing bodies shall consider engaging young people in such responsibilities.

**641 Obligatory Appointments.** The Church Council shall appoint class leaders and pastoral visitors, a church treasurer and, subject to Standing Order 644(4), a Pastoral Committee, together with any other officers or committees who may for the time being be required by Standing Orders, each with the responsibilities and powers prescribed by the Deed of Union or Standing Orders.

As to class leaders and pastoral visitors, the church treasurer and the Pastoral Committee see S.O. 630, 635 and 644 respectively.

There must also be church stewards, appointed by the General Church Meeting; see S.O. 632–634.

**642 Discretionary Appointments and Powers.** (1) The Church Council may appoint such other officers and committees, and with such responsibilities, as in its judgment are required for the furtherance of the work of the Local Church, and for effective communication with the Circuit, the District and the Conference in areas of special concern such as world mission and social responsibility.

As to chairing, form and notice of committee meetings see S.O. 502.

(2) The council may delegate to any committees or to any other body which it may appoint any of its powers, except appointments under Standing Order 641, the approval

of persons for membership of the Methodist Church and the accreditation of workers among children and young people under Standing Order 661.

(3) The above powers of delegation are subject, in the case of the council's functions as managing trustees, to the provisions of the Model Trusts and Standing Order 911.

As to the Model Trusts, see para. 16(1)(k) (Book II, Part 2).

(4) The persons eligible for appointment under this clause are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i), (ii) or (iii) of Standing Order 606(1).

**643 Ex-officio Membership.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 611A(6)(ii) and 644 the ministers, probationers and others who are members of the Church Council under head (i) of Standing Order 610(1) or heads (i) and (ii) of Standing Order 511(2) shall, ex officio, be members of every official meeting, committee or other body (however described) connected with the Local Church.

(2) The church stewards shall be entitled to appoint one of their number to any such meeting.

**644 Pastoral Committee.** (1) The Pastoral Committee shall, subject to clauses (4) and (5) below, consist of the following persons:

- (i) the Superintendent;
- (ii) the ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit;
- (iii) the church stewards;
- (iv) the class leaders and pastoral visitors and, in a local ecumenical partnership, any members of other participating communions who have similar pastoral responsibilities.

(2) *[revoked]*

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) In churches with a membership of 49 or less, the Church Council may resolve not to appoint a committee, in which case the council itself shall discharge the committee's functions.

(5) No person may be a member of the committee while under 18 years of age.

(6) The secretary of the committee shall be appointed by the Church Council from among the members of the committee.

(7) The committee shall meet at least once in each year. It may meet at other times, as often as there is need, or the class leaders and pastoral visitors themselves may meet for the consideration of the responsibilities of their pastoral office and the increase of its effectiveness.

As to charring, form and notice see S.O. 502.

(8) It shall be the responsibility of the committee:

- (i) to conduct an annual review of the membership and to prepare the annual returns of membership as at the 1st November;

- (ii) to take such part as the Church Council may require in arranging training for membership and to report thereon to the Church Council;
- (iii) to consider all other matters relating to church membership;
- (iv) *[deleted]*
- (v) *[deleted]*
- (vi) to prepare a report on membership for the Church Council, and to put forward suggestions and recommendations;
- (vii) to encourage the practice of fellowship through class meetings and other groups among all members of the church family;
- (viii) to take all possible steps to increase the effectiveness of the offices of class leaders and pastoral visitors, to perform its functions under Standing Order 631(3) and to ensure that Standing Order 630 (2) is carried into effect.

The review required by (1) is to be carried out name by name (S.O. 054(5)).

As to training for membership see S.O. 525(iv) and 050(1).

As to admission to membership see cl. 8 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 050(4).

As to the functions of the committee in relation to members who cease to meet see cl. 10 of the Deed of Union.

S.O. 631(3) provides that the committee shall allocate pastoral responsibility among class leaders and pastoral visitors.

S.O. 630(2) provides for a public service of recognition and commissioning of newly appointed class leaders.

For guidelines for the business of the committee see Book VI B, Part 6.

(9)–(10) *[revoked]*

(11) For the purposes of the Deed of Union and Section 05 of Standing Orders the meeting or committee having the responsibilities of a Pastoral Committee is:

- (i) the local Pastoral Committee composed in accordance with clause (1) above, where constituted; or
- (ii) the Church Council, when entitled to exercise and exercising the functions of the Pastoral Committee under clause (4) above; or
- (iii) in a local ecumenical partnership with no such local Pastoral Committee, either
  - (a) in a partnership where the Synod has directed that an ecumenical meeting act as the Church Council for particular Methodist purposes under Standing Order 611, an ecumenical pastoral committee appointed by that meeting to discharge in relation to Methodist members the responsibilities of a Pastoral Committee under clause 10(a) of the Deed of Union and Section 05 of Standing Orders; or
  - (b) in a partnership with a Methodist membership of 49 or less the ecumenical body so directed; or
  - (c) failing any such committee or meeting the circuit Pastoral Committee.

Cl. 10 of the Deed and Section 05 of Standing Orders are concerned with training for and admission to membership, pastoral oversight and lapse from membership.

For the circuit Pastoral Committee see S.O. 553.

## Section 65 Funds

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**650 General Church Fund.** (1) The Church Council shall maintain a general church fund.

(2) Subject to Standing Order 637(4) all collections at public services and meetings for worship of the congregation of a chapel shall be for the general church fund unless, under the direct or delegated authority of the Church Council, a collection is made for some other charitable purpose and the congregation have been informed of the purpose before contributing.

As to what are 'charitable purposes' see the note to clause (5) below.

It is suggested that unless a collection is being made for some other purpose the normal form of announcement should be 'for the general church fund'. The traditional words 'for the Work of God in this Church and Circuit' might be understood to exclude the support of wider causes.

S.O. 637(4) concerns separate collections at the Lord's Supper.

(3) All other money received by or due to the Church Council and not belonging to any other fund shall belong to the general church fund.

(4) The first charge on the general church fund shall be the sums required of the Local Church by the assessment of the Circuit Meeting, which shall be paid into the circuit fund quarterly eight working days before the beginning of the quarter to which they relate.

For the assessment see S.O. 515(3), 532(1)(i), 635(2).

(5) Subject to clause (4) above the general church fund shall be applied under the direct or delegated authority of the Church Council for the charitable purposes of the Local Church.

'Charitable' purposes are not in law confined to the relief of poverty or distress; they include, e.g., the advancement of the Christian faith. However, Methodist money cannot be used for any purpose which is not charitable in the legal sense. Not all 'good causes' are charitable in this sense; nor is the advocacy of political change a charitable purpose (for further guidance as to political activity see the website of the Charity Commission for England and Wales or, in Scotland, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator).

As to what are the charitable purposes of the Local Church see clause (6) below.

(6) The purposes of the Local Church include (without excluding or restricting any which would subsist apart from this clause):

- (i) those appearing from Standing Orders 600, 604 and 651 and Section 66;
- (iA) any purpose for which model trust money which is local property of the church may be applied under Standing Order 917(1) or (2);
- (ii) the support of any connexional, district, circuit or local fund of the Methodist Church;

- (iii) the support of any ecumenical work in which the Local Church is engaged;
- (iv) the support of the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust;
- (v) subject to (i), (ii) and (iii) above, the support from the general church fund of any other charitable fund or body, except in so far as such support would be contrary to any purpose of the Methodist Church or to Methodist discipline.

As to the meaning of 'charitable' see the note to clause (5) above.

As to the purposes of the Local Church see also S.O. 600.

The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust was created in 2005 and is the successor body (meeting a wider range of need) to the Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association.

**651 Benevolence Fund.** (1) The purposes of the Local Church include the relief of poverty and distress and to that end the Church Council shall maintain a local benevolence fund.

(2) The sources of the fund shall, subject to Standing Order 637(4), be the separate or additional collections, if any, made at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and at love-feasts and allocations, if required, made by the council from the general church fund.

(3) The fund shall be applied first for the relief of poverty and distress in the congregation and neighbourhood. The Church Council may adopt and implement a scheme of distribution, and payments may also be made, in any event, at the confidential discretion of the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church in consultation with any deacon or diaconal probationer appointed to the Circuit who exercises ministry in the relevant Local Church, any local lay-pastor appointed under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders to serve in that church and with the communion stewards, if appointed, or if not with the church stewards.

(4) At its first meeting in each year the council shall consider the state of the fund and decide whether any moneys are surplus to expected needs for the above purpose and, if so, what allocations shall be made out of the fund to the circuit benevolence fund, the district benevolence fund, the Methodist Relief and Development Fund and any other fund for the relief of poverty and distress, provided that no allocation shall be made which would be contrary to any purpose of the Methodist Church or to Methodist discipline.

For the circuit benevolence fund see S.O. 527 and for the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (now operating under the name *All We Can*) S.O. 285.

**652 Model Trust Moneys.** The Church Council shall maintain a fund or funds, consisting of all model trust moneys, whether capital or income, of which the council are the managing trustees, including any allocations or contributions for model trust purposes from the income of the general church fund.

**653 Other Funds.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 012, 635(2), 650, 651 and 652 and to clause (2) below organisations within the Local Church may hold their own funds, appointing a treasurer for each fund so held.

S.O. 012 concerns banking and audit.

S.O. 635(2) concerns the responsibilities of the church treasurer.

As to the duties of treasurers generally see S.O. 012A.

(2) The accounts of all organisations connected with the Local Church, as well as of its general, benevolence and model trust funds, shall be presented annually to the Church Council. The accounts shall clearly indicate the financial position of the funds as at the 31st August in each year, including all investments, and loans due to and from the fund.

(3) The treasurer and the Church Council shall ensure that the Local Church makes the contributions to connexional funds prescribed by Standing Orders.

The general church fund contributes to the Methodist Church Fund (S.O. 371) by way of the circuit assessment (see S.O. 515(3), 532(1)(i)).

**654 Cessation.** (1) If a Local Church is about to cease to exist, then pending actual cessation by the loss (by transfer or otherwise) of all its members, and for the avoidance of doubt:

- (i) any proceeds of sale within Standing Order 944 or 945 must be applied in accordance with those Standing Orders; and
- (ii) the Church Council continues to have authority to expend or apply all or any part of any other church fund for any of the purposes for which it is held, in accordance with the applicable trusts and Standing Orders.

(2) Clauses (3) and (4) below apply to regulate the position upon cessation.

(3) If the church becomes part of another Local Church (whether existing or new, and whether by virtue of Standing Order 605A(1)), or under a scheme within Standing Order 605A(2) or 942(1), or because in any other way all its remaining members have been transferred to one other Local Church), any balances remaining shall become part of, or form, the corresponding fund of that other church.

(4) In any other case any balances remaining:

- (i) if in a benevolence fund, shall become part of or form the circuit benevolence fund; or
- (ii) if held on any other specific trust, other than the Model Trusts, shall be held **by such new trustees** and applied [...] **upon such trusts as shall be determined in accordance with charity legislation most closely to fulfil the original purposes of the trust**; or
- (iii) if model trust capital money shall become circuit model trust money of the relevant Circuit as capital; and
- (iv) as to all other funds, whether or not identifiable in whole or in part as model trust money, shall become circuit model trust money of that Circuit as income.

This Standing Order concerns the cessation of a Local Church (i.e. its membership) under S.O.605A, not the closure of its chapel, which is an entirely separate matter, as to which see S.O. 943. See also connexional guidance on church mergers and amalgamations, and on chapel closures, on the Methodist Church website.

As to (4) note that where the trust funds involved include moneys held on a permanent endowment, an application will need to be made to the Charity Commission to determine how that permanent endowment can be dealt with.

For the church benevolence fund see S.O. 651. For the circuit benevolence fund see S.O. 527.

## Section 66 Workers among Children and Young People

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**660 Candidates.** (1) Persons offering, or being invited, to serve as workers with children and young people shall be accepted as candidates by the Church Council.

(1A) The persons eligible for acceptance under clause (1) above are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (ii) or (iii) of Standing Order 606(1).

(2) Normally they shall be at least 16 years of age for work with children and at least 18 years of age for work with young people.

(2A) They shall be required to complete an application form and to accept and sign a form containing their job description and committing them to protect children and young people from harm in accordance with the policy of the Church.

(3) The Church Council shall be satisfied of their commitment to Christ and His Church and of their appropriateness for this work.

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

(4) They shall enter upon a probationary period, which shall normally be for twelve months, but which may be extended or reduced as required.

(5) They shall agree to undertake preparation for service applicable to the work they wish to do.

**661 Accreditation.** Reports on their probation and preparation for service shall be made to the Church Council. If satisfied, the Church Council shall grant accreditation within the area of work among children or young people and shall signify this by a certificate. The fact of this accreditation shall be noted when the person is transferring from one Local Church to another.

**662 Service of Recognition.** The Church Council shall make arrangements for the newly accredited workers to share in a service of recognition and commissioning.

## [Section 67 Lay Appointments – revoked in 2008]



## Section 68 Worship Leaders

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(4) As to membership of the Local Church, it is the responsibility of worship leaders regularly to attend public worship in their Local Church, normally a Methodist church or

an approved local ecumenical partnership, and to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

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

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

(3) Accepted candidates shall enter upon a probationary period, during which they shall follow a training programme approved in accordance with Standing Order 680(1). They shall be required to make a firm commitment to training and study.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(3) Subject to clause (2) above, if a question or concern is raised about the fidelity to doctrine of a worship leader or his or her fitness for the work (including his or her calling, commitment to fulfil his or her responsibilities or his or her competence as a worship leader) the Church Council shall refer the case to the Local Preachers' Meeting

which shall follow the guidelines for such circumstances produced by the Connexional Team. The guidelines shall include guidance on the circumstances in which Part 11 applies.

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

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

## Section 69 Involvement in the Local Church where there is a Safeguarding Concern

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As to undertaking work with children and young persons, and as to appointment to any office, post or responsibility or engagement under a contract, see S.O. 010.

- 690 Arrangements for Involvement.** (1) When a person:
- (i) who has been convicted of or has received a simple or conditional caution in respect of an offence referred to in Standing Order 010(2)(ii); or
  - (ii) in respect of whom the Safeguarding Committee has made a recommendation that clause (2) below should apply

worships in a Local Church or seeks to become involved in its life, he or she may only do so in accordance with the provisions of clause (2) below.

(2) (a) The safeguarding officer for the relevant District in consultation with the presbyter in pastoral charge or circuit superintendent, must establish a monitoring and support group, including at least one member of the Local Church, in accordance with the applicable policies and procedures adopted by the [...] **Connexional** Council from time to time, for the purposes set out there and in this Standing Order.

(b) The safeguarding officer, working with the group so established must consider the recommendations made in any risk assessment undertaken pursuant to Standing Order **235** and if no such risk assessment has been undertaken, must carry out such an assessment at the earliest opportunity.

(bA) The safeguarding officer, working with the group and seeking to minimise the risk to others presented by the person concerned, will determine on what terms he or she may become involved in the life of the Local Church.

(c) The person concerned must agree to enter into a written contract setting out the terms determined in accordance with sub-clause (bA) above and the contract must be signed and dated by him or her and by the members of the group. The contract must also include a provision that its terms will be reviewed and may be amended in accordance with Standing Order 690A.

(3) [revoked]

(4) [revoked]

(5) A person to whom clause (1) above applies shall not be placed on the community roll maintained by the Local Church in accordance with Standing Order 054(7) before signing a contract in accordance with clause (2) above and may, if such a contract has not been signed, be removed from the community roll if not a member or be made the subject of a complaint under Part 11 if a member.

(6) If the person concerned declines to sign a contract, the group may nevertheless monitor him or her within the life of the Church in order to minimise the risk posed to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

**690A Review of a Contract.** (1) When a written contract has been made with a person under the provisions of clause (2) of Standing Order 690, its terms will be reviewed at least annually by the group established under that clause.

(2) The group shall consider at least once every three years, but no earlier than two years and six months after the contract takes effect or after the latest previous consideration of the subject, whether a new risk assessment is required to be undertaken to reassess the risk posed by the person concerned. This timescale may be varied, but only by the appropriate connexional safeguarding officer.

(3) The group may revoke or amend the terms of a contract following recommendations from the Safeguarding Committee under Standing Order **230(4)(viii)**.

(4) The group shall provide an annual report on the review of each contract to the safeguarding officer as defined by Standing Order **230(3)(ii)**, who shall maintain a record of all contracts, and to the District Safeguarding Officer of the District of which the Circuit of the relevant Local Church forms part.

(5) The District Safeguarding Officer or a person in relation to whom the officer exercises the power to delegate that responsibility shall attend meetings of the group with sufficient frequency to maintain a working knowledge of the situation and to provide appropriate support and shall be supplied with notes of other meetings for those purposes.

**691 Changes in Church Representatives.** The members of any group established under Standing Order 690(2)(a) above shall be responsible collectively for ensuring that:

- (i) the presbyter in pastoral charge of the Local Church is aware of any circumstances making a change in the membership of the group necessary or appropriate; and
- (ii) information is passed on and pastoral support continues to be provided when there is a change of presbyter in pastoral charge of the Local Church or of other members of the group.

Changes in the membership of the group shall be made by the minister in pastoral charge and Standing Order 690(2)(a) shall apply so far as circumstances permit.

**692 Transfer.** (1) If a person to whom Standing Order 690 applies and whose name is on the community roll of a Local Church (whether or not as a member) removes from one Circuit to another, the presbyter in pastoral charge of that Local Church, in carrying out his or her responsibilities under Standing Order 055, shall ensure that the recipient presbyter or presbyteral probationer is aware of the existence and terms of the contract made in accordance with Standing Order 690.

(2) A presbyter or presbyteral probationer receiving notice that a person removing from one Circuit to another has made a contract with a Local Church in accordance with Standing Order 690 shall ensure that the provisions of that Standing Order are

applied again if the person concerned wishes to attend worship or to become involved in the life of a Local Church in the new Circuit.

(3) If a person to whom Standing Order 690 applies and whose name is on the community roll of a Local Church (whether or not as a member) ceases to attend worship or to be involved in that Local Church but wishes to attend worship or be involved in another Local Church within the same Circuit, the presbyter in pastoral charge of the first Local Church shall ensure that the presbyter in pastoral charge of the second Local Church is aware of the existence and terms of the contract made in accordance with Standing Order 690 and the second presbyter shall ensure that the provisions of that Standing Order are applied again.

## Part 7 Presbyters and Deacons (1) – Status and Stationing

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The Conference in 2008 (in dealing with the report ‘Signalling Vocation and Clarifying Identity’) resolved that the Church should be committed to a ‘clear and consistent’ vocabulary, using ‘minister’ to refer to an ordained person in Full Connexion, whether presbyter or deacon. The necessary legislative proposals to reflect this were finally adopted by the Conference in 2012. The terminology used throughout these Standing Orders therefore now reflects the definitions in the Deed of Union (Book 2, Part 1): see cl. 1 (xA), (xix) and (xxviiA) as to ‘deacon’, ‘minister’ and ‘presbyter’ respectively, See also cl. 4 of the Deed, and the editorial note.

Note also that, under these definitions, ‘minister’, ‘presbyter’ and ‘deacon’ do not include, in any instance, ‘probationer’.

For the definition of ‘the diaconate’ and ‘the presbyterate’ see S.O. 005(ix) and (x) respectively.

See Part 0 of Standing Orders for the relevant provisions relating to:

- continuance in training and probation (Section 03)
- ministerial competence (Section 04).

See Part 11 of Standing Orders for complaints and disciplinary proceedings.

As to the circumstances in which persons are disqualified from appointment see S.O. 010 generally.

**Section 70 Principles**

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See the notes on the title page of Part 7 above.

**700 Presbyteral Ministry.** (1) Presbyters are ordained to a life-long ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility in the Church of God which they fulfil in various capacities and to a varying extent throughout their lives.

(2) By receiving persons into Full Connexion as Methodist presbyters the Conference enters into a covenant relationship with them in which they are held accountable by the Church in respect of their ministry and Christian discipleship, and are accounted for by the Church in respect of their deployment and the support they require for their ministry. That covenant relationship arises within their existing relationship with the Church as members, which continues, and neither entry into it nor service within it has ever created or is intended to create, or does create, contractual relations.

(3) Presbyters in the active work exercise their ministry, including pastoral responsibility, primarily in the setting in which they are stationed, whether the appointment is full-time or part-time, and whether or not the appointment is directly within the control of the Church or some other body, and whether or not they are in receipt of a stipend or pension.

(4) Some presbyters in the active work may be temporarily released from appointment in order to study or to reside abroad, but they are not thereby released from being stationed or from the covenant relationship of being in connexion.

(5) Presbyters who are not in the active work, that is, supernumeraries and those without appointment, remain accountable to and accounted for by the Church, and continue to exercise their ministry as they are able according to their circumstances.

(6) The primary constitutional forum in which presbyters account for their ministry and are accounted for by the Church is the Presbyteral Session of the Synod. The Presbyteral Session of the Conference is the primary constitutional forum in which presbyters corporately exercise their ministry of pastoral responsibility for the Church.

(7) Pastoral charge in a Circuit is exercised by those presbyters in the active work who are appointed by the Conference to that Circuit; sharing with others, in the courts of the church and individually, the exercise of the particular responsibilities and ministries involved, they have oversight on behalf of the Conference of the worship, pastoral care and mission policy of the Circuit and its constituent Local Churches in accordance with Methodist discipline.

(8) Presbyteral probationers serve in a Circuit or other appointment under the oversight of a Superintendent or other presbyter. They do not therefore have pastoral charge in a Circuit.



## Part 7 Presbyters and Deacons (1) – Status and Stationing [701]

(9) Superintendents share with the other presbyters appointed to the Circuit the pastoral charge of the Circuit and have oversight of all the ministers and probationers stationed in the Circuit.

(10) District Chairs are appointed to give leadership and have care of the life of the Church in the District, and in particular to have care of the ministers and probationers. The pastoral charge of each Circuit remains, however, with the Superintendent and other presbyters appointed to it in accordance with clauses (7) and (9) above.

(11) In its accounting for its presbyters and presbyteral probationers the Conference stations them annually. Some it appoints to serve in Circuits or Districts or in connexional office, others to serve as chaplains or as mission partners with other conferences and churches. Others are authorised to serve in appointments not directly within the control of the Church; each is stationed in a Circuit, where they are called to share the insights of their particular ministry with the persons who are appointed to or are members in the Circuit. Others again are stationed as supernumeraries, without appointment or with permission to study.

(12) Presbyters and presbyteral probationers in a district or connexional appointment may be listed in the stations additionally under a Circuit in which they reside, and are expected to offer such assistance to the Circuit as may be mutually agreed.

**701 Diaconal Ministry.** (1) All Methodist deacons are ordained to a life-long ministry of service and witness in and on behalf of the Church of God, which they fulfil in pastoral care, outreach and worship in various capacities and to a varying extent throughout their lives.

(2) By receiving persons into Full Connexion as Methodist deacons the Conference enters into a covenant relationship with them in which they are held accountable by the Church in respect of their diaconal ministry and Christian discipleship, and are accounted for by the Church in respect of their deployment and the support they require for their ministry. That covenant relationship arises within their existing relationship with the Church as members, which continues, and neither entry into it nor service within it has ever created or is intended to create, or does create, contractual relations.

(3) All deacons in Full Connexion are members of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

(4) Deacons in the active work exercise their diaconal ministry primarily in the setting to which they are appointed, whether the appointment is full-time or part-time, and whether or not the appointment is directly within the control of the Church or some other body, and whether or not they are in receipt of a stipend or pension.

(5) Some deacons in the active work may be temporarily released from appointment in order to study or to reside abroad, but they are not thereby released from being stationed, from the covenant relationship of being in connexion, or from the privileges and duties of membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

(6) Deacons who are not in the active work, that is, supernumeraries and those without appointment, remain accountable to and accounted for by the church, and continue to exercise their diaconal ministry as they are able according to their circumstances.

(7) Deacons in the active work who are appointed to serve in Circuits share in leadership of the pastoral care, worship and mission of the Circuit and its constituent Local Churches, collaborating with others, ordained and lay, in the exercise of the particular responsibilities and ministries involved.

(8) The principal constitutional forum in which deacons account for their servant ministry and watch over and support one another as members of a dispersed religious order is the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The principal constitutional forum in which deacons corporately exercise their servant ministry in the Church and are accounted for by the Church is the Conference acting through the Conference Diaconal Committee.

(9) Diaconal probationers serve in a Circuit or other appointment under the oversight of a Superintendent or other presbyter and the Order. The preparation of probationers for full membership of the Order as a religious order is under the oversight and guidance of the Order.

(10) The Warden of the Order is appointed to have overall responsibility for the oversight of the Order, and is accountable to the Conference in that regard. The Warden shall be consulted on all matters concerning deacons in relation to their formation, stationing, discipline and pastoral care.

(11) In its accounting for its deacons and diaconal probationers the Conference stations them annually. Some it appoints to serve in Circuits or Districts or in connexional office, others to serve as chaplains or as mission partners with other conferences and churches. Some are authorised to serve in appointments not directly within the control of the Church; each is stationed in a Circuit, where they are called to share the insights of their particular ministry with the persons who are appointed to or are members in the Circuit. Others again are stationed as supernumeraries, without appointment or with permission to study.

(12) Deacons and diaconal probationers appointed to a district or connexional appointment may be listed in the stations additionally under a Circuit in which they reside, and are expected to offer such assistance to the Circuit as may be mutually agreed.

## Section 71 Presbyteral and Diaconal Candidates

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The Conference of 2023 approved a suite of amendments to Standing Orders to accommodate the new candidating process for presbyters and deacons. These now constitute Section 71 as it appears below, with the further amendments made in 2024 indicated in the usual way.

**710 General. (1)** Candidating for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church is a process of discernment by the candidate and the Church of the call of God upon a person's life and of how the Church may respond to it. In the remainder of this Section a "candidate" means a candidate for the diaconate or the presbyterate in the Methodist Church unless otherwise stated.

For the definition of 'the diaconate' see S.O. 005(ix).

For the definition of 'the presbyterate' see S.O. 005(x).

See also the note concerning 'minister', 'presbyter' and 'deacon' on the title page of Part 7.

For candidature for the diaconate by presbyters and presbyteral probationers see S.O. 718.

For candidature for the presbyterate by deacons and diaconal probationers see S.O. 718.

(2) It shall be the responsibility of the relevant member of the Connexional Team to make available a variety of resources to enable and encourage the exploration of vocation.

(3) Following any such exploration every candidate shall engage in a process of discernment of vocation comprising two stages. Stage One is a formal process of accompanied reflection leading up to a decision by the person concerned whether or not to offer as a candidate for ordained ministry. Stage Two is the process of consideration of such an offer once it has been made.

(4) It shall be the responsibility of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee annually to produce Information for Candidates setting out the process, requirements, dates and deadlines for both stages of Discernment of Ordained Vocation.

For the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, see S.O. 252.

The Information for Candidates produced in accordance with sub-clause (4) refers to Stage One of Discernment of Ordained Vocation as 'DOV1' and to Stage Two as 'DOV2'.

(5) The Conference shall adopt and publish, and may from time to time amend, discernment criteria to be applied in considering offers by candidates for training as presbyters or deacons.

For the responsibility of the Ministries Committee in recommending these criteria to the Conference, through the Connexional Council, see S.O. 311(4).

For the criteria adopted by the Conference of 2024, to take effect for those offering as candidates in the connexional year 2025-2026, see Agenda report 22, Section L.

**711 Appointments.** (1) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall annually appoint:

- (i) a pool of appropriately gifted people to serve on an Advisory Group as directed by the relevant member of the Connexional Team;
- (ii) a pool of appropriately gifted people from whom the relevant member of the Connexional Team shall appoint an accompanist for each candidate; and
- (iii) such other appropriately gifted and experienced people as it thinks necessary for the purpose specified in clause (4) below.

(2) An Advisory Group Panel of three people selected from the Advisory Group by the relevant member of the Connexional Team and normally comprising a presbyter, a deacon and lay member, [...] **shall** meet with each candidate.

(3) The role of the accompanist is to support the candidate through the journey of vocational discernment, to meet and reflect with the candidate and to produce the agreed record referred to in Standing Order 712(2) below.

(4) The purpose for which additional persons are to be appointed under head (iii) of clause (1) above is the purpose of delivering both stages of the process of discernment of ordained vocation effectively each year and in particular supporting each candidate pastorally throughout the process and, where necessary beyond it, whatever its outcome.

For the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, see S.O. 252.

This S.O. 711 does not prevent any candidate from receiving in the districts pastoral support beyond those appointed in any given year by the Ministerial Candidates and Probations Oversight Committee.

**712 Discernment of Ordained Vocation: Stage One.** (1) Any person exploring whether to offer as a candidate in accordance with the Stage One process shall have fulfilled all of the requirements of Stage One as set out in the Information for Candidates produced annually by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee as required by Standing Order 710(4) above.

(2) Every person entering Stage One shall be assigned an accompanist from the pool appointed in accordance with Standing Order 711(1)(ii) above by the relevant member of the Connexional Team. The person and the accompanist shall normally meet on at least three occasions either in person or online to review how the person's discernment is progressing and produce an agreed record of it which will form part of a candidate's portfolio.

For the candidate's portfolio see S.O. 713(5) below.

(3) Unless the person concerned has voluntarily withdrawn every potential candidate shall meet with an Advisory Group Panel drawn from the Advisory Group appointed as set out in Standing Order 711(1)(i) above to reflect on the potential candidate's

progress. The Advisory Group Panel shall suggest:

- (i) continuing to Stage Two to offer as a candidate; or
- (ii) continuing to Stage Two to offer as a candidate after having undertaken further identified elements of preparation; or
- (iii) undertaking further exploration of vocation before returning to offer as a candidate in a subsequent year; or
- (iv) exploring a different vocation.

If the suggestion made by the Advisory Group Panel falls within the categories (ii), (iii) or (iv) above, it shall nonetheless be for the potential candidate alone to decide whether or not to continue to offer for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in the current year, with or without having undertaken any further identified elements of preparation.

**713 Discernment of Ordained Vocation: Stage Two.** (1) A candidate shall have been baptized and shall have been a member of the Methodist Church in good standing for at least one year as at 1 September in the connexional year in which the candidate's offer is made.

(2) A candidate shall submit such forms and supply such references and other documentation as shall from time to time be required by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(3) A candidate must have and demonstrate the legal right to work in the United Kingdom.

(4) A candidate shall meet with the connexional psychologist who shall produce a resilience assessment report which the candidate will be invited to sign before it is submitted.

(5) A candidate shall submit a portfolio in the form and covering the areas of experience from time to time required by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(6) (a) A candidate shall satisfy the Superintendent that the candidate assents to the doctrinal standards set out in clause 4 of the Deed of Union and indicate willingness, on reception into Full Connexion, to uphold the discipline of the Church, including its discipline in relation to stationing. In addition, a candidate for the diaconate shall indicate willingness to accept the commitments entailed in becoming a full member of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

For the doctrinal standards set out in the Deed of Union cl. 4, see Book II, Part 1.

The discipline of the Church is expressed in *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.

For the discipline particularly appropriate to presbyters and deacons see Parts 7 and 8 of Standing Orders.

For the discipline of the Methodist Diaconal Order as a religious order see S.O. 750.

(b) The Superintendent shall also make a preliminary assessment on a connexional proforma of what might reasonably be expected of the candidate's future availability for stationing in circuit or other appointments and the terms and conditions of service under which the candidate might serve.

(7) A candidate must be prepared to accept the form and length of training prescribed

by the Conference.

(8) An offer shall only be accepted if the candidate at the time of acceptance:

- (i) again indicates a willingness to uphold the discipline of the Church in relation to stationing; and
- (ii) provides in writing an affirmation of willingness to be stationed in the active work for a minimum period of ten years.

(9) Notwithstanding the provisions of clause (8) above, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee may in an individual case make recommendations as to exemption from the requirements of that clause to the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, who shall have the power to grant or withhold such exemptions subject in each such case to the agreement of the Conference.

For the appointment and remit of the connexional Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation see S.O. 250.

(10) A person who was formerly a candidate may not re-offer for either the presbyterate or the diaconate in the year following that in which the previous offer was declined unless advised to do so in writing by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation.

**714 The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation.** (1) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall examine all continuing candidates and shall report directly to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference in the case of presbyteral candidates and the Conference Diaconal Committee in the case of diaconal candidates.

For the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation see S.O. 250.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(2) The committee shall meet on or before the date or dates determined by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and shall take the form and be conducted in the manner set out in the Information for Candidates referred to in Standing Order 710(4) above.

(3) In order to facilitate the process of discernment of vocation the committee shall have access to all portfolios, documents, references and reports submitted together with any and all such other information as the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee may from time to time determine.

(4) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall report to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, under the classification specified in clause (5) below, the vote for each candidate being recorded and no neutrals being allowed. In reaching its classification the committee shall apply the discernment criteria published under Standing Order 710(5).

(5) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall have three categories in which it may report on candidates in accordance with clause (4):

- (i) Recommended: those candidates in respect of whom the committee

## Part 7 Presbyters and Deacons (1) – Status and Stationing [714A]

recommends by a majority of 75% or more that, if accepted on that basis, they may proceed immediately or after deferment to pre-ordination training;

- (ii) Conditionally Recommended: those candidates in respect of whom the committee recommends by a majority of 75% or more that, if accepted on that basis, they must first fulfil a condition but, provided that condition is fulfilled within three years, may then proceed to pre-ordination training;
- (iii) Not Recommended: those candidates whom the committee does not recommend by a sufficient majority, or whom it judges to be unsuitable or not called to the form of ministry for which they offered.

The recommendations in classes (i) and (ii) above are subject to there being no obstacle found in the safeguarding check or Occupational Health assessment required by clauses (6) and (7) of this Standing Order. The report and the reasons given shall be made available to the candidate in writing.

(6) Every candidate recommended or conditionally recommended for training and every candidate not recommended for training, but who has appealed against the recommendation of the committee and whose appeal has been upheld, must undertake a safeguarding Disclosure and Barring Service check if based in a home district in England or Wales, or its equivalent if based in a home district in another legal jurisdiction. The check must be completed before the Conference to which the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or the Appeals Committee, as the case may be, will report its recommendation.

See S.O. 010(2) and (4).

(7) Every candidate recommended or conditionally recommended for training and every candidate not recommended for training, but who has appealed against the recommendation of the committee in accordance with Standing Order 716(2) below and whose appeal has been upheld, must undertake an Occupational Health assessment in accordance with Standing Order 715(2) below. The assessment, and any appeal against the recommendations of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee made in consequence of that assessment, must be completed before the Conference to which the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or the Appeals Committee, as the case may be, will report its recommendation.

(8) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation may also advise on the desirable length and form of pre-ordination training for all candidates who are Recommended or Conditionally Recommended, shall make a judgment on any applications for deferment of pre-ordination training and, if it thinks fit, may for the purposes of Standing Order 713(10) advise a candidate whose offer is declined to re-offer in the following year.

As to deferment of pre-ordination training see S.O. 721(4).

**714A Safeguarding Concerns.** *If at any stage in the operation of the process of Discernment of Ordained Vocation as set out in this Section of Standing Orders it appears to any of the persons involved or to a group, a panel, a committee or a section*

***of a group, panel or committee that safeguarding issues or concerns are, or may be, involved, then the matter shall immediately be referred to the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order 230(3)(ii)), who may offer advice or refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee for its advice, or risk assessment and recommendations as that committee judges appropriate.***

As to the functions of the Safeguarding Committee, see S.O. 230(4).

**715 Candidates' Health.** (1) The [...] **Ministries Committee** shall adopt and publish, and may from time to time amend, the Candidates Health Policy to be applied by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee when considering and making a determination consequent upon the outcome of the Occupational Health assessment of a candidate made under clause (2) below

For the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee see S.O. 252.

(2) Every candidate to whom Standing Order 714(7) applies shall undertake an Occupational Health assessment for the purpose of identifying adjustments that, for reasons of physical, mental or emotional health, or a combination of such reasons, will need to be put in place to enable a candidate to carry out the duties reasonably to be expected of a presbyter or deacon. The assessment shall be carried out by such external body or company as shall from time to time be appointed for this purpose by the [...] **Ministries Committee**.

(3) The Occupational Health assessment shall take place after the recommendation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or the decision of the Appeals Committee, as the case may require, has been communicated to the candidate.

As to the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation see S.O. 250. As to appeals and the Appeals Committee see S.O.s 716 and 251.

(4) The report of the outcome of the Occupational Health assessment shall be made available to the candidate and to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(5) If the Occupational Health assessment identifies a need for such adjustments as are referred to in clause (2) above, it shall be the responsibility of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee to make one of the following determinations:

- (i) that the candidate be recommended for acceptance unconditionally to the Conference;
- (ii) that the candidate be recommended for acceptance conditionally to the Conference; or
- (iii) that the candidate be not recommended for acceptance to the Conference.

The committee's determination shall replace the previous recommendation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or, if applicable, of the Appeals Committee.

(6) In making the determination required by clause (5) above the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall determine only whether the adjustments identified by the Occupational Health assessment can reasonably and in



timely manner be put in place having regard to and in all cases applying the Candidates Health Policy.

(7) Any candidate shall have the right to appeal against any recommendation made under clause (5) above, by following the appeals procedure set out in Standing Order 716 below.

**716 Appeals.** (1) The candidate, or with the candidate's consent the candidate's Superintendent or Chair, may, by notice given in writing to the secretary of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or in the case of an appeal against a recommendation of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in accordance with Standing Order 715(5) above to the secretary of that committee, within fourteen days of notification to the candidate in writing of the decision of the committee, appeal against the recommendation of the committee, on one or more of the following grounds:

- (i) that the procedural provisions of this Section have not been correctly followed;
- (ii) that there are facts which were not available to the committee and which are such as to make its recommendation inappropriate;
- (iii) that the judgment of the committee, as conveyed to the candidate in the official letter informing the candidate that the offer made has been declined, is questioned in writing by both the Superintendent and the Chair of the candidate.

The notice of appeal must specify the grounds of appeal and a reasoned statement to support the appeal shall be supplied by the appellant

(2) Every such case shall be considered by an Appeals Committee of eight persons, of whom seven shall be a quorum. In the case of an appeal by or on behalf of a candidate for the diaconate the committee shall always include at least two deacons. The members of the committee shall be selected by the convener from the panel appointed by the [...] **Ministries Committee** under Standing Order 251. The convener shall be present throughout the meeting of the committee in order to advise on procedure and practice but shall not speak on the substance of the case and shall have no vote.

(3) The Appeals Committee shall be supplied at its meeting with copies of all papers from Stage One and Stage Two of the appellant's Discernment of Ordained Vocation process in the case of every appeal and, where the appeal is under Standing Order 715(7) above, the Occupational Health assessment, whether that appeal is against the recommendation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, and the secretary of the relevant committee shall expound its case for its recommendation.

(4) The candidate and any other appellant specified in clause (1) above shall have the right to attend the committee, to be present for the presentation of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation's case or that of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, as the case may be, and to reply. The candidate may be accompanied by a presbyter or deacon of the candidate's own choice.

(5) The candidate may be questioned about the grounds of the appeal and, where the

appeal is under heads (ii) or (iii) of clause (1) above, the issues cited in the judgment of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee but there shall be no general rehearing of the case or repetition of the assessment procedures, as the case may be, of the relevant Committee.

(6) After the candidate (if present), any other appellant and the secretary of the relevant committee have withdrawn, the Appeals Committee shall decide whether or not to uphold the appeal.

(7) Subject to the above the Appeals Committee shall regulate its own procedure.

(8) The Appeals Committee shall report to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, with the number of votes cast for and against its recommendation, no neutrals being allowed. Any recommendation at variance with that of the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation or of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee (as appropriate) shall require not less than six votes in favour.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

**717 The Conference.** (1) The Conference in its Presbyteral Session shall first consider those presbyteral candidates in respect of whom there has been an appeal in accordance with Standing Order 716. The convener of the Appeals Committee shall present that committee's recommendation and the Conference shall vote upon each case in turn.

(2) When the cases specified in clause (1) have been dealt with all those candidates who have been recommended or conditionally recommended by a 75% majority or more by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation, or by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in respect of cases dealt with under Standing Order 715(5), shall be proposed to the Conference en bloc.

(3) Those candidates whom the committee has listed as Not Recommended in accordance with Standing Order 714(5) or 715(5) and in respect of whom no appeal has been made under Standing Order 716 shall then be proposed en bloc to be declined by the Conference.

(4) No candidate for the presbyterate shall be recommended or conditionally recommended by the Presbyteral Session to the Representative Session for the presbyterate save by a vote of 75% or more of the members of the Conference present and voting.

(5) The provisions of Clauses (1) to (4) of this Standing Order shall apply to the Conference Diaconal Committee in considering and making its recommendations in respect of diaconal candidates as if references to the Presbyteral Session were references to that committee.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(6) The candidates for the presbyterate recommended or conditionally recommended by the Presbyteral Session and the candidates for the diaconate recommended or conditionally recommended by the Conference Diaconal Committee shall be proposed

respectively en bloc for acceptance or conditional acceptance as the case may be by the Conference in its Representative Session.

No candidate for the presbyterate can be accepted without the recommendation of the Presbyteral Session (Deed of Union, clause 23(g), Book II, Part 1).

No candidate for the diaconate can be accepted without the recommendation of the Conference Diaconal Committee (Deed of Union, clause 25A(g), Book II, Part 1).

(7) No candidate shall be accepted or conditionally accepted save by a vote of 75% or more of the members of the Conference in its Representative Session present and voting.

**718 Change of Order of Ministry.** *(1) Any student minister seeking to change order of ministry shall complete an application form. A student requesting to move into diaconal ministry shall have an interview with the diaconal tutor of the training institution and the Warden, who shall jointly write a report. A student requesting to move into presbyteral ministry shall have an interview with the student's personal tutor and the oversight tutor of the training institution who shall jointly write a report. All such students shall meet with a panel of the training institution's oversight committee which shall make a recommendation to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, which may also complete a panel interview with the student. The focus of the meeting shall be on the order of ministry alone. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall report the outcome to the Conference under one of the following categories:*

- (i) Recommending an immediate transfer to the training pathway for the other order of ministry.*
- (ii) Recommending a suspension of the current training whilst the student undertakes further guided discernment (and the timing and nature of that discernment is determined).*
- (iii) Not recommending the transfer.*

*(2) Any probationer seeking to change order of ministry shall have a vocational conversation with the Chair of District and complete an application form. A probationer requesting to move into diaconal ministry shall have a formal interview with the Warden, who shall write a report. A probationer requesting to move into presbyteral ministry shall have a formal interview with the Chair of District who shall write a report. All such probationers shall meet with a panel from the District Probationers Committee which shall make a recommendation to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, which may also choose to see the probationer in a panel interview. The focus of the meeting shall be on the order of ministry alone. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall report the outcome to the Conference under one of the following categories:*

- (i) Recommending a transfer to the other order of ministry after a period of training, followed by stationing to a new two year appointment on probation to the other order.*
- (ii) Recommending stationing in the next connexional year to a new probationer's appointment in the other order, followed by reception into full connexion and ordination after two years in the case of someone*

*transferring to the diaconate, and after one or two years for someone transferring to the presbyterate.*

**(iii) Not recommending the transfer.**

**(3) Any ordained minister wishing to change order of ministry shall have a vocational conversation with the Chair of District and shall complete an application form. A presbyter requesting to move into diaconal ministry shall have a formal interview with the Warden, who shall write a report. A deacon requesting to move into presbyteral ministry shall have a formal interview with the Chair of District who shall write a report. All such ordained ministers shall meet with a Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee panel. The focus of the panel shall be on the order of ministry alone. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall report the outcome to the Conference under one of the following categories:**

**(i) Recommending a transfer to the other order of ministry after a period of training at a training institution.**

**(ii) Recommending a transfer to the other order after two years' probation in the case of someone transferring to the diaconate, and a transfer after one or two years' probation in the case of someone transferring to the presbyterate.**

**(iii) Not recommending the transfer.**

**(4) In all cases the nature and oversight of the formation and probation are determined by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.**

For the Ministerial Candidates and Oversight Committee see S.O. 252.

Following the review of candidature procedures, which led to the introduction in 2023 of the substantial changes in this Section 71, it was decided that substantial amendments were needed to this Standing Order to create a standard but flexible process. The previous clauses (1) to (5) were therefore revoked in their entirety by the Conference of 2024 and the above clauses substituted, with the previous clauses (6) and (7) being renumbered as (5) and (6).

**(5)** A candidate who is a deacon shall cease to be in Full Connexion as a deacon and to be a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order on the commencement of pre-ordination training or on entry upon probation, whichever is the earlier. If for any reason pre-ordination training or probation for the presbyterate is not completed, the candidate shall be entitled to apply for reinstatement as a deacon under the provisions of Standing Order 761.

**(6)** A candidate who is a presbyter shall cease to be in Full Connexion as a presbyter on the commencement of pre-ordination training or on entry upon probation, whichever is the earlier. If for any reason pre-ordination training or probation for the diaconate is not completed, the candidate shall be entitled to apply for reinstatement as a presbyter under the provisions of Standing Order 761.

## Section 72 Presbyteral and Diaconal Training and Probation

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As to ministerial probationers of other conferences and churches see S.O. 734.

As to persons in training for the diaconate of other conferences and churches see S.O. 734 and 730(2).

**720 General Principles of Pre-ordination Training and Probation.** (1) Candidates who have been accepted by the Conference for training for the presbyterate or the diaconate shall enter a period of pre-ordination training and probation leading, when so recommended, to reception into Full Connexion and ordination. This period shall consist of programmes of training, education and formation for the presbyterate or the diaconate through which their character, work and general fitness for the appropriate order of ministry shall be assessed.

(2) Pre-ordination training and probation may be undertaken consecutively or concurrently as determined for each candidate under Standing Order 721(1).

(3) Should the number of persons available to be stationed as probationers by virtue of the determinations made under Standing Order 721(1) be insufficient to meet the essential needs of the Church, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf, having consulted the appropriate member of the Connexional Team, the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the training of the person involved and, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, has authority to station as a probationer a student presbyter or student deacon not otherwise available for stationing. In such cases the Connexional Team member responsible for pre-ordination training shall ensure that alternative programmes are provided where necessary for the person concerned to fulfil the requirements of pre-ordination training.

As to travelling and removal expenses see S.O. 528(2).

(4) When a person has not been stationed and is undertaking pre-ordination training he or she shall have the status of a student presbyter or student deacon. When a person has been stationed on completion of pre-ordination training, or in order to complete some or all of it in service, or under clause (3) above, he or she shall have the status of a presbyteral or diaconal probationer.

For the undertaking of pre-ordination training in service see further S.O. 721(3).

(5) In this section and elsewhere in Standing Orders, unless the context otherwise requires, 'pre-ordination training' includes where appropriate any training which a person who has already been ordained has been required to undertake prior to being recommended for reception into Full Connexion.

**721 Length and Form of Pre-ordination Training and Probation.** (1) The length and form of pre-ordination training and probation for each accepted candidate shall be determined by the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or Conference Diaconal Committee, as appropriate, on the recommendation of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(2) Such recommendations shall be designed to ensure that the requirements of Standing Orders 722 and 724 are fulfilled and shall normally consist of a period of at least four and no more than seven years between acceptance as a candidate and reception into Full Connexion. Such period shall normally include two years on probation on a full-time basis after the completion of pre-ordination training, three years on probation on a part-time basis, or, where such training has been undertaken concurrently with probation, one further year after completion of such training.

(2A) Any period during which a candidate's training or probation is deferred or suspended under Standing Order 726 or clause (4) below shall not be taken into account in calculating the minimum period of four years specified in clause (2) above, but shall be taken into account in calculating the maximum period of seven years.

(3) Recommendations that a person be stationed to undertake pre-ordination training in service shall be made according to criteria set from time to time by the Conference.

(4) If candidates are permitted to continue their studies for a degree or to engage in some other activity after acceptance by the Conference, the commencement of the period of pre-ordination training and probation shall be deferred for one or more years and it shall begin on a date to be determined by the Conference or Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, meeting in the connexional year next following the accepting Conference.

(5) *[revoked]*

(5A) If an application made under Standing Order 726 or 726A for the deferral or suspension of a candidate's training or probation would, if granted, prolong the total period of training and probation beyond seven years the committee shall, in addition to any other considerations, take into account the provisions of clause (2) above, and unless it rejects the application or can and does recommend a deferral or suspension limited to one involving no prolongation of that period beyond seven years it shall recommend either (i) both the deferral or suspension and the extension applied for, with reasons for the latter, or (ii) the discontinuance of training or probation.

(6) All the foregoing regulations are subject to satisfactory yearly reports during both pre-ordination training and probation.

(7) Probation shall not be considered as completed until the probationer has actually been received into Full Connexion with the Conference.

(8) In this Standing Order there shall qualify as a year, where appropriate, the period from one annual Conference until the next or the period from the 1st September preceding reception into Full Connexion until such reception.

**722 Pre-ordination Training.** (1) Pre-ordination training shall take place only on courses which have been validated for the purpose in accordance with connexional guidelines by the [...] **Ministries Committee**.

(2) In the case of each person who is recommended by the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation for acceptance as a candidate the Connexional Team member responsible for pre-ordination training shall ensure that any training recommendations made by the committee are reviewed by a connexional allocations panel in the discharge of its responsibilities under clause (3) below.

(3) The connexional allocations panel, acting under the oversight of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall have the responsibility for:

- (i) allocating each candidate to full-time or part-time pre-ordination training and to the appropriate training institution; and
- (ii) determining which candidates are to receive financial assistance towards the cost of such training in the form of bursaries (and if so, at what level).

Any appeal made against a decision upon the matters covered by (i) or (ii) above shall be dealt with by the Appeals Panel appointed under Standing Order **251**.

(4) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall review the reports on each person's progress each year, and where appropriate revise his or her training accordingly.

(5) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall ensure that the relevant training institution arranges for every student presbyter and student deacon to spend a period or periods in circuits and other placements in order that, under the guidance of a senior presbyter or deacon, the student presbyter or deacon may gain experience of presbyteral or diaconal life and work and become acquainted with different aspects of the Church's worship and mission.

**723 Probationers' Appointments.** (1) In making their recommendations to the Stationing Committee concerning the stationing of probationers, the Connexional Team member responsible for presbyteral probationers and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall seek to have all presbyteral and diaconal probationers stationed in situations where due care and oversight can be given to the probationer by lay and ordained colleagues in accordance with criteria for such appointments recommended by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(2) (a) Where a probationer is to be appointed to a Circuit the Circuit shall furnish a description of the appointment in response to connexional proformas and guidelines issued on behalf of the Stationing Committee. This description shall be reviewed on behalf of the district Policy Committee and forwarded by the Chair to the Connexional Team member responsible for presbyteral probationers or the Warden of the Methodist

Diaconal Order as the case may be for approval by the date announced each year in those guidelines.

(b) A probationer shall be appointed to a Circuit only when the Stationing Committee is satisfied that the appointment is suitable for a probationer in accordance with the connexional criteria referred to in clause (1) above and that there is a reasonable expectation that it will be maintained without diminution of suitability until the probationer is received into Full Connexion.

(c) Once a probationer has been appointed the nature of the appointment shall not be altered by the Circuit before the end of probation without the consent of the Chair, who shall normally consult the district Policy Committee, and of the Connexional Team member responsible for presbyteral probationers or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, who shall normally consult the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(d) If Standing Order 544, as to curtailment, would apply in the case of a probationer but for the limitation in sub-clause (1)(c) of that Standing Order, the question of possible curtailment shall be dealt with by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, which shall make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee.

(2A) Where a probationer is stationed in a Circuit the Superintendent shall ensure that the care and oversight required by clause (1) above are given. Each such probationer shall have a Minister in Oversight, who shall either be the Superintendent or a minister appointed by the Superintendent. The Minister in Oversight shall coordinate and participate in that care and oversight and in particular meet regularly with the probationer in order to review the exercise of their vocation and ministry. The probationer shall also have a reflective supervisor who shall meet regularly with the probationer to offer reflective supervision.

(3) (a) Where a presbyteral probationer is to be stationed in an appointment that is not within the control of the Church the Connexional Team member responsible for probationers shall arrange for consultations to be held between the relevant parties to ascertain the way in which the probationer will exercise his or her ministry within the particular appointment and link it with the worship and mission of the wider Church, and how his or her character, work and general fitness for the presbyterate will be assessed.

(b) From such consultations the Connexional Team member responsible for probationers shall ensure that an agreement is formulated as to the nature of probation in the appointment. This proposed agreement shall be in accordance with connexional guidelines issued on behalf of the Stationing Committee. It shall be reviewed by members of the district Probationers Committee appointed by the committee for that purpose and forwarded by the Chair to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee for approval.

(c) A probationer shall be stationed in such an appointment only when the Stationing Committee is satisfied that it is suitable for a probationer in accordance with the connexional criteria referred to in clause (1) above and that there is a reasonable



expectation that it will be maintained without diminution of suitability until the probationer is received into Full Connexion.

(d) Once a probationer has been appointed the agreement as to the nature of probation in the appointment shall not be departed from nor, before the end of probation, shall it be varied without the consent of the Chair and the Connexional Team member responsible for presbyteral probationers, who shall normally consult the district Policy Committee and the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee respectively.

(4) Whenever a presbyteral or diaconal probationer enters upon a first appointment the Chair shall arrange for a welcome service to be held within the District, if possible in the probationer's Circuit, early in the connexional year. The service shall include appropriate exhortation and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

(5) When an authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper is granted to a presbyteral probationer it shall be sent to the Superintendent of the Circuit in which it is to be exercised for presentation to the probationer at the welcome service or on some other appropriate occasion.

**724 Probation.** (1) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall approve programmes of probation in accordance with clauses (2) to (4) below to enable the character, work and general fitness for the appropriate order of ministry of probationers to be assessed. Such programmes shall include the requirements of pre-ordination training where that training is being undertaken in service. Probation shall be undertaken only on programmes which have been so approved.

(2) Such programmes shall ensure that adequate provision has been made for the pastoral care and support of each probationer, the guidance and oversight of his or her ministry and instruction in his or her particular duties. In particular, when a presbyteral probationer is stationed without an authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper, the Superintendent shall arrange for the probationer to assist in the conduct of the Lord's Supper at least once in each quarter.

(3) Such programmes shall also ensure that, irrespective of the type of appointment in which they are stationed, each probationer:

- (i) gains experience of and practice in the core expressions of what it is to be a member of the particular order of ministry and, in the case of a deacon, a member of a particular religious order, as defined in guidelines issued by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee;
- (ii) receives formal support and guidance from their Minister in Oversight for a number of hours specified by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and reflective supervision from their reflective supervisor in accordance with the connexional Reflective Supervision Policy;
- (iii) engages with peers in theological analysis of the mission of the church in the world as encountered through their particular appointments;

- (iv) pursues agreed formal studies; and
- (v) undertakes practical training.

(4) The Connexional Team members responsible for presbyteral and diaconal probationers respectively shall ensure that consultations are held between the staff of the training institution responsible for each probationer's pre-ordination training, the probationer concerned and the probationers secretary of the District in which she or he is to be stationed. At such consultations the probationer's self-assessments and all relevant reports shall be considered in order to ascertain the probationer's needs and personal circumstances and the availability of suitable courses and resources for his or her probation. Where necessary the Connexional Team members may appoint a training panel to consider the case further. From such consultations a particular programme of probation for the person concerned which meets the connexional requirements outlined in clauses (2) and (3) above shall be proposed for approval by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee. Should the circumstances of a person's probation change substantially, the appropriate Connexional Team member shall ensure that the approved programme is revised accordingly.

For self-assessments see further S.O. 725(3)(a), 725(4)(a), 725(5)(a).

(5) It shall be the duty of the Chair of the District, in consultation with the district probationers secretary, to ensure that all the arrangements for a particular person's probation are carried out.

(6) The Chair shall arrange for each probationer in the District to attend, in the course of the year, a retreat or refresher course or other informal meeting for fellowship and consideration of the work of the presbyterate or the diaconate.

**725 Oversight of Pre-ordination Training and Probation.** (1) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall oversee the development of student presbyters and deacons and presbyteral and diaconal probationers and shall report annually to the Presbyteral Session and the Conference Diaconal Committee respectively with recommendations about particular cases as appropriate.

As to the overall responsibilities of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, see S.O. 252(10).

As to discipline of student ministers and ministerial probationers see Part 11 of Standing Orders.

As to discontinuance of student ministers and ministerial probationers see Section 03 of Standing Orders.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(2) Such oversight shall include elements of both pastoral support and assessment. To this end, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall coordinate and guide the work of student oversight committees appointed for training institutions and theological colleges and, in the case of presbyteral probationers, district Probationers Committees. In particular they shall formulate guidelines for practice and connexional criteria for assessment.

As to student oversight committees see S.O. 252(11).

As to district Probationers Committees see S.O. 484.

(3) (a) In the case of student presbyters and student deacons, the oversight tutor with overall responsibility appointed for the appropriate training institution shall ensure that each student writes a self-assessment and that a report is written about him or her on behalf of the staff of the institution according to the connexional criteria, guidelines and timetables. Such reports shall include evidence of the student's progress in academic studies, practical skills and experience, integration of the theory and practice, Methodist identity, spirituality and sense of call; and of his or her suitability for the presbyterate or the diaconate as appropriate. The reports shall be discussed with the student and submitted to the local oversight committee together with the student's self-assessment and any comments or representations about his or her training or general welfare that the student wishes to make.

As to tutors see S.O. 252(12).

(b) The local oversight committee shall consider all the reports and other material submitted to it, and shall arrange for the student to be interviewed by an individual, a panel or the full committee as required. The committee shall formulate a summary report each year about each student together with any particular recommendations that are appropriate. At least seven voting members of the local committee must be present when such reports and recommendations are agreed.

(c) The committee's report and recommendations shall be forwarded to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in time for that committee to review them, take any appropriate further action and prepare the reports and recommendations required by clause (1) above.

(4) (a) In the case of presbyteral probationers, the district probationers secretary shall ensure that each probationer writes a self-assessment and that all the appropriate reports are written about him or her, namely reports by:

- (i) the Superintendent, staff and circuit stewards of the Circuit in which the probationer is stationed;
- (ii) any other reference groups appointed to monitor his or her work in chaplaincies, other institutions or other appointments not within the control of the Church; and
- (iii) those responsible for overseeing his or her academic studies, engagement in group discussion, practical training, leading of worship and preaching and personal development.

The reports shall be completed according to connexional criteria, guidelines and timetables and shall include evidence of the probationer's exercise of ministry, the oversight and guidance exercised, the opportunities offered for study and fellowship with the circuit staff and peers, and of his or her suitability for the presbyterate. The reports shall be discussed with the probationer and submitted to the district Probationers Committee together with the probationer's self-assessment and any comments or representations about his or her work, training or general welfare that the probationer wishes to make.

(b) If a probationer who has spent part of the probation overseas enters the home work the Team member responsible for probationers shall forward to the probationers secretary of the District to which he or she is appointed a report on each year of probation spent abroad.

(c) The district committee shall consider all the reports and other material submitted to it, and shall arrange for the probationer to be interviewed by an individual, a panel or the full committee as required. The committee shall formulate a summary report each year about each probationer together with any particular recommendations that are appropriate. At least seven voting members of the committee must be present when such reports and recommendations are agreed.

(d) The district committee's report and recommendations shall be presented to the Presbyteral Session of the Synod. In the light of them and any other enquiries which it judges appropriate the Synod shall express its judgment as to the suitability of the probationer for this particular order of ministry. The vote of the Synod with a note of any comments made in discussion shall be recorded.

(e) The district committee's report and recommendations and the record of the judgment of the Synod shall be forwarded to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in time for it to review them, take any appropriate further action and prepare its report and recommendations for the Presbyteral Session of Conference.

(5) (a) In the case of diaconal probationers, the Warden shall ensure that each probationer writes a self-assessment and that reports are written about him or her, namely reports by:

- (i) the Superintendent, staff and stewards of the Circuit in which the probationer is stationed;
- (ii) any other reference groups appointed to monitor his or her work in chaplaincies or other institutions; and
- (iii) those responsible for overseeing his or her academic studies, engagement in group discussion, practical training, and personal development.

The reports shall be completed according to the connexional criteria, guidelines and timetables and shall include evidence of the probationer's exercise of ministry, the oversight and guidance exercised, the opportunities offered for study and fellowship with the circuit staff and peers, and of his or her suitability for the diaconate. The reports shall be discussed with the probationer and submitted to the Warden together with the probationer's self-assessment and any comments or representations about his or her work, training or general welfare that the probationer wishes to make.

(b) If a probationer who has spent part of the probation overseas enters the home work the Team member responsible for probationers shall submit a report on each year of probation spent abroad to the Warden.

(c) The Warden shall submit the reports and other material received under (a) and/ or (b) above, with any further comments of his or her own, to the district committee, which shall consider all the reports and shall arrange for the probationer to be interviewed by an individual, a panel or the full committee as required. The committee shall formulate a summary report each year about each probationer together with any particular recommendations that are appropriate. At least seven voting members of the committee must be present when such reports and recommendations are agreed.

(d) The district committee's report and recommendations shall be forwarded to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee in time for it to review them, take any appropriate further action and prepare its report and recommendations for the Conference Diaconal Committee.

(6) If at any stage in the operation of the procedure set out in clauses (1) to (5) above (so far as applicable) it appears to any of the persons involved or to a committee that safeguarding issues or concerns are, or may be, involved, then the matter shall immediately be referred to the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order **230(3)(ii)**), who may offer advice or refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee for its advice and recommendations.

**726 Deferment or Suspension of Probation.** (1) A student presbyter, student deacon or probationer may, on any of the grounds specified in clause (3) below, apply to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, for deferment or suspension of probation and that committee, if satisfied of the applicant's intention to complete training (if incomplete) and, in due course, to undergo or complete probation and enter the active work shall make a recommendation to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference, or, as the case may be, the Conference Diaconal Committee, which may grant or refuse the application. Such a person shall not during any deferment or suspension of probation be at any cost to the Connexion, except as provided in clause (4) below.

(2) If the grounds for an application do not arise or are not discovered until after the last meeting (before the Conference) of the committee a student or probationer may make a similar application to the President at any time before the opening of the Conference, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf may grant or refuse the application but shall not grant an application unless satisfied of the applicant's intentions as described in clause (1) above. Any applications granted shall be reported by the President to the Presbyteral Session or, as the case may be, the Conference Diaconal Committee.

(2A) If an application under clause (1) or (2) above would if granted prolong the period of training or probation beyond seven years the application shall include an application for an appropriate extension beyond the seven year period.

(3) An application may be granted under clauses (1) or (2) above on compassionate or domestic grounds which in the judgment of the committee or the President or Vice-President, as the case may be, make it impossible or undesirable for probation to commence or continue for the present.

(4) The names of probationers granted deferment or suspension under the above clauses shall in the stations be printed in the Circuit in which they reside as 'without appointment'; they shall be expected to give such help to the Circuit as they are able, in appropriate cases shall be entitled to receive remuneration by the decision of the Circuit Meeting, and shall have all the rights and privileges of church members in that Circuit.

They retain their status (if already held) as local preachers and are members of the Circuit Meeting. (S.O. 510(1)(ii)).

(5) Students or probationers who do not wish to apply to be without appointment under Standing Order 774 or for deferment or suspension of probation under this Standing Order, or whose applications do not proceed or are not granted, and who will not be able to complete their probation and then to be stationed annually, shall withdraw from training. If subsequently they apply for reinstatement by the Conference, regard shall be had to the training they had received when they withdrew. If they are reinstated the calculation of their year of entry under Standing Order 800 shall disregard any earlier period of probation except to the extent that the Conference may otherwise direct upon their reception into Full Connexion, as empowered by those Standing Orders.

As to reinstatement see S.O. 761(12).

(6) A person granted deferment or suspension of probation as above shall in due course, with the permission of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, granted on application made through the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, commence or resume probation.

**726A Deferment or Suspension of Training.** A candidate or student presbyter or student deacon may apply to defer or suspend training and the provisions of Standing Order 726 shall apply as nearly as possible.

**727 Withdrawal from Training.** (1) The provisions of Standing Order 760 shall apply to the withdrawal of a presbyteral or diaconal probationer from training as they apply to the resignation of a presbyter or deacon, except that the advisory committee shall consist of an ex-President or ex-Vice-President appointed by the President, the Secretary of the Conference, who shall act as convener, the Chair and Superintendent concerned, and a tutor of the theological college or other training institution which the probationer attended and three other persons (who shall be members of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee) appointed by the convener.

For the oversight committee see S.O. 252.

(2) A student presbyter who wishes to withdraw from training shall give notice to the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the relevant training institution who shall report it to the college or course oversight committee concerned. The committee shall make a recommendation to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, which shall have the authority to accept the withdrawal and shall report any such acceptances to the Conference next following in its Presbyteral and Representative Sessions, with a recommendation to the Conference in its Presbyteral Session to what extent the status of the person concerned as a local preacher or member shall be affected. The Presbyteral Session shall in all such cases make a declaration as to such status and the declaration shall be reported to the Representative Session.

For the oversight committee see S.O. 252.

(3) A student deacon who wishes to withdraw from training shall give notice to the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the relevant training institution who shall

report it to the Connexional Team member responsible for diaconal training and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall consider the matter, giving opportunity for the student to meet the committee, and shall have the authority to accept the withdrawal, reporting any such acceptances to the Conference Diaconal Committee with a recommendation to that committee to what extent the status of the person concerned as a local preacher (if relevant) or member shall be affected. The Conference Diaconal Committee shall in all such cases make a declaration as to such status and the acceptance of withdrawal and declaration shall be reported to the Representative Session.

For the oversight committee see S.O. 252. For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(4) Where a person seeking to withdraw under this Standing Order is at the time of giving notice the subject of a complaint or charge under Part 11:

- (i) that person or the person or body with authority to accept such withdrawal may at any time before a decision is made under this Standing Order require that the complaint or charge is first disposed of in accordance with the provisions of that Part;
- (ii) if no person or body so requires, the provisions of Standing Order 1151(9) shall apply.

**728 Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination: Presbyters.** (1) (a) Before a presbyteral probationer is recommended to be received into Full Connexion the district probationers secretary shall ensure that the district Probationers Committee is provided with the reports and fulfils the requirements stipulated in Standing Order 725(4)(a).

(b) The probationer shall also meet with the committee for an oral examination conducted according to connexional guidelines which shall include questions regarding the probationer's commitment to the ministry and to the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Church, and his or her ability to understand, interpret and apply such traditional Methodist concepts and texts as are prescribed by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(c) The committee shall consider all the records, reports and interviews and vote to decide its judgment upon them and its recommendations.

(2) (a) The district probationers secretary shall present a summary of the reports presented to the district committee together with a report of the judgment of the committee and its recommendations to the Presbyteral Session of the Synod.

(b) Unless any presbyter in the Synod wishes to ask supplementary questions the examination of ordinands in the Synod shall be confined to the asking of three questions:

- (i) Do you believe and preach our doctrines?
- (ii) Do you accept and will you administer our discipline?
- (iii) Are you still as convinced of your call to the ministry as you were when you were accepted?

(c) The Presbyteral Session of the Synod shall record its judgment about the fitness of each ordinand to be received into Full Connexion. The reports of the Synod shall be forwarded to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Committee in time for it to review them, take any appropriate action and prepare its own report for the Presbyteral Session of the Conference.

(3) In connection with the Synod the Chair shall conduct or arrange for a service for the public testimony of all presbyteral probationers in the District who are recommended to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference.

(4) Before the Conference each year the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall arrange a retreat for all presbyteral ordinands to prepare themselves for reception into Full Connexion and ordination.

(5) (a) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Committee shall make recommendations about each ordinand to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference. The Conference shall make its judgment on the recommendations and then resolve by a standing vote that those who are judged to have duly completed their pre-ordination training and probation shall be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters and, if not already ordained, be ordained.

(b) Those judged by the Presbyteral Session to be fit for such admission shall be presented to the Representative Session of the Conference for admission into Full Connexion. The Representative Session shall by a standing vote receive them into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters and resolve that, if not already ordained, they shall be ordained.

See cl. 23(h) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part I) as to the respective functions of the two sessions of the Conference in relation to reception into Full Connexion and ordination.

(c) Only those may be received into Full Connexion with the Conference who are willing to baptize infants in appropriate circumstances.

(6) (a) Those who have been accepted into Full Connexion with the Conference shall, unless already ordained or to be ordained elsewhere, be ordained in a service held during the meeting of the same Conference, at which the President or a deputy being a presbyter shall preside.

(b) The names of those who have already been ordained shall be so identified in the Agenda or otherwise circulated to the Conference and recorded in the Daily Record. Information shall similarly be given as to the place at which each ordinand is to be ordained.

As to ordinands in the Welsh language work see S.O. 495.

(c) Each ordinand shall be ordained by the laying-on of hands with prayer by the President or a deputy being a presbyter, assisted by two other ministers in accordance with Standing Order 729, one of whom may be nominated by the ordinand.

(7) Subject to Standing Order 495 no person shall be ordained in the name of the Methodist Church except by a resolution of the Conference, or, in cases of emergency where the probationer is serving overseas, of the [...] **Ministries Committee**.

S.O. 495 deals with ordinands in the Welsh language work.



## Part 7 Presbyters and Deacons (1) – Status and Stationing [728A]

**728A Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination: Deacons.** (1) (a) Before a diaconal probationer is recommended to be received into Full Connexion the district probationers secretary shall ensure that the district Probationers Committee is provided with the reports stipulated in Standing Order 725(5)(a).

(b) The probationer shall meet with the committee for an oral examination conducted according to connexional guidelines which shall include questions regarding the probationer's commitment to diaconal ministry, to the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Church and to the Methodist Diaconal Order.

(c) The committee shall consider all the records, reports and interviews and vote to decide its judgment upon them and its recommendations.

(d) The Warden shall present a summary of the reports presented to the district committee together with a report of the judgment of the committee and its recommendations to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(e) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall consider the reports, take any appropriate action and prepare its own report for the Conference Diaconal Committee.

For the oversight committee see S.O. 252. For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(2) Each Chair of District shall arrange for the diaconal probationers who are recommended to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference (the ordinands) to be presented to the Representative Session of the Synod and to be included in the public testimony service held under Standing Order 728(3).

(3) Before the Conference, the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall arrange for a retreat for all diaconal ordinands to prepare themselves for reception into Full Connexion and ordination.

(4) (a) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall make recommendations about each ordinand to the Conference Diaconal Committee. That committee shall make its judgment on the recommendations and then resolve that those who are judged to have duly completed their pre-ordination training and probation shall be received into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and, if not already ordained, be ordained.

(b) Those judged by the Conference Diaconal Committee to be fit for such admission shall be presented to the Representative Session of the Conference for admission into Full Connexion. The Representative Session shall by a standing vote receive them into Full Connexion with the Conference as deacons and resolve that, if not already ordained, they shall be ordained.

See cl. 25A(h) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part I) as to the respective functions of the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Representative Session of the Conference in relation to reception into Full Connexion and ordination.

(5) (a) Those who have been accepted into Full Connexion by the Conference shall, unless already ordained or to be ordained elsewhere, be ordained in a service held during the meeting of the same Conference, at which the President or a deputy being a presbyter shall preside.

(b) The names of those who have already been ordained shall be so identified in the Agenda or otherwise circulated to the Conference and recorded in the Daily Record. Information shall similarly be given as to the place at which each ordinand is to be ordained.

(c) Each ordinand shall be ordained by the laying-on of hands with prayer by the President or a deputy being a presbyter, assisted by the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order or a deputy (being a deacon).

(6) Ordination to the office and ministry of a deacon in the Church of God is held in the Methodist Church to be for life.

(7) No person shall be ordained in the name of the Methodist Church except by a resolution of the Conference, or, in cases of emergency where the probationer is serving overseas, of the [...] **Ministries Committee**.

(8) Every person received into Full Connexion as a deacon becomes thereby also a full member of the Methodist Diaconal Order. Membership of the Order continues whilst the deacon remains in Full Connexion, and resignation from either Full Connexion or the Order automatically entails resignation from the other.

For the Methodist Diaconal Order see S.O. 750.

**729 Ministers Assisting at Ordinations.** (1) Anyone assisting at an ordination in accordance with Standing Order 495(2) or 728(6)(c) shall be either:

- (i) a presbyter in Full Connexion or a person ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in the Irish or another autonomous conference; or
- (ii) a person ordained to the ministry of the word and sacraments in a church whose ministry is recognised by the Methodist Church.

(2) No person shall be invited to assist under head (ii) of clause (1) above unless the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee is satisfied that he or she meets the requirements there laid down, has been made aware in writing of the view of the Methodist Church that to participate in the laying-on of hands in a Methodist ordination service implies the intention to ordain to the presbyterate in the Church of God, and has subsequently indicated that he or she is willing to participate. Where necessary the Faith and Order Committee shall be asked to investigate a particular case.

For the Faith and Order Committee see S.O. 210.

## Section 73 Transfer and Recognition

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**730 Ministerial Transfer between Churches.** (1) It shall be competent for the Conference to transfer presbyters and deacons in Full Connexion to other conferences and to other churches with which we are in communion, when mutually approved, on the understanding that on the completion of such a transfer all financial arrangements hitherto existing between the minister and the British Conference shall come to an end. Upon any such transfer of a deacon, the deacon shall cease to be a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

As to persons 'recognised and regarded' as presbyters or deacons see S.O. 732.

(1A) The Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation shall act as the Transfer Committee in respect of all applications to be received into Full Connexion by the Conference as presbyters or deacons by transfer.

For the Committee for the Discernment of Ordained Vocation see S.O.250 and, as to its functions in relation to candidates, S.O. 714.

(2) (a) Persons ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in other conferences or other Christian churches, ordained deacons of the United Methodist Church or of a church with a three-fold order of ministry and officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters shall apply in writing to the President, by the date annually determined by the Transfer Committee, and the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

(b) Ordained deacons of other conferences or Christian churches or officers of the Salvation Army who wish to be admitted as deacons in Full Connexion with the Conference shall apply in writing to the President, by the date annually determined by the Transfer Committee, and the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) Subject to clause (5B) below the appropriate Connexional Team member responsible for presbyteral or diaconal candidates shall obtain:

- (i) particulars of the applicant's ordination, if any, and ministry or service to date;
- (ii) references from two referees nominated by the applicant, one of whom shall be a lay person;
- (iiA) evidence that before applying under clause (2) above the applicant held a conversation or conversations about the proposed application with the appropriate senior officer in the applicant's conference or church, and of their content and outcome;
- (iii) reports by a responsible representative of the applicant's existing denomination and by a Methodist presbyter or deacon who knows the applicant, neither being one of the referees in (ii) above;
- (iiiA) evidence that the applicant has the legal right to work in the United Kingdom;
- (iv) a signed assurance by the applicant that the applicant:
  - (a) if offering for the presbyterate, believes and will preach our doctrines and is willing to accept and administer our discipline, or
  - (b) if offering for the diaconate, assents to the doctrinal standards set out in clause 4 of the Deed of Union and is willing to accept Methodist discipline and the obligations of membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order; and
  - (c) in either case accepts the obligation to be at the disposal of the Conference for stationing;
- (v) a report from a connexional assessor who shall meet the applicant and make such other enquiries as to the applicant's suitability to exercise ministry effectively in the context of the Methodist Church, together with a preliminary assessment on a connexional proforma of what might reasonably be expected of the applicant's future availability for stationing and the terms and conditions of service under which the applicant might serve;
- (vi) a resilience assessment report on the applicant provided by a connexional psychologist in accordance with connexional guidelines, which the applicant will be invited to sign before it is submitted.

As to (iv), note that 'stationing' covers the whole range of settings to which the Conference assigns a person to exercise presbyteral or diaconal ministry (Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1), cl. 1 (xxxi); S.O. 700 and 701; S.O. 780(1)). Note in particular that this includes the possibility of being stationed as a supernumerary (S.O. 780(1)(x) and S.O. 791(1)).

For the connexional psychologist see S.O. 713(4).

(5) Subject to clause (5B) below the Team member shall also ensure that an occupational health assessment shall be conducted for each applicant recommended by the Transfer Committee. The assessment shall be conducted in accordance with the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) with any necessary modifications and, in particular, substituting 'applicant' for 'candidate' throughout.

(5A) (a) The assessment shall be sent to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee who shall advise the responsible connexional officers about any adjustments that, for reasons of physical, mental or emotional health, or a combination

of such reasons, may need to be put in place to enable an applicant to carry out the duties reasonably to be expected of a deacon or presbyter. It may also recommend that the responsible connexional officers make changes to the category in which the Transfer Committee reports on the applicant to the Conference under clause (6) below.

(b) The results of this assessment shall be disclosed to the applicant.

(c) If the applicant wishes to appeal against the assessment the matter shall be dealt with in accordance with clause (10) below.

For the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee see S.O. 252.

(5B) In the case of an applicant who is recognised and regarded as a presbyter or a deacon under clause 43(b), 44(b), 45(a) or 45A(a) of the Deed of Union the requirements of clauses (4) and (5) above shall apply only to the extent determined by the Transfer Committee.

(6) The application shall be considered by the Transfer Committee. Clauses (1) to (4) and (7) of Standing Order 714 shall apply with any necessary modifications and, in particular, substituting 'applicant' for 'candidate' throughout.

(7) The Transfer Committee shall have three categories in which it may report on applicants:

- (i) Recommended: those applicants in respect of whom the committee by a majority of 75% or more recommends that the application be unconditionally granted, subject to clause (9) below;
- (ii) Conditionally recommended: those applicants in respect of whom the committee by a majority of 75% or more recommends that the application be granted subject to the fulfilment within a specified period of a specified course of training and/or some other specified condition;
- (iii) Not recommended: those applicants whom the committee does not recommend by a sufficient majority or judges to be unsuitable.

(8) The committee shall not recommend that an application be granted unless:

- (i) the applicant has given the signed assurance required in clause (4)(iv) above and has satisfied the committee of adherence to Methodist doctrines and discipline and, if offering for the diaconate, of commitment to the life of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (ii) the Stationing Committee has approved outline provisions for the stationing of the minister including proposals about the minister's exercise of ministry and terms and conditions of service, and the Transfer Committee is satisfied that the applicant is willing and able to fulfil them.

For the Methodist Diaconal Order, see S.O. 750.

(9) If the committee recommends that an application be granted or conditionally granted it shall also recommend:

- (i) whether the applicant should be admitted by the Conference forthwith or at some future specified date;
- (ii) whether the applicant should be admitted into Full Connexion or upon probation;

- (iii) whether on admission into Full Connexion the applicant should be so admitted as a person who has been ordained minister of the word and sacraments or deacon in a church whose ministry is recognised by the Methodist Church, or should be so ordained by the Conference;
- (iv) in what way the applicant should be stationed for the purposes of Standing Order 780(1).

(9A) (a) This clause relates to applicants admitted upon probation, and in this clause they are referred to as “ordained probationers”.

(b) Ordained probationers shall be under the oversight of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee, which shall determine the content of their training, including any orientation studies to be undertaken at the Queen’s Foundation, Birmingham.

(c) The length of probation shall normally be two years, but the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee may in what it judges to be exceptional circumstances set a shorter or longer period.

(d) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall obtain and take into account annual reports on each ordained probationer, as follows:

- (i) from the Queen’s Foundation on any orientation studies undertaken there;
- (ii) from their Superintendent an assessment according to competencies prescribed by the committee;
- (iii) from their Chair of District an assessment according to those competencies;
- (iv) in the case of diaconal probationers, from the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order an assessment according to those competencies, and of how they inhabit the diaconal religious order and order of ministry.

(e) The Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall annually make recommendations to the Conference on the progress of each ordained probationer.

Despite the choice of the expression “ordained probationers” this clause (9A) applies to all applicants admitted upon probation, even if not ordained, for example former Salvation Army officers.

(10) The applicant may, by notice in writing to the appropriate Team member responsible for candidates for the presbyterate or the diaconate, apply for a review of the recommendation of the committee, specifying the grounds of appeal. The notice shall be given so as to reach the Team member within fourteen days of notification in writing to the applicant of the decision of the committee. The appeal shall be dealt with under Standing Order 716(2) to (8) substituting “applicant” for “candidate” throughout, except that:

- (i) there shall be no other appellant than the applicant;
- (ii) the phrase “Stage One and Stage Two of” should be omitted in Standing Order 716(3), and “relevant connexional officer” substituted for “Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee”;
- (iii) the phrase “and any other appellant specified in clause (1) above” in Standing Order 716(4) should be omitted;

- (iv) the phrase “relevant connexional officer” should be substituted for “Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee” in Standing Order 716(8).

(11) [revoked]

(12) In the case of an application by a person resident outside the home Districts the [...] **Ministries Committee** may direct such variations of procedure as may, in its judgment, be necessitated by difficulty or expense of travel or communication.

(13) (a) If the Transfer Committee recommends that an application be accepted even though the applicant’s own conference or equivalent authority refuses its consent to a transfer, the recommendation shall be reported to the [...] **Ministries Committee**, which shall consider the implications of the case for the relations between the Conference and the other conference or church, and shall advise the Conference whether the committee’s recommendation be accepted.

(b) The Conference, if it agrees to accept the application, shall record that the applicant is received into Full Connexion or probation, as the case may be, but shall not refer to transfer.

(14) The Presbyteral Session of the Conference and the Conference Diaconal Committee shall consider the reports received from the Transfer Committee and (if applicable) the Appeals Committee on all applications for transfer under this Standing Order and make recommendations to the Representative Session of the Conference. No applicant shall be recommended or conditionally recommended for acceptance except by a vote of three fourths of the members of the recommending body present and voting. A similar majority shall be required for acceptance or conditional acceptance by the Conference in its Representative Session.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18. See cl. 25A(h) in particular as to the respective functions of the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Representative Session of the Conference in relation to reception into Full Connexion.

**731 Former Ministers of other Churches applying to be received into Full Connexion.** (1) This Standing Order applies to persons who have been ordained to the ministry of the word and sacraments or to the diaconate by an autonomous conference or in a church whose presbyteral ministry or diaconate is recognised by the Methodist Church but who are no longer recognised as such ministers or deacons by that conference or church.

(2) Where such a person applies to be received into Full Connexion then the procedures of Standing Order 730 shall apply with the following variations:

- (i) The Transfer Committee shall inquire into the reasons why the applicant is no longer regarded as a presbyter or deacon, and shall be satisfied that, if the applicant had been applying for reinstatement under Standing Order 761, the application would have been granted.
- (ii) The view of the applicant’s previous conference or church as to the application shall be ascertained.
- (iii) Whether the applicant is resident in the home Districts or elsewhere, the report of the assessor as under Standing Order 730(5) and (5A) shall in

no case be omitted, unless for good reason, stated in the report of the Transfer Committee.

- (iv) If the applicant's conference or church formally registers its objection to the application the provisions of Standing Order 730(13) shall apply.

(3) Applications by persons not within clause (1) above or within Standing Order 730(2) shall be dealt with under Section 71.

**732 Persons Recognised and Regarded as Presbyters or Deacons.** (1) Ministers of the Irish Conference admitted into Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland are listed in the Minutes of Conference and by virtue of clause 43(b) of the Deed of Union are recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion.

(2) The names of ministers of word and sacraments of other autonomous conferences who are to be appointed to the stations shall be reported to the Conference each year and those so named shall by virtue of clause 44(b) of the Deed of Union be recognised and regarded as presbyters of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion during the period of that appointment.

(3) (a) The persons to be recognised and regarded as presbyters or deacons of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion by virtue of clause 45 or clause 45A respectively of the Deed of Union shall be specified annually by the Conference for the ensuing year, and their names shall be printed in the Minutes.

For cl. 45 and cl. 45A of the Deed of Union see Book II, Part I.

As to the proposal of names to the Conference see sub-cl. (c) below.

(b) Persons seeking to be so specified must in the case of presbyters have been ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in a church whose ministry is recognised by the Methodist Church or in the case of deacons have been ordained to the diaconate in an autonomous conference or in a church whose diaconate is recognised by the Methodist Church.

(c) All such persons seeking to be so specified must have the permission of the appropriate authority in their own church for the application, where possible as part of an appropriate formal agreement between that church and the Conference under Standing Order 736(1). They shall be required to make a declaration that during the period of their appointment by the Conference to the stations they will not so preach or expound God's holy word or perform any act as to deny or repudiate the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church. Persons seeking to be so specified as deacons shall also be required to make a declaration that during the period of their appointment by the Conference they will associate with the members of the Methodist Diaconal Order and will share in such privileges and fulfil such obligations of being a member of the Order as the Order deems appropriate.

For the right of those recognised and regarded as deacons to attend and speak at the MDO Convocation see S.O. 751(2).

(d) All such applications shall be made to the Secretary of the Conference, and in the case of deacons also to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and in either case by the date annually determined by the Transfer Committee under Standing Order



730(2)(a) or (b), as applicable. The Secretary shall ensure that the applications are assessed by the same connexional bodies as deal with those offering for reception into Full Connexion by transfer, and according to similar criteria, and shall bring them to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, with recommendations.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(e) Without prejudice to the unfettered nature of its discretion in each case, the Conference shall in exercising its powers under this clause have regard to whether the persons in question are within a conference or church with whom arrangements such as are specified in Standing Order 736(1) subsist.

(4) All persons who by virtue of clauses 43, 44, 45 and 45A of the Deed of Union are recognised and regarded as presbyters or deacons of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion are here referred to as presbyters or deacons respectively and collectively as ministers, whatever may be their title by the usage of their own church.

(5) Such ministers shall serve under the same terms and conditions and be as available for stationing as presbyters or deacons in Full Connexion, and all the principles of presbyteral or diaconal ministry set out in Standing Orders 700 and 701 shall apply to them. They shall be accountable both for their presbyteral or diaconal practice and for their general vocation and development as presbyters or deacons to the Conference in the first instance and, through the Conference, to their own conferences or churches and in the event of a complaint or charge the provisions of Part 11 of Standing Orders apply accordingly (subject to the modifications set out in clauses (4) to (7) of Standing Order 1151).

(6) The Conference or the appropriate committee may make recommendations to a minister's own conference or church as to supernumeraryship, deployment under the terms of Standing Order 780, transfer to another conference or church, resignation from the ministry or any corresponding or similar subject, but the authority on any such subject shall remain with the minister's own conference or church.

For supernumeraryship see Section 79, for transfers S.O. 730 and for resignation S.O. 760.

**733 Persons Authorised to Serve as Presbyters or Deacons.** (1) The Conference may authorise persons who are not presbyters or deacons in Full Connexion nor recognised or regarded as such to serve the Methodist Church during the ensuing connexional year to the extent specified in clause (5) below, and in these Standing Orders and in the stations such a person is referred to as being 'authorised to serve the Church as a presbyter' or 'authorised to serve the Church as a deacon' respectively.

A person so authorised does not thereby become eligible for funds held under trust or otherwise for Methodist presbyters or deacons.

(2) A person seeking to be so authorised must have been ordained to the ministry of word and sacraments in a church whose ministry is recognised by the Methodist Church or have been ordained to the diaconate in an autonomous conference or in a church whose diaconate is recognised by the Methodist Church. Such persons must have the permission of the appropriate authority in their own church for the application, where possible as part of an appropriate formal agreement between that church

and the Conference under Standing Order 736(1). This granting of permission shall include a provision that those conferences and churches will permit them to serve the Methodist Church and to undertake leadership of pastoral care, worship and mission, or exercise pastoral responsibility, or, in the case of ministers, exercise pastoral charge on its behalf, as appropriate, and that their own disciplinary processes will ensure that they exercise accountability under discipline to the Methodist Church in so doing. Persons who apply under the terms of this Standing Order shall also be required before being so authorised to make a declaration that they will not during the period of authorisation so preach or expound God's holy word or perform any act as to deny or repudiate the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church. Persons seeking to be so authorised to serve as deacons shall also be required to make a declaration that during the period of their appointment by the Conference they will share in the life of the Methodist Diaconal Order and will associate with its members in such ways as the Order deems appropriate.

For the right of those authorised to serve as deacons to attend and speak at the MDO Convocation see S.O. 751(2).

(3) All such applications shall be made in a prescribed form, in the case of ministers to the Secretary of the Conference and in the case of deacons to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Secretary of the Conference. The Secretary shall ensure that the applicants are interviewed, and that their cases are considered by the relevant district Policy Committee and assessed by the officers of the connexional bodies which also deal with those offering for reception into Full Connexion by transfer. The Secretary shall then bring them to the Conference with recommendations.

The reference to 'minister' in this Standing Order recognises that not all churches use the term 'presbyter'.

(4) In cases arising after the meeting of the Conference the Secretary may bring the recommendation concerning an application to the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf, and where the urgency of the situation is judged to demand it, the President or Vice-President may grant to an eligible person an authorisation having immediate effect and continuing until the 31st August following the next meeting of the Conference.

(5) Persons authorised under this Standing Order shall be appointed by the Conference to fulfil presbyteral or diaconal duties in a circuit or other appointment within the control of the Church. They may be so authorised whilst concurrently being appointed by their own conferences or churches to fulfil ministerial or diaconal duties on their behalf. In giving its authorisation under this Standing Order the Conference or, as the case may be, the President or Vice-President shall indicate whether the duties to be undertaken by a person so appointed involve the leadership of pastoral care, worship and mission, or the exercise of pastoral responsibility, or the exercise of pastoral charge, and shall specify the Circuit in which that person shall reside for the purpose of the stations and the person's name shall appear under that Circuit accordingly.

(6) Persons who are authorised to serve the Church as presbyters or deacons are accountable for their general vocation and development as ministers or deacons to their own conferences or churches. As required by clause (2) above they are accountable to the Conference for the specific tasks which they are authorised by the

## *Part 7 Presbyters and Deacons (1) – Status and Stationing [733A]*

Conference to undertake on its behalf in particular appointments. In the event of any proposed complaint against such a person which would, in the case of a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion or recognised and regarded as such, be dealt with under Part 11 of Standing Orders, the matter shall be referred to the person's own conference or church to be dealt with unless otherwise stipulated in any arrangement made under Standing Order 736.

(7) (a) The authorisation given under this Standing Order in the case of those authorised to serve as presbyters shall be to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, to conduct services, to preach and in addition to exercise pastoral responsibility and, where appropriate, pastoral charge in Local Churches or such other ministry as shall be specified in the terms of the appointment, but not to fulfil the duties of Superintendent. All shall be exercised under the direction of the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the person so authorised resides. In respect of district appointments all shall be exercised under the direction of the Chair of the District.

(b) The authorisation given under this Standing Order in the case of those authorised to serve as deacons shall be to administer the sacrament of Baptism, to conduct services, to preach where authorised to do so in the person's own church and to undertake pastoral work in Local Churches or such other ministry as shall be specified in the terms of the appointment. In respect of circuit appointments all shall be exercised under the direction of the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the person so authorised resides. In respect of district appointments all shall be exercised under the direction of the Chair of the District.

Authorised persons are, *ex officio*, members of the Circuit Meeting (S.O. 510(1)(i)) and of the relevant Church Councils (S.O. 610(4)(iii)). As to circuit and local committees and offices see S.O. 503(1)(i), 552, 606(1)(f), 643(1) and the Standing Orders dealing with particular committees and offices.

**733A Associate Presbyters or Deacons.** (1) The Conference may grant the status of associate presbyter or deacon to persons who are not presbyters or deacons in Full Connexion nor recognised or regarded as such nor authorised to serve as such, and thereby affirm and own their ministries to the extent specified in clause (3) below during the ensuing connexional year. In these Standing Orders and in the stations such a person is referred to as being an 'associate presbyter' or 'associate deacon' respectively.

(2) The requirements of clause (2) to (4) of Standing Order 733 with any necessary modifications shall apply to a person seeking to be granted the status of associate presbyter or associate deacon as if the applicant were seeking to be authorised to serve the Church as a presbyter or deacon, with the exceptions that the forms of service and accountability are limited to the extent set out in clauses (3) and (4) of this Standing Order, that the applicant is not required to be interviewed and that the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf may grant the status on the ground of furthering ecumenical cooperation rather than the urgency of the situation.

(3) Persons granted the status of associate presbyter or deacon under this Standing Order shall be permitted by the Conference to undertake specific acts of ministry in and on behalf of particular Local Churches or institutions to the extent that their own

churches allow them. Those so permitted shall normally be appointed concurrently by their own churches to fulfil ministerial or diaconal duties on their behalf. The particular acts of ministry and the extent to which and places in which they may be exercised shall be specified in the agreement between the Conference and their own churches under Standing Order 736(1). For those granted the status of associate presbyter they may include particular functions of the ministry of the word and the ministry of sacrament, such as preaching, conducting services and administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and particular functions of the ministry of pastoral responsibility in the sense of undertaking pastoral work and offering pastoral care, but not of exercising pastoral charge. For those granted the status of associate deacon they may include particular functions of the ministry of witness through service such as administering the sacrament of Baptism, conducting services, preaching where authorised to do so in their own churches and undertaking pastoral work in Local Churches or such other ministry as shall be specified in the terms of the appointment. In granting the status of associate presbyter or deacon under this Standing Order the Conference or, as the case may be, the President or Vice-President shall in each case specify the Circuits or other bodies in which that status shall pertain.

(4) Persons who are granted the status of associate presbyter or deacon serve under the terms and conditions of service of their own churches and are accountable to those churches for all their ministerial practice, including that undertaken in or on behalf of the Church. The granting of permission by their churches shall include a provision that those churches shall ensure that in so far as the people concerned are affecting or representing local Methodist churches or institutions they shall act in ways acceptable to the Conference and in consultation with the appropriate Superintendent or Chair of District. In the event of any proposed complaint against such a person which would, in the case of a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion or recognised and regarded as such, be dealt with under Part 11 of Standing Orders, the matter shall be referred to that person's own conference or church to be dealt with unless otherwise stipulated in any arrangement made under Standing Order 736.

#### **734 Persons in Training for Ordained Ministries of other Conferences and Churches.**

(1) Subject to agreement with the conference or church concerned the Conference may authorise a person to serve the Methodist Church as a presbyteral or diaconal probationer during the ensuing connexional year. Such a person shall be in training for the ministry of word and sacraments or for the diaconate of another conference or of a church whose ministry is recognised by the Methodist Church. If ordained to the diaconate of a church with a three-fold ministry, and in training or on trial for the priesthood of that church, the person shall be authorised to serve as a presbyteral probationer. In these Standing Orders and in the stations a person authorised under this clause is referred to as being 'authorised to serve the Church as a presbyteral probationer' or 'authorised to serve the Church as a diaconal probationer' respectively.

(2) (a) Persons seeking to be so authorised must have achieved the necessary qualifications for them to be authorised to begin public ministry in their own conference or church, and must have adequately undertaken pastoral work under appropriate

supervision and oversight in or on behalf of that conference or church. Such persons shall be required before being so authorised to make a declaration that they will not during the period of authorisation so preach or expound God's holy word or perform any act as to deny or repudiate the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church, and must have the permission of the appropriate authority in their own church for the application. Persons seeking to be so authorised as diaconal probationers shall also be required to make a declaration that during the period of their appointment by the Conference they will accept the status of probationer membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order and will share in the privileges and fulfil the obligations of such membership.

(b) The appropriate Connexional Team member shall in each case obtain from the candidate and from the appropriate authorities in the applicant's own conference or church and training institution the assurances required by clause (2)(a) above.

(3) The provisions of Standing Order 733 shall apply except that in relation to presbyteral and diaconal probationers and ordained deacons in training for the presbyterate of other conferences or churches serving under the Conference such of the procedure prescribed by Standing Orders 724, 725, 728(1) to (4) and 728A(1) to (3) and Part 11 or by the corresponding regulations of their own conferences or churches shall be carried out by the Synods, other district bodies and connexional committees with such modifications as may be agreed between the Conference and the other conference or church concerned in each case.

For arrangements with other conferences and churches see also S.O. 736.

(4) Presbyteral and diaconal probationers received into Full Connexion by their own conferences while serving under the Conference shall at the request of the conference concerned be ordained presbyters or deacons at the next convenient ordination service appointed by the Conference.

**735 Permission to Serve another Conference or Church.** (1) Overseas appointments under Standing Order 780(1)(vi) and permissions under Standing Order 773 are not within the scope of this Standing Order.

S.O. 773 deals with applications for permission to study.

(2) In all other cases where a minister wishes to be permitted to serve another conference or church, application shall be made to the Stationing Advisory Committee which shall make recommendations in the case of a presbyter to the Secretary of the Conference and in the case of a deacon to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Secretary of the Conference. The Secretary shall bring them to the Conference or, in cases arising after the meeting of the Conference where the urgency of the situation demands it, to the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf.

(3) Permission shall only be given to serve a conference or church whose ministry is recognised by the Methodist Church.

(4) Permission may be given on terms that the minister will be accountable to the other conference or church for the minister's presbyteral or diaconal practice and general vocation and development as a presbyter or deacon and, through that conference or church, to the Conference, if such terms are agreed by the Conference and the conference or church concerned.

(5) In every other case, any permission given shall be on terms that the minister will be accountable to that conference or church for the specific tasks which the minister is authorised by that conference or church to undertake on its behalf, but will continue to be accountable to the Conference for the minister's general vocation and development as a presbyter or deacon.

**736 Arrangements with other Conferences and Churches.** (1) The Conference shall seek to enter into mutually acceptable arrangements with other conferences and churches as to the well-being and terms of service of and their respective responsibilities for ministers of one conference or church serving for the time being under another.

(2) The names of those included in the alphabetical lists of ministers and deacons in the *Minutes of Conference* at the time of the formation of a united church or establishment of an autonomous conference, and who became presbyteral ministers or deacons of that church or conference, shall continue to be recorded in a list maintained by the Connexional Team so long as they live and continue to be such ministers or deacons in their respective churches.

## Section 74 Full Connexion

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**740 Connexion with the Conference.** (1) (a) Presbyters admitted into Full Connexion or recognised and regarded as such enter into a covenant relationship with the Conference as laid down in Standing Order 700. In this relationship they accept a common discipline of stationing and collegially exercise pastoral responsibility for the Church on behalf of the Conference in the stations to which they are appointed, working in collaboration with others, in the courts of the church and individually, who bear proper responsibilities in those situations.

(b) Deacons admitted into Full Connexion or recognised and regarded as such enter into a covenant relationship with the Conference as laid down in Standing Order 701. In this relationship they accept a common discipline of stationing and collegially exercise servant ministry in the Church, collaborating with others and sharing in the leadership of the pastoral care, worship and mission in the stations to which they are appointed. In addition they undertake the privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order as a dispersed religious order.

(2) Presbyters and deacons admitted into Full Connexion or recognised and regarded as such are required to uphold the authority of the Conference in the life of the church and to observe its discipline. To this end they shall study its proceedings, loyally carry out its directions and make its decisions known. When appointed to do so they shall attend its sessions and take part in its deliberations. Deacons, as members of a dispersed religious order, shall also attend the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

(3) Probationer presbyters and deacons, although not in Full Connexion, are required to uphold the authority of the Conference in the life of the church and to observe its discipline. To this end they shall study its proceedings, loyally carry out its directions and make its decisions known.

(4) Persons authorised to serve as presbyters or deacons in accordance with Standing Order 733 are invited to take part in the wider life of the church as far as their circumstances allow and Standing Orders permit.

**741 Attendance at Synod.** Except as provided by Standing Orders **286(4)(b)**, 806(6) and 791(5) every presbyter, every deacon who is not a supernumerary and every probationer, unless, in any case, excused by dispensation of the Chair, is required

to attend the Synod of which he or she is a member and to remain throughout its sessions. A dispensation of absence is to be given only upon compelling grounds. The Chair shall report to the Synod all dispensations for its approval.

By direction of the Conference this Standing Order is to be reprinted year by year in the Chair's note summoning the presbyters and presbyteral probationers to the Synod.

For deacons and diaconal probationers, this Standing Order applies to attendance at the Representative Session of the Synod.

S.O. 791(5) provides that supernumerary presbyters need attend only the Presbyteral Session of the Synod.

S.O. 286(4)(b) provides for forces chaplains to attend the Synods of the Districts in which they are serving, although they are members of the Synod specified for that purpose in the stations.

S.O. 806(6) provides that a person on leave in relation to parenthood is excused from attending the Synod, but may attend, except during compulsory maternity leave, upon informing the Chair of the intention to do so.

As to the Synod of which a presbyter, deacon or probationer is a member see S.O. 410(1)(ii) and (2) and 785(8)(a).

As to attendance by deacons (including supernumeraries), probationers and students at the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order see S.O. 751(1).

**742 Accountability and Mutual Support.** (1) Presbyters and presbyteral probationers and deacons and diaconal probationers shall meet regularly, as separate orders of ministry and where appropriate together, to confer together, encourage and watch over one another in love in respect of the exercise of their presbyteral or diaconal ministry.

For the covenant relationship in which presbyters and deacons account for their presbyteral or diaconal ministry and are accounted for by the Church see S.O. 700(2) and (6) and 701(2) and (8).

(2) (a) Presbyters and presbyteral probationers shall fulfil their responsibilities under this Standing Order in the Presbyteral Synod under the direction of the Chair of the District and, between meetings of the Synod, in staff meetings, leadership team meetings or other appropriate meetings in the Circuit under the direction of the Superintendent of the circuit in which they reside for the purpose of the stations.

(b) Supernumerary presbyters undertaking formal pastoral work under Standing Order 792(2) shall attend the appropriate meetings in the Circuit.

S.O. 792(3) requires that where it is desired that a supernumerary exercise pastoral charge in a Circuit, the supernumerary shall apply to return to the active work in accordance with S.O. 793.

(3) (a) Deacons and diaconal probationers shall fulfil their responsibilities under this Standing Order in the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order and between meetings of the Convocation in meetings of area groups under the direction of the Warden of the Order, and in staff meetings, leadership team meetings or other appropriate meetings under the direction of the Superintendent of the Circuit in which they reside for the purpose of the stations.

(b) Supernumerary deacons undertaking formal pastoral work under Standing Order 792(2) shall attend the appropriate meetings in the Circuit.

For attendance at the Presbyteral Synod and its purposes see S.O. 741 and 791(5) and Section 48.

For circuit staff meetings see S.O. 523, and for circuit leadership team meetings see S.O. 515(2) and 531(3).



For the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order see Section 75.

For the participation of supernumerary ministers see Section 79.

**743 Ministerial Development.** (1) (a) This Standing Order applies to:

- (i) every presbyter or deacon in circuit or district appointment, every District Chair, the Warden and deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (ii) every supernumerary who has entered into a formal agreement with a Circuit to undertake pastoral responsibility in one or more Local Churches.

(b) Every such person shall engage in ministerial development review, a process which enables each such presbyter or deacon to reflect, with input from others, on how his or her ministry is being experienced and fulfilled both in relation to the Church as a whole and within the particular context in which his or her ministry is being exercised.

(c) *[revoked]*

(2) Guidance about the process shall be issued by the Ministries Committee.

**743A Reflective Supervision.** (1) (a) This Standing Order applies to:

- (i) every presbyter or deacon or presbyteral or diaconal probationer in circuit or district appointment, every District Chair, the Warden and deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (ii) every supernumerary who has entered into a formal agreement with a Circuit to undertake pastoral responsibility in one or more Local Churches;
- (iii) such other persons as are required by the connexional Reflective Supervision Policy to engage in reflective supervision.

(b) Every such person shall engage in reflective supervision, an exploratory and reflective process in which a supervisee meets with a trained supervisor to reflect on their vocation and practice, with a view to this reflection providing support for the responsible exercise of the grace of ministry.

(2) Reflective supervision shall be undertaken in accordance with the guidance about the process contained in the connexional Reflective Supervision Policy.

'Supervision' in the context of this Standing Order means 'reflective supervision'. Where 'supervision' is used elsewhere in Standing Orders it may be used in other senses or applications of the word (for example in some disciplinary or lay employment contexts), which may include the possibility of 'reflective supervision' but will not always do so, according to the context and purpose of the particular Standing Order.

**744 Sabbaticals.** (1) Subject to the following clauses of this Standing Order a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion stationed in an appointment within the control of the Church shall (in the performance of his or her duties as a minister) at intervals undertake a sabbatical, that is a period of release from the ordinary duties of the appointment, in addition to normal holidays, for the purpose of pursuing an approved programme of study, research, work or experience.

(2) Normally the length of the sabbatical shall be three months. Special permission is required for any longer period.

(3) (a) Subject to Standing Order 807A(6), the first year in which a minister may take a sabbatical shall normally be as follows:

- (i) for ministers whose year of entry is in or before 2010, the tenth year of travel;
- (ii) for ministers whose year of entry is 2011 or 2012, the year 2019/2020;
- (iii) for ministers whose year of entry is in or after 2013, the seventh year of travel.

(b) Subject to Standing Order 807A(6), the years in which subsequent sabbaticals may be taken shall normally be each seventh year of travel after that specified in sub-clause (a) above.

(c) A sabbatical may for good reason be taken one year earlier or later than that specified in sub-clause (a) or (b) above, and in particular shall not be taken in the first year of a new appointment. Special permission shall be required for any greater departure from the normal dates.

(4) Before a sabbatical is taken, the following require approval:

- (i) the dates of release and return;
- (ii) the programme;
- (iii) arrangements for covering the ordinary duties of the appointment;
- (iv) arrangements for the pastoral support of the participant's partner and dependants;
- (v) an estimate of the expenses to be incurred in carrying out the approved programme.

(5) In relation to prospective sabbaticals the district Policy Committee shall appoint a Sabbaticals Advisory Group to identify those eligible for sabbaticals; to consider, advise upon and monitor items (i) and (ii) of clause (4) above; to provide advice in the preparation and execution of programmes; to ensure that any fruits are appropriately shared; and to authorise the incurring of expenses included in the estimate referred to in clause (4)(v) above (when approved). This group shall check whether a Sabbatical Support Group is established by each participant in accordance with clause (6).

(6) Each participant shall, with the advice of the district Sabbaticals Advisory Group, form a Sabbatical Support Group to consider, advise upon and monitor items (iii) and (iv) of clause (4) above; to provide support in the preparation and execution of the programme; and to ensure that the fruits of the programme are properly shared. It shall include representatives of the relevant Local Church(es), and the Circuit (or other body responsible for the payment of stipend), and probably the participant's partner. The participant will be a member, but will not chair it. The relevant Circuit Meeting shall appoint the convener.

(7) Approval under clause (4) shall be by the Synod unless special permission is required or there is a dispute. The district Sabbaticals Advisory Group shall report to the Synod through the district Policy Committee. Where special permission is required, it shall be given or withheld by a Connexional Team member responsible for sabbaticals.

Where there is a dispute it shall be considered and determined by the [...] **Ministries Committee** or by a [...] **group** appointed by the [...] **committee** for the purpose.

(8) The Sabbatical Support Group shall report to the district Sabbaticals Advisory Group and to the relevant Circuit Meeting or corresponding church court.

(9) *[revoked]*

(10) The Circuit or other responsible body shall continue during a sabbatical to provide a manse and the minister's stipend and to reimburse the minister for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during the sabbatical.

(11) Expenses which are related to a sabbatical programme approved to be pursued by a particular minister and which have been authorised pursuant to clause (5) above or clause (12) below to be incurred shall be paid (whether directly or by way of reimbursement) out of the fund to be raised in accordance with Standing Order 364(2) up to a maximum amount to be prescribed from time to time by the Conference.

(12) The provision of sabbaticals for full-time connexional staff and tutors at theological colleges and other training institutions shall be under the jurisdiction of the [...] **Connexional** Council or other responsible body (which shall have power to authorise the incurring of expenses included in the estimate referred to in clause (4)(v) above when approved) and clauses (5) to (8) above shall not apply.

**745 Continuing Development.** (1) After reception into Full Connexion and ordination all ministers shall be required to engage in further study, training and professional development under each of the following headings:

- (i) engagement with peers in considering issues of the mission and worship of the church in the world and of presbyteral or diaconal practice;
- (ii) specific training when entering a new context or mode of ministry;
- (iii) personal and vocational development.

(2) Each District is responsible for:

- (i) assessing annually what development and training needs could helpfully be provided for presbyters stationed in the District;
- (ii) receiving annually from the Methodist Diaconal Order an assessment of the development and training needs of deacons stationed in the District;
- (iii) making recommendations to the relevant persons or bodies responsible for training as to how these needs should be met.

(3) The member of the Connexional Team responsible for continuing development in ministry shall:

- (i) co-ordinate and, where appropriate, organise the connexional responses to development and training needs identified by the Districts;
- (ii) administer any connexional element of the funding of ministerial continuing development.

(4) (a) All ministers stationed by the Conference in accordance with Standing Order 780(1)(i), (ii) or (iii) shall be entitled to five days leave in each connexional year, in addition to normal periods of leave, for the purpose of study, training or development.

(b) Assistance with the costs involved shall be dealt with as follows:

- (i) where the Conference by Standing Order or otherwise, or some other body acting under the authority of a Standing Order, has required a minister to undertake a course of training or development, the full costs of that course and of associated travel shall be borne by the body so requiring;
- (ii) where undertaking a course of study leading to a higher education award, the person concerned may apply for a grant both from the relevant District and from connexional funds;
- (iii) in all other cases, the person concerned may apply for a financial contribution towards the cost of such study, training or development, these costs being borne in the proportions agreed in each individual case between connexional funds, the relevant District and the person concerned.

## Section 75 The Methodist Diaconal Order and its Convocation

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**750 The Methodist Diaconal Order.** (1) The Methodist Diaconal Order is a religious order to which those who belong to the order of deacon in the Church of God are admitted by the act of the Conference.

(2) The members of the Order offer lifelong commitment to diaconal ministry and a willingness to serve where the Conference directs. They exercise, alongside others, a pastoral, evangelistic and outreach ministry which reflects the servant ministry of Christ and enables the mission and service of the Church in the world.

As to availability for stationing see S.O. 783 and 542.

(3) The Order shall have a Rule of Life, approved by the Conference, so as to provide a framework for the devotional life of each member, for discipline, mutual care and accountability, and for individual and collective commitment to the ministry of a deacon.

The Rule of Life was approved by the Conference of 2022 and is printed in Book IV B, Part 5 below.

(4) The Order consists of those who have been received as full members upon reception into Full Connexion under Standing Order 728A, 730 or 731.

**751 Convocation: Membership and Attendance.** (1) There shall be a Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order, which shall consist of all full members of the Order and all those recognised and regarded as deacons under Standing Order 732 and which shall also be attended by all diaconal probationers and student deacons. All these persons are required to attend and to remain throughout the sessions of the Convocation, unless on compelling grounds a dispensation is given by the Warden. All dispensations shall be reported to the Convocation for its approval.

(2) Those authorised to serve as deacons under Standing Order 733 shall be entitled to attend and speak at the Convocation.

(3) Only the full members of the Order shall be eligible to vote upon the business of Convocation.

For the business of the Convocation see S.O. 753 below.

**752 Meetings.** (1) The Convocation shall meet annually at a time and place appointed by the Conference.

(2) Subject to any invitation given under clause (3) below, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall preside at every meeting of the Convocation. If because

of an emergency the Warden is unable to be present, then the deputy Warden shall preside. If neither the Warden or deputy Warden is able to preside then the members present shall invite the President or Vice-President, if present, or, if both decline, one of their number, to preside.

(3) The President and the Vice-President shall normally visit the Convocation and may preside at any sessions upon the invitation of the Warden.

**753 Functions.** (1) Those attending the Convocation meet to recall and reflect upon their diaconal vocation, to watch over one another in love and to consider the work of God.

(2) In addition to sessions for devotion, study and fellowship, the agenda of the Convocation shall include:

- (i) **[deleted]**
- (ii) recommendations, if any, to the [...] **Connexional** Council;
- (iii) preparation of obituaries;
- (iv) preparation of applications from deacons in the active work for permission to become supernumerary.

For obituaries at the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Representative Session of the Conference, see cl. 25A(j) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 182.

For permission to become supernumerary, see cl. 25A(i) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 790(1).

For return to the active work see S.O. 793.

(3) The Convocation shall annually appoint a small pastoral committee to act in association with the Warden in any cases referred to it which do not fall within the purview of Sections 03 or 04 or Part 11 of Standing Orders.

Part 11 deals with complaints and discipline, Sections 03 and 04 with discontinuance from training and competence.

(4) The Convocation may adopt and submit resolutions to be moved in the Conference on any matter of connexional interest. Any such resolution shall be sent to the Secretary of the Conference to be published in the Agenda, accompanied by a reasoned statement. The Warden shall determine which of the diaconal representatives should move and second the resolution in the Conference.

(5) The members of the Convocation shall rededicate themselves to diaconal ministry during a service of worship, which shall include the renewal of the promises made at ordination and, as a religious order, the affirmation of the Rule of Life, and, for the probationers and student deacons, an affirmation of their sense of call.

**754 Warden of the Order.** (1) (a) There shall be a Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, being a member of the Order appointed by the Conference.

(b) There shall be a deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, being a member of the Order, stationed to serve as such in accordance with Standing Order **387(1)**.

(1A) The Warden shall be appointed initially for a specified period, not exceeding six years. Every appointment for an extension shall be for a specified period, each not exceeding five years.

(1B) The procedure for the appointment of the Warden shall be determined by the [...] **Conference on the recommendation of the Ministries Committee** and shall follow as closely as possible the provisions for the appointment of a Chair of District in Standing Orders 421A to 423B, with the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order having the equivalent functions to those of the Synod.

(1C) The provisions of clause (1A) and those referred to in clause (1B) above for appointments for periods of years operate only to obviate any need for earlier application of the procedure under those clauses and do not derogate from the ultimate authority of the Conference over stationing annually.

(1D) The provisions as to curtailment in Standing Order 544 shall apply to the period of appointment of the Warden as they apply to the period of invitation of a presbyter, with the following adaptations:

- (i) The functions of the circuit Invitation Committee shall be exercised by a Nominations Committee appointed annually by the Convocation, which in addition to its responsibilities under this clause shall exercise such functions in relation to the nomination of officers of the Order as the Convocation may prescribe.
- (ii) The function of the Chair of the District and the Warden under clauses (5) and (11) of Standing Order 544 shall be exercised by the President.
- (iii) Reference to the relevant Circuit shall be read as applying, in clauses (1)(a), (6) and (8)(a)(i), to the Methodist Diaconal Order Centre, and in clause (11) to the Convocation of the Order.
- (iv) Provisions which can have no application shall be ignored, including (without necessarily being exhaustive) those relating to church stewards or probationers and the last sentence of clause (9).

(2) In addition to the specific functions assigned to the Warden in the Deed of Union and Standing Orders, the Warden shall have overall responsibility for the oversight of the Order. In conjunction with the members of the Convocation, the Warden shall be responsible to the Conference for the observance within the Order of Methodist order and discipline, and he or she shall exercise oversight of the character and fidelity of the deacons, diaconal probationers and student deacons, subject to the provisions of Part 11 of Standing Orders. To this end he or she will use all the gifts and graces he or she has received, being especially diligent to be a pastor to the deacons, facilitating the devotional life of the Order and the role of deacon within the Church.

Part 11 deals with complaints and disciplinary charges against deacons, diaconal probationers and student deacons.

For the discharge of the Warden's responsibility to the Conference see S.O. 183.

(2A) The deputy Warden shall assist the Warden of the Order in fulfilling the Warden's functions and responsibilities. Subject to clause (5) below the Warden shall delegate to the deputy Warden the discharge of such of those functions and responsibilities as the Warden, with the agreement of the Methodist Diaconal Order Leadership Group, thinks fit.

(3) A casual vacancy arises in the office of Warden if the Warden dies or becomes incapable of acting or unfit to act or ceases to be a deacon. In this event the vacancy

shall be filled (until the taking effect of an appointment under clause (1A) above) by the appointment of a qualified person by the President.

For temporary inability of the Warden to fulfil the duties of the office see cl. (4) below.

(4) Subject to clause (5) below, if the Warden is temporarily unable to fulfil all or any of the duties of the office because of accident, illness, absence from the country, sabbatical leave or other cause, the President may appoint the deputy Warden or another deacon in the active work with authority to fulfil those duties which the Warden is unable to perform.

This clause deals with temporary inability to fulfil the duties of the office, as opposed to the situation where a casual vacancy arises, for which see cl. (3) above.

(5) Nothing done under clause (2A) or clause (4) above can empower any person other than the Warden to perform any act expressly required by the Deed of Union to be performed by the Warden.

**755 Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group.** (1) The Conference shall each year appoint the Methodist Diaconal Order Support and Advisory Group upon nominations from the [...] **Ministries Committee**.

(2) The Group shall consist of seven persons, comprising a former President or Vice-President appointed as chair, two presbyters, two deacons and two lay persons.

(3) The Group shall meet as frequently as need be, but at least once a year.

(4) The responsibilities of the Group shall be to:

- (i) advise and support the Warden and the deputy Warden on the performance of their duties under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders and generally in the exercise of their functions;
- (ii) oversee any such arrangements as from time to time may be required for consulting the Methodist Diaconal Order on matters referred to it by the Conference or the [...] **Ministries Committee**.



## Section 76 Resignation and Reinstatement

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**760 Resignation.** (1) Any presbyter or deacon wishing to resign from Full Connexion shall send to the President notice of such resignation. All such notices shall be referred by the President to an advisory committee for consideration. An opportunity shall be given to the minister to be present at the committee if the minister should so desire. The committee shall advise the President as to whether the resignation should be accepted and, if so, the date from which it should take effect and to what extent the status of the person concerned as a local preacher and member should be affected. The committee shall also advise the President, the Superintendent of the Circuit in which that person is stationed or if not stationed is shown as residing and the Chair of the District of which the Circuit forms part whether any public announcement should be made and if so, to whom and in what terms.

As to the withdrawal of student ministers and ministerial probationers see S.O. 727.

As to ministers and deacons of other conferences and churches see S.O. 732(6).

(1A) The minister may be accompanied by a friend when attending the advisory committee.

(2) The advisory committee shall consist of an ex-President or ex-Vice-President appointed by the President, the Secretary of the Conference, who shall act as convener, the Chair and Superintendent concerned, in the case of a deacon the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order or the Warden's deputy, and three other persons appointed by the convener.

(3) Where a person seeking to resign or withdraw under this Standing Order is at the time of giving notice the subject of a complaint or charge under Part 11:

- (i) that person or the President may at any time before a decision is made under this Standing Order require that the complaint or charge is first disposed of in accordance with the provisions of that Part;
- (ii) if no person so requires, the provisions of Standing Order 1151(9) shall apply.

(4) Should a minister intimate to the President an intention to resign from Full Connexion at some future date the President may regard that intimation as tantamount to a present resignation and the procedure shall be as above.

(5) In any case in which a minister gives notice of a wish to resign or intention to resign at some future date (whether or not the resignation is accepted) the President, acting in consultation with the advisory committee, may, if the President thinks fit, notify the convener of the Complaints Support Group appointed by the District in which the minister is stationed or if not stationed is shown as residing. The convener shall offer two members of the Group to the minister to act as advisers and friends and two

further members of the Group to any Local Church or churches in the Circuit (if any) in which or of which the minister is stationed or has pastoral charge, or in which the minister undertakes pastoral responsibilities. The convener shall also offer further members of the Group to individuals or groups of individuals to whom the President directs that such an offer should be made.

(6) The President, acting in consultation with the advisory committee, has authority to accept the resignation of a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion and in every case of an accepted resignation the President shall make a declaration with regard to the status of the person concerned as a local preacher and member. Every action under this clause on the part of the President shall be deemed for all purposes to be the action of the Conference. The President shall report the action taken to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference next following or the next meeting of the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, and to the Representative Session.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

#### **761 Reinstatement as a Presbyter, Deacon, Probationer, Student or Local Preacher.**

(1) A former presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion who wishes to be reinstated or a former deacon who resigned or was excluded from the Methodist Diaconal Order before the Conference adopted the practice of receiving deacons into Full Connexion and who wishes to be reinstated as a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order and received into Full Connexion shall apply in writing before the 15th January to the President. A former presbyter who has the status of member only and is seeking, upon reinstatement, to return to the active work, must first obtain reinstatement as a local preacher under clause (14) below.

Note the provision contained in S.O. 1134(4).

Members of the Methodist Diaconal Order were first received into Full Connexion in 1998.

For reinstatement as a member see S.O. 053.

(1A) Subject to compliance with the last sentence of clause (1) above, where applicable, the President shall arrange for the application to be considered as set out in the following clauses.

(2) The Secretary of the Conference shall obtain or prepare (in the case of a former deacon, in consultation with the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order):

- (i) particulars of the applicant's previous ministry;
- (ii) a statement of the circumstances in which the applicant resigned or was excluded from that ministry (including a statement of any period specified by a connexional Discipline Committee under Standing Order 1134(4) as a period before the end of which no application for reinstatement should be made);
- (iii) references from two referees nominated by the applicant;
- (iv) reports covering the last two years by the Chair of the District in which the applicant is a member and by the Superintendent of the Circuit in which he or she is a member or the presbyter having pastoral charge of the Local Church in which he or she is a member.

(3) The convener of the interviewing committee shall be the Secretary of the Conference who shall

- (i) ***[...]ensure that an Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) is undertaken by each applicant and that the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) is applied, subject to making any necessary modifications including, in particular, substituting 'applicant' for 'candidate' and 'interviewing committee' for 'Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee' throughout;***
- (ii) appoint and obtain a report from an assessor, who shall meet the applicant and make such other enquiries as he or she thinks fit;
- (iii) appoint the interviewing committee in accordance with clause (4) below and supply to each member, before the committee meets, a copy of the application and any supporting documents submitted by the applicant, of the particulars, statement, references and reports obtained under clause (2) above and of the reports obtained under this clause;
- (iv) convene the committee for a time and place chosen with due regard to the convenience of the applicant.

(4) The interviewing committee shall include as voting members the President or the Vice-President or an ex-President or ex-Vice-President as chair, the convener as secretary and up to five [...] persons chosen [...] ***for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel*** with due regard to the proposed venue of the committee and to whether the applicant is seeking to exercise a ministry in circuit work or elsewhere. The following persons, namely the Chair of the District and the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the applicant is a member, and (in a case where the applicant is a former deacon) the Warden of the Order shall each have the right to be included as a non-voting member of the committee.

(5) The committee shall meet as convened under clause (3)(iv) above, interview the applicant, and confer, and shall then recommend to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, whether or not the application should be granted, and if not with reasons.

Re-admission into Full Connexion is by the Representative Session, but requires a judgment of fitness, as the case may be, by the Presbyteral Session or the Conference Diaconal Committee (cl. 23(h) and 25A(h) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and cl. (13) below).

(6) The applicant may be accompanied by a friend when interviewed in accordance with clause (5) above.

(7) The applicant, if he or she wishes, may remain in the vicinity of the committee room after being interviewed and, in that event, shall be informed orally by the chair or some other person appointed by the committee of the interviewing committee's recommendation as soon as the meeting is over. In any event, the interviewing committee's recommendation shall forthwith be communicated to the President of the Conference who shall, in writing, officially inform the applicant, [...] and, where the applicant is a former deacon, the Warden of the Order.

(8) If the interviewing committee recommends that an application be not granted, [...] the applicant ***may apply, [...]*** by notice in writing to the Secretary of the

Conference within seven days of being informed of the recommendation, [...] **for that recommendation to be reversed. [...] The application shall be decided by a group of five persons chosen for that purpose from the panel constituted under Standing Order 291 by a convener of that panel, and in dealing with the application the group shall determine its own procedures.**

(9) If the [...] **group appointed under clause (8) declines** to reverse a recommendation that the application be not granted the applicant may, by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference within seven days of being informed of the refusal, take the application to the Conference itself, and the Conference shall then determine its own procedures.

(10) No former presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion shall be re-admitted into Full Connexion with the Conference except upon the recommendation of an interviewing committee under clause (5) above, or of the [...] **group** under clause (8) above, or pursuant to an application duly brought before the Conference under clause (9) above.

Questions of pension rights and of contributions to the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme are governed by the rules of that scheme.

(11) Where the applicant is a former presbyter or deacon who ceased to be in Full Connexion by the operation of Standing Order 718[...] **(6) or (7)**, clauses (2) to (10) above shall apply with the following modifications:

- (i) in clause (2) omit head (iv) and for heads (ii) and (iii) substitute:
- "(ii) a statement of the circumstances in which the applicant ceased to be in Full Connexion;
- (iii) a report from the appropriate Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee";
- (ii) in clause (3) omit heads (i) and (ii);
- (iii) in clause (4) for the second sentence substitute: "In a case where the applicant is a former deacon, the Warden of the Order shall have the right to be included as a non-voting member of the committee".

(12) A former student or probationer who wishes to be reinstated shall apply to the President, who shall arrange for the application to be brought to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, by the appropriate Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee with a recommendation, after such enquiries and consultations as the committee may prescribe, either generally or in the particular case.

See also S.O. 726(5).

(13) Reinstatement shall be by the Conference in its Representative Session, but no applicant shall be proposed to that session for reinstatement except upon the recommendation of the Presbyteral Session or the Conference Diaconal Committee.

See cl. 23(h) and 25A(h) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

(14) A former presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, probationer or student who by reason of a judgment or declaration under Standing Order 760 or 727 or Part 11 is a member but not a local preacher and who, having formerly been a local preacher, wishes to be reinstated as such shall apply to the President and the application shall

## *Part 7 Presbyters and Deacons (1) – Status and Stationing* [761]

be considered and determined as set out in clauses (1) to (11) or (12), as the case may be, of this Standing Order, with any necessary changes, but so that no [...] **Occupational Health assessment** shall be required. If the Conference decides that the applicant shall be reinstated it shall direct the Circuit Meeting of the Circuit in which he or she is a member to reinstate him or her as a local preacher.

(15) If at any stage in the operation of the procedure set out in clauses (1) to (14) above it appears to any of the parties involved or to the interviewing committee that safeguarding issues or concerns are, or may be, involved, then the matter shall immediately be referred to the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order **230(3)(ii)**), who may offer advice or refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee for its advice and recommendations.

**Section 77 Stationing – Location and Special Provision**

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**770 Base of Ministry.** (1) All presbyters and deacons received into Full Connexion with the Conference shall be accepted for ministry based on the home Districts unless upon reception an overseas appointment under Standing Order 780(1)(vi) is specified as the base of ministry. Their names shall be recorded upon reception in the Journal and the Minutes, which shall distinguish between those whose ministry is based upon the home Districts, and those whose ministry is based upon a specified overseas appointment, and shall in addition identify those who are serving elsewhere than in the territory or territories upon which their ministry is based.

For definitions and their application refer to cl. 1(xiii) and (xxv) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 002(1)(x), 003(iii).

(2) All presbyters and deacons, whatever their base of ministry, shall have equal status as presbyters or deacons respectively, but the recruitment, training and terms of service of any presbyter or deacon whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment shall be the subject of mutually agreed regulations, and, in the case of a deacon, with the advice of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. Save under the provisions of clause (4) below a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion serving in an overseas appointment shall be stationed in the territory or territories upon which his or her ministry is based.

For overseas appointments see also S.O. 322, cls. (4) to (7).

(3) Membership of the Conference shall be open to a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment only

- (i) by **[...] appointment** as a representative **[...] by the [...] Connexional Council** under Standing Order 102(1)(vi) **[...]**; or
- (ii) while stationed in a home District, upon the terms which apply to presbyters or deacons whose ministry is based on the home Districts.

Membership of the Presbyteral Session of the Conference only is therefore open to such presbyters by permission under the provisions of cl. 15(a)(ii) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1).

(4) (a) Subject to sub-clause (c) below a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion may without changing the territory or territories on which his or her ministry is based, be appointed to serve in an overseas appointment or a mission partnership with another conference or church under Standing Order 780(1)(vi) or be permitted to serve another conference or church under Standing Order 735.

(b) A presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion whose ministry is based on an overseas appointment may, without changing that base, be appointed to serve in the home Districts for such periods and on such terms as the **[...] Ministries Committee** on the

advice of the responsible Team member and, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Order shall arrange.

(c) Where it is proposed under sub-clause (a) above to appoint a presbyter or deacon whose ministry is based on the home Districts to serve in his or her home country overseas, the responsible Team member and, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Order shall first consider and advise the [...] **committee** whether it would be more appropriate for the service to be on terms which obtain for those whose ministry is based in that country.

(5) In clause (4)(c) above 'home country' means the country in which the minister or deacon is domiciled for the purpose of English Law.

(6) (a) A presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion seeking to change the base of his or her ministry shall apply to the Synod of which he or she is a member. The Synod shall consider the application in its Presbyteral Session in the case of a presbyter and in its Representative Session in the case of a deacon. In each case the application shall be forwarded, with the recommendation of the Synod, to the Secretary of the Conference.

(b) The Secretary of the Conference shall invite the comments of the Connexional Team member appointed to the Stationing Committee under Standing Order **260(1)(iv)** and, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order upon any such application.

(c) The application shall then be considered by the [...] **Ministries Committee**, which shall have the right to prescribe any tests it may consider necessary and shall ensure that suitable arrangements regarding pension funds can be made and that any other obligations to connexional funds will be met. The [...] **committee** shall then make its recommendation to the Conference, which shall determine the matter.

In relation to clauses (4) and (6) above:

For permission to serve another conference or church see S.O. 735.

For arrangements with other conferences and churches about oversight, terms and conditions of service, etc. see S.O. 736.

For transfer to another conference or church see S.O. 730.

For selection, training and appointment of mission partners see S.O. 322 cls. (4) to (7).

### **771** [revoked]

**772 Residence Abroad.** (1) No presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion whose ministry is based on the home Districts and no probationer in training for such a ministry shall reside abroad unless appointed to a station within the control of the Church or to an overseas appointment under Standing Order 780(1)(vi) or as a chaplain to the forces or permitted to do so under Standing Order 735 or 773 or this Standing Order.

For forces chaplains see S.O. 286.

(2) Applications for permission to reside abroad for the purposes of study shall be dealt with under Standing Order 773.

(3) All other applications under this Standing Order by presbyters or deacons in the active work or without appointment or by probationers shall be considered by

the Stationing Advisory Committee, which if it recommends that the application be accepted shall report its recommendation to the Stationing Committee which shall advise the Conference. In the case of a deacon or diaconal probationer the applicant shall inform the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order at the outset and the Warden shall be consulted by the Stationing Advisory Committee and informed of the committee's recommendation. Permission may be granted under this clause for an initial specified period not exceeding five years and may be continued for a further period or periods each not exceeding five years.

(4) A presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion seeking to reside abroad as a supernumerary shall apply to the Stationing Committee through his or her Chair or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order respectively or, after the stations have been adopted, to the President, and permission may be granted by the Conference or, after the stations have been adopted, by the President or by the Vice-President on his or her behalf.

(5) All presbyters, deacons and probationers granted permission under Standing Order 735, 773 or this Standing Order shall be listed in the stations as permitted to serve, to study or to reside abroad, as the case may be, with a note of the country of residence.

(6) Presbyters permitted to reside in Ireland shall answer as to their continuing belief in the doctrines and observance of the discipline of the Methodist Church to the Synod of the District in Ireland in which they reside. All other presbyters permitted to reside abroad shall supply annually written assurance of their fidelity in those respects to the Synod of the home District of which they are members. All deacons permitted to reside abroad shall supply to the Warden annually written assurance of their continuing belief in the doctrines of the Methodist Church and of their observance of its discipline and of the obligations of membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order. All probationers permitted to reside abroad shall answer as to their continuing belief in the doctrines and observance of the discipline of the Methodist Church to the members of the Connexional Team who convene the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee as part of the particular arrangements made by that committee with another conference or church for the providing of the reports about the probationers required under Section 72 of these Standing Orders.

For the obligations of membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order see S.O. 750, and for the responsibility of the Warden for the oversight of the Order see S.O. 754(2).

**773 Permission to Study.** (1) A minister or probationer who wishes to be stationed for the purpose of undertaking a course of study or research shall apply to the Stationing Advisory Committee, and that committee shall make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee, which may grant or refuse the application. Such a recommendation shall specify the course of study or research to be undertaken and its duration, whether the minister, deacon or probationer concerned is to reside in the home Districts or abroad, and whether he or she is to be in receipt of a stipend from the Church. In the case of a probationer the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee shall be consulted.

(2) The names of ministers and probationers permitted to study under this Standing



Order, unless permitted to reside abroad under Standing Order 772, shall in the stations be printed in the Circuit in which they reside as 'permission to study'; they shall be expected to give such help to the Circuit as they are able, in appropriate cases where they are not otherwise in receipt of a full stipend from the Church shall be entitled to receive remuneration by the decision of the Circuit Meeting, and shall have all the rights and privileges of church members in that Circuit.

They may be members of the Circuit Meeting (S.O. 510(1)(ii)) and (if eligible) Local Preachers' Meeting (S.O. 560(1)) of the Circuit in which they reside and attend the meetings of circuit staff (S.O. 523(1)).

As to eligibility for circuit and local committees and offices see S.O. 503(1)(i) and 606(1)(i) and the Standing Orders relating to specific committees and offices.

**774 Ministers without Appointment.** (1) A minister may be without appointment by permission obtained under clause (2), (3), or (4) below on the grounds specified in clause (5) below, or by direction of the Stationing Committee or the President or Vice-President under clause (9) below, or by the operation of Part 11 or Section 04, or S.O. 775(3), 782(8), 783(7), or 790(4).

(2) A minister who wishes to be without appointment shall apply to the Stationing Advisory Committee, and that committee shall make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee, which may grant or refuse the application.

(3) A student or probationer who wishes to be without appointment on being received into Full Connexion shall apply to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and that committee, if satisfied of the applicant's intention both to complete training (where incomplete) and probation and, in due course, to enter the active work, shall make a recommendation to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be, which may grant or refuse the application.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(4) A minister, probationer or student may, on any grounds not arising or discovered until after the last meeting (before the Conference) of the committee to which application would have been made under the above clauses, make a similar application to the President at any time before the opening of the Conference, and the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf may grant or refuse the application, but shall not grant an application by a probationer or student unless satisfied of the applicant's intentions as described in clause (3) above. Any applications granted shall be reported by the President to the Presbyteral Session or, as the case may be, the Conference Diaconal Committee.

(5) An application may be granted under clauses (2), (3) or (4) above on compassionate or domestic grounds which in the judgment of the committee or the President or Vice-President, as the case may be, make it impossible or undesirable for the applicant to be subject to normal stationing.

(6) A minister who has been granted exemption under clauses (1) to (5) above shall normally be at no cost to the Church, but in exceptional circumstances the Stationing Advisory Committee or the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight

Committee may recommend a payment under Standing Order **376(6)(ii)**.

Information about any possible implication of the rules of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme or Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for the benefits of a minister undergoing a change in conditions of service may be obtained through the Stationing Advisory Committee.

(7) In cases where permission is granted under clauses (2) to (5) above, it shall be for five years or for a specified shorter period. In the year before the end of the period for which permission has been granted the minister shall make application to continue to be without appointment for a further period, or to return to or commence the active work. Application shall be made to the Stationing Advisory Committee, and that committee shall make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee, which may grant or refuse the application.

(8) At any time a minister granted permission to be without appointment under clauses (2) to (7) above may by permission of the Stationing Committee, granted on application made through the Stationing Advisory Committee, return to or commence the active work. In exceptional cases permission may be granted and an appointment made to a station by the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf.

(9) The Stationing Committee, or exceptionally the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf, may require a minister or probationer for whom no appointment can be found to be without appointment and shall in each case determine what sums (if any) should be paid under Standing Order **376(5)(ii)**, and what other arrangements should be made. A minister or probationer without appointment under this clause may be appointed to a station during the year by the President or by the Vice-President on his or her behalf. Only in exceptional circumstances shall a minister or probationer be without appointment in this category for more than one year.

(10) The names of persons stationed under the above clauses shall in the stations be printed in the Circuit in which they reside as 'without appointment'; they shall be expected to give such help to the Circuit as they are able, in appropriate cases shall be entitled to receive remuneration by the decision of the Circuit Meeting, and shall have all the rights and privileges of church members in that Circuit.

They may be members of the Circuit Meeting (S.O. 510(1)(ii)) and (if eligible) Local Preachers' Meeting (S.O. 560(1)) of the Circuit in which they reside and attend the meetings of circuit staff (S.O. 523(1)).

As to eligibility for circuit and local committees and offices see S.O. 503(1)(i) and 606(1)(i) and the Standing Orders relating to specific committees and offices.

(11) Where following disciplinary action under Part 11 or proceedings under Section 04 the Stationing Advisory Committee has been informed that a minister has been designated 'without appointment', the committee shall ensure that, at such intervals as it shall think fit (but not exceeding five years), the person concerned is offered the opportunity to meet the committee to discuss whether he or she should make an application to the President to return to the active work. Any such application shall be considered and determined as set out in clauses (1) to (10) of Standing Order 761 with any necessary changes.

**775 Married Couples.** (1) When two persons, each of whom is a minister, are

married to each other, they shall both be subject to normal stationing except as provided in the following clauses of this Standing Order.

As to the terms of service of married couples see also S.O. 803(2).

For guidance as to the stationing of such persons married to each other see the code of practice published annually by the Stationing Committee.

(2) When two persons, each of whom is a minister, probationer or student, are married to each other one, but not both, may if thought fit receive exemption, deferment or suspension under clauses (1) to (5) of Standing Order 774 or clauses (1) to (3) of Standing Order 726.

(3) If each of the two persons within the scope of clause (1) above wishes to be stationed but no suitable arrangement can be made to station them together the Conference may designate one of them to be 'without appointment'. The names of ministers so designated shall be printed in the Circuits in which they reside and they shall be expected to give such help in the Circuit as they are able, and in appropriate cases shall be entitled to receive remuneration by the decision of the Circuit Meeting. They shall have all the rights and privileges of church members in the Circuits in which they reside.

See the note to S.O. 774(10) above.

(4) Ministers designated 'without appointment' under clause (3) above shall, unless they subsequently apply for exemption under clause (2) above, be liable and eligible to be stationed whenever suitable arrangements can be made to station them with their spouses or civil partners and in exceptional circumstances such a minister may be appointed separately to a Circuit by the President or by the Vice-President on the President's behalf.

(5) The Conference may, if it thinks fit, approve applications by persons within the scope of clause (1) above, submitted through the appropriate Synod for permission to enter into arrangements with a Circuit under which one or both of them serve part-time and stipends are adjusted accordingly.

## Section 78 Stationing – Appointments and Procedures

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The Conference has power to appoint ministers and probationers to the Circuits as it thinks proper (Deed of Union, cl. 20, Book II, Part 1).

The President has power to fill any vacancy in the stations caused by death or resignation occurring before the appointment takes effect and to make necessary or expedient changes in appointments during the year (Deed of Union, cl. 29, Book II, Part 1).

For ministerial appointments to the Connexional Team and certain other offices see S.O. 385, 387 and as to the Chairs of Districts see S.O. 420–423B.

**780 Types of Station.** (1) Presbyters, deacons and probationers shall be stationed by the Conference in one of the following ways:

- (i) in a Circuit appointment in a home District;
- (ii) in a District appointment;
- (iii) in a connexional appointment;
- (iv) in a chaplaincy relating to the forces, prisons, health-care institutions, educational institutions, work-places or other bodies as approved by the Stationing Committee on a recommendation of the Stationing Advisory Committee or the relevant members of the Connexional Team;
- (v) in a Circuit, but with authorisation granted by the Stationing Committee on a recommendation from the Stationing Advisory Committee to serve in an appointment not directly within the control of the Church;
- (vi) in a mission partnership with an autonomous conference or united church or other agency as approved by the Stationing Committee on a recommendation from the Connexional Team member appointed to the committee under Standing Order **260(1)(iv)**;
- (vii) with permission to serve another conference or church under Standing Order 735;
- (viii) with permission to reside abroad under Standing Order 772;
- (ix) with permission to study under Standing Order 773;
- (x) as a supernumerary under Standing Order 791;
- (xi) without appointment under Part 11 or Section 04, or Standing Order 774, 775, 782(8) or 783(7).

(2) (a) Being stationed under one or more of heads (i) to (vi) of clause (1) above identifies the primary purpose or purposes for which a presbyter, deacon or probationer is stationed. Appointment in such a station may be full-time or part-time.

(b) A presbyter, deacon or probationer stationed under one of those heads may also as a secondary purpose undertake pastoral work or, in the case of a presbyter or

presbyteral probationer, exercise pastoral responsibility in a context that falls under one of the other heads.

(c) A presbyter, deacon or probationer may be stationed concurrently under two or more of those heads.

**781 Initial Deployment and Subsequent Review.** (1) (a) In the penultimate year of pre-ordination training an interview shall be conducted with each student concerning

- (i) his or her development in pre-ordination training;
- (ii) changes in his or her personal circumstances since the preliminary assessment made in accordance with Standing Order 710(3)(b);
- (iii) the type of appointment in which he or she might be deployed and the terms and conditions of service under which he or she might serve in the light of the above.

(b) The interview shall be conducted according to connexional proformas and guidelines provided by the Ministerial Probationers Oversight Committee in consultation with the Stationing Advisory Committee.

(c) The interview shall be conducted by the relevant person specified in those guidelines.

(2) (a) In what is expected to be the penultimate year of an appointment within the control of the Church, whether such expectation arises under Section 54 or otherwise, or in every fourth year in the case of an appointment not within the control of the Church, or, in either case, at other times upon his or her request, an interview shall be conducted with each presbyter, deacon and probationer to review

- (i) his or her experience in the current appointment;
- (ii) his or her development as a presbyter or deacon;
- (iii) his or her future deployment in the light of the above and of any relevant factors in his or her personal circumstances.

(b) The interview shall be conducted according to connexional proformas and guidelines provided by the Stationing Advisory Committee.

(c) The interview shall be conducted by the relevant person specified in those guidelines.

(3) After the interviews specified in clauses (1) and (2) above a report about the initial or future deployment of the person concerned shall be submitted to the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee or the Stationing Advisory Committee as appropriate, which shall review it, conduct any further investigations or interviews as it deems to be necessary or as are requested by any of the parties concerned, and make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee.

**782 Stationing Procedures: presbyteral.** (1) In respect of circuit appointments, by the date announced each year in the guidelines issued on behalf of the Stationing Committee, the Superintendent of each Circuit shall supply to the Chair, on a schedule supplied by the Conference Office, information about invitations for the extension of appointments issued to presbyters by the Circuit under Standing Order 545, or accepted

by presbyters in the Circuit under the same Standing Order, and other necessary information in relation to presbyteral stationing in the next two connexional years, together with the details from presbyters, and circuit stewards required to enable the Chair to comply with clause (2) below.

As to invitations see Section 54.

(2) No later than the date announced each year in the guidelines issued on behalf of the Stationing Committee, the Chair of each District shall supply to the Secretary of the Conference the required details of each appointment for which a presbyter is sought, including any information requested by the [...] **Resourcing** Committee, and the required details concerning each presbyter seeking an appointment in the next connexional year, together with any other necessary information in relation to presbyteral stationing in the next connexional year. These details shall be provided by the circuit stewards and presbyters concerned respectively, by completing forms provided for the purpose by the Stationing Committee.

(3) A list of all presbyters to be transferred from overseas to home stations, or from home to overseas stations, shall similarly be furnished by a Connexional Team member responsible for personnel serving overseas to the Secretary of the Conference.

(4) The Secretary of the Conference shall obtain from the Stationing Advisory Committee its recommendations on opportunities for ministry in appointments under heads (ii) to (vi) of clause (1) of Standing Order 780 and on applications from presbyters to serve in them, together with its recommendations on applications by presbyters to be without appointment, to have permission to study or to reside or serve abroad or to serve another conference or church. He or she shall also obtain from other appropriate bodies all other relevant information.

For the Stationing Advisory Committee see S.O. 261.

The 'other relevant information' will include particulars of student presbyters to be stationed, presbyters becoming supernumeraries, ministers transferring to and from other churches, etc.

(5) From the information so provided the Secretary of the Conference shall prepare a list of presbyters available for invitation and Circuits or other bodies seeking to invite a presbyter in relation to the next connexional year, and circulate it to members of the Stationing Committee. The Stationing Committee shall oversee the processes which recommend the matching of particular presbyters to appointments.

For the constitution of and general provisions relating to the Stationing Committee see S.O. 260.

For the processes of matching presbyters to appointments, see Section 54 of Standing Orders and the code of practice published annually by the Stationing Committee.

(6) A copy of the list of presbyters and Circuits available and a compilation of the information about presbyters and Circuits prepared in accordance with clauses (2), (3) and (4) above shall be supplied to circuit stewards or other relevant parties and presbyters by application to the Conference Office on payment of a reasonable charge.

(7) From the above lists, recommendations and information, and from the recommendations provided under Standing Order 783(1), the Secretary shall prepare for use in the Stationing Committee and its sub-committees a draft of the stations (presbyteral and diaconal), a copy of which shall be distributed to members of the Conference.

(8) Except where Standing Order 775(3) applies the committee may refer the case of any presbyter for whom no appointment can be found to a district Consultative Committee appointed under Standing Order 040 and shall designate the presbyter 'without appointment' until the Consultative Committee can resolve the matter.

S.O. 775(3) refers to ministers or probationers married to each other and S.O. 040 failure by a minister to fulfil the obligations of the minister's appointment.

**783 Stationing Procedures: diaconal.** (1) The Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall be responsible for deciding upon the recommendations to be made as to the stationing of the deacons in the available diaconal stations, recognising the specialised ministry needs of the Circuits involved.

(2) A deacon, diaconal probationer or student deacon shall not be offered nor accept an initial invitation to serve in a Circuit but shall be entirely at the disposal of the Stationing Committee, and the same shall be true of persons applying to be received into Full Connexion as deacons under Standing Order 730, 731 or 761.

S.O. 730, 731 and 761 refer to deacons or former deacons applying to be received by transfer or reinstatement.

(3) Subject to clause (2) above, the initial stationing of deacons and diaconal probationers shall proceed alongside that for presbyters and presbyteral probationers in accordance with Standing Order 542. To that end, each deacon available for stationing in the next connexional year shall provide the details required by the Warden to assist him or her in framing the recommendations as to stationing.

This Standing Order is to be read in conjunction with the provisions in Section 54 applicable to Circuits as follows:

S.O. 542 (initial stationing)

S.O. 546 (extension by invitation)

S.O. 544(1A) (curtailment).

(4) In order to discharge this responsibility, the Warden shall obtain from the Circuits and deacons involved and from any other appropriate bodies all relevant information, including any information requested by the **[..] Resourcing** Committee. He or she shall also obtain from the Stationing Advisory Committee its recommendations as to any diaconal appointments within its purview and shall take into account the requests and suggestions submitted by Chairs of Districts.

For the Stationing Advisory Committee see S.O. 261.

(5) In deciding upon the recommendations to be made, the Warden shall act with the advice of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee appointed under Standing Order **260(6)**.

(6) The Warden's recommendations shall be provided to the Secretary of the Conference by a date to be determined by the Stationing Committee and from these recommendations the Secretary shall prepare a draft of the diaconal stations to be incorporated into the draft prepared for the purposes of Standing Order 782(7) above.

(7) Except where Standing Order 775(3) applies the Stationing Committee may refer the case of any deacon for whom no appointment can be found to a district

Consultative Committee appointed under Standing Order 040 and shall designate the deacon 'without appointment' until the Consultative Committee can resolve the matter.

S.O. 775(3) refers to ministers or probationers married to each other and S.O. 040 failure by a minister to fulfil the obligations of the minister's appointment.

**784 Representations.** (1) Any Circuit may make representation concerning stationing in writing to the Conference. In cases of special difficulty, and with the consent of the Stationing Committee, a Circuit may communicate directly with the committee.

(2) Any presbyter, deacon or probationer who wishes to challenge a recommendation of the committee and who is not a member of the Conference shall have the right to attend and to state his or her own case, but shall have no vote.

(3) The Conference may refer any such representation under clause (1) or (2) above or any other question to a Committee of Reference for consideration and report.

For Committees of Reference see S.O. 137.

**785 Adoption, Arrangement and Effect.** (1) At the end of the Representative Session the draft of the stations together with a list of the subsequent changes proposed by the Stationing Committee shall be presented to the Conference for adoption. The draft as presented and adopted shall contain both the presbyteral and diaconal stations, the one being clearly distinguished from the other in accordance with clause (4) of this Standing Order.

(2) The presbyters, deacons, probationers and students concerned in changes made to the stations, the senior circuit stewards of the Circuits involved, the secretary of each Synod, all the members of the Stationing Committee and those Chairs and Lay Stationing Representatives who are not members of the Stationing Committee shall be entitled to receive notification of those changes.

(3) (a) The stations shall be arranged under the home Districts, followed by the Connexional Team, chaplains to the forces, the overseas Districts and presbyters, deacons and probationers appointed to serve other conferences or churches, permitted to serve abroad or permitted to reside abroad.

(b) Within the home and overseas Districts each of the places mentioned in the stations and numbered is the name of a Circuit, and the presbyter first named is the Superintendent. In the event of his or her death, resignation, incapacity or removal to another station the Chair shall consult with the ministers appointed to the Circuit, if any, and the circuit stewards and, within 21 days, appoint one of the other presbyters appointed to the Circuit or another appropriate Circuit (in consultation with other Chairs if necessary) as Superintendent, or elect to be the Superintendent himself or herself, and Standing Orders shall apply to such appointment as if it were an appointment by the Conference.

For the meaning of 'appointed to' see S.O. 005 (vi).

(4) (a) In the circuit stations, after the name of the Superintendent, the names of other presbyters, deacons, probationers and other persons shall be printed in the following order of categories and in alphabetical order within each category:



- (i) presbyters and deacons in the active work and probationers appointed to the Circuit;
- (ii) persons residing in the Circuit for the purposes of the stations who are authorised to serve the Church as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733;
- (iii) presbyters, deacons and probationers in appointments not within the control of the Church;
- (iv) those residing in the Circuit for the purposes of the stations under clause (8)(d) below and those stationed in another Circuit who have elected to reside in the Circuit under clause (8)(c) below;
- (v) presbyters, deacons and probationers without appointment;
- (vi) supernumerary presbyters and deacons.

(b) Where presbyters, deacons or probationers are appointed to stations in the home work but not to a Circuit, nor as Chairs, nor in the Connexional Team, nor as chaplains to the forces, their names shall appear under the circuit number of a suitable Circuit, but under an appropriate heading following the names arranged in accordance with sub-clause (a) above.

For the distinction between 'appointed to' and 'stationed in' see S.O. 005(vi), (vii).

For ministers without appointment see S.O. 774, 775.

For supernumeraries see S.O. 791.

As to the listing of forces chaplains see S.O. 286(4) and (5).

(5) (a) The appointments of ministers and probationers shall take effect for one year from the first day of the month of September next following, and accordingly a minister or probationer moving to a new appointment within the control of the Church shall not be expected to undertake any of the duties of that appointment until the 1st September.

(b) Ministers and probationers removing to new appointments within the control of the Church shall do so during the week beginning on the first Monday in August, unless alternative arrangements are concluded which are agreeable to all the parties concerned. Unless such arrangements are agreed by all the parties, removals shall not be delayed beyond the second Monday in August, whether in the case of a subsequent engagement in the Circuit or for any other reason.

(c) Circuit stewards shall ensure that appropriate arrangements are made within the Circuit or with a neighbouring Circuit to cover the duties of the outgoing minister or probationer from the date of removal until the 1st September, including the availability of a person authorised to conduct marriages.

(6) Immediately after the name of each District shall appear in brackets the ministry deployment figure allotted by the Conference, that is to say the number of presbyters, deacons and presbyteral and diaconal probationers expected to be stationed in appointments to a Circuit in that District or to the District itself, subject to availability of personnel and finance and to any other stationing considerations.

(7) A direction in the terms of Standing Order **273(7)** or **275(8)** (as appropriate) shall be inserted in the stations in relation to every chaplain appointed under those Standing Orders.

(8) (a) Every presbyter, deacon and probationer whose name appears in the stations in accordance with clause (4)(b) above is a member of the Synod of the District in which he or she resides for the purposes of the stations, and for those purposes resides in the Circuit under the number of which his or her name so appears unless he or she is entitled and has elected in accordance with sub-clause (c) below to reside elsewhere for those purposes.

(b) *[deleted]*

(c) A person so entitled may elect to reside for the purposes of the stations in another Circuit if he or she will be living in the area which it serves or be active in its life and work or if members of his or her household will be in membership there. He or she shall so elect before or during the preceding Conference by so informing the Chair of the District containing that Circuit.

(d) The stations of members of the Connexional Team not also appointed to a Circuit shall specify the Circuits in which they are to reside for the purposes of the stations.

As to membership of the Circuit Meeting and (if eligible) Local Preachers' Meeting of a person within sub-clause (a) or (d) see S.O. 510(1)(ii) and 560(1).

As to eligibility for membership of church courts and office in the Local Church see S.O. 606(1)(i) and the Standing Orders as to particular courts and offices.

As to eligibility for circuit committees and offices see S.O. 503(1)(i) and the Standing Orders as to particular committees and offices.

As to forces chaplains see S.O. 286.

## Section 79 Supernumeraries

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Clauses 23(i) and 23A(i) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) require the Conference by Standing Order to make provisions for presbyters and deacons to become supernumerary.

This Section applies to presbyters and deacons in Full Connexion. As to other ministers see S.O. 734.

**790 Application to become Supernumerary.** (1) Any presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion who will have been stationed for at least ten years at the end of the current connexional year may seek permission to become a supernumerary under the terms of Standing Order 791(1) with effect from the end of that year. Requests by presbyters shall be submitted through the Presbyteral Session of the Synod or if the presbyter concerned is not a member of a Synod through the Secretary of the Conference, and requests by deacons through the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

Permission to become a supernumerary is given by the Conference, or, in cases of urgency on the ground of ill health, the President (Deed of Union, cl. 23(i) or 25A(i), Book II, Part 1).

(1A) A minister seeking permission under clause (1) above may, on making the request, state that it is also made on the grounds of ill health or on compassionate grounds and the procedure set out in clause (2) or (3) below, as the case may require, shall apply, with the necessary amendments, for the purpose of determining whether such grounds are satisfied.

(1B) Except where clause (1A) applies, permission to become supernumerary will normally be granted only where the date on which the minister would become supernumerary coincides with the expected end of the minister's current appointment as agreed in a previous connexional year or after curtailment.

(1C) A minister who is not within the scope of clause (1) above or clause (2) or (3) below may seek permission to become supernumerary under the terms of Standing Order 791(1) by making a request to the Secretary of the Conference or the Warden of the Diaconal Order, as the case may require, stating the reasons for which the application is made and the date on which it is proposed that the application will take effect if granted.

(1D) The amount of any pension to be received by a minister from the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme and the age at which it is to be received are governed by the Rules of the Scheme.

As to pensions see S.O. 805. The Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme is a registered pension scheme (formerly a scheme approved under Chapter 1 Part XIV of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988) administered, in accordance with the Scheme Rules, by a corporate trustee, The Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd., appointed by the Conference.

See also the notes to S.O. 375(1).

(2) (a) Any minister seeking to become a supernumerary on the grounds of ill health who is not within the scope of clause (1) above shall, after giving notice to [...] **the relevant** Chair (and, in the case of a deacon, also to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order), apply to the relevant member of the Connexional Team who shall **ensure that, whenever appropriate, an Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) is undertaken by each applicant and that the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) is applied with any necessary modifications.** [...] All expenses in connection with such an [...] assessment shall be borne by **connexional budgets** [...].

(b) In cases of prolonged or repeated absence through ill health, the relevant Chair or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order or the Secretary of the Conference may require a minister to **undertake an Occupational Health** assessment [...] and may specify that the assessment should include an assessment of whether the minister concerned should be invited to seek permission to become supernumerary on the grounds of ill health. All expenses in connection with such an assessment shall be borne by **connexional budgets** [...].

(c) If following an assessment under sub-clause (b) it is reported by the person making the assessment or it appears to the Secretary of the Conference or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order that the minister concerned should be invited to seek permission to become a supernumerary on the grounds of ill health but **the minister** [...] declines to do so, the Secretary or, in the case of a deacon, the Warden may require that [...] **the person concerned** be treated as having made such an application, but without prejudice to the rights given by sub-clause (e) below.

(d) All records, reports and assessments received pursuant to sub-clauses (a) and (b) above shall be held in connexional files that are confidential [...] to the Secretary of the Conference and **the Secretary's** [...] delegated representatives and to the Trustee of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme when early retirement on grounds of ill health in the case of a particular minister is being discussed.

(e) Unless sub-clause (f) below applies **those considering the case under sub-clause (c) above** [...] shall recommend to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may require, whether the person concerned should be permitted to become a supernumerary on medical grounds and shall inform **the person concerned** [...] in writing of [...] **that** recommendation. The person concerned may **give** [...] notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference [...] within fourteen days after [...] **having been** informed of the [...] recommendation, or such longer period as the Secretary of the Conference may allow, **requiring** that a further [...] **assessment** be sought and that the matter be considered afresh by people who have not been involved in the making of the previous recommendation. The second recommendation shall, if the person concerned so requires, be presented to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may require, together with the first recommendation.

For the Conference Diaconal Committee see cl. 25A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and Section 18.

(f) If **on consideration of an assessment or in any case where no assessment is required the Secretary of the Conference or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order** [...]

**recommends** that the person concerned should as a matter of urgency be permitted to become a supernumerary before the next meeting of the Conference, and **the minister [...]** so desires, [...], the President or the Vice-President on **the President's [...]** behalf shall grant permission.

(g) Where the person concerned desires to receive an enhanced pension from the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme **any relevant Occupational Health assessment [...]** shall be made available [...] to the Trustee of the scheme.

The level of pension, if any, to be paid in such cases is determined by the rules of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (see note to cl. (1D) above).

As to (f), the President has power to grant permission on the ground of ill health in cases of urgency (Deed of Union, cl. 23(i) or 25A(i), Book II, Part 1).

(3) A minister who is not within the scope of clause (1) or (2) above may apply for permission to become a supernumerary on compassionate grounds. Any such person shall, after giving notice to the Chair (and, in the case of a deacon, also to the Warden), apply to the Stationing Advisory Committee, stating the grounds on which the application is made. The committee shall make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee which shall in turn make a recommendation to the Presbyteral Session of the Conference or the Conference Diaconal Committee, as the case may be.

The level of pension, if any, to be paid in such cases is determined by the rules of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme (see note to cl. (1D) above).

(4) A minister who is permitted to serve in accordance with heads (iv) to (vi) of Standing Order 780 in a chaplaincy or an appointment not within the control of the Church or a mission partnership where the length and timing of appointments is not co-terminous with the connexional year and who satisfies the criteria for becoming a supernumerary in clause (1) above may apply to the President to be designated as without appointment until the end of the connexional year. In determining the case the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf may ask the Stationing Advisory Committee to make a recommendation about the circumstances and the financial implications.

(5) All recommendations under clauses (2), (3) and (4) above made with respect to presbyters prior to the Presbyteral Session of the Synod shall be reported to it. Those made with respect to deacons prior to the Convocation shall be reported to that body.

(6) The Agenda of the Conference shall include a list of the names of ministers asking permission to become supernumeraries, showing also the number of years each has travelled.

**791 Status and Stationing.** (1) A minister who seeks permission to become a supernumerary thereby requests an alteration in the terms and conditions of his or her service, and in particular exemption from any requirement to be available for appointment to a station in the active work. He or she shall not be counted in the number of

- (i) those appointed to serve in the ministry deployment figure allotted by the Conference to a District in accordance with Standing Order 785(6) and heads (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 780(1); or

- (ii) those appointed to serve according to heads (iii) to (vi) of Standing Order 780(1); or
- (iii) those permitted to serve another conference or church under Standing Order 735; or
- (iv) those permitted to study under Standing Order 773; or
- (v) those permitted to be without appointment under Standing Order 774.

(2) The President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf of the Conference has power at the request of a supernumerary to authorise the placing of his or her name in the stations printed in the Minutes of Conference in a different Circuit from that in which it appeared in the stations as adopted by the Conference, and he or she shall then be regarded for all purposes as stationed in the Circuit in which he or she appears in the Minutes.

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) Supernumeraries moving into other Districts after the publication of the Minutes of Conference may, by arrangement with their own Chairs, attend the Synods of the Districts to which they have moved. They shall previously give notice to the Chairs of those Districts of their intention of so doing. Each presbyter shall, nevertheless, continue to be responsible in matters of doctrine and discipline to the Synod of the District in which he or she is stationed.

All supernumeraries except those with permission to reside abroad are members of the Synods of the Districts in which they are stationed (S.O. 410(1)(ii)).

(5) Supernumerary presbyters shall attend the Presbyteral Session of the Synod unless they receive a dispensation of absence, but their attendance at the Representative Session is optional.

As to dispensations, see S.O. 741. Supernumerary deacons are not required to attend the Representative Session (S.O. 741).

**792 Continuing Ministry.** (1) (a) Unless otherwise directed by a church court under Part 11 or Section 04 a supernumerary minister is expected to continue as he or she is able to exercise his or her ministry in collaboration with those in the active work in the Circuit in which he or she is stationed or elsewhere by agreement with the appropriate Superintendent or Chair.

(b) In the case of a supernumerary presbyter this shall be a continuing ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility.

(c) In the case of a supernumerary deacon it shall be a continuing ministry of service and witness.

See also S.O 700(5) and 701(6).

A supernumerary may be a member of the Circuit Meeting (S.O. 510(1)(ii)) and (if eligible) Local Preachers' Meeting (S.O. 560(1)) of the Circuit. As to the eligibility of supernumeraries for membership of church courts and office in the Circuit and Local Church see S.O. 503(1)(i), 505(1A), 530, 541(3), 551(4), 562(1), 606(1)(i), 610(2A), 610(4)(ii), 620, 630(1A), 632(1), 635(1), 637(1A), 642(4).

(2) Where a supernumerary minister undertakes pastoral work on a regular basis in a Circuit or institution connected with the Church, he or she shall do so under a letter of understanding entered into with the consent of his or her Chair and the appropriate

Superintendent or head of institution and, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. The letter of understanding shall be framed in accordance with connexional guidelines issued by the Stationing Advisory Committee. Such guidelines shall include information about such matters as remuneration and pensions and shall ensure that no contract is created.

(3) Where it is desired that a supernumerary presbyter exercise pastoral charge in a Circuit, he or she shall, in order to be eligible to do so, apply to return to the active work in accordance with Standing Order 793.

**793 Return to the Active Work.** (1) Subject to clause (2) below any application by a supernumerary presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion for permission to return to the active work shall be made to the Stationing Advisory Committee. The **convenor of that committee [...]** shall arrange for **an Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) to be undertaken by the applicant. The assessment shall be considered in accordance with the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) with any necessary modifications and reported [...]** to the Advisory Committee and, where application has been made to become a member of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme, to the Trustee of the scheme. The Advisory Committee shall consult the Chair and Superintendent of the supernumerary concerned, and, where the supernumerary is a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee, which shall in turn make a recommendation to the Conference. In the case of urgent stationing needs or other emergency the President or the Vice-President on the President's behalf may consider the recommendation from the Advisory Committee, grant immediate permission and report to the Conference.

For the advisory committee see S.O. 261.

(2) In cases where a minister was made a supernumerary as a result of disciplinary action under Part 11 or proceedings under Section 04 the application shall be made to the President and shall be considered and determined as set out in clauses (1) to (10) of Standing Order 761, with any necessary changes, as though it were an application for reinstatement.

Section 04 deals with ministerial competence; see S.O. 042(7).





## **Part 8 Presbyters and Deacons (2) – Terms of Service**

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**Section 80 Support and Maintenance**

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**800 Year of Entry.** (1) Entry into the presbyterate or the diaconate for the purpose of seniority and years of travel shall, except as provided in these Standing Orders or as otherwise directed by the Conference on reception, date from the year of reception into Full Connexion or, if earlier, the year of first appointment as a probationer to a Circuit or other approved appointment. A specific direction shall be given whenever reception into Full Connexion has been deferred.

For 'years of travel' as a traditional way of expressing length of service see the Deed of Union clauses 23(i) and 25A(i).

(2) If first appointment as a probationer within clause (1) above occurs before completion of pre-ordination training any subsequent period as a student or while probation is suspended shall add no seniority and the year of entry shall be adjusted accordingly.

(3) If a presbyter or deacon ceases to be in Full Connexion with the Conference, whether by transfer, resignation, exclusion or for any other reason, and is later reinstated, the intervening period shall add no seniority and the year of entry shall be adjusted accordingly.

(4) The above provisions of this Standing Order apply in respect of presbyters to those accepted as candidates in and after 1985. The seniority of other presbyters shall continue to be governed by the Standing Orders in force when they were accepted as candidates, except that clause (3) above shall apply to every presbyter reinstated in or after 1985.

**801 Stipends.** (1) (a) Circuit ministers, other ministers in the active work and probationers appointed to stations within the control of the Church shall, subject to clauses (6) and (7) below, receive stipends at not less than the appropriate rate on the scale of minimum stipends from time to time prescribed by the Conference, provided that a minister or probationer who is duly permitted to serve part-time shall

receive an appropriate proportion of the full-time rate, the amount of such proportion being determined with reference to connexional guidelines by the Chair of the District in which he or she is stationed after consultation with the circuit stewards or other responsible officers of the Circuit or other responsible body respectively.

(b) Circuit ministers, other ministers in the active work appointed to stations within the control of the Church and probationers may also receive discretionary local allowances by arrangement with the circuit stewards or the officers of the relevant responsible body. Any discretionary allowance shall require prior approval of the [...] **Resourcing Committee**.

(c) The circuit stewards or officers of the relevant responsible body shall provide a profile of the appointment including a statement of the financial arrangements for that appointment, including any approved discretionary local allowances and potential opportunities for earning fees.

For fees and remuneration for additional work see S.O. 802 below.

For the statement, see S.O. 782(2) and 783(4).

For the Resourcing Committee, see Section 36.

(2) In addition all essential expenses incurred by ministers and probationers in the discharge of the responsibilities of their appointments shall be defrayed in full by the Circuits or other bodies responsible for provision of their stipends.

For travel allowances see S.O. 433.

For furnishing allowance see S.O. 804(2).

(3) There shall be throughout the Connexion a uniform method in the payment of stipends, namely that upon entry into a Circuit a full month's stipend shall be paid on the 1st September to each newly-appointed minister and probationer, and similarly in each subsequent month, payment being made in advance. Stipends shall be paid by the Connexional Team, which shall collect the sums required for that purpose by direct debit from the Circuits and other responsible bodies four working days before the beginning of each month.

See S.O. 532(1)(i).

(4) Ministers or probationers within the scope of clause (1) above who are unable by reason of illness or injury to discharge the responsibilities of their appointments shall continue to receive their stipends and to be reimbursed for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during the incapacity. They shall, however, give credit for any Social Security benefits and statutory sickness pay to which they may be entitled by reason of the incapacity, the amount of all such benefits receivable during any quarter being deducted from the next quarter's payment of stipend and (if there has been a change of station meanwhile) remitted to the Circuit or other body entitled to the refund.

As to reimbursement from the Methodist Church Fund see S.O. 376.

(5) (a) On the death of a minister or probationer within the scope of clause (1) above the deceased's spouse or civil partner and/or any dependants of the deceased then resident in the manse shall be entitled to remain there until the end of the current connexional year.

(b) If the deceased leaves a spouse or civil partner or dependants in financial need, a payment of three full months' stipend at the rate payable at the date of death shall be

made and expenses and allowances of the same total amount as those payable under Standing Order 528(1) shall be paid from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons to such spouse or civil partner or dependants, the payment being allocated having regard to the principles applied by the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme in allocating lump sum payments from the Scheme.

For the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons see S.O. 375(1).

(6) (a) A minister or probationer entitled to receive a stipend under clause (1) above may inform the Chair of the relevant District and, in the case of a deacon or diaconal probationer, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order that he or she does not wish to receive a stipend. The Chair or the Warden shall hold a pastoral interview with the minister or probationer according to guidelines issued by the [...] **Resourcing** Committee and make a recommendation through the Stationing Advisory Committee to the Stationing Committee.

(b) Where a minister or probationer does not receive a stipend for an appointment within the control of the Church, the Circuit or other appropriate body shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the district Policy Committee that the moneys which otherwise would be paid as stipend are being spent on or saved for additional ministries within that Circuit or body.

(c) A Circuit or other body responsible for a full-time or part-time appointment within the control of the Church may apply for a minister or probationer to be stationed without payment of a stipend. Such application shall be made to the district Policy Committee which shall consider the resources of the Circuit or other body according to guidelines issued by the [...] **Resourcing** Committee and shall make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee accordingly.

(7) Clauses (2) to (5) above shall not apply to any ministers or probationers in appointments not within the control of the Church, except that they shall be entitled in accordance with clause (2) above to have all essential expenses incurred in the discharge of their responsibilities defrayed in full by the Circuits or other connexional body in which they undertake duties.

**802 Remuneration of Part-time Chaplaincies and Other Work.** (1) Ministers and probationers permitted to serve part-time in appointments within the control of the Church shall be remunerated for that service in accordance with Standing Order 801(1).

(2) Supernumeraries and those ministers and probationers who are permitted to serve in appointments not within the control of the Church or who are otherwise not normally in receipt of a stipend from the Church shall have expenses incurred in the course of undertaking duties for the Church defrayed in accordance with Standing Order 801(7).

(3) The following clauses of this Standing Order relate to the engagement of circuit ministers or probationers in part-time chaplaincy, teaching or other work not within their circuit responsibilities, to remuneration for such work and to fees received for weddings and funerals.

(4) No person to whom clause (3) of this Standing Order applies shall engage in work to which that clause applies without first consulting the Superintendent and Chair, and,

in the case of a deacon or diaconal probationer, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. A probationer must also obtain the permission of the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee.

(5) If the total of any such remuneration and fees will exceed one quarter of the person's minimum stipend or if the total of any time spent on work to which clause (3) applies and on weddings and funerals will exceed ten hours per week, then the Superintendent, the other ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit and the circuit stewards shall consult in order to arrive at a just and amicable agreement which shall then, except where clause (7) below applies, be put into effect. If the work will affect the person's circuit duties or cause extra work to a ministerial colleague the agreement shall include an arrangement for some recompense to be paid to the Circuit or colleague.

(6) Where agreement is not reached locally the Chair, who will already have been consulted, shall be asked to decide (subject to clause (7) below and, in the case of a diaconal appointment, after consultation with the Warden) whether the work shall be undertaken, and if so on what terms.

(7) If clause (5) above applies and the amount involved will exceed in total one half of the person's minimum stipend or if the time spent will exceed in total 20 hours per week, then after proposals have been formulated under clause (5) or (6) above they shall be referred, in the form of an application, to the Chair and the Stationing Advisory Committee, who shall in consultation with the Stationing Committee, and, where relevant, with the Warden, together consider them as the Advisory Committee does those for full-time work in appointments not within the control of the Church and give a decision.

For the Stationing Advisory Committee see S.O. 261.

(8) If the amount specified in clause (5) above rises or falls the arrangements shall be reviewed and, if necessary, revised.

(9) Superintendents shall by the 31st March in each year report in writing to the Chair on all agreements and arrangements made or revised under this Standing Order.

**803 Accommodation and Furnishing.** (1) (a) Subject to clause (2) below the Circuit or other body responsible for provision of the stipend of a circuit minister or other minister in the active work or probationer appointed to a station within the control of the Church shall provide a manse as a base for the work of ministry as well as a home.

(b) The accommodation to be provided shall satisfy the relevant accommodation guidelines approved from time to time by the Conference, unless permission for a departure from those guidelines has been granted under paragraph (c) below.

For the guidelines approved by the Conference of 2009, see Book VII A, Part 2.

For inspection of manses by the District Manses Committee see S.O. 965.

(c) In any case in which it is proposed that there be a significant departure from the approved accommodation guidelines, permission shall be sought by the Circuit or other responsible body from the district Policy Committee or, if the appointment is not a circuit appointment, the [...] **Resourcing Committee** or other body or person to whom the [...] **committee** may delegate the granting of such permissions.

For the Resourcing Committee, see Section 36.

(d) Such permission shall only be granted if the committee [...] (or other body or person) is satisfied:

- (i) that it is appropriate because of the particular local circumstances or nature of the appointment or for some other compelling reason; and
- (ii) that the matter has been fully discussed with the minister concerned and (if applicable) those responsible for his or her oversight, such discussion having taken place, in the case of an incoming minister, before an invitation has been offered and accepted, and, in the case of an incoming deacon, before the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order has made his or her recommendation as to stationing.

(e) No such departure shall be permitted in the case of an incoming probationer after the description of the appointment has been furnished under Standing Order 723(2)(a).

(1A) For the purposes of clause (1) above, provision of a manse 'as a base for the work of ministry' means that the minister or probationer concerned is enabled to discharge the duties of the appointment in substantial part from the manse (whether or not he or she has a study available elsewhere) but does not oblige him or her to hold meetings or to conduct pastoral or other confidential interviews at the manse.

(2) Where two persons, each of whom is a minister or probationer, married to each other are appointed to the same Circuit or to nearby Circuits they shall be entitled to one manse only and shall choose which of the available manses they will occupy. Where two Circuits are involved any question as to the financial arrangements between them not resolved by consultation shall be referred to a special committee appointed by the Synod and its decision shall be final.

See also the guidance in the code of practice published annually by the Stationing Committee.

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) The Circuit or other such body shall, having regard for energy efficiency, also provide all carpets, curtains and other floor covering, lamp shades and light fittings, fixed fires (where fitted), study furniture, cooker and kitchen cupboards, as specified in clauses (6) to (8) below.

As to energy efficiency see also the guidance in Book VII A, Parts 1 and 2. The Conference of 2010 directed that Circuits should endeavour to use model trust money to put in place these high standards of energy efficiency. It also directed that Circuits should endeavour to provide smart meter devices to enable ministers to control their electricity use.

(5) *[revoked]*

(6) Guidelines as to the minimum requirements and best practice in the furnishing of manses shall be issued from time to time on behalf of the [...] **Resourcing Committee**. Commonsense and flexibility should be exercised in applying those guidelines. It is the clear duty of the Circuit or other responsible body to see that each manse contains the items in the guidelines, but if a minister or probationer has any of these items and is willing that they should be used then it should be noted that these items may be required when there is a new appointment but are not needed now.

The Conference of 2009 received the guidelines intended to be issued under this clause by the Methodist Council (2009 Agenda p 203), which largely reflected the provisions previously contained in cl. (5) above.

See also the 'Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers', in Book VII A, Part 1.  
For the Resourcing Committee, see Section 36.

(7) Where the accommodation provided does not comply in all respects with the guidelines referred to in clause (1) above, whether as a result of a permitted departure from those guidelines or otherwise, the furnishings shall satisfy the requirements of clause (6) above as far as is reasonably possible and in any event shall be adequate for the accommodation and appropriate for the purposes of a manse.

(8) A minister or probationer bringing study furniture, cooker, carpets or curtains into a manse so as to render surplus manse furniture or furnishings (not considered inadequate by the district Manses Committee by reference to the guidelines as to minimum requirements) is responsible with the Circuit or other responsible body for the proper storage of such surplus furniture or furnishings and the cost of such storage shall be shared equally by the Circuit or other responsible body and the person concerned. He or she should consult the circuit stewards or other responsible officers so that an approved arrangement can be made for storage of this and any other manse furniture or furnishings which it is considered will not be used, to the extent that the stewards or other officers cannot find an alternative use for it or cannot themselves store it safely and economically. The Circuit Meeting shall receive and record the details for future use.

(9) This Standing Order and clause (2) of Standing Order 804 shall not apply to ministers or probationers permitted to serve in appointments that are not within the control of the Church, who shall be wholly responsible for the provision of their own accommodation and furniture.

(10) Where a minister or probationer wishes to live in his or her own home and not in the manse provided by the Circuit or other appointing body, application must be made in writing to the Ministries Committee for permission to do so. The application must give the reasons upon which the request is made. The Committee shall issue, and may from time to time amend, guidelines for dealing with such applications, shall consider each application in accordance with those guidelines, and shall have power to grant or withhold permission, to impose conditions and to give any associated directions.

**804 Furniture.** (1) A minister or probationer within the terms of Standing Order 803 (1) shall be responsible for supplying all furniture, with the exception of that provided under Standing Order 803(4).

(2) Ministers and probationers on being appointed for the first time to a station in the home work within the control of the Church shall be eligible to receive financial assistance according to need from the Methodist Church Fund. Assistance may be given by way of grant or loan or a combination of both, according to criteria approved by the [...] **Connexional** Council. Payment shall be made by the Connexional Team which shall also deal with any related administrative matters which may arise.

(3) The needs of mission partners returning from overseas to home service shall be a charge upon the World Mission Fund.

For this fund see S.O. 373(2).

**805 Retirement Benefits.** (1) (a) A minister or probationer may apply to become a member of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme according to the Rules for eligibility and application set by the Trustee of that Scheme.

The Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme is a registered pension scheme (formerly a scheme approved under Chapter 1 Part XIV of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988) administered, in accordance with the Scheme Rules, by a corporate trustee, The Methodist Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd., appointed by the Conference.

Information about any possible implication of the rules of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme for the benefits of a minister undergoing a change in his or her conditions of service may be obtained through the Stationing Advisory Committee (for which see S.O. 261).

(b) The Conference may from time to time on the recommendation of the Trustee of the Scheme approve levels of contribution to the Scheme that are required from Circuits or other bodies providing the stipend for a minister or probationer, and from any minister or probationer who applies to be a member of the Scheme.

(c) The Conference shall receive reports from the Trustee of the Scheme as to the level of pension and deferred pension to be paid by the Scheme to its members.

(2) (a) A minister or probationer may apply to the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for help with housing upon becoming a supernumerary, according to the Society's eligibility criteria.

Information about any possible implication of the eligibility criteria of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for the benefits of a minister undergoing a change in his or her conditions of service may be obtained through the Stationing Advisory Committee (for which see S.O. 261).

(b) Upon the death of a minister or probationer, their spouse or civil partner may apply to the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society for help with housing according to the Society's eligibility criteria.

See the note to S.O. 375(2).

(3) (a) A presbyter may apply for assistance from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons on becoming a supernumerary.

(b) Upon the death of a presbyter or presbyteral probationer their spouse or civil partner may apply for assistance from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons.

See further S.O. 375(1).

**806 Parenthood: Interpretation, General Provisions and Savings.** (1) This Standing Order and Standing Orders 807, 807A, 807B, 807C, 807D are here called 'this sub-section'.

(2) In this sub-section references to any statutory provision are to that statutory provision or any modification or re-enactment of it for the time being in force and any regulations or orders made or having effect under it, and (except in Standing Order 807D) references to a week are to a week beginning at midnight between Saturday and Sunday.

(3) The persons to whom this sub-section applies are persons who are ministers in the active work or probationers and whose stations are within the control of the Church, and they are sometimes referred to as 'qualifying persons'.

(4) In this sub-section, unless the context otherwise requires:

(i) 'child' means a person under the age of eighteen and, where the context



- so requires, includes an expected child;
- (ii) ‘childbirth’ means the birth of a living child or the birth of a child whether living or dead after 24 weeks of pregnancy;
  - (iii) ‘disability living allowance’ means the disability living allowance provided for in Part III of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 or personal independence payment provided for in Part IV of the Welfare Reform Act 2012;
  - (iv) ‘expected week of adoption’ means the week in which it is expected that adoption will occur, and ‘expected week of placement’ means the week in which it is expected that the placing of a child for adoption will occur;
  - (v) ‘expected week of childbirth’ means the week in which it is expected that childbirth will occur, and ‘week of childbirth’ means the week in which it occurs;
  - (vi) ‘leave’ means any of the kinds of leave or time off provided for in this sub-section and ‘entitlement to leave’ has a corresponding meaning;
  - (vii) ‘parental responsibility’ has the meaning given by section 3 of the Children Act 1989, and ‘parental responsibilities’ has the meaning given by section 1(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;
  - (viii) ‘responsible officers’ means:
    - (a) in the case of a person appointed to a Circuit who is not a Superintendent, the Superintendent and the circuit stewards and also, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
    - (b) in the case of a Superintendent, the Chair and the circuit stewards;
    - (c) in the case of a Chair, the Secretary of the Conference;
    - (d) in the case of the Secretary of the Conference or the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, the President, or, in the case of the assistant secretary, the Secretary;
    - (e) in the case of [...] **the** Connexional Secretary, the Secretary of the Conference, or, in the case of any other person who is a member of the Connexional Team, the Connexional Secretary [...] and also, if any such person is a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
    - (f) in all other cases, the Chair of the District in which the person is stationed, and also, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
  - (ix) ‘responsibilities of his or her appointment’ and similar expressions include training or any activity undertaken for the purposes of keeping in touch with the responsible officers.

(5) Subject to clause (6) below and to Standing Order 807A(4), a person on leave under the provisions of this sub-section is not permitted to discharge the responsibilities of his or her appointment.

(6) A person on leave under the provisions of this sub-section is excused from attending the Synod of which he or she is a member, but may attend, except during compulsory maternity leave, upon informing the Chair of his or her intention to do so. If either of Standing Orders 807A(4)(c) or 807C(4)(c) applies to a person who attends,

then that person will be treated for the purposes of the relevant Standing Order as having fulfilled the responsibilities of his or her appointment for one day.

(7) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this sub-section entitlement to leave ceases on the day, and leave ceases on the day before, a person ceases to be one to whom this sub-section applies by virtue of clause (3) above.

(8) The provisions in Standing Order 807A, 807B, 807C and 807D are intended to reflect as closely as possible the statutory provisions for maternity and paternity leave, shared parental leave and adoption leave applicable to employed persons and should be interpreted to reflect this intention.

**807 Ante-natal Care.** (1) A qualifying person who is pregnant is entitled to take time off to attend ante-natal care appointments.

(2) A qualifying person who is within Standing Order 807B is entitled to take time off to attend up to two antenatal care appointments.

**807A Maternity Leave.** (1) A qualifying person who is pregnant is required to take compulsory maternity leave and is entitled, upon compliance with clause (2) below, to take ordinary maternity leave and additional maternity leave or to share ordinary and additional maternity leave with a person entitled to do so in law or under clause (1A) below.

(1A) A qualifying person who is within Standing Order 807B is entitled, upon compliance with clause (2) below, to share with the mother of the relevant child ordinary and additional maternity leave if the mother is entitled to such leave in law or under clause (1) above.

(2) Any person claiming to take maternity leave under clause (1) or (1A) above shall notify the responsible officers by the fifteenth week before the expected week of childbirth or as soon as is reasonably practical of:

- (i) the pregnancy;
- (ii) the expected week of childbirth evidenced by a certificate stating such expected week of childbirth from a registered medical practitioner or midwife;
- (iii) the date on which the mother intends ordinary maternity leave to start, which shall be a date not earlier than the beginning of the eleventh week before the expected week of childbirth; and
- (iv) if ordinary and additional maternity leave is to be shared, what part of the total entitlement to such leave the claimant intends to take, and on what dates, giving at least 8 weeks' notice.

As to responsible officers see S.O. 806(4)(viii).

As to expected week of childbirth see S.O. 806(4)(v).

(3) (a) Ordinary maternity leave commences with the earliest of:

- (i) the date notified under clause (2)(iii) above;
- (ii) the child's date of birth; or
- (iii) the first day of absence as a result of illness, wholly or partly because of pregnancy, after the start of the fourth week before the expected week

of childbirth and continues for 39 weeks from its commencement, or until the end of compulsory maternity leave if later, unless the person entitled earlier resumes fulfilling the responsibilities of his or her appointment under clause (4) below, in which case it ends on the day before the resumption.

(b) Additional maternity leave commences on the day after the last day of ordinary maternity leave, and continues until the end of the period of 13 weeks thereafter or, if earlier, until the day before the person concerned resumes fulfilling the responsibilities of his or her appointment under clause (4) below.

(bA) Where two persons share maternity leave and either or both do so under this Standing Order they shall together be entitled to a total of 39 weeks' ordinary maternity leave and 13 weeks' additional maternity leave, and if they take any part of such leave at the same time the dates of termination under clause 3(a) and/or (b) above shall be adjusted accordingly.

(c) Compulsory maternity leave (which is part of ordinary maternity leave if taken) must be taken by the mother and commences with the day on which childbirth occurs and continues for 14 days.

Cl. (1) above requires that qualifying persons take compulsory maternity leave.

(4) (a) A person on maternity leave (which expression, in this clause and clauses (5) and (6) below, includes where applicable shared maternity leave) may resume the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the appointment at any time after the end of the compulsory maternity leave, but shall give the responsible officers at least 8 weeks' notice of the intended date of resumption if it is earlier than the date on which all the maternity leave would otherwise end.

(b) Subject to sub-clause (c) below, if a person on maternity leave attempts to resume fulfilling the responsibilities of the appointment without complying with sub-clause (a) above, the responsible officers may postpone the resumption either to the earliest date which will ensure that they have had 8 weeks' notice, or to the date on which all maternity leave ends, whichever is the earlier.

(c) Subject to Standing Order 806(6), a qualifying person or persons taking or sharing maternity leave may, with the consent of the responsible officers, fulfil the responsibilities of the appointment for up to 20 days in total (but not during compulsory maternity leave) without bringing maternity leave to an end or extending the entitlement to maternity leave. This clause does not confer any right on a qualifying person taking maternity leave to fulfil the responsibilities of the appointment, nor any right on the responsible officers to require a qualifying person taking maternity leave to fulfil the responsibilities of the appointment.

(5) (a) A qualifying person on ordinary maternity leave shall be paid his or her stipend less any claimable Social Security benefits, and shall also be reimbursed for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that leave.

As to reimbursement from the Methodist Church Fund see S.O. 376.

(b) A qualifying person on additional maternity leave receives no stipend but shall be reimbursed for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that leave.

(6) A qualifying person who takes ordinary or additional maternity leave shall not also undertake a sabbatical in any connexional year in which such leave is taken.

As to sabbaticals generally see S.O. 744.

**807B Paternity Leave.** (1) A qualifying person who is within this Standing Order is entitled, upon compliance with clause (2) below, to paternity leave in accordance with this Standing Order. To be within this Standing Order a person shall be either:

- (i) the child's biological father;
- (ii) married to the mother of the child; or
- (iii) living with the child's mother or father in an enduring family relationship but not an immediate relative.

(2) The qualifying person shall notify the responsible officers by the fifteenth week before the beginning of the expected week of childbirth unless that is not reasonably practicable, of the day on which he or she intends the paternity leave to start, which shall be either:

- (i) the day on which the child is born; or
- (ii) a specified date after the child's expected date of birth.

As to responsible officers see S.O. 806(4)(viii).

As to expected week of childbirth see S.O. 806(4)(v).

(3) Paternity leave commences on the date or day notified under clause (2) above and continues for 14 days. It must be completed before the end of a period of 56 days beginning with the date of the child's birth.

(4) A person on paternity leave shall be paid his or her stipend less any claimable Social Security benefits, and shall also be reimbursed for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that leave.

As to reimbursement from the Methodist Church Fund see S.O. 376.

**807C Adoption Leave.** (1) A qualifying person who adopts a child, or with whom a child is placed for adoption, is entitled, upon compliance with clause (2) below, to adoption leave, in accordance with this Standing Order.

As to which of adoption or placement for adoption is the relevant event, see cl. (6) below.

(2) He or she shall notify the responsible officers within 7 days of the date on which he or she is notified of having been matched with a child for the purposes of adoption or placement, or as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, of:

- (i) the date on which the child is to be adopted or placed; and
- (ii) the date on which adoption leave is expected to commence which shall be either
  - a. the date specified in sub-clause (i); or
  - b. a predetermined date which is no more than 14 days before the date on which the child is expected to be placed and no later than the date of the placement.

As to responsible officers see S.O. 806(4)(viii).

As to expected week of adoption or placement see S.O. 806(4)(iv).

(3) (a) Ordinary adoption leave commences on the day notified under clause (2) above

and continues for 39 weeks from its commencement.

(b) Additional adoption leave commences on the day after the last day of ordinary adoption leave and continues until the end of a further period of 13 weeks.

(4) (a) A person on adoption leave may resume the fulfilment of the responsibilities of his or her appointment at any time but shall give the responsible officers at least 28 days' notice of the intended date of resumption if it is earlier than the date on which all his or her adoption leave would otherwise end.

(b) Subject to sub-clause (c) below, if a person on adoption leave attempts to resume the fulfilment of the responsibilities of his or her appointment without complying with sub-clause (a) above, the responsible officers may postpone the resumption either to the earliest date which will ensure that they have had 28 days' notice, or to the date on which all adoption leave ends, whichever is the earlier.

(c) A qualifying person taking adoption leave may, with the consent of the responsible officers, fulfil the responsibilities of his or her appointment for up to 10 days in total without bringing his or her adoption leave to an end or extending the entitlement to adoption leave. This clause does not confer any right on a qualifying person taking adoption leave to fulfil the responsibilities of his or her appointment, nor any right on the responsible officers to require a qualifying person taking adoption leave to fulfil the responsibilities of his or her appointment.

(5) (a) A person on ordinary adoption leave shall be paid his or her stipend less any Social Security benefits to which he or she may be entitled, and shall also be reimbursed for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that leave.

(b) A person on additional adoption leave shall be reimbursed for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that leave.

As to reimbursement from the Methodist Church Fund see S.O. 376.

(6) If a child is placed with a person for adoption and later adopted by that person the placement, and not the adoption, is the relevant event for all the purposes of this Standing Order and Standing Order 807D.

The effect of this provision is that a person may take adoption leave once only in respect of any child, and that leave must be taken at the time of placement for adoption, if that occurs before adoption itself.

**807D Parental Leave.** (1) A person who has, or expects to have, responsibility for a child is, subject to clause (3) below, and upon compliance with clause (4), entitled to parental leave in accordance with this Standing Order.

(2) A person has responsibility for a child, for the purposes of clause (1), and is in this Standing Order called the child's parent, if:

- (i) he or she has parental responsibility or, in Scotland, parental responsibilities for the child; or
- (ii) he or she has been registered as the child's mother or father under any provision of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 or the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965.

As to parental responsibility or responsibilities, see S.O. 806(4)(vii).

(3) [revoked]

(4) (a) At least 21 days before the date on which he or she wishes any period of parental leave to start, the person in question shall notify the responsible officers of the name of the relevant child, of the dates on which he or she wishes that period to begin and end, and of the dates of every period of parental leave which he or she has taken in respect of that child.

(b) The responsible officers may postpone any period of parental leave if:

- (i) they consider that fulfilment of the responsibilities of the parent's appointment would be unduly disrupted if parental leave were taken during the period specified in the notice; and
- (ii) they are willing to permit the parent to take parental leave, of the same duration as specified in the notice, beginning on a date (not later than six months after the proposed commencement date) specified by them after consultation with the parent; and
- (iii) they give notice to the parent in writing of the postponement, stating the reason for it; and
- (iv) that notice is given to the parent not more than seven days after the parent's notice was given to them.

(5) On or before giving the first notice under clause (4)(a) above in respect of a child, the parent shall inform the responsible officers in writing of the full names and date of birth of that child and, if material, the date of the child's adoption by, or placement for adoption with, the parent.

(6) (a) A parent is entitled to 18 weeks' parental leave in respect of any individual child, not more than four of which may be taken in any connexional year.

(b) A parent may not take parental leave in periods of less than one week or multiples of that period, except in a case where the child in respect of whom leave is taken is entitled to a disability living allowance, in which case the aggregate of the periods of parental leave shall not exceed four weeks in any connexional year.

(7) Entitlement to parental leave shall be exercised before the child's eighteenth birthday.

(8) A person on parental leave shall not be paid his or her stipend. He or she shall be reimbursed for all expenses within Standing Order 801(2) which continue during that leave.

**808 III Health.** The [...] *Connexional* Council shall ensure that the Connexional Team issues and updates as necessary a good practice guide for supporting ministers who experience ill health which shall set out procedures for reporting ill health absence, strategies for returning to ministry after an extended absence, and sources of further advice.

The Conference in 2011 adopted the above Standing Order (the responsibility being laid then on the Methodist Council) and directed that the good practice guide be placed on the Methodist Church website.

## Part 9 Property

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See the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*, on the title page of Book II Part 2 (Model Trusts), for the applicability to the Connexional Council of the provisions referring to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts.

**Section 90 Introductory and Interpretation**

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**900 Trusts and Standing Orders.** (1) In their application to property these Standing Orders are supplementary to the trusts and other legal powers and obligations arising under the trust instruments relating to the property or under the general law; in the event of any conflict between these Standing Orders and any such trust or legal obligation the latter prevails.

(2) Where, by virtue of the provisions of the Model Trusts or otherwise, the Conference has power to regulate by Standing Order the exercise by trustees of any power, duty or discretion vested in them as such trustees, compliance with such Standing Orders is a requirement both of law and of Methodist polity.

(3) Subject to clauses (1) and (2) above these Standing Orders have the same force and authority, as part of the polity and discipline of the Methodist Church, in relation to property as to other subjects.

(4) Where church property is not held on the Model Trusts any provisions of these Standing Orders of general application but framed by reference to the terms of the Model Trusts shall take effect and be applied as nearly as the circumstances admit.

(5) The provisions of clauses (1) to (4) above apply to all Standing Orders affecting property, whether or not contained in this Part.

**901 Vesting of New Property.** All land acquired for use as local, circuit or district property or otherwise on behalf of any Local Church, Circuit or District shall be vested in the custodian trustees on the trusts of the Model Trusts or, if a project under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 has received consent in accordance with Section 93, in the trustees and on the trusts provided for by that project, and no person or church court shall permit the acquisition, or any step towards the acquisition, of any such land unless satisfied that it will be so vested.

As to who are the custodian trustees see S.O. 006(3)(b).

**902 Model Trusts – Consultation.** The power of the Conference to prescribe what shall be ‘appropriate consultation’ for the purposes of paragraphs 3(2), 6(1), 8(1), 8(3)



and 9 of the Model Trusts shall be exercised by the adoption of regulations, which shall be published in accordance with Standing Order 124(9).

See Book VI, Part 2.

**903 Care and Custody of Deeds.** (1) A fire-proof safe or safes may be provided in each Circuit for documents of title relating to local and circuit property and in any District or by any connexional organisation for those relating to district or connexional property respectively.

(2) All documents of title in the possession or under the control of any managing trustees shall be kept in a safe provided in accordance with clause (1) above or shall be deposited with a clearing bank, except that if the relevant Local Authority is willing to accept them into its archives on the terms set out in clause (2A) below the managing trustees may at their discretion, in the case of registered land, deposit some or all of the pre-registration documents of title with that Local Authority on those terms.

(2A) The terms referred to in clause (2) above are these:

- (i) the deposit shall be on loan, ownership remaining with the custodian trustees and the right to possession with the managing trustees;
- (ii) upon or before deposit a full catalogue shall be agreed and duplicate copies shall be kept by the managing trustees and the deposites;
- (iii) the managing trustees shall be entitled at any time to withdraw all or any of the documents if they believe that to be necessary or desirable for conveyancing purposes or for any other purpose connected with the performance of their functions as managing trustees;
- (iv) no document or part of a document may be destroyed without the consent in writing of the custodian trustees and the managing trustees;
- (v) the deposites may not pass the custody of the documents, or of any of them, to any other body or person except to the managing trustees or, with the consent in writing of the managing trustees, to some other body with statutory authority to hold archives, and upon the terms set out in this clause.

(2B) The managing trustees' copy of the catalogue prepared under clause (2A)(ii) above shall be kept with the register required by clause (3) below.

(3) A register of all documents of title and other documents relating to local or circuit property shall be kept in each Circuit and of those relating to district or connexional property in each District and by each connexional organisation respectively. Every such register shall be made and preserved in a book and the documents (so far as not legitimately deposited elsewhere under clause (2) above) shall be compared annually with the register, in the case of those relating to local and circuit property by the Superintendent and the senior circuit steward or by some other person or persons appointed for the purpose by the Circuit Meeting, and in the case of district and connexional property by some person or persons appointed by the trustees.

(4) This Standing Order does not apply to documents of title relating to land in the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.

In the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands the custodian trustees, as defined in S.O. 006(3)(b), will need to deal with the documents of title in accordance with the relevant law in force in the respective jurisdictions.

**904 [...] Trusteeship Provisions Consequent on the Establishment of the Connexional Council.** (1) [...] **The Connexional Council shall constitute** the connexional trustees for any connexional property or part or category of such property [...].

(2) **The Connexional Council shall perform and exercise the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts and for this purpose only is the body of persons of that name constituted by the Conference.**

For the Connexional Council, see Section 9A of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1 above) and Section 20 of Standing Orders.

See the definition of 'connexional trustees' in para. 1 of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2 above), and the explanation for the making of this provision with effect from 1 September 2024 in the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*, on the title page of Book II Part 2 (Model Trusts) above.

**905 Interpretation – Projects.** In this Part references to 'projects' are to any of the matters requiring consent under Standing Order 930 and any other dealing with or action relating to property for which the trustees of that property require approval or consent under the Model Trusts or these Standing Orders, except capitalisation of revenue reserves under Standing Order 915(6) and (for the avoidance of doubt) schemes within Standing Order 942.

**906 Interpretation – Connexional Organisations.** In this Part, unless the context otherwise requires, 'connexional organisation' has the meaning assigned to it by paragraph 1 of the Model Trusts.

**907 Interpretation – Parent Bodies.** In this Part, unless the context otherwise requires, 'parent body' means in relation to district property or district trustees the relevant Synod or Synods [...] **and** in relation to conference property the Conference [...].

**908** [*revoked*]

**909 Interpretation – Appropriate Connexional Authority.** In this Part 'appropriate connexional authority' means the [...] **Connexional** Council or any person, persons or body to whom it may delegate its powers in relation to applications under this Part generally or in relation to the relevant application or class of applications.

This definition applies, in particular, wherever in this Part the consent of the 'appropriate connexional authority' is required for any step. The amendment (from 'Methodist Council') takes effect from 1 September 2024.

## Section 91 Administration of Trusts

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**910 Proceedings of Trustees.** (1) The proceedings of Circuit Meetings and Church Councils while acting as managing trustees shall be governed by the Standing Orders affecting the proceedings of those bodies generally.

See in particular S.O. 502, 514(3), 517, 518, 613(3), 615 and 616.

Only persons of full age may be managing trustees of model trust property (s. 9(3) of the 1976 Act. Vol. 1, p. 11). In Great Britain, persons of 18 years and over (16 years and over in Scotland) are of full age for the purposes of Charity Law.

(2) The proceedings of conference trustees [...] and district trustees shall be governed by the regulations (if any) in that behalf made by the parent body. Any such regulations may include provisions authorising the chair of such trustees to take action between meetings of the trustees in such circumstances, to such extent and on such conditions as the parent body may think fit.

For the meaning of 'parent body' see S.O. 907.

(3) Subject to clauses (1) and (2) above **and (3A) below** the determination of what is necessary or expedient for the purposes of the Model Trusts and of all other questions falling to be decided by managing trustees shall be by the vote of the majority of the managing trustees present at the relevant meeting and voting, and if the votes are equal the chair shall have a casting vote, whether or not he or she has already voted.

**(3A) The Connexional Council acting as managing trustees may not make any determination within clause (3) above unless any quorum requirement applicable to the relevant meeting is met.**

As to the quorum requirement, see S.O. 200(1)(a).

(4) Subject to clauses (1), (2) [...] **and (3A)** above managing trustees may regulate their own procedure.

(5) (a) The regulations made by the Conference under clause (2) above as parent body to govern the proceedings of conference trustees are as follows.

(b) The trustees may fix the time and place of their next meeting, and if they do so no further consultation or consent is required for the calling of that meeting as so fixed.

(c) Subject to (b) above a meeting of the trustees shall be called only by or with the consent of the chair, except that if the chair refuses to call or consent to the calling of a

meeting requested in writing by not less than one third of the trustees then the meeting may be called by the secretary or by any three other members.

(d) Fourteen days' written notice shall be given of every meeting, except that in case of emergency, as judged by the chair, a meeting may be called on such notice as is practicable.

(e) In the absence of the chair from a properly convened meeting the trustees present shall elect a chair from among themselves.

(f) The rules comprising clauses (5) to (7) and (10) to (25) of Standing Order 413 shall apply to the conduct of meetings, with the necessary substitutions.

(g) In cases of urgency, if it is impracticable to call a meeting of the trustees, even on short notice, the chair may take, after such consultation with other trustees as is practicable, any action which he or she considers necessary for the protection of the trust property or in furtherance of the responsibilities of the trustees, provided that such action is not contrary to the provisions of the Model Trusts or of any Standing Order made thereunder or to any subsisting resolution of the Conference or of the trustees.

**911 Indemnity Insurance.** (1) This Standing Order applies only in England and Wales, Scotland and the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

There is no statutory power for charity trustees within Jersey or the Isle of Man to purchase trustee indemnity insurance from the charity's income so it is necessary for Model Trust 16(1)(o) to remain applicable to local churches and circuits in Jersey and the Isle of Man.

(2) This Standing Order applies to members of church courts acting as charity trustees within the meaning of legislation relating to charities, and in particular to all managing trustees of model trust property. In this Standing Order 'trustees' means all such persons.

Note that the definition of 'charity trustees' is broad enough to include persons who are not necessarily trustees in the strict legal sense of the word. Generally speaking, the body of persons responsible for the general control and management of the affairs of a charity are regarded for the purposes of the relevant legislation as the charity trustees.

(3) This Standing Order regulates the exercise by trustees of any statutory power to arrange for the purchase of insurance designed to indemnify them against personal liability in respect of any breach of trust or breach of duty committed by them in their capacity as charity trustees. Its requirements supplement, not replace, those of the relevant statute or statutes.

In England and Wales, the relevant legislation is s. 180 of the Charities Act 2011. In Scotland it is s.68A of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 (as inserted by s.127 of Part 9 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010). In the Bailiwick of Guernsey it is s.35 of The Trusts (Guernsey) Law 2007.

(4) Trustees may not purchase such insurance unless they are satisfied that it is in the best interests of the trust estate and of the execution by them of their trust obligations to do so.

(5) The terms of any such insurance must be so framed as to exclude the provision of any indemnity in respect of:

(a) any liability to pay:

- (i) a fine imposed in criminal proceedings, or
- (ii) a sum payable to a regulatory authority by way of a penalty in respect of noncompliance with any requirement of a regulatory nature, however arising;

(b) any liability incurred in defending any criminal proceedings in which the relevant trustee is convicted of an offence arising out of any fraud or dishonesty, or wilful or reckless misconduct, by him or her;

(c) any liability arising out of any conduct which the relevant trustee knew (or must reasonably be assumed to have known) was not in the interests of the trust estate or of the execution of his or her trust obligations or in the case of which he or she did not care whether it was in those interests or not.

(6) For the purposes of clause (5)(b) above 'convicted' has the meaning apparent from section 189(3) of the Charities Act 2011.

In effect, this means a conviction which is final i.e. once any appeal has been disposed of or the time for bringing an appeal has expired.

**912 Committees and Officers.** (1) The appointment and dismissal of committees, stewards, treasurers or other officers or servants by [...] district trustees shall be governed by the regulations (if any) in that behalf made by the parent body.

(2) Subject to clause (1) above and to the Standing Orders affecting appointments by **the Connexional Council**, Circuit Meetings and Church Councils any managing trustees may at any time exercise the powers specified in sub-paragraph 16(1)(f) of the Model Trusts.

For sub-para. 16(1)(f) of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2.

As to appointments by Circuit Meetings and Church Councils see in particular S.O. 504, 550, 551, 641 and 642.

**913 Accounts.** (1) All managing trustees shall ensure that provision is made for accounts to be kept so that all receipts and payments and all debits and credits relating to property are promptly and accurately recorded and sufficiently explained. The accounts relating to local and circuit property shall be open to inspection at any time by the Superintendent and by the auditor or independent examiner, as the case may be.

This and the next clause are authorised by para. 19(f) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

For the auditor or independent examiner see S.O. 012(3).

Detailed guidance as to accounts is integrated into the Standard Form of Accounts available from the Connexional Team.

(2) All such accounts shall be audited or examined annually. Subject to clause (3) below the auditors or examiners for general property shall be appointed by the [...] **Connexional Council**. The auditors or examiners for conference property shall be appointed by the relevant conference trustees. The auditors or examiners for connexional property [...] **shall be appointed by the Connexional Council. The auditors or examiners for** district property shall be appointed by the relevant parent [...] **body**. The auditors or examiners for circuit property shall be appointed by the Circuit Meeting. In accordance with Standing Order 636 the auditor or examiner for the local property account shall be appointed by the Church Council.

For the meaning of 'parent body' see S.O. 907.

For the provision relating to funds consisting of Model Trust moneys see S.O. 652.

(3) (a) Where new model trust property is general property under paragraph 3(1) of the Model Trusts the provisions of this clause as to audit or independent examination shall apply.

(b) If the property ceases to be general property before the expiration of its first accounting period and no earlier audit or examination has been required the auditor or examiner for the period during which it was general property shall be appointed by reference to the category of model trust property into which it next falls.

(c) If sub-clause (b) does not apply and it becomes necessary to appoint auditors or examiners in respect of an accounting period ending within twelve months of the property's becoming model trust property then:

- (i) if the managing trustee has delegated his or her powers and duties in relation to that property to a body or committee under sub-paragraph 16(1)(k) of the Model Trusts, either generally or for purposes which include those of this Standing Order, the auditors or examiners shall be appointed by that body or committee;
- (ii) if not, the auditors or examiners shall be appointed by the custodian trustees.

For sub-para. 16(1)(k) of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2

(d) If neither sub-clause (b) nor sub-clause (c) applies then any auditors or examiners required shall be appointed by the [...] **Connexional** Council in accordance with clause (2) above.

(4) The provisions of clauses (1) to (3) above are in addition to and not in place of those of Standing Order 012.

(5) The financial year for all Methodist properties shall close on the 31st August.

**914 Investments.** All moneys subject to the Model Trusts and requiring investment shall be invested through and in the name of the custodian trustees.

As to these trustees see S.O. 006(3)(b).

As to what investments are authorised see para. 17 of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

**915 Capital and Income.** (1) The following clauses of this Standing Order shall have effect by virtue of paragraph 19(1)(c) of the Model Trusts and subject to the provisions of that paragraph.

Para. 19(1)(c) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) empowers the Conference to prescribe by Standing Order what shall be deemed to be capital and what income for the purposes of the administration of the Model Trusts.

(2) The following shall be deemed to be capital for the purposes of the administration of the Model Trusts and shall be paid to and held by the custodian trustees and applied in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 916:

- (i) the proceeds of any sale of model trust property, including any premium received on the creation or disposal of a leasehold interest

- or an easement, but excluding the proceeds of sale of investments representing revenue reserves or other income;
- (ii) money raised by any appeal specifically for the acquisition of land or the erection or alteration of any building;
- (iii) *[deleted]*
- (iv) money paid into a district Advance Fund under any Standing Order requiring such a payment;
- (v) legacies, bequests and devises received in kind and, to the extent of any excess over £20,000 from any one estate, those received as money.

(3) Subject to clauses (5) and (6) below the following shall be deemed to be income for the purposes of the administration of the Model Trusts and may, so far as allowed by the custodian trustees, be received by the managing trustees and paid into a bank to their credit:

- (i) charges and rents from licences or lettings of Model Trust property;
- (ii) dividends and interest on the investment or deposit of money;
- (iii) in the case of local property, allocations and contributions to the property fund from Sunday collections, stewardship or envelope schemes, or from other income of the general church fund, or from Sunday School or other church departments or groups and all other moneys raised in the Local Church for the upkeep and maintenance of the property;
- (iv) in the case of circuit property, allocations from the circuit assessment and all other moneys raised in the Circuit for the upkeep and maintenance of the property;
- (v) in the case of district property, allocations from the district assessment, charges to residents in student hostels, recurring grants for the work of such hostels and all other moneys raised in the District for the upkeep and maintenance of the property;
- (vi) in the case of connexional property, allocations from the general income administered by the *[...] Connexional Council*;
- (vii) proceeds of sale excluded from clause (2) (i) above;
- (viii) the first £20,000 of the legacies, bequests and devises received, at whatever date, as money from any one estate.

As to the words 'so far as allowed by the custodian trustees', the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP), as custodian trustees of all model trust property in Great Britain, have by resolution dated 27 April 1977, in exercise of their powers under section 4(2) of the Public Trustee Act 1906, permitted and directed all income of model trust property within their jurisdiction to be received by managing trustees and paid into a bank to their (the managing trustees') credit, subject to certain conditions.

As to (viii) all legacies and bequests of whatever amount should be notified to TMCP so that a direction can be made under para. 3 of the Model Trust.

(4) Subject to clauses (5) and (6) below the recommendations for the time being of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice, or any successor to that statement, shall be followed for the purpose of determining whether any other moneys coming to the hands of trustees of model trust property shall be deemed to be capital or income for the purposes of the administration of the Model Trusts, provided that no change in such recommendations shall affect the category of moneys already duly allocated to income or capital.

(5) Nothing in this Standing Order shall require any money to be deemed to be income which cannot in law be allowed to be held by managing trustees or in a bank account to the credit of managing trustees.

(6) Notwithstanding any other provision in these Standing Orders managing trustees may at any time, with the consent of the appropriate connexional authority, capitalise any sum or sums forming the whole or part of one or more revenue reserve accounts in their books. Any such consent may be particular or may relate generally to sums identified by reference to the nature or origin of the reserve or in some other way.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

**916 Application of Capital Money.** (1) Subject to clauses (2) and (3) below, capital money shall be applied to or for the following purposes and in the following order:

- (i) in payment of the expenses, if any, of or connected with the sale or other transaction giving rise to the receipt of the money, including the cost of a qualified surveyor's report as to the value of the property in question;
- (ii) unless the [...] appropriate connexional authority [...] otherwise permits, in the discharge of all or any encumbrances or liabilities on the trust property or on the trustees, whether personal or otherwise, lawfully incurred or assumed in the execution of the Model Trusts or by virtue of section 11 of the 1976 Act;
- (iii) unless the treasurer or treasurers of the fund in question otherwise direct, in repayment in whole or in part of any grant at any time received in connection with the trust property from any connexional fund, according to the date of the disposal, as follows, and so that any such direction may be for repayment of more or less than the amount shown, or of none:
  - up to and including the 5th anniversary of the date of the grant: 100%
  - thereafter up to and including the 6th anniversary: 80%
  - thereafter up to and including the 7th anniversary: 60%
  - thereafter up to and including the 8th anniversary: 40%
  - thereafter up to and including the 9th anniversary: 20%
  - thereafter: nil;
- (iv) in making such payment, if any, to the Connexional Priority Fund as may be required by the provisions of Standing Order 972;
- (v) where the money arises from any sale, letting or other disposition of model trust property which has received consent under Standing Order 930 as part of a project involving the application of the proceeds to particular purposes, in applying the proceeds accordingly;
- (vi) where Standing Order 945 applies, in paying the balance to the custodian trustees in accordance with the provisions of that Standing Order;
- (vii) subject to the above, for the purposes specified in Standing Order 917.

For the authority to make this Standing Order see paras. 18, 19(1)(d) and (e) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).



The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

For s. 11 of the 1976 Act see Vol. 1, p. 13.

As to (ii) and (iii) see clause (3) below.

(2) Clause (1) of this Standing Order shall not govern the application of capital money in a district Advance Fund, which shall be applied in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 963(3).

(3) Capital money received by way of legacy, or arising from the sale, letting or other disposition of property which has been received by way of devise or bequest and is not required for Methodist purposes, need not be applied for the purposes specified in clause (1)(ii) or (iii) above unless the managing trustees so decide.

**917 Application of Model Trust Money generally.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 916 and to clause (5) below money which is model trust property shall be applied in the first place to or for the following purposes:

- (i) the payment of all taxes, assessments, rates and other outgoings lawfully payable in respect of the trust property and of all rents, hire charges and similar payments due in respect of any part of the trust property held on lease, hire, licence or similar terms;
- (ii) the payment of insurance premiums adequately to insure the trust property against destruction or damage by fire and other such perils as require to be insured against and to insure the trustees against such other risks and liabilities as they may be likely to incur;
- (iii) the payment of interest due on all moneys borrowed by the managing trustees in the execution of the Model Trusts or due from them by virtue of section 11 of the 1976 Act or otherwise charged upon the trust property.

(2) Subject to clauses (1) above and (5) below and to any consents required by the Model Trusts or Standing Orders the balance may be applied for such of the following purposes and in such amounts as the managing trustees may from time to time decide:

- (i) the repair, maintenance and decoration of the trust property;
- (ii) the replacement of lost, worn out, damaged or unserviceable chattels comprised in the trust property;
- (iii) the cleaning, lighting, heating and caretaking of the trust property and the supply of water and other services;
- (iv) the reimbursement of the managing trustees, their stewards, treasurers or other officers or any other person for any expenses incurred in the execution of the Model Trusts;
- (v) the support of personnel serving in the District or any of its Circuits;
- (vi) subscriptions or other payments to the funds of any other model trust property or of any of the organisations, societies, institutions or charities specified in section 4 of the 1976 Act;
- (vii) those of paragraph 13(a) of the Model Trusts;
- (viii) the promotion of the work of God in the relevant church organisation, as specified in clause (4) below;

- (ix) any other charitable purpose for the time being of that church organisation;
- (x) the establishment of or payments to any district Advance Fund, or payments to the Connexional Priority Fund;
- (xi) any charitable purpose of a Housing Association if either the Housing Association is subsidiary or ancillary to the Church or the application of the money is made in furtherance of ecumenical work or activity within the purposes of the relevant church body;
- (xii) the exercise of any power conferred on the managing trustees by subparagraph 16(1) of the Model Trusts;
- (xiii) any other purpose specifically authorised by the Conference, provided it is one of the purposes of the Church.

(3) Subject as in (2) above model trust money which is local property may also be applied to any purpose for which the relevant general church fund may be applied under Standing Order 650(4) or (5).

(4) For the purposes of heads (viii) and (ix) of clause (2) above the relevant church organisation is the [...] **Connexional** Council or other connexional organisation, the District, the Circuit, the Local Church or other church body in connection with which the relevant model trust property is held.

(5) This Standing Order shall not govern the application of money in a district Advance Fund, which shall be applied in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 963(3).

For the authority to make this Standing Order see para. 19(1)(d) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

For ss. 11 and 4 of the 1976 Act see Vol. 1, pp. 13 and 8.

For paras. 13(a) and 16(1) of the Model Trusts, see Book II, Part 2.

For the conditions upon which money can be granted to a Housing Association see S.O. 935.

For the purposes of the Church see s. 4 of the Methodist Church Act 1976 (Vol. 1, p. 8).

For district Advance Funds see S.O. 963(3).

**918 Overriding Power of Sale.** (1) If at any time any managing trustees of model trust property are unable to discharge the interest on moneys properly borrowed and due from them as such trustees or any other current expenses involved in the due execution of the Model Trusts by reason of lack of income or other moneys available for the discharge of such interest or other expenses then subject to clauses (2) and (3) below but notwithstanding any other provision of these Standing Orders those managing trustees shall be entitled to exercise the power of sale conferred by subparagraph 16(1)(b) of the Model Trusts without obtaining the consent of any other person or body.

For sub-para. 16(1)(b) of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2.

(2) No sale shall be made or contracted under clause (1) above unless the managing trustees have at least three months before an annual meeting of the Conference given notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference and the connexional Property Secretary of their intention to act under clause (1) above and their reasons for so intending, and have supplied to the Secretary of the Conference and the Property

Secretary such particulars of their financial position and of the state of the model trust property as either of those persons may require.

As to the Property Secretary see S.O. 006(2A).

(3) No such sale shall be made or contracted until six months after the opening of the meeting of the Conference referred to in clause (2) above and no such sale shall be made or contracted if within that period of six months the Conference or some other church court has provided or procured the provision to the managing trustees of such financial or other assistance or relief as will enable them to continue in the due execution of the Model Trusts.

**919** *[revoked]*

S.O. 919 (Conflicts of Interest) was revoked in 2021 and can now be found in S.O. 019A.

**919A Amendment of Model Trusts.** (1) Any committee or other body or person considering business which may involve proposals to amend the Model Trusts shall inform the Connexional Team of the nature of the proposals.

(2) The Team shall ensure that whenever such proposals are under consideration there are consultations with appropriate officers, bodies and persons in the home Districts and Circuits outside England and Wales in order to establish whether any proposed amendments will have the intended effect under the law there applicable or, if not, what modifications are needed to that end or (as the case may be) what corresponding amendments are required to any trust instrument taking the place of the Model Trusts in that jurisdiction.

(3) Every report to the Conference proposing any such amendments shall include an account of all such consultations and of their outcome.

**Section 92 Use of Methodist Premises**

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This Section contains the Standing Orders on the topic. Certain resolutions dealing with the use of Methodist premises by persons of other faiths were adopted by the Conference in 1972 but not promulgated as Standing Orders (see 1972 *Minutes*, pp. 81–2). A further report, with suggested guidelines, was brought by the Faith and Order Committee to the Conference in 1997 and adopted with one amendment (see 1997 Agenda pp. 236–248, Daily Record 7/5).

As to restrictions on the use of chapels after sale or lease see S.O. 926 below and also S.O. 943(3).

**920 Religious Meetings.** (1) The managing trustees and (in the case of local or circuit property) the Superintendent in his or her capacity as such shall:

- (i) keep under review as they think fit the teaching given at all non-Methodist public religious meetings held on model trust property by the members of a church or congregation to whom permission has been granted to use such property for a period pursuant to paragraph 14(2A) of the Model Trusts and
- (ii) accept general responsibility for the teaching given at all other non-Methodist public religious meetings held on Methodist premises.

(2) The consent required under paragraph 14(2) of the Model Trusts shall be that of the Superintendent.

(3) The consents required under paragraph 14(2A) of the Model Trusts shall be those of the Superintendent and the appropriate connexional authority.

Para. 14 of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) deals with services and meetings for religious worship in any place of worship or other premises comprised in the property which is subject to the Model Trusts. Para 14(2) deals with services and meetings held, with consent (for which see cl. (2) above), jointly by members of the Methodist Church and those of another Christian communion or body. Para. 14(2A) lays down the requirements to be fulfilled if the managing trustees wish to grant permission (for particular occasions or by licence or lease of any duration) to members of another church or congregation to use the property; these include the consents referred to in cl. (3) above. Cl. (1)(i) above then imposes the duty to keep the teaching given in this situation under review.

For the position in relation to persons of other faiths, see the note at the head of this Section.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

**921 Political Matters.** (1) Managing trustees may not sponsor meetings in support of political parties, nor may such meetings be held in the name of any other Methodist body. Nonetheless managing trustees may permit occasional use of

Methodist property for political meetings by non-Methodist bodies and may sponsor meetings designed to promote informed discussion of public issues in the context of Christian theology and ethics. Before agreeing to such use, the managing trustees shall consider, in the light of any advice which the Connexional Team may issue from time to time, the extent, if any, to which the granting of such permission would have a detrimental effect on the peace and unity of the Church and its witness.

(2) It is not permitted to submit resolutions, or take votes, on political matters during any Methodist meeting for public religious worship, or while the congregation is assembling or dispersing.

(3) It is not permitted to invite signatures for petitions on political matters during any Methodist meeting for public religious worship, or while the congregation is assembling or dispersing, except with the consent of the Church Council or of some person or persons to whom the council has delegated authority for that purpose.

### 922 Intoxicants.

(1) Subject to clauses (3), (3A), (3B) and (3C) below and to Standing Orders 010B and 926, the supply, sale or use of intoxicants on Methodist premises is not permitted in any circumstances, nor may Methodist premises be used in such a way as to advertise or promote, whether directly or by means of sponsored events, the sale or use of intoxicants.

S.O. 010B concerns the type of wine to be used in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on Methodist or other premises.

Activities forbidden on Methodist premises by this Standing Order may not take place elsewhere in the name of the Church, with certain exceptions (see S.O. 010B and S.O. 014(3)).

For those recommendations of the 1987 report upon responsible attitudes to alcohol (*Through a Glass Darkly*) directed to be printed in this volume by the Conference of 2000, see Book VII C, Part 12, below.

(2) [*revoked*]

(3) Clause (1) shall not preclude the use of alcoholic drinks on domestic occasions in private homes, nor the lawful supply, sale or use of such drinks in other residential premises with the consent of the trustees and subject to such conditions as they may prescribe.

(3A) Clause (1) above shall not preclude the lawful supply, sale or use of alcoholic drinks on Methodist premises (other than any part of the relevant premises in which worship has been identified by the trustees as the primary use) if:

- (i) a significant part of the mission and activity of the Methodist Church carried out on the relevant premises involves use of the premises as a conference centre;
- (ii) such supply, sale or use is solely in connection with an event taking place on those premises as part of such use; and
- (iii) such supply, sale or use is with the consent of the trustees given for the specific event and subject to such conditions as they may prescribe.

(3B) Where the relevant premises are local, circuit or district property, the trustees may treat the condition specified in clause (3A)(i) above as satisfied only if the appropriate district authority so determines. In all other cases, the trustees may treat

that condition as satisfied only if the appropriate connexional authority so determines.

The 'appropriate district authority' is the district Policy Committee or its delegates (S.O. 960(1)).

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

(3C) The trustees may delegate their power to grant consent under clause (3A)(iii) above to such person or body as they think fit upon terms that any exercise of the delegated power shall be in accordance with a policy agreed by the trustees.

(4) *[revoked]*

**923 Smoking.** (1) All managing trustees shall comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the Health Act 2006, where it applies, or of any corresponding legislation applying to the relevant Model Trust property.

(2) If any part of the premises for which a Church Council is responsible is not subject to a ban on smoking required under clause (1) above, the Council may, as to that part, decide from time to time whether some or all of it, other than residential accommodation, shall nevertheless be subject to such a ban. In reaching its decision the Council shall have regard to such aspects as: any policy statement of the Methodist Conference, the health and comfort of those using the premises, fire and other safety hazards, the use to which particular rooms are put, and public policy generally.

**924 Gambling.** (1) Except as provided in clause (2) below and in Standing Order 926, no form of gambling is permitted on Methodist premises.

Funds may not be raised for Church purposes by any form of gambling which could not be permitted on Methodist premises under this Standing Order (S.O. 014(1)).

(2) Subject to clause (3) below and to any specific resolution of the Conference those forms of gambling allowed by law at non-commercial events may at the discretion of the trustees take place at such events held on Methodist premises.

See the guidance as to permitted gambling in Book VII B, Part 7.

(3) Notwithstanding clause (2) above the use of gaming machines, including Category D gaming machines, and the offer or payment of cash prizes in connection with non-commercial gaming and betting, are prohibited in any event.

(4) Methodist premises may not be used in such a way as to advertise or promote, whether directly or by means of sponsored events, any form of gambling which would not be permitted on such premises under this Standing Order.

**925 Dances.** Dances arranged as social functions for the members, and friends of members, of organisations meeting on Methodist premises may be held on Methodist premises. Where the organisation and conduct of a dance are directly under the control of the trustees public advertisement is permitted, subject to strict compliance with Standing Orders 922, 924 and 927; otherwise public dances are not permitted.

Managing trustees will need to ascertain and observe the various statutory and local authority requirements applicable to such events.

Activities forbidden on Methodist premises by this Standing Order or S.O. 927 may not be held elsewhere in the name of the Church (S.O. 014(2)).

**926 Exceptions for Commercial Leases.** (1) Where this Standing Order applies the provisions of clauses (3) and (4) below shall have effect in place of those in Standing Orders 922 and 924 respectively.

(2) This Standing Order applies to Methodist premises which are no longer required for any purpose within heads (b) to (o) of paragraph 13 of the Model Trusts and are demised on a lease for a term of 10 years or more at a commercial rent and/or premium.

(3) In every lease of premises to which this Standing Order applies the lessee shall covenant, in terms approved by the Connexional Team, not to carry on, permit or suffer any use of or activity on the premises which would class the premises or any part of them as a drinking establishment or would involve using them or any part of them as a nightclub.

(4) In every lease of premises to which this Standing Order applies the lessee shall covenant, in terms approved by the Connexional Team, not to carry on, permit or suffer any gambling on the premises except:

- (i) as permitted by Standing Order 924(2); and
- (ii) the sale of lottery tickets and scratchcards in the course of a business lawfully carried on by the lessee within the terms of the lease, so far as such sale is not already permitted by that Standing Order.

**927 Entertainments generally.** The primary purpose for which Methodist premises exist necessarily excludes every kind of entertainment or amusement which is inconsistent with the standards of the Church. Types of entertainment which are inimical to the spiritual life and purpose of the Church may not be allowed on Methodist premises.

See second note to S.O. 925. No entertainment inconsistent with this clause may be arranged by any Methodist organisation (S.O. 014(2)).

S.O. 014 deals with the carrying on elsewhere in the name of the Methodist Church or the arranging by Methodist organisations of activities forbidden on Methodist premises by S.O. 922, 924, 925 or 927(1) above.

**928 Masonic Services and Meetings.** (1) Meetings of Freemasons' Lodges or other meetings for masonic purposes may not be held on Methodist premises.

(2) Services exclusively for Freemasons may not be held on Methodist premises.

(3) If a Freemasons' Lodge requests that a service be held on Methodist premises, the trustees may at their discretion either withhold permission or grant permission on the following conditions:

- (i) the service shall be one of public Christian worship held in accordance with Methodist practice and complying with the Model Trusts;
- (ii) the contents of the service shall first be seen and approved by the Superintendent;
- (iii) it shall be conducted by a person appointed by the Superintendent.

**929 Authorised Uses of Dwellings.** (1) In accordance with paragraph 13(g) of the Model Trusts any house or other dwelling which is model trust property may with the

appropriate consents as prescribed by clause (3) or (4) below, and subject to clause (5) below, be put by the managing trustees to any of the uses specified in clause (2) below.

It is important to appreciate that this Standing Order has a different function and effect from those of the others in this Section, which are concerned to regulate, and for the most part to *restrict*, the activities which may be carried out on Methodist premises, on whatever trusts they are held (see S.O. 900(3), (4)). This Standing Order applies only to model trust property and clauses (1) to (4) exercise the power given by para. 13(g) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) to declare the primary *trust purposes* for which residential property is held. When not required for such purposes the property can be turned to account by letting, licence or otherwise within the general powers of the managing trustees under para. 16 of the Model Trusts, with any necessary consents, and this Standing Order in no way restricts or excludes those powers, except by cl. (5), which should be carefully noted.

(2) The uses referred to are:

- (i) as a manse or connexional dwelling under paragraph 13(g) of the Model Trusts and Standing Order 803(1);
- (ii) as the residence of a caretaker of Methodist property, of a person appointed by the Circuit as a local-lay pastor under Section 56A, of a person employed under Standing Order 570, or of a supernumerary under an appointment of the Circuit Meeting and residing in the property as a term of that appointment;
- (iii) use in connection with youth and community service under a project approved by the Connexional Team or its divisional predecessors or use by a residential community established by a Circuit or Local Church in furtherance of its purposes;
- (iv) any other use in furtherance of or incidental to a purpose of the Church.

(3) **[revoked]**

(4) In the case of district, circuit or local property the appropriate consents under each head of clause (2) above are as follows:

- (i) no consent is required for any use by the managing trustees within head (i) or (ii) or of circuit or district property within head (iii);
- (ii) the appropriate consent for the use of local property within head (iii) is that of the Circuit Meeting;
- (iii) the appropriate consents for a use within head (iv) are those of the appropriate connexional authority and, in the case of local property, of the Circuit Meeting.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

(5) Whether or not the above clauses apply and whether or not any consent is required under clause (3) or (4) above, no person shall be admitted into occupation of or allowed to reside in any house or other dwelling which is model trust property, except under head (i) of clause (2) above, unless that person has entered into and signed a binding agreement in writing with the managing trustees in terms approved by the Connexional Team.

See also S.O. 438A(6)(iv).



## Section 93 Projects

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**930 Consents generally.** (1) No consent is required under this Standing Order for the exercise by managing trustees of their powers under heads (c), (g), (i) (j), (k), (l), (m), (n) or (o) of sub-paragraph 16(1) of the Model Trusts, nor for furnishing or the execution of non-structural repair under head (d) of that paragraph, but this provision does not remove the need to comply with any other Standing Orders regulating the exercise of those powers and does not apply to listed building works, as defined in clause (8)(a) below, or to any other works, whether structural or not, which would materially affect the internal or external appearance of a listed building or the external appearance of a building in a conservation area.

The heads of sub-para. 16(1) of the Model Trusts referred to relate to the following matters:

- (c) licences for the use of the property;
- (g) providing facilities for tenants or occupants;
- (i) bringing or defending actions;
- (j) arbitrations;
- (k) delegation;
- (l) appointment and dismissal of committees and officers;
- (m) general management
- (n) (*applies only in Scotland – s. 29(2)(f) of the Methodist Church Act 1976, Vol.1, p. 23*)
- (o) (*does not apply in England, Wales, Scotland or Guernsey – see note to para.16(1)(o)*) trustee indemnity insurance.

For details see sub-para. 16(1) itself in Book II, Part 2. Heads (i), (j) and (l), although not requiring consent under this Standing Order, are regulated by S.O. 931(5), (6) and 912 respectively.

(2) Subject to clause (1) above the consent of the appropriate bodies, as specified below, shall be obtained before managing trustees take any of the steps specified in this Standing Order.

(3) Consent under this Standing Order is consent to the substance of the transaction. It does not exempt managing trustees from complying with any proper requirements as to form or procedure imposed by the law or the custodian trustees, or arising under other Standing Orders or the Model Trusts, whether those requirements arise before or after consent is given under this Standing Order.

The custodian trustees are, for example, entitled and bound to refuse to participate in any transaction which would be in breach of trust.

As to requirements under Standing Orders see, for example, S.O.s 912, 929(4), 931, 935, 936, 942.

(4) The following steps require, in the case of local property, the consent of the Circuit Meeting and, in the case of local, circuit and conference property, that of the appropriate district authority:

- (i) the acquisition, or any contract for the acquisition, of land for Methodist use;
- (ii) the exercise of any power conferred by paragraph 15 or 16 of the Model Trusts, except as provided in clause (1) above.

The 'appropriate district authority' is the district Policy Committee or its delegates (S.O. 960(1)).

See also S.O. 512B and 611A for the power to dissolve, respectively, a Circuit Meeting or Church Council, for serious breaches of trust or Methodist discipline, including a breach of this Standing Order (S.O. 512B(2)(ii)(b) and S.O. 611A(2)(ii)(b)).

(5) (a) Where any application to the appropriate district authority for consent under clause (4) above requires the authorisation of the [...] **Connexional** Council under paragraph 20 of the Model Trusts, or in the opinion of the appropriate district authority gives rise to the question whether such authorisation should be sought, it shall be referred to the [...] **Connexional** Council for consideration of that aspect.

See S.O. 904(2) above and the explanation given in the note to that provision.

(b) Where some aspect of such an application requires the consent of the appropriate connexional authority under Standing Order 931(1) it shall be referred to the appropriate connexional authority for consideration of that aspect

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

(c) The appropriate district authority may also refer to the appropriate connexional authority any other such application, or any part or element of it, which it considers for any reason would better be decided there.

(6) In the case of district [...] and general property, any of the steps specified in clause (4) above requires the consent of the appropriate connexional authority.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

(7) In the exercise of the general powers of the [...] **Connexional** Council under Standing Order **204(3)** it shall prescribe an electronic process, compliant with Standing Orders, by which the appropriate district and connexional authorities shall deal with all applications for consent under this Standing Order. The process so prescribed shall include provisions to alert those using the process to the existence of possible conflicts of interest or duty and the steps to be taken to avoid any actual conflict.

(8) (a) In this and the next Standing Order 'listed building works' has the meaning given to it by Standing Order 980.

(b) In relation to listed building works in England and Wales the provisions of Section 98 shall apply in addition to those of this Standing Order, and in case of any conflict the provisions of Section 98 shall prevail.

**931 Connexional Consent, Approval and Guidance.** (1) The consent of the appropriate connexional authority shall be required for the following matters:

- (i)-(v) *[deleted]*
- (vi) any mortgage or charge of all or any part of the trust property, other than a mortgage or charge to secure a loan from Methodist Chapel Aid Limited, or
- (vii) *[deleted]*
- (viii) the application of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, or
- (ix) the classification of a project as a replacement project for the purposes of Standing Order 973(1);
- (x) listed building works, as defined in Standing Order 930(8)(a), and any other works, whether structural or not, which would materially affect the internal or external appearance of a listed building or the external appearance of a building in a conservation area.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

As to the Sharing of Church Buildings Act see also S.O. 934.

See also S.O. 512B and 611A for the power to dissolve, respectively, a Circuit Meeting or Church Council, for serious breaches of trust or Methodist discipline, including a breach of this Standing Order (S.O. 512B(2)(ii)(b) and S.O. 611A(2)(ii)(b)).

(2) *[revoked]*

(3) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below all contracts, deeds and declarations relating to property, and in particular documents of a kind specified in a list to be published from time to time for this purpose by the [...] **Connexional** Council, shall be submitted in draft to the Connexional Team for inspection and approval before being signed.

(b) Sub-clause (a) above does not apply to:

- (i) contracts for building works or demolition, except insofar as they contain, or should contain, provisions relating to Party Wall Act matters, or
- (ii) licences, except those of a kind specified in the said list.

(4) Before any application is made to the Charity Commission (or to any court or other authority having jurisdiction in relation to charities) for any order affecting Methodist property the guidance of the Team shall be obtained, and all drafts of proposed orders of the Charity Commission, court or other authority shall be submitted to the Team before they are accepted.

(5) Except by direction of the Conference trustees shall not, without the written consent of the Team:

- (i) bring any action or refer or join in a reference to arbitration in respect of any Methodist property, or any matter relating thereto;
- (ii) make any application for consent to demolish a listed building or a building in a conservation area nor any other application in relation to a building which is listed or is in a conservation area which could result in an official inquiry (whether public or by written submission);
- (iii) make any application to a statutory tribunal or similar body.

(6) If any action is brought against trustees, or any dispute or difference between them and another party is submitted to a statutory tribunal or similar body or to arbitration, or becomes the subject of an appeal or official inquiry or if any public authority takes any step which may lead to the making of an order or the holding of an

inquiry affecting Methodist property, the trustees shall at once inform the Team.

**931A Connexional Trustees and Consultation.** (1) *The following provisions apply to the exercise of its powers by the Connexional Council when acting as connexional trustees.*

(2) *In cases in which other trustee bodies are required pursuant to Standing Order 930(6) or Standing Order 931(1) to obtain the consent of the appropriate connexional authority to a step or matter, the council shall consult with the Connexional Team before taking any such action.*

(3) *Clause (3) of Standing Order 931 applies with the substitution of the word “comment” for the word “approval”.*

(4) *The council shall consult with the Team before making any application such as is referred to in Standing Order 931(4) and shall submit to the Team for comment any drafts such as are there referred to before they are accepted.*

(5) *Clause (5) of Standing Order 931 applies with the substitution of the words “prior consultation with” for the words “written consent of”.*

(6) *Except to the extent specified above, the provisions of Standing Order 930 do not apply to the council when acting as connexional trustees.*

This Standing Order was adopted in 2024, to provide for the different rules (compared with those governing other trustee bodies under the requirements of this Section) which should appropriately apply to the Connexional Council, as the trustee body having “the general control and management of the connexional administration of the Methodist Church” (cl. 37B of the Deed of Union), and hence not subject to the rules requiring the consent of any other body. See however S.O. 986 for the rules applicable where the Connexional Council is proposing to carry out a project which comes within the purview of S.O. 980 (“Listed Building Works”).

As to the power of the Connexional Council to act as connexional trustees, see S.O. 904, and the explanation in the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024* on the title page of Book II, Part B (Model Trusts) above.

**932 Requirements.** (1) Before giving consent under Standing Order 930 to any project the appropriate bodies must be satisfied that:

- (i) the church court which constitutes the managing trustees or is their parent body has adopted a mission policy statement with which the project accords;
- (ii) the plans take into account any guidance supplied by the Connexional Team or the district officers;
- (iii) the trustees will have sufficient funds at their disposal to meet the cost of the project as it proceeds and any loans will be repaid in accordance with Standing Order 933 or 934(2), as the case may be.

(1A) Before considering any project requiring its consent and affecting a building on which there is or should be a current quinquennial report the appropriate district or connexional authority may, if it thinks fit, require such a report to be produced to it.

For quinquennial reports see S.O. 934(3), 952 and 966(2).

(2) In considering any project affecting the activities of a Local Church the appropriate bodies shall have regard to the role of the Local Church as a centre of

worship and mission and shall make every effort to give effect to proper pastoral concerns.

**933 Time Limits.** Before giving consent to any project the appropriate bodies shall be satisfied that it can be completed and the entire outlay defrayed within five years after the date of consent unless they specifically approve a defined longer period. They shall not approve such a longer period unless (i) there are exceptional circumstances making it appropriate, and (ii) a satisfactory scheme for the liquidation of debt has been submitted.

**934 Shared Projects.** (1) Where a new building, alteration or extension is to be the subject of a sharing agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 the decision of the appropriate connexional authority upon any application for consent shall have regard to the property regulations and practices of the other participating denominations.

Such schemes require the consent of the appropriate connexional authority (S.O. 931). The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

(2) In the case of such a shared project all reasonable measures shall be taken to complete it and clear all debt within five years of the date of consent. Any debt beyond that period shall be sanctioned only if proposals for its early liquidation are accepted by the other participating denominations and by the appropriate connexional authority.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

(3) Where, under such a shared project, the property is model trust property responsibility for quinquennial inspections shall fall upon the Circuit Meeting. Where the building is in joint ownership an arrangement shall be made by the joint council whereby the regulations of one of the participating denominations for quinquennial or comparable periodic inspections and reports are complied with and the reports are made to or shared with the Circuit Meeting. Where the property is held on the trusts of another participating denomination that denomination's regulations shall be complied with and the report shared with the Circuit Meeting.

For quinquennial inspections generally see S.O. 952.

(4) In such shared projects, the Methodist Church Council shall be responsible for making annual returns of local property as required by Standing Order 941(iii) and (vii).

**935 Housing Associations.** (1) Before authorising any disposition of model trust property to a Housing Association under paragraph 20(1) of the Model Trusts the [...] **Connexional** Council shall:

- (i) satisfy itself that the purposes of the Housing Association are wholly charitable;
- (ii) consider whether the money to be granted, the property to be disposed of, or any additional proceeds which might be obtained from some other disposition of such property, are likely to be required by the managing trustees for property purposes (and to that end the council shall be provided with any quinquennial inspection reports, district manse

- inspection reports and other information which it may deem requisite);
- (iii) obtain the judgment of the District in which the model trust property or fund is situated or managed and also of the District (if different) in which the housing project is to proceed as to the nature and urgency of the housing need intended to be met.

For para. 20(1) of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2.

For quinquennial reports see S.O. 952.

Housing Association has the meaning given to it in the Housing Associations Act 1985.

(2) A Housing Association may at any time, notwithstanding that no specific disposition or project is before the council under clause (1) above, obtain the opinion of the council as to whether the purposes of that Association are wholly charitable.

**936 Historic Artefacts.** (1) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below, the consent of the Methodist Heritage Committee shall be obtained before managing trustees sell, lease, give or otherwise dispose of or part with any artefact, publication or record specified by the committee under Standing Order **340(1)(ii)** and any such dealing with such property shall be on such terms only as may be approved by the committee.

(b) No consent shall be required under sub-clause (a) above for a loan within the area of the Connexion to a recipient not excluded by any direction of the committee currently in force for a fixed term not exceeding one year or for a period terminable on not more than six months' notice under an agreement in writing on standard terms published by the committee.

For the Methodist Heritage Committee see S.O. 340.

(2) *[revoked]*

## Section 94 The Local Church

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**940 Church Council.** The Church Council shall transact all business required of it as managing trustees of the local property.

See para. 2(1) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) and the definition of 'local property' in para. 1.

Only persons of full age may act as managing trustees. In Great Britain persons of 18 years and over (16 years and over in Scotland) are of full age for the purposes of Charity Law.

**941 Particular Responsibilities.** It shall be the responsibility of the Church Council to ensure that either the council itself or officers or committees appointed for that purpose:

- (i) obtain regular reports on the state of the local property and undertake renovations and repairs as necessary;
- (ii) after every quinquennial inspection consider the findings and recommendations of the inspectors and take any action required in consequence;
- (iii) prepare and consider the annual property schedules, both of accounts and investments and of the state of the property, and take any action required in consequence;
- (iv) consider such matters as the purchase, sale, extension or alteration of the property and take appropriate action;
- (v) appoint or employ a caretaker of the premises, if required, and supervise his or her work;
- (vi) open and maintain a log book for retention of the annual schedules of property, quinquennial inspection reports and other relevant material, and periodically examine the log book and ensure that records are up to date;
- (vii) present an annual report on the local property to the Circuit Meeting and after every quinquennial inspection include in that report details of all action taken or to be taken by the Church Council to implement the recommendations of the inspectors.

For quinquennial inspections see S.O. 952.

As to (v), if the caretaker is employed see S.O. 018 and 438A.

**942 Local Churches and Chapels.** (1) There may be more than one chapel used by or in connection with one Local Church, but only (i) where Standing Order 605A(1) is in

operation, or (ii) under a scheme adopted by the Church Council and the Circuit Meeting under this Standing Order, or (iii) under a scheme within Standing Order 605A(2).

Normally a single chapel is used in connection with a single Local Church – see the definition of ‘Local Church’ in cl. 1(xv) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) - but this S.O. 942 allows for exceptions. A ‘scheme’ may take a variety of forms. See also S.O. 605A and 612 and guidance on the Methodist Church website.

(2) More Local Churches than one may share the use of a chapel or other local property, but only under a scheme adopted by the Church Councils and the Circuit Meeting or Meetings involved. Every such scheme shall (unless an appropriate Memorandum of Terms of Management has already been signed under paragraph 3(2) (b) of the Model Trusts, and the scheme includes a copy) include a draft Memorandum or amended Memorandum of Terms of Management under paragraph 8 or 9 of the Model Trusts, agreed between the Church Councils involved, and that Memorandum or amended Memorandum shall be signed on their behalf as soon as the scheme has been adopted.

For paragraphs 3, 8 and 9 of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2. A ‘scheme’ may take a variety of forms. See also S.O. 605A and 612 and guidance on the Methodist Church website.

**943 Closure of Chapels.** (1) Public services may not be discontinued in any chapel or preaching-place, nor any preaching-place removed from the circuit plan, until permission has been given by the Synod on the recommendation of the managing trustees, the Circuit Meeting and the district Policy Committee. The Circuit Meeting shall submit any such recommendation to the district committee before any steps are taken to carry the intention into effect.

As to the closure of redundant chapels see para. 23 of the Model Trusts in Book II, Part 2 and refer to connexional guidance published on the Methodist Church website. All chapel closures should be notified to the Connexional Team to enable the central database to be updated.

(2) No steps are to be taken by trustees towards the sale of a chapel until it has been decided that services shall be discontinued in accordance with the provisions of clause (1) above.

(3) When offering any chapel or former chapel for sale, lease or other disposition the trustees shall have regard to any authority from the [...] **Connexional** Council under paragraph 20(2) of the Model Trusts and shall, if so authorised by the council under the said paragraph, take all possible steps, by the exaction of suitable covenants and otherwise as they may be advised, to secure that the premises shall not be used for the manufacture, distribution, sale or supply of intoxicating liquors, nor for any purpose in connection with the organisation or practice of gambling in any of its forms, nor as a public dance-hall, nor (subject to the proviso to paragraph 23(2) of the Model Trusts) for such religious purposes as may be specified in any such authority, nor for any trade for gain on Sundays.

For para. 20(2) of the Model Trusts, see Book II, Part 2. Note that para. 20(2) provides for the authority to be given by the Methodist Council. That provision remains unamended pending the confirmation of the re-adopted Special Resolution amending the Model Trusts by substituting the Connexional Council for the Methodist Council. However, see S.O. 904(2) and the explanation for the making of that Standing Order in the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*, on the title page of Book II Part 2 (Model Trusts) above. The functions of the Methodist Council in this Standing Order are therefore exercisable by the Connexional Council.



(4) Before offering by auction or entering into a contract for the sale of a building for secular use, (and in the case of head (i) below before worship ceases) the trustees shall:

- (i) if the building is a listed building or a building in a conservation area which in either event is a chapel, obtain the prior consent of the appropriate connexional authority to the removal of any object or structure fixed to the building or within its curtilage;
- (ii) consider the appropriate time for the removal of notice boards associated with the Methodist use of the building, and make arrangements accordingly;
- (iii) give attention to the preservation in situ of external foundation stones and other public indications of the Methodist history of the building;
- (iv) seek guidance from the Connexional Team as to whether internal memorials and other internal items (whether or not part of the structure of the building) should for historical or aesthetic reasons be preserved in situ, in other places of worship or elsewhere, and make decisions and arrangements in those matters in the light of that advice;
- (v) identify any sanctuary furniture or other structural or non-structural items (not to be preserved under (iv) above) which they wish to exclude from the sale of the building and which are to be sold separately or transferred to other places of worship, and make arrangements accordingly.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

S.O. 341(4) provides for the Connexional Team to keep a register of listed chapels, manses, etc.

There are legal constraints on the removal of certain items from a listed building once worship has ceased; hence the requirement to consult the Team.

**944 Proceeds of City Centre Premises.** Where capital money arises from the sale, letting or other disposition of the whole or substantially the whole of the land held in connection with a Local Church, Circuit or project on the official list kept under Standing Order 440(1) the project for the disposition shall provide for the capital money to be applied to district purposes under Standing Order 440(6).

The Standing Order referred to concerns Local Churches, Circuits and projects in city centres designated to be listed under that Standing Order and thereby subject to certain special provisions.

Disposals of city centre premises are no longer exempt from the CPF levy under S.O. 970.

**945 Other Proceeds.** (1) Capital money arising from any other disposition of land to which this Standing Order applies, shall be paid to the custodian trustees, to be held and applied as capital money held for the circuit purposes of the relevant Circuit.

(2) This Standing Order applies to the sale, letting or other disposition of any land which is local property except:

- (i) land held as an investment, and
- (ii) land received in the last five years by way of bequest or devise and not required or no longer required for use for Methodist trust purposes, and
- (iii) Local Church caretakers' accommodation.

## Section 95 The Circuit

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**950 Circuit Meeting.** (1) The Circuit Meeting shall transact all business required of it as managing trustees of the circuit property.

See para. 2(1) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) and the definition of 'circuit property' in para. 1.

Only persons of full age may act as managing trustees. In Great Britain persons of 18 years and over (16 years and over in Scotland) are of full age for the purposes of Charity Law.

(2) The Circuit Meeting shall ensure that the matters within this Section are dealt with and appropriate action taken, either by the meeting or by officers or committees appointed for that purpose.

(3) The Circuit Meeting shall ensure that if property in the Circuit shared under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 is model trust property the provisions of Standing Orders 951 and 953 are followed. If property so shared is not model trust property the Circuit Meeting shall co-operate with the joint council to ensure that the requirements of charity law are met.

**951 Projects.** (1) All projects affecting local or circuit property shall be considered, giving particular attention in the case of new projects to their relation to existing properties in the Circuit or to the opportunities they present for shared projects with other denominations. Careful enquiry shall be made as to:

- (i) the adequacy of insurance cover for each property, and the current quinquennial inspection where applicable;
- (ii) compliance with Standing Order 901 in relation to the acquisition of new land;
- (iii) the measures being taken to reduce and extinguish capital debts where they exist;
- (iv) the irregular cases referred to in Standing Order 961(5).

As to the liquidation of debts see S.O. 933.

For quinquennial inspections see S.O. 952.

(2) After such consideration and enquiry the Circuit Meeting shall in the case of local property give or withhold its consent, or in the case of circuit property reach its decision as managing trustees.

**952 Quinquennial Inspections.** (1) In relation to all local property the Circuit Meeting shall, subject to clause (4) below, arrange for an inspection, which shall include an inspection for timber decay, at least once every five years by professionally

qualified persons, who shall report to the Church Council and the Circuit Meeting with recommendations as to any work required. The Circuit Meeting shall ensure that any further investigatory inspections shown to be necessary in the initial inspection report are carried out if the managing trustees have not acted.

(2) In relation to all circuit property the Circuit Meeting shall, subject to clause (4) below, arrange for an inspection, which shall include an inspection for timber decay, at least once every five years by professionally qualified persons, who shall report to the Circuit Meeting, the circuit stewards and, in the case of manses, the district Manses Committee with recommendations as to any work required. The district Manses Committee shall ensure that any further investigatory inspections shown to be necessary in the initial inspection report are carried out if the managing trustees have not acted.

(3) The Circuit Meeting shall ensure that every inspector engaged to carry out an inspection under this Standing Order is an architect or building surveyor or has some other appropriate professional qualification and is adequately covered by professional indemnity insurance against any liability arising out of the inspection or report.

(4) Clauses (1) and (2) above shall not apply to Methodist premises which are no longer required for any purpose within heads (b) to (o) of paragraph 13 of the Model Trusts and are demised on a full repairing lease for a term of 10 years or more.

**953 Local Property.** In relation to local property the Circuit Meeting shall also:

- (i) arrange for the annual local property schedules on the state of the property to be examined, especially in relation to work recommended by quinquennial inspections, and obtain a report on the general condition of each property in the Circuit;
- (ii) arrange for the annual local schedules of accounts and returns of investments to be examined and review the enquiries made of each Local Church, satisfying itself that the Church Council has officially accepted, as presented, the schedule relating to its own accounts;
- (iii) send to the district property secretaries such originals, copies or summaries of the above schedules as may be directed by the Connexional Team, together with any quinquennial report on local property obtained since the last such return and a report on matters requiring special attention, especially where work recommended by the quinquennial inspections has not been undertaken.

Access for registered persons to the relevant schedules is via the Property section of the Methodist Church website.

**954 Circuit Property.** In relation to circuit property the Circuit Meeting shall also ensure that either the meeting itself or officers or committees appointed for the purpose:

- (i) appoint visitors to visit and inspect each manse each year, except when the quinquennial inspection or the district Manses Committee visitation has taken place within the last twelve months, the duties of the visitors

- being to visit at a mutually agreed time, to consult with the occupants (including spouse or civil partner, where appropriate) and to report to the meeting;
- (ii) consider the latest quinquennial inspection report and put in hand such work as needs to be done to the structure of any circuit property and such external painting as requires attention and (as to manses) decide what internal decoration and refurnishing shall be carried out by the circuit stewards;
  - (iii) receive the reports of the district Manses Committee and report back what action the Circuit has taken;
  - (iv) consider what is the state of the manses, take into account what the reports of the district Manses Committee and quinquennial inspectors recommend and decide what action should be taken;
  - (v) prepare a budget of expenditure necessary for each dwelling to be brought up to and maintained at the connexional standard;
  - (vi) review at intervals of not more than four years whether the buildings are in the right places, whether they are economic to maintain, whether a new dwelling or dwellings should be obtained and whether a proposed new dwelling or a former manse to be reinstated is suitable;
  - (vii) obtain and consider a financial report at least annually;
  - (viii) ensure that a record of all decisions and action taken under (ii) or (iii) above is sent to the Superintendent (who shall make it available to the minister or probationer occupying the accommodation), that a copy is sent to the senior circuit steward and that a further copy is preserved in the relevant log book;
  - (ix) open and maintain for each circuit property a log book for retention of the annual schedules of property, quinquennial inspection reports, manse visitation reports and other relevant material.
  - (x) send to the district property secretaries annually any quinquennial report on circuit property obtained since the last such return.

For connexional standards see S.O. 803 and the guidelines approved under that Standing Order.

As to energy efficiency (dealt with in the guidance in Book VII A, Parts 1 and 2) the Conference of 2010 directed that Circuits should endeavour to use model trust money to put in place these high standards of energy efficiency. It also directed that Circuits should endeavour to provide smart meter devices to enable ministers to control their electricity use.

For the district committee see S.O. 472 and 965.

### **955 Model Trust Money.** (1)–(5) [*revoked*]

(6) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b) below a contribution shall be made annually to the relevant district Advance Fund from the model trust capital money held in each Circuit at the end of the year, as follows:

- (i) up to £100,000 or the first £100,000 2½%;
- (ii) on any excess over £100,000 but not exceeding £250,000 5%;
- (iii) on any excess over £250,000 7½%.

(b) Sub-clause (a) above does not apply:

- (i) to capital money held for long-term investment to yield income used for the work and mission of the Circuit in accordance with a circuit policy approved by the district Synod, nor
- (ii) to money raised by any appeal specifically for the acquisition of land or the erection or alteration of any building, nor
- (iii) to the proceeds of any disposition completed within the last five years, so far as they are to be employed in or towards a replacement project and consent to the disposition has been granted under Section 93 on that basis.

All capital money must be held by the custodian trustees. As to who are the custodian trustees see S.O. 006(3)(b).

As to what is capital money for the purposes of this clause see S.O. 915.

S.O. 945 provides that most local proceeds of sale become circuit model trust capital money.

The effect of this clause is to make the 2½%, 5% or 7½% contribution a mandatory requirement; it does not preclude contributions being made over and above this minimum.

(7) The district Policy Committee shall from time to time (and at least once every three years) review the state of circuit model trust funds and their distribution throughout the District and may propose to the relevant Circuit Meeting projects for the application or use anywhere within the District of the capital money or of income from any such fund. The outcome of any review shall be reported to the Synod.

(8) A careful and responsible balance shall be held in the application of capital money as between property projects, ministry projects and other purposes.

See the note to S.O. 954 as to the use of model trust money to improve energy efficiency in manses.

**Section 96 The District**

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**960 Interpretation – Appropriate District Authority.** (1) In this Part ‘appropriate district authority’ means, subject to clause (2) below, the relevant district Policy Committee or any person, persons or body to whom it may delegate its powers in relation to applications under this Part generally or in relation to the relevant application or class of applications.

This definition applies, in particular, wherever in this Part the consent of the ‘appropriate district authority’ is required for any step.

(2) The Synods of two or more Districts may by agreement appoint a joint body to take the place, in those Districts, of the district Policy Committee for the purposes of clause (1) above.

**961 Projects.** (1) In reaching a judgment on projects submitted to the appropriate district authority for consent particular attention shall be given to the requirements of Standing Order 932.

(2) In cases where the appropriate district authority has given its consent under Standing Order 930(4) the district property secretaries shall send to the Connexional Team such financial details, plans and other information as the Team may require for purposes of record and the appropriate district authority shall be responsible for ensuring that the project is completed and the entire outlay defrayed within five years after the date of consent or within such longer period (if any) as was then specified.

As to time limits see S.O. 933, 934(2).

(3) In all projects for the acquisition of sites the appropriate district authority shall have regard to current town planning proposals, the needs of the Church, the extent of local and circuit resources and those matters which are the responsibility of the district Policy Committee.

For district redevelopment responsibilities see S.O. 962.

For ecumenical relationships see S.O. 434(3)(iii).

See also S.O. 901.

(4) At the Synod next following the expiry of five years from the date of consent a return shall be made showing that any conditions attached to the consent have been fulfilled.

See S.O. 933, 934(2) and cl. (2) above.

(5) The Synod shall call the attention of the trustees to any cases in which the proportion of debt is excessively heavy or the proceedings irregular and shall communicate its judgment to the trustees through the Superintendent.

For the duty of the Circuit Meeting in such cases see S.O. 951(1)(iv).

**962 Development Plan.** The district Policy Committee shall formulate and keep under annual review a development master-plan for the Methodist church buildings and circuit staffing of the District taking into account Planning Authority proposals (e.g., new residential areas, new road proposals, and urban centre redevelopment). Existing and proposed church buildings of other denominations shall be noted, particularly with a view to ecumenical co-operation or the formation of local ecumenical partnerships and the consideration of projects under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969. Any such project may be referred for detailed consideration to a group appointed by the committee for that purpose. The committee shall report annually to the Synod upon any such projects and upon the content and implementation of the development master-plan generally.

As to the second sentence regarding ecumenical co-operation see also S.O. 323, 412(2), (3) and 434(3). See also, more generally, the note to S.O. 400A(1).

**963 Advance Funds.** (1)–(2) [*revoked*]

(3) Each Synod shall establish a district Advance Fund for the purpose of making grants out of capital or income for the support of personnel serving in the District or any of its Circuits, for property projects within Standing Order 930, for the support of work in furtherance of the Church's mission and for ecumenical work. The Synod shall establish a process and criteria for dealing with such grants.

(4) Money in a district Advance Fund, whether arising from the disposition of model trust property or otherwise, shall be held upon the Model Trusts and is accordingly model trust property.

See the note to S.O. 954 as to the use of model trust money to improve energy efficiency in manses.

**964 Supervision of Circuit Meetings.** (1) The district property secretaries shall satisfy themselves that each Circuit Meeting has been fully notified as to the structural condition of all chapels and ancillary premises and that the quinquennial inspection of property required by Standing Order 952 has been duly carried out.

(2) The annual property schedules from the Circuits shall be examined in preparation for the district secretaries' report to the Synod.

(3) Any case of serious financial deficiency or under-insurance or questions relating to trust investments revealed by the circuit schedules shall be reported to the Connexional Team.

(4) The district property secretaries shall not only examine the annual property schedules but also enquire what other properties and funds are held for the benefit of any Circuit, Local Church, chapel, manse, school or other organisation or building in the District and shall investigate and where necessary make recommendations as to the

oversight given to the investment and management of all such funds, whether or not reported in the annual property schedule.

**965 Manses.** (1) The district Manses Committee shall appoint a panel of visitors (at least half of whom shall be women) sufficient in number to ensure that every manse, including that of the Chair and of any connexional officer, college tutor or school chaplain, in the District, is visited by two members of the panel (not being members in the Circuit concerned) every five years. In addition to making their own general inspection the visitors shall ask the occupant whether he or she has any reason to suspect anything wrong with the drains or sanitary fittings or any serious or general dampness likely to be prejudicial to health and shall include the answers in their report to the committee. The visitors shall use the form of questionnaire and report obtainable from the Connexional Team.

For the constitution of the committee see S.O. 472.

It is desirable that there should be as short an interval as possible between the inspections and the meetings of the committee which deal with the reports. To secure this it is recommended that the committee should meet early in the connexional year and that the inspections for that year should be made as soon as the committee can complete the necessary arrangements, i.e., in the period October to January.

(2) In preparation for each visit the committee shall obtain from the circuit stewards (in the case of circuit property) or the responsible officers (in other cases) a copy of the latest quinquennial inspection report for the property (unless already received pursuant to Standing Order 952(2)) and details of the work carried out as a result of that report and invite the circuit stewards or other responsible officers to share information about any other works carried out or proposed.

(3) The committee shall prepare a report on the manses visited and present it to the Synod in the Synod Agenda. A copy of the whole report shall be sent by the secretary of the committee to the Chair and of the relevant parts (in the case of circuit property) to the Superintendent (who shall make it available to the occupants of the premises inspected) and the senior circuit steward or (in other cases) to the occupants of the premises inspected and the responsible officers. The circuit stewards or other responsible officers shall report, through the committee, to the Synod in the following year what has been done to carry out the recommendations of the committee.

For the connexional requirements see S.O. 803 (and NB the note to S.O. 803(4)) and the guidelines approved under that Standing Order.

For the duties of the circuit committee see S.O. 954.

(4) If an inspection reveals what the committee adjudges to be inadequacy of accommodation, the facts shall immediately be communicated to the circuit stewards or other responsible officers and also to the Connexional Team so that their advice may be available to the Circuit Meeting or other responsible body.

(5) A visit shall be undertaken up to three months before a minister or probationer is due to move under Standing Order 785(5)(b). It may be a regular visit under clause (1) above which occurs at that time or an additional visit made in order to comply with this clause. The visitors shall assess and report what additional help or further work is needed in order to ensure that the manse, its grounds and boundaries are left



in a reasonable condition and in accordance with the guidance from the Ministries Committee.

See the 'Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers' in the guidance in Book VII, A1 below.

**966 District Property.** (1) The district trustees for any district property or part or category of such property shall be the persons, being church members and members or eligible to be members of the Synod, annually appointed as such by the Synod. They shall report to the Synod through the district Policy Committee.

As to this and the next clause see the definition of 'district trustees' in para. 1 of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

Only persons of full age may be managing trustees of model trust property (s. 9(3) of the 1976 Act, Vol. 1, p. 11). In Great Britain as a whole persons of 18 years and over (16 years and over in Scotland) are of full age.

(2) All district trustees shall, subject to clause (5) below, arrange for an inspection, which shall include an inspection for timber decay, at least once every five years of all district property by professionally qualified persons, who shall report on their inspection to the district trustees, the district property secretaries and Policy Committee and (in the case of manses) the district Manses Committee. The trustees shall ensure that every inspector engaged to carry out an inspection under this clause complies with the requirements set out in Standing Order 952(3). The district Policy Committee shall ensure that any further investigatory inspections shown to be necessary in the initial inspection report are carried out. All district trustees shall arrange for a log book to be opened and maintained for each district property, in which shall be retained the annual schedules of property, quinquennial inspection reports, manse visitation reports and other relevant material.

(3) All district trustees shall arrange for a log book to be opened and maintained for each district property, in which shall be retained the annual schedules of property, quinquennial inspection reports, manse visitation reports and other relevant material.

(4) In relation to any District in which there is for the time being a Methodist International House or other international student hostel which is model trust property the purposes of such a hostel shall be district purposes of that District.

Each M.I.H. held on the Model Trusts is therefore district property; see the definitions of 'district property' and 'district purposes' in para. 1 of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2), by virtue of which district manses are also district property.

(5) Clause (2) above shall not apply to Methodist premises which are no longer required for any purpose within heads (b) to (o) of paragraph 13 of the Model Trusts and are demised on a full repairing lease for a term of 10 years or more.

**Section 96A Connexional and Conference Property**

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**96A0 Quinquennial Reports.** (1) All connexional and conference trustees shall, subject to clause (2) below, arrange for an inspection, which shall include an inspection for timber decay, at least once every five years of all property of which they are trustees by professionally qualified persons, who shall report on their inspection to the relevant connexional or conference trustees. The trustees shall ensure that every inspector engaged to carry out an inspection under this clause complies with the requirements set out in Standing Order 952(3). They shall also ensure that any further investigatory inspections shown to be necessary in the initial inspection report are carried out.

(2) Clause (1) above shall not apply to Methodist premises which are no longer required for any purpose within heads (b) to (o) of paragraph 13 of the Model Trusts and are demised on a full repairing lease for a term of 10 years or more.

**Section 97 Connexional Priority Fund**

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**970 Scope.** (1) Subject to the following provisions of this Section a levy for the Connexional Priority Fund shall be charged on all capital money arising from the sale, letting or other disposition of land held for local, circuit or district purposes.

For the authority to make this Standing Order see paras. 18 and 19(1)(e) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

(2) The levy shall not apply:

- (i)–(iv) *[deleted]*
- (v) to property compulsorily purchased where compensation by the acquiring authority is on the basis of equivalent reinstatement;
- (vi) *[deleted]*
- (vii) to dispositions of property received within the last five years by way of devise or bequest and not required or no longer required for Methodist trust purposes.

(3) Money in this fund shall be held upon the Model Trusts and is accordingly model trust property.

**971 [revoked]**

The provision in this Standing Order for the fund to be administered by the Strategy and Resources Committee has now been replaced by the amended provisions below assigning the relevant powers and functions to the Connexional Council.

**972 Contributions.** (1) When trustees dispose of property on which a levy is chargeable under Standing Order 970 they shall, subject to Standing Order 973, contribute part of the proceeds to the fund as follows:

(iA)	up to £20,000 or the first £20,000	Nil
(i)	on any excess over £20,000 up to £100,000	20%
(ii)	on any excess over £100,000	40%

(2) The sum upon which the levy is calculated shall be the balance remaining after making the payments required under heads (i), (ii) and (iii) of Standing Order 916(1) or made for work to the property disposed of which has been undertaken on the advice of a qualified surveyor for the purpose of increasing the proceeds of the disposal.

**973 Replacement Projects.** (1) This Standing Order applies when the proceeds of one or more dispositions are to be employed in or towards a replacement project and consent to the disposition or dispositions has been granted under Section 93 on that basis.

Classification of a project as a replacement project requires the consent of the appropriate connexional authority (S.O. 931(1)(ix)).

(1A) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall adopt criteria for the classification of a project as a replacement project.

(2) If the replacement project costs not less than the net proceeds, arrived at in accordance with Standing Order 972(2), and is implemented forthwith then no levy shall be required.

(3) If the replacement project costs less than such net proceeds and is implemented forthwith then the levy shall be calculated on the unused balance or balances, as if they were the net proceeds.

(4) If the replacement project is not implemented forthwith then the levy shall initially be paid as if there were no such project, but if the project is implemented within five years of the disposition or if the appropriate connexional authority has granted an exception to the five year requirement in this Standing Order, the levy shall be cancelled or recalculated in accordance with clause (2) or clause (3) above, as appropriate, and the overpayment refunded with interest at the rate earned by the Central Finance Board's Trustees Interest Fund.

(5) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall adopt criteria for the grant of any exception under clause (4) above and as to the date on which a project is to be treated as implemented for the purposes of that clause.

**974 Purposes.** (1) The purposes of the fund are:

- (i) to distribute annually to some or all of the district Advance Funds the appropriate proportion of the balance between the total received and the total refunded in the previous year through the levy charged under Standing Order 970(1), the amount (if any) payable to each such fund being determined by the [...] **Connexional Council**;
- (iA) to allocate the appropriate proportion of that balance to such fund as the Conference may designate as a Pension Reserve Fund to be held in respect of the liabilities of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme and the Pension and Assurance Scheme for Lay Employees of the Methodist Church;
- (ii) subject to (i) and (iA) above, to make grants out of income or capital to Local Churches, Circuits and Districts in cases which are within one or more of the following categories and are beyond the normal resources of the Circuit and District, namely when:
  - i. new work is to be undertaken which will constitute an advance and be of connexional significance;
  - ii. *[deleted]*
  - iii. an urgent and essential property scheme is to be carried out;
- (iii) subject to (i) and (iA) above, to make payments out of capital to

the Mission in Britain Fund when so directed by resolution of the Conference

and for the purposes of heads (i) and (iA) above, 'the appropriate proportion' means in each case such proportion as may be determined by the Conference from time to time.

The Conference of 2009 determined 'the appropriate proportion' for the purpose of heads (i) and (iA) above to be 27.5% and 45% respectively. The Conference of 2023 agreed that, should circumstances allow, the contributions from the property levy to the Pension Reserve Fund be suspended, and it was confirmed at the Conference of 2024 that those payments have been suspended.

(1A) If the requirements of clause (1) are satisfied a grant may be made for ecumenical work within the purposes of the relevant Local Church, Circuit or District or for Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice.

As to ecumenical work see S.O. 604, 650(6)(iii) (Local Churches), 500, 532(1)(iv) (Circuits) and 434(4) (Districts). For the meaning of the phrase see S.O. 008(viii).

For Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice see S.O. 331.

(2) A grant under category (iii) of clause (1) shall consist of a single amount payable in a lump sum or by instalments, and any other grant shall consist either of such an amount, or of an annual sum for a limited period, or of both.

(3) All grants shall be at the discretion of the [...] **Connexional Council**.

**975 Applications.** (1) Subject to the following clauses of this Standing Order all applications shall be submitted to the committee by the relevant district Policy Committee or Synod with a statement of facts in support and the advice of the district Policy Committee, given in the light of the district redevelopment plan. Every application shall require the support of the Synod or in urgent cases (if not considered by the Synod) of the district Policy Committee.

(2) The Connexional Team may sponsor an application falling within the purposes of Standing Order 974(1) or (1A), and in that event clause (1) above shall not apply.

(3) An application within category (ii) of Standing Order 974(1) shall be presented to and considered by the committee whether or not it has the support of the Synod or district Policy Committee, but the advice or judgment of the relevant district bodies shall be among the considerations weighed by the committee.

**976 Administration.** The Team shall provide the administrative services required by the committee and ensure that all applications including those made under Standing Order 975(1) are investigated and presented to the committee by an appropriate Team member.

**977 Payments.** Upon the committee's desiring to make a payment out of the fund the committee shall instruct the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to make that payment.

**978 Reports.** The accounts of the fund and a report of payments promised shall be included within the consolidated accounts of the Methodist Church Fund.

## Section 98 Listed Building Works

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**980 Scope of Section.** (1) The buildings to which this Section applies are those for the time being exempted from the provisions of sections 3, 4, 7 to 9, 47, 54, 59 and 74 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 or of any enactment amending or replacing those provisions, by virtue of sections 60 and 75 of that Act (in this Section called 'the Act of 1990'), or any enactment amending or replacing the last mentioned sections, and of any Order made under them.

(2) The works to which this Section applies are:

- (i) internal or external works for the demolition, alteration or extension of a listed building to which this Section applies or of any item fixed to such a building, including any internal fixtures or fittings, or of any other structure or fixture within the curtilage of such a building, including any tombstone or boundary wall, being works which would affect the character of the building as a building of special architectural or historic interest; and
- (ii) works of demolition affecting the exterior of a building to which this Section applies in a conservation area.

(3) Works to which this Section applies are in Section 93 and this Section referred to as 'listed building works'.

(4) This Section extends to England and Wales only.

**981 Interpretation.** In this Section, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (i) 'Local Planning Authority' means in relation to any building or area the body exercising the functions of a local planning authority under the Act of 1990 in respect of that building or area;
- (ii) 'National Amenity Societies' means the Ancient Monuments Society, the Council for British Archaeology, the Georgian Group, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Victorian Society and the Twentieth Century Society;
- (iii) 'Heritage Authority' means in relation to England English Heritage and in relation to Wales Cadw;
- (iv) 'Royal Commission' means in relation to England the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England and in relation to Wales the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales.

**982 Advice and Consultation.** Before considering whether to consent to a project for listed building works the appropriate connexional authority shall:

- (i) obtain the advice of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, which shall include advice on the factors specified in Standing Order 983(iii);
- (ii) consult each of the following bodies, namely the Local Planning Authority, the Heritage Authority and the National Amenity Societies, and (except in case of emergency) ensure that each such body has 28 days in which to comment upon the proposed works;
- (iii) ensure (except in case of emergency) that a notice describing the proposed works and inviting comments from interested persons is or has been displayed for 28 days outside the building affected in a prominent position visible to the general public and that a similar notice is or has been published in a local newspaper circulating in the locality; and
- (iv) where works of demolition are proposed, ensure that notice of the proposal is or has been given to the Royal Commission.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

For the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee see S.O. 341.

**983 Requirements.** When considering whether to consent to a project for listed building works the appropriate connexional authority shall take into account:

- (i) the advice obtained under item (i) of Standing Order 982 and any comment or representation made in the course of or in response to any consultation or notice under item (ii) or (iii) of that Standing Order;
- (ii) the provisions of Standing Order 932; and
- (iii) in addition to any other relevant factors the desirability of preserving historic church buildings, the importance of protecting features of architectural merit and historic interest and the archaeological implications of the scheme.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

**983A Reviews and Appeals.** (1) Trustees who have applied for consent to listed building works may seek, in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order, to have a refusal, or the imposition of one or more conditions, reversed.

(2) In order to do so they must within three months of receiving the decision lodge an appeal in writing with the Property Secretary, stating what new decision they seek and the grounds on which they do so.

As to the Property Secretary, see S.O. 006(2A).

(3) For the purposes of this Standing Order the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee shall appoint and maintain a review sub-committee, with a convener, and the [...] **Connexional** Council shall annually appoint a chair and four other members of an appeals panel.

(4) Upon receipt of an appeal the Property Secretary shall send copies to the convener of that review sub-committee and the chair of that appeals panel.

(5) The review sub-committee shall consider the appeal and within 40 days report to the appropriate connexional authority, which shall review its decision in the light of that report and within 28 days inform the trustees whether it is maintained, reversed or varied.

(6) Unless the decision, as reviewed, is that which the trustees seek they shall within 28 days inform the chair of the appeals panel whether they wish to pursue their appeal.

(7) If the trustees inform the chair of the appeals panel that they wish to pursue their appeal the chair shall convene an appeal hearing as soon as possible, but so that the date shall in any event (i) allow for not less than 28 days' notice, which shall be given to those entitled to attend or be represented, and (ii) be not more than six months after the lodging of the appeal under clause (2) above.

(8) The appeal shall be heard by three members of the appeal panel, appointed by and if possible including the chair, who shall ensure that no-one is appointed who has been involved at any earlier stage, or has any personal interest in the outcome, or might or might reasonably be supposed for any other reason to be open to partiality or embarrassment in acting.

(9) The parties entitled to attend or be represented shall be the trustees and the appropriate connexional authority.

(10) Either party may rely on written submissions, but otherwise there may attend one or more of the following:

- (i) on behalf of the trustees: one trustee, one presbyter, one professional adviser and one legal representative;
- (ii) on behalf of the appropriate connexional authority: the person, or one of the persons, who made the decision, as reviewed, one member of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and, if the trustees are legally represented, a legal representative (who may if so desired be a legal officer of the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes).

(11) (a) The appeal body shall give each party the opportunity of making representations and of knowing the substance of, and dealing with, any representations or other material before the appeal body adverse to its case, and shall not, in the course of its deliberations, take into account any point which the party affected has not had an opportunity of meeting.

(b) Each party shall be responsible for its own costs.

(c) Subject to sub-clauses (a) and (b) above the appeal body shall determine its own procedure.

(12) The Connexional Team shall provide a clerk to the hearing, who shall take notes and provide support to the chair in the preparation of the latter's report, which shall include the reasoned decision of the appeal body. That decision shall be final. The report shall be communicated to the parties and to any other interested persons or bodies specified in guidelines issued by the [...] **Connexional** Council.

**984 Records.** (1) The Connexional Team shall maintain properly arranged and indexed records of all projects for listed building works in such form as to show the



action taken to comply with Standing Orders 982, 983 and 983A, the response to such action and the decision taken.

(2) The record of the decision taken shall show what account was taken of any comments made under Standing Order 982.

(3) The records maintained under this Standing Order shall be open to public inspection during reasonable hours as prescribed from time to time by the appropriate connexional authority.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

**985 Enforcement.** (1) In this Standing Order 'unapproved listed building works' means listed building works which have not received consent in accordance with Section 93 and this Section from all the appropriate bodies, including the appropriate connexional authority.

The 'appropriate connexional authority' is the Connexional Council or its delegates (S.O. 909).

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of Standing Order 1130 it shall be a breach of the discipline of the Church to carry out or authorise, alone or jointly with others, any works which the person concerned knows or should have known to be unapproved listed buildings works.

(3) It shall be the right and duty of the custodian trustees and of the connexional Property Secretary to take such steps as they or either of them may deem necessary or expedient for preventing the commencement or continuation of unapproved listed building works, and if thought fit to invoke disciplinary action in respect of any such acts, including:

- (i) an application to any court having jurisdiction in that behalf for an injunction or other appropriate relief; and
- (ii) the initiation of a charge under Part 11 against any person subject to the discipline of the Church who is involved as a managing trustee or in any other capacity in carrying out or authorising unapproved listed building works, and of an application for the suspension under Standing Order 1105 of any such person.

As to the connexional Property Secretary see S.O. 006(2A).

See also S.O. 512B and 611A for the power to dissolve, respectively, a Circuit Meeting or Church Council, for serious breaches of trust or Methodist discipline, including a breach of this Standing Order (S.O. 512B(2)(ii)(b) and S.O. 611A(2)(ii)(b)).

(3A) A complaint within the meaning of Standing Order 1101(1) which is made against any person by a person performing a duty under clause (3) above with a view to the initiation of a charge under Part 11 may be referred directly to the relevant Connexional Team member as defined in Standing Order 1101(1) for it to be dealt with by a connexional complaints team appointed under Standing Order 1122.

(4) The [...] **Connexional** Council shall have power to require managing trustees to restore and reinstate, in accordance with a specification recommended by the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee after consultation with the Local Planning Authority and the Heritage Authority, any buildings altered or demolished in whole or in part by unapproved listed building works and, in default of compliance, shall have power to

carry out the required works of restoration and reinstatement and to charge the cost to the managing trustees, provided that no financial liability shall be incurred personally under this clause by any person who was not a managing trustee when the decision to execute the unapproved listed building works was taken.

For the authority to make this Standing Order see para. 19(3) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2). That power is given to the Methodist Council. That provision remains unamended pending the confirmation of the re-adopted Special Resolution amending the Model Trusts by substituting the Connexional Council for the Methodist Council. However, see S.O. 904(2) and the explanation for the making of that Standing Order in the Note on *The Resolutions of the Conference of 2024*, on the title page of Book II Part 2 (Model Trusts) above. The functions of the Methodist Council in this Standing Order are therefore exercisable by the Connexional Council.

(5) For the purposes of this Standing Order a managing trustee does not carry out or authorise unapproved listed building works, or join in doing so, who:

- (i) votes against the resolution or other form of proposal or decision for the execution of the works; or
- (ii) is absent when the decision to execute the works is taken, either having received no notice of the meeting or having received no notice of any proposal for such a decision or other indication that the subject would be considered; or
- (iii) is absent for good cause when the decision to execute the works is taken, and has taken reasonable steps to dissuade the managing trustees from taking that decision;

and such a managing trustee shall be entitled to the benefit of clause (6) below in respect of those works.

See also S.O. 517(3) and 615(3).

(6) Nothing in this Standing Order shall render a managing trustee who is entitled to the benefit of this clause personally liable for any expense incurred by or charged against the managing trustees under clause (4) above in consequence of the relevant works or deprive such a trustee of the protection afforded by paragraph 24(2) of the Model Trusts in respect of any such expense or any other loss or expense, including legal costs, arising under this Standing Order in relation to those works.

**986 Application to Connexional Trustees. (1) The following provisions apply if the Connexional Council in exercise of its powers as connexional trustees wishes to take action which would constitute a project within the meaning of Standing Order 905 if the consent of the appropriate connexional authority were required.**

**(2) The functions of the appropriate connexional authority set out in this Section, including its function of giving consent, shall be exercised by the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, subject to any necessary modifications.**

**(3) The provisions of Standing Order 983A as to reviews and appeals shall apply for the benefit of the council as they apply to other trustee bodies.**

**(4) The powers of the council under Standing Order 985(4) to require restoration and reinstatement shall be exercisable by the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee.**

See the note to S.O. 931A for the general position of the Connexional Council as connexional trustees in relation to carrying out projects on such connexional property. Where, however, the project is one

which falls within the purview of this Section governing listed building works, the above Standing Order regulates the exercise of the council's powers, as the provisions of the Ecclesiastical Exemption legislation (applicable in England and Wales) as to seeking consent from an approved body and the other matters provided for here are as applicable to the council as they are to other Methodist trustee bodies.

**SECTION 99 (PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE) WAS REVOKED BY THE CONFERENCE IN 2024.**

**PART 10 THE CHURCH IN MISSION:**

**[THIS PART WAS REVOKED BY THE CONFERENCE IN 2024 WITH THE STANDING ORDERS WHICH WERE TO BE RETAINED BEING REDISTRIBUTED IN PARTS 2 AND 3].**



## Part 11 Complaints and Discipline

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Guidance as to the complaints and discipline processes can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk). In the event of any conflict between such guidance and the Standing Orders below, the Standing Orders will govern the procedure.

A discipline or appeal committee under this Part 11 may be held electronically or in hybrid form provided the respondent agrees or the chair of the relevant committee is satisfied that meeting in such a way would still be able to deal fairly with the proceedings. See S.O. 019B(7) and (8).

The Conference of 2024 received a major report upon this Part 11 and adopted a number of recommendations as a result of which amendments to various Standing Orders will be brought in due course.

## Section 110 General

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**1100 Principles.** (1) The need of the Methodist Church for a complaints and discipline process stems from the imperfect nature of human beings. The Church is a fallible community and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. A complaints and discipline process is one of the means by which the Church recognises that all human beings are made in the image of God and are entitled to be treated as such, and by which it maintains its witness to the new life to which we are called through Christ.

(2) Through the complaints and discipline process members of the Methodist Church are accountable to the Church in matters of faith and behaviour. The Church seeks to enable healing and reconciliation to take place through that accountability whenever possible. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, openness and honesty, and to the need for each of us to accept responsibility for our own acts.

(3) The complaints and discipline process therefore seeks to embody the following principles:

- (i) the initiation of complaints should not be limited to members of the Church;
- (ii) there should be no difference of principle between ordained and lay people in the way in which complaints against them are dealt with;
- (iii) the possibility of reconciliation should be explored carefully in every case in which that is appropriate;
- (iv) help and support should be offered both to the person making the complaint and to the person complained against at every stage during the process;
- (v) the process should be fair;
- (vi) the person or body making the decision at each stage should be competent to do so;
- (vii) there should be a means of correcting any errors which may be made;
- (viii) there should be a means of ensuring compliance with any decision;
- (ix) there should be appropriate requirements relating to confidentiality and record-keeping.

**1101 Interpretation.** (1) In this Section and in other provisions of these Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline:

- (i) 'complaint' means a statement (whether or not in writing) by any person to a member of the Church (whether ordained or lay):
  - (a) objecting to the words, acts or omissions of another member of or person holding office in the Church and requesting that action be taken as a consequence, but subject to clause (2) below; or
  - (b) asserting that the respondent has a conviction or has received a simple or conditional police caution which, whether or not previously known, would be a bar to appointment to office under Standing Order 010(2)(ii);

As to racism, see S.O. 013B. In 2010 the Conference received a report which dealt with the relationship between allegations of racist words, acts or omissions and the Complaints and Discipline process (Agenda pp. 228–239).

As to the acts or omissions of another member of or person holding office in the Church, see the Commitments and Expectations published at Part 6 of Book IV.

S.O. 010(2)(ii) contains the provision dealing with persons who have been convicted or received a police caution concerning sexual offences against children.

- (ii) 'complainant' means the person making the complaint;
- (iii) 'recipient' means the person to whom the complainant first makes the complaint;
- (iv) 'respondent' means the person against whom the complaint is made and (if applicable) any other person so referred to in Standing Order 1130(8);
- (v) 'local complaints officer' means the person who has the functions given by Standing Order 1110 in relation to that complaint;
- (vi) 'relevant Connexional Team member' means the Secretary of the Conference or the member of the Connexional Team to whom the Secretary has delegated responsibility for discipline matters in relation to the Church generally;
- (vii) 'complaints team' means a team convened from the connexional Complaints Panel established under Standing Order 1112;
- (viii) 'charge' means a complaint falling within Standing Order 1130(3) in respect of which a complaints team has decided a discipline charge should be formulated and heard by a church court;
- (ix) 'parties', in relation to an appeal, means the parties as defined by Standing Order 1140(1).

(2) A statement is not a complaint within clause (1)(i)(a) above if the respondent's standing in relation to the Church could not reasonably be regarded as of any significance in connection with the words, acts or omissions complained of.

**1102 General Matters.** (1) The principle of fairness set out in Standing Order 1100(3)(v) above means that all persons exercising functions in relation to complaints and discipline must at all times have regard to the further principles that a respondent should:

- (i) have an adequate opportunity of responding to the complaint, meeting any charge and dealing with the evidence;
- (ii) be treated fairly by any complaints team dealing with the complaint;

and

- (iii) receive a fair hearing from any church court which is to decide whether any charge is established.

(2) (a) Subject to sub-clause (b)(ii) and (iii) below, but notwithstanding anything contained elsewhere in these Standing Orders no person may form part of a complaints team or sit as a member of any church court deciding a discipline charge or appeal if that person:

- (i) is or has been a complainant or respondent in relation to that complaint or any connected complaint;
- (ii) has formed part of a complaints team or been a member of any other inquiry which has considered that complaint or any connected complaint;
- (iii) has sat on any church court at an earlier hearing of any other charge arising from that complaint or any connected complaint;
- (iv) has any personal interest in the outcome;
- (v) has received in confidence information relevant to the complaint;
- (vi) has sat on a Pastoral Committee under Standing Order 013 concerning the complainant or respondent; or
- (vii) because of a close friendship or relationship with the complainant or respondent or otherwise might or might reasonably be supposed to be open to partiality or embarrassment in carrying out the responsibilities of a member of the complaints team or sitting on the church court.

A Pastoral Committee is convened under S.O. 013 or 013A to deal with an appeal by a person who has been suspended from office on grounds other than those covered in this Part.

- (b) (i) If, because of the operation of sub-clause (a) above or otherwise, any church court would have fewer than three members for the hearing of a case, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf must appoint additional members for the purpose of the hearing to bring the court to a membership of at least three.
- (ii) If but for this provision full compliance with Standing Order 1131(3) to (5) and sub-clause (a) above would make it impossible to convene a court of at least three members the President or Vice-President shall nevertheless exercise his or her powers under head (i) of this sub-clause, fulfilling the requirement of clause (1)(iii) above by the appointment of a person or persons not on the connexional Panel or by such other means as, in his or her absolute discretion, he or she judges necessary and sufficient and having regard as far as possible to the requirements of Standing Order 1131(3) to (5) and sub-clause (a) above.
- (iii) If but for this provision full compliance with sub-clause (a) above would make it impossible to appoint a complaints team of three members the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf must make such appointments as may be necessary to establish a team of three members, fulfilling the requirement of clause (1)(iii) above by the appointment of a person or persons not on the connexional Complaints



Panel.

(c) Provided that a court has three members, or, in the case of a committee of the Conference constituted under Standing Order 1145(2) below, 11 members, no proceeding or decision of the court will be invalid because it consists, in any particular case, of fewer members than is specified in these Standing Orders.

(d) No person under 18 years of age may form part of a complaints team or sit as a member of a church court deciding a discipline charge or appeal.

(e) No person may form part of a complaints team or sit as a member of a church court (except the Conference) who is not a member of the Methodist Church.

(3) Except as otherwise specifically provided in these Standing Orders every complaints team and every church court hearing a discipline charge or appeal has power to regulate its own procedure in the light of the principles set out in Standing Order 1100 and clause (1) above and having regard to guidelines approved from time to time by the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity appointed under Standing Order **211**.

These guidelines are made available to those involved as members of church courts through the relevant convener.

(4) Except where otherwise expressly provided or where all those affected agree, all time limits specified in this Part must be strictly observed. Where a provision specifies a time before which a hearing must not begin, that period may not be abridged except with the consent of all those affected. All persons with responsibility for taking steps under this Part for which no time limit is specified must take those steps as soon as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the case.

(5) Where provision is made in this Part for an appeal to be brought to a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)**, the appeal will normally be dealt with on the basis of written materials without a hearing. The person determining the appeal must give written reasons for his or her decision. No further appeal lies against that decision.

(6) Any person or body acting under this Part must have regard at all times to the provisions of any relevant code of practice and any relevant guidance issued in the name of the Committee on Methodist Law and Polity appointed under Standing Order **211**. The relevant Connexional Team member must keep a list of codes of practice and guidance falling within this clause.

(7) Any person or body acting under this Part in relation to a complaint or charge raising issues of sexual or racial harassment or abuse, or abuse of a person with a disability, must consider whether it is appropriate to obtain specialist advice in order to deal fairly with the matter. The Secretary of the Conference may direct that the expenses of obtaining such advice shall be reimbursed from the Methodist Church Fund. (This provision is without prejudice to Standing Order **376(6)**.)

(8) A complaint based on the existence of a conviction or police caution which would be a bar to office under Standing Order 010(2)(ii) and a complaint made in performance of the duty imposed by Standing Order 985(3) must not be dealt with by way of resolution, whether informal or formal, or reconciliation.

S.O. 985(3) concerns action to be taken when a person carries out or authorises unapproved listed building works.

(9) If at any stage in the investigation of a complaint or the pursuit of a charge issues emerge which raise safeguarding concerns, whether the concerns are as set out in clauses (7) and (8) above or of a more general nature, and whether or not the concern relates to the complainant or the respondent, then the person or body then dealing with the complaint or charge must immediately refer the matter of concern for consideration by the safeguarding officer (as defined in Standing Order **230(3)(ii)**), who may offer advice or refer the matter to the Safeguarding Committee for its advice and recommendations. The relevant Connexional Team member must be informed of the referral.

(10) The Safeguarding Committee, on a referral to it of any matter under clause (9) above or in the fulfilment of its functions under Standing Order **230**, and without prejudice to those functions, may investigate any such matter as if it were a local complaints officer with all the powers and responsibilities of such an officer but following its own procedures as set out in Standing Orders.

(11) Where clause (9) above applies, the person or body making the referral shall determine, having received the advice of the safeguarding officer or the Safeguarding Committee on the point, as the case may be, whether the investigation of the complaint or the pursuit of the charge can continue while the matter is under consideration or investigation by the safeguarding officer or the committee or whether the investigation or pursuit must cease for the time being. In the latter case, the time limits contained in this Part shall, to the extent necessary, be suspended.

**1103 Special Cases.** (1) If:

- (i) the recipient of a complaint is a district Chair;
- (ii) the complaint is made in writing; and
- (iii) the complainant requests that the complaint should be dealt with under the provisions of Standing Order 040

the complaint must be treated as a complaint under that Standing Order and not under this Part unless clause (2) below applies. If a Chair takes steps under Standing Order 040 on his or her own initiative the provisions of that Standing Order shall similarly apply.

S.O. 040 relates to failure to fulfil obligations where that failure relates to issues of competence rather than discipline.

(2) If the relevant local complaints officer has already referred the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel by the time a request of the kind referred to in clause (1) above is received, this Part applies and no steps shall be taken under Standing Order 040 except after a further referral to a Chair.

(3) If charges or appeals arising out of the same or similar facts or connected with the same subject matter are pending against two or more persons before more than one church court, the courts concerned may, subject to Standing Order 1102(1) and (2) above, sit jointly to hear some or all of the evidence or reports and of the arguments, and may consult together. Each court must reach its own decisions separately on the evidence relevant to the charge or appeal before it.

This clause is permissive only and the bounds set by the words 'subject to Standing Order 1102(1) and (2) above' and by the last sentence will be noted. This procedure cannot properly be used merely for

administrative convenience or even out of pastoral concern if the principles of natural justice embodied in Standing Order 1102(1) and (2) are in consequence discarded or a charge decided otherwise than on all and only the evidence relevant to it and properly received for or against the person charged. It will not normally be found feasible to combine two hearings at different stages (e.g. an initial hearing of one case with an appeal in another) or of different kinds (e.g. an appeal by way of rehearing with an appeal by way of report).

(4) If a complaint is made by or against, or a charge is brought against, a person under the age of 18, the provisions of this Part apply, but he or she has the right at all times to be accompanied by an adult of his or her choosing. Any person or body acting under this Part in relation to such a complaint or charge must have regard at all times to the age of the person concerned in giving effect to the requirements of Standing Order 1102(1) above.

(5) If a complaint is made by or against, or a charge is brought against, a person with a disability, the provisions of this Part apply, but he or she shall have the right at all times to such assistance as may reasonably be required to enable him or her to participate effectively in the relevant processes. Any person or body acting under this Part in relation to such a complaint or charge must have regard at all times to the disability of the person concerned in giving effect to the requirements of Standing Order 1102(1) above.

(6) No action may be taken on a complaint against a person carrying out the responsibilities of a local complaints officer or a member of a complaints team or a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)** or sitting as a member of any church court in respect of the performance of those responsibilities, or against the Secretary of the Conference or a member of the Connexional Team in respect of acts or omissions in the performance of the duties of his or her office or employment relating to complaints or discipline, unless:

- (i) the complaint is made on the ground that the person concerned acted in bad faith or that his or her conduct constituted sexual or racial harassment or abuse, or abuse of a person with a disability; and
- (ii) the Secretary of the Conference or, in the case of a complaint against the Secretary, the President or a person appointed for the purpose by the President, after making such inquiries of the person proposing to make the complaint and the person against whom the complaint is proposed to be made as he or she may think fit, has agreed in writing that the complaint may be made.

(7) If a complaint is made against the relevant Connexional Team member, whether or not the complaint relates to the performance of his or her duties, the Secretary of the Conference must appoint another member of the Connexional Team to perform the functions of the relevant Connexional Team member in the particular case, unless the complaint cannot proceed without the agreement in writing of the Secretary of the Conference in accordance with clause (6) above and that agreement is not given.

**1104 Record-keeping, Confidentiality and Related Matters.** (1) The records specified in heads (iA) to (iv) below shall be deposited with the Secretary of the Conference for safe custody, shall be retained by the Secretary for the period specified in the relevant head or, where any of clauses (1A) to (3B) below applies, for the longer period there provided for, and shall then be destroyed:

- (i) *[deleted]*
- (iA) each record of a decision of a complaints team to summarily dismiss a complaint under Standing Order 1123(7) or to deal with a complaint under an alternative procedure set out in Standing Order 1123(6), for two years;
- (iB) each record of a decision of a complaints team to dismiss a complaint under SO 1124(10), for two years;
- (iC) each record of a decision of a complaints team to follow a course of action under Standing Order 1124(11), for five years;
- (iD) each record of a decision on an appeal under Standing Order 1126(1), for two years;
- (iE) each record of a decision on an appeal under Standing Order 1126(3), for five years;
- (ii) copies of all reports prepared at the conclusion of inquiries held under Standing Order 111(2A), for ten years;
- (iii) all records of hearings before discipline committees, appeal committees and other connexional courts under this Part or Section 03 or Section 04, for ten years;
- (iv) all records relating to the resignation, discontinuance or discipline of ministers and probationers and those in training for the presbyterate or the diaconate, for ten years.

Section 03 deals with issues relating to discontinuance in training and probation and Section 04 deals with issues relating to competence.

(1A) The Secretary of the Conference shall have the authority to retain records for a longer period than that specified in clause (1) if he or she considers that to be in the best interests of the Church. All parties to the record that is to be retained for an extended period under this clause shall, so far as reasonably possible, be informed of the decision.

(2) If any records deposited with the Secretary under clause (1) above contain an allegation of a criminal offence, or relate to a safeguarding concern, that record shall be retained for fifty years.

(2A) Clauses (1) and (2) above shall be applied as closely as possible to all records deposited with the Secretary under previous Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline.

(3) *[revoked]*

(3A) Any record that a minister or probationer resigned, was discontinued or was removed from Full Connexion, or of the reason for any such action, shall be retained until the death of that minister or probationer.

(3B) Any record that a local preacher or member of the Church lost the status of a local preacher or ceased to be a member, or of the reason for any such loss or cessation, shall be retained until the death of that local preacher or member.

(4) Both the complainant and the respondent are entitled upon request to a copy of any record to which clause (1) or (2A) above applies, but must treat any document supplied following such a request as confidential.

(4A) The nature and extent of the record to be retained by the Secretary of the Conference under clause (1) above shall be in accordance with guidance adopted by the [...] **Conference**.

(5) The Secretary of the Conference must permit the relevant Connexional Team member to have access to the records kept pursuant to this Standing Order for the purpose of carrying out a search required to be made under Standing Order 1153(1).

(6) Any person who:

- (i) is or has been a member of any church court, complaints team or team convened from a former district Complaints Panel; or
- (ii) is or has been a local complaints officer; or
- (iii) has acted as a district Complaints Officer or appropriate responsible person under previous Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline

and in that capacity has dealt with a charge or complaint under this Part or such previous provisions must observe at all times the confidentiality of those proceedings. This does not prevent the communication of material in the course of any discipline process whether relating to the particular complaint or to any other complaint involving either the complainant or the respondent.

(7) The complainant and the respondent and any person who has brought a complaint under previous Standing Orders relating to complaints and discipline or had such a complaint made against him or her must observe at all times the confidentiality of those proceedings. The provisions of Standing Order 1157 apply if there is any breach of this obligation.

(8) Subject to clauses (9) and (10) below, the Chair of the District and the Superintendent of the Circuit in which a respondent resides for the purposes of the stations (if a minister or probationer) or is a member or office-holder (if a lay person) must be informed of the decision made at each stage of the complaints and discipline process by the person responsible under this Part for recording the decision, whether or not he or she would otherwise be entitled to be so informed under any provision of this Part.

(9) Clause (8) above does not apply in respect of a decision by a local complaints officer not to refer a complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel if the relevant Chair or (as the case may be) the relevant Superintendent is not aware that a complaint has been made.

(10) *[revoked]*

(11) Any person retaining a record or copy of a record under the provisions of this Part must within 90 days of the date of the document send it to the Secretary of the Conference for safe custody in accordance with clause (1) with all the relevant records relating to the complaint in question. Any person holding records under the provisions of this Part must destroy any duplicate records or other documentation, including correspondence, once the records have been passed to the Secretary of the Conference.

(12) For the purposes of this Standing Order “record” does not include the Journal as defined in clause 36 of the Deed of Union or any document included within Standing Order 125(2).

**1105 Suspension.** (1) When a local complaints officer has referred a complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel under Standing Order 1121(5), the responsible person as defined in clause (2) below has power to suspend the respondent from all or any of his or her functions as a presbyter, deacon, local preacher, member, probationer or student or from the exercise of any or every office in the Church, and to lift or vary any such suspension.

(2) The responsible person means:

- (i) in the case of a complaint which might form the subject matter of a ministerial charge under Standing Order 1130, the Chair or other person to whom that Standing Order requires a copy of any charge to be sent; and
- (ii) in any other case, the Superintendent.

(3) Where criminal charges are pending against a person within the scope of clause (1) above of such a kind that in the event of conviction that person's standing in relation to the Church might require to be reviewed or where a formal investigation is taking place which might lead to the preferring of such charges, but (in either case) no complaint has yet been referred to the connexional Complaints Panel, the person who would be the responsible person if a complaint had been made has powers similar to those given by that clause.

(4) Where a person exercises the powers given by clause (1) or clause (3) above and the Deed of Union and Standing Orders contain no provision for securing the continued performance of some or all of the functions to which the suspension relates, he or she must also make interim arrangements for such continued exercise, in consultation with those affected as far as is reasonably possible in the circumstances. For that purpose the person so acting may appoint another person to exercise any of the relevant functions, other than those expressly given by the Deed of Union to the office-holder concerned, until the suspension is lifted or such interim arrangements otherwise cease to be necessary.

(5) The powers given under this Standing Order are additional and without prejudice to any power of suspension which may arise or have arisen under Standing Order 013. A suspension validly in force under any of these provisions may continue notwithstanding the termination of a suspension imposed under another provision.

The power of suspension under S.O. 013 or 013A arises where a responsible officer (as defined by S.O. 013(2)) believes that an office-holder (for which see S.O. 013(1) and (2)) should be suspended on one of the grounds specified in S.O. 013(3)(a).

(6) The power given by clause (1) above and any suspension in force under it continues until:

- (i) a complaints team has declined to refer the complaint to a connexional Presenting Officer for the preparation of a charge (whether or not the team decides to take any form of alternative action) and, if relevant:

- (a) the time for bringing an appeal under Standing Order 1126(1) has expired and no appeal has been brought; or
- (b) the appeal under that Standing Order has been dismissed; or
- (ii) a competent church court has dismissed the charge, either at first instance or on appeal, and leave to appeal against that dismissal has been refused or the time for appeal has expired without any appeal being brought; or
- (iii) any judgment reached has taken effect.

(7) The power given by clause (3) above and any suspension in force under it ceases if:

- (i) the person concerned is prosecuted and acquitted or is notified that criminal charges will not be preferred or proceeded with; or
- (ii) after the person has been convicted, a decision is taken in accordance with the provisions of this Part not to proceed with any charge.

If the person is convicted but paragraph (ii) does not apply, any suspension then in force continues after conviction as if imposed under clause (1) above and the provisions of that clause and clause (6) above apply accordingly.

(8) (a) A person suspended under the provisions of this Standing Order may at any time while he or she remains suspended appeal in accordance with the provisions of this clause to a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)**, appointed by the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf, who may uphold, lift or vary the suspension.

(b) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought.

(c) The Secretary must give notice of an appeal to the person who imposed the suspension, who must be given an opportunity to respond to the grounds of appeal. The person appealing must then be given an opportunity to reply.

(d) No appeal may be brought within three months after the determination of a previous appeal and the grounds of appeal may not include any grounds relating to the merits of any complaint or of any criminal charges which are pending or which might be preferred and which are the reason for a suspension under clause (3) above.

(9) When a person within the scope of Standing Order 801(1) is suspended under clause (1) or (3) above, the Circuit or other body responsible for provision of the stipend must continue to provide that stipend and pay all expense allowances which are of a continuing nature (except those for expenses which cease during suspension) until:

- (i) the suspension ceases; or
- (ii) the expiration of the quarter during which the initial hearing of any charge occurs; or
- (iii) the expiration of the quarter during which a complaints team decides not to bring a charge

whichever is the earlier. The person suspended is entitled to continue residing in the manse for the same period.

S.O. 801(1) covers circuit ministers, other ministers in the active work and probationers appointed to stations within the control of the church.

(10) When such a person is or may be suspended and a charge has been brought by a complaints team, the discipline committee conducting the initial hearing must direct what payment, if any, by way of stipend or allowances is to be made, and what accommodation, if any, is to be provided, during any period of suspension which may occur after the period covered by clause (9) above. All payments so directed are to be made out of the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)**, and any Circuit or other body making or providing for any payment or providing any accommodation under clause (9) above or this clause may also apply for a discretionary payment from the fund under Standing Order **376(6)**, ***including for reimbursement of the costs of supplying ministry in place of the suspended minister or probationer.***

(11) Whenever the power given under clause (1) above is exercised in relation to a minister or a probationer in a Circuit appointment, the person exercising the power and all those thereafter involved in the complaints and discipline process must at all times have regard to the immediate and likely future effects of the suspension on the affected Local Church or Churches and Circuit while the process continues. The person exercising the power should ensure that appropriate steps are taken to provide interim pastoral care and to monitor the situation and revise the interim arrangements as necessary, in particular if the suspension becomes lengthy.



## Section 111 Appointments

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**1110 Local Complaints Officers.** (1) Unless one of clauses (3) to (8) below applies, and subject to clause (8A), the local complaints officer in relation to any complaint is the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the respondent:

- (i) resides for the purposes of the stations, if he or she is a minister or probationer; or
- (ii) is a member or office-holder, in any other case.

(2) The Superintendent may delegate his or her functions as the local complaints officer to another person who resides for the purposes of the stations or is a member in the same Circuit by an agreement in writing approved by the Circuit Meeting. The Superintendent must inform the relevant Connexional Team member and the Chair of the District of any such delegation.

(3) Where the complaint is against the President, a Chair or a minister or probationer in connexional appointment (whether full-time or part-time), or against a lay connexional officer (including, for the purposes of this Standing Order, a lay member of the Connexional Team) in respect of conduct in the discharge of his or her office, the local complaints officer is the Secretary of the Conference (or the President in the case of a complaint against the Secretary). The Secretary or the President may delegate his or her functions as the local complaints officer to a former President or Vice-President or such other member of the Church as he or she deems appropriate. For the purposes of this clause 'connexional appointment' includes an appointment under Standing Order **312(1) or (2)** if made by or on behalf of the Conference.

(4) Where the complaint is:

- (i) against a Superintendent, or
- (ii) against any other minister or probationer not falling within clause (3) above and is of conduct of a nature sufficiently serious to warrant consideration whether a charge or charges should be brought the local complaints officer is the Chair of the District in which the respondent resides for the purposes of the stations, unless clause (6) applies.

(5) Where the complaint is against a ministerial student, the local complaints officer is the oversight tutor appointed with overall responsibility for the training institution to which the student has been allocated under Standing Order 722.

S.O. 722 deals with pre-ordination training.

(6) Where the complaint is against a minister or probationer who is appointed or permitted to serve or reside outside the home Districts and who either:

- (i) is not a member of a Synod under the Conference or under the Irish or another autonomous Conference nor subject to the discipline of another church; or
- (ii) is complained against in relation to matters alleged to have arisen in the home Districts; or
- (iii) is not, and is not expected to be, the subject of a complaint entertained by a competent church court or other appropriate body outside the home Districts, or in respect of whom such a court or body has referred the case to the Church or has declined to reach a decision as to whether the matters complained of are established or as to the action to be taken or both

the local complaints officer is the Secretary of the Conference.

On the winding up of the Methodist Missionary Society in 2013, the role of local complaints officer in complaints against ministers or probationers covered by this clause, formerly held by the Society's Secretary, was transferred to the Secretary of the Conference.

(7) Where the complaint is against a person whose membership is not in one of the home Districts or who is an office-holder who is not a member of the Methodist Church, the local complaints officer is the Superintendent of the Circuit including the Local Church which he or she most frequently attends or with which he or she has the closest involvement or the person to whom the Superintendent has delegated his or her functions under clause (2) above.

(8) Where the complainant has requested the relevant Connexional Team member to nominate an alternative local complaints officer in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 1120(5) and such a nomination is made, the person so nominated is the local complaints officer in relation to the relevant complaint.

(8A) Unless the local complaints officer has referred the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel, the relevant Connexional Team member may at any time, at the request of the local complaints officer or otherwise in order better to give effect to the principles set out in Standing Order 1100, nominate an alternative local complaints officer to act thereafter in place of the original or any previous alternative local complaints officer, and if such a nomination is made, the person so nominated is thereafter the local complaints officer in relation to the relevant complaint.

(9) The duties and responsibilities of a local complaints officer are those set out in Standing Order 1121.

**1111 District Reconciliation Group and Complaints Support Group.** (1) Each Synod must appoint annually:

- (i) a Reconciliation Group of at least two people with skills appropriate for discharging the functions of the Reconciliation Group under the provisions of this Part; and
- (ii) a Complaints Support Group of at least 10 persons with pastoral skills (including in particular sensitivity to harassment and abuse issues) and with understanding of Methodist procedures. One member of

the Support Group is to be appointed as convener and one as deputy convener. The deputy convener may exercise any power or fulfil any duty conferred on the convener by any Standing Order.

(2) Each Synod may make its appointments under clause (1) above in co-operation with the Synod of another District or other Districts, so that the total number of persons appointed by the Districts in question taken together is not less than the requisite number.

(3) If a casual vacancy occurs in the office of convener or deputy convener of a Complaints Support Group the vacancy is to be filled by the Chair of the District (or, where appointments under clause (1)(ii) above are made in co-operation by more than one District, by any of the Chairs of those Districts) until a Synod is able to make the necessary appointment. The person appointed by the Chair must satisfy the requirements set out in that clause.

(4) The functions of the district Reconciliation Group are:

- (i) to provide a resource within the relevant District offering assistance (including assistance by way of the provision of information) in achieving reconciliation between persons in dispute; and
- (ii) to respond to requests for assistance from that resource made in accordance with these Standing Orders and in such additional circumstances as the relevant District may decide.

The manner in which a district Reconciliation Group is to discharge its functions is to be decided by the relevant District, which may appoint such officers of the group, including a convener or conveners, as it thinks fit.

(5) The duties and responsibilities of the convener and members of the district Complaints Support Group are those set out in Standing Orders 1123 and 760(5).

S.O. 760(5) deals with the procedure where a minister indicates an intention to resign.

(6) The Synod must encourage all persons appointed as members of the Complaints Support Group to participate in training relevant to the appointment.

(7) Conversations between members of a district Complaints Support Group acting in that capacity and a complainant or respondent are confidential, but confidentiality does not extend to admissions or to the disclosure of material evidence.

(8) References in this Part to the 'relevant' district Reconciliation Group or Complaints Support Group are references to that group in the home District in which the respondent resides for the purposes of the stations or is a member or office-holder. If there is no such District, the recipient may ask the relevant Connexional Team member to nominate a home District the groups in which will become the relevant groups for the purposes of this Section. If the recipient has not made such a request and the complaint is passed on to the local complaints officer, he or she must do so. The relevant Connexional Team member must make a nomination if so requested and in doing so must have regard in particular to where the respondent is carrying out the duties of any office in the Church or is living.

**1112 Connexional Complaints Panel and Connexional Advocates.** (1) The Conference must appoint annually a panel of persons, to be known as the connexional

Complaints Panel, from which members may from time to time be chosen to serve on complaints teams. All members of the panel must be members of the Methodist Church.

(2) In appointing the panel, the Conference must have regard to the need for expertise amongst its members in law, accountancy, harassment and disability issues, marriage guidance, medicine and theology. The Conference must also seek to ensure that there is a geographical spread of panel members, for which purpose Districts are encouraged to make nominations to the panel.

(3) The Conference must also appoint an appropriate number of persons, to be known as Connexional Advocates, with the skills necessary to act as connexional Presenting Officers in relation to discipline charges brought under the provisions of this Part and, when not so acting, as the representative for a respondent in relation to a discipline charge at the respondent's request. All Connexional Advocates must be members of the Methodist Church and aged 18 or over.

**1113 Connexional Reconciliation Group.** (1) The Conference must appoint annually a panel of persons, to be known as the connexional Reconciliation Group, from which members may from time to time be chosen to carry out the duties and responsibilities set out in Standing Order 1155. All members of the panel must be members of the Methodist Church.

(2) With the exception of persons falling within Standing Order **290(3)**, no person may be appointed a member of the connexional Reconciliation Group who holds an office or is a member of a group (other than a district Reconciliation Group) or panel appointed under this Section or under Standing Order **290**.

(3) One member of the panel must be appointed as the convener and at least one as a deputy convener of the panel. The deputy convener may exercise any power or fulfil any duty conferred on the convener by any Standing Order.

**1114 Connexional Complaints Officers.** The Conference must further appoint a connexional Complaints Officer and at least one deputy, whose duties and responsibilities are to offer advice and assistance, upon request, to local complaints officers, members of complaints teams and Connexional Advocates in the performance of their duties and responsibilities under this Part.

## Section 112 Complaints Procedure

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**1120 Initiation of Complaints.** (1) The provisions of this Standing Order apply when a complainant makes a complaint to a recipient.

(2) Unless one of clauses (4), (7) or (8) below or Standing Order 1102(8) applies, the recipient (whether or not he or she is also the local complaints officer) is encouraged to try to resolve the complaint informally if possible and for that purpose will usually seek a reply from the respondent. If he or she cannot deal with the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, it must be referred to the local complaints officer if that is a person other than the recipient.

(3) When trying or considering whether to try to resolve the complaint in accordance with clause (2) above, the recipient, if he or she is not the local complaints officer, may consult that officer about what steps to take. In any event he or she may consult the district Reconciliation Group.

(4) If a recipient receives a complaint involving allegations of sexual, homophobic or racial harassment or abuse, or of the harassment or abuse of a person with a disability (in this Part called 'an abuse complaint') or allegations of matters which in the opinion of the recipient amount or might amount to a criminal offence (in this Part called 'a criminal complaint'), he or she must inform the relevant Connexional Team member before taking any other step.

See Book VII Guidance, Part 15 for Homophobia: Definition and Guidance.

(5) Unless clause (6) below applies, in a case falling within clause (4) above, the relevant Connexional Team member must consult the complainant and may then:

- (i) nominate a person other than the person who would otherwise be the local complaints officer to carry out the functions of the local complaints officer in the particular case; or
- (ii) treat the matter as having been referred directly to the connexional Complaints Panel in accordance with Standing Order 1121(5), in which event also the local complaints officer shall cease to perform his or her functions as such in connection with that case.

The relevant Connexional Team member must inform the recipient and the complainant of his or her decision and if he or she does not exercise the power given by paragraph (ii) above, clause (2) above will apply, whether or not an alternative local complaints officer has been nominated. Before exercising his or her power under paragraph (ii), the relevant Connexional Team member must usually seek a reply from the respondent.

- (6) This clause applies in the case of a criminal complaint if:
- (i) the relevant Connexional Team member, after taking any necessary legal advice, shares the view of the recipient that the matters alleged amount or might amount to a criminal offence; and
  - (ii) the matters in question appear not yet to have been reported to the police or, although they have been reported, it is not reasonably possible to seek a reply from the respondent without prejudicing a police inquiry.

In such circumstances the relevant Connexional Team member must treat the complaint as having been referred directly to the connexional Complaints Panel.

(7) (a) If a recipient receives a complaint against a local lay-pastor appointed under Section 56A of Standing Orders, whether that person is employed or serves in a voluntary capacity, and that complaint relates to that person's conduct as a local lay-pastor, all subsequent processes to be followed under this Part 11 shall be dealt with by the persons and bodies having the relevant responsibilities in relation to where the appointment is located irrespective of where the membership of the local lay-pastor is held.

(b) If a recipient receives a complaint against a lay person (including an employed local lay-pastor) employed under a contract of employment (in this Part called 'an employment complaint'), he or she must seek the advice of the relevant district Lay Employment Sub-committee (if the respondent is employed by a District, Circuit or Local Church) or a member of the Connexional Team responsible for employment matters under Standing Order **382(3) and (4)** (in any other case) before taking any other step. The recipient must, with the approval of the relevant Chair or the Secretary of the Conference (if there is no relevant Chair or the Chair is the recipient) seek legal advice if he or she thinks it necessary. The recipient must act in accordance with the advice received. Any costs incurred in obtaining advice are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)**.

(7A) A recipient who receives a complaint concerning the condition of premises must, with the approval of the relevant Chair or the Secretary of the Conference (if there is no relevant Chair or the Chair is the recipient) seek the advice of a surveyor if they think it necessary. The recipient must act in accordance with the advice received. Any costs incurred in obtaining advice are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)**.

(8) If the recipient receives a complaint alleging matters so serious that the interests of the church require that it be formally investigated and he or she is not the local complaints officer, the recipient must pass the complaint to that officer. He or she may consult the local complaints officer on the question whether or not this clause applies.

(9) If the recipient receives a complaint against the relevant local complaints officer, whether or not the complaint relates to the performance of his or her duties as a local complaints officer, the recipient must inform the relevant Connexional Team member before taking any further steps. The relevant Connexional Team member must then nominate another person to carry out the functions of the local complaints officer in the particular case, unless the complaint cannot proceed without the agreement in writing

of the Secretary of the Conference or the President in accordance with Standing Order 1103(6) and that agreement is not given.

(10) No formality is required for resolution under the provisions of this Standing Order and no record of any complaint so resolved is to be kept.

(11) The recipient is under no obligation to keep copies of documents or notes of conversations when acting under the provisions of this Standing Order, but if he or she does so and clause (10) does not apply, the documents and notes should be passed on to the person who will be responsible for dealing with the complaint after the recipient ceases to act as such.

(12) Local complaints officers holding that office in a Circuit are encouraged to take appropriate steps to make ministers, lay employees, members and office-holders within the Circuit aware of the role and responsibilities of a recipient and a local complaints officer.

(13) No action may be taken on a complaint against a recipient for failing to comply with a provision of this Standing Order if the recipient was not aware of the relevant provision and acted reasonably in the circumstances of the case.

(14) Where a local complaints officer becomes aware that a complaint has been made but that the provisions of this Standing Order have not been complied with, he or she must encourage the recipient thereafter to comply with those provisions as far as possible or, at his or her discretion, act thereafter as far as possible as if he or she had been the recipient.

**1121 First Formal Complaint Stage.** (1) The provisions of this Standing Order apply when:

- (i) a recipient who is not a local complaints officer passes a complaint to the relevant local complaints officer; or
- (ii) a recipient who is a local complaints officer decides that the complaint cannot be resolved informally to the satisfaction of the complainant in accordance with Standing Order 1120(2).

(2) When a local complaints officer receives a complaint passed on by a recipient or decides that the complaint cannot be resolved informally, he or she must:

- (i) note in writing the date on which the complaint was received or the decision made;
- (ii) obtain a written statement of the complaint from the complainant if such a statement has not yet been made; and
- (iii) consult the district Reconciliation Group in order to explore the possibility of resolving the complaint by a more formal means (whether or not the group has already been consulted in relation to the complaint), unless clause (11) below applies and the local complaints officer is advised not to do so. If the local complaints officer is not also the recipient, he or she should involve the recipient in the consultation if possible and appropriate.

(3) Where clause (2)(iii) above applies, the local complaints officer must make every reasonable effort to resolve the complaint formally, subject to clauses (9) and (11) below. For this purpose, the local complaints officer must inform the respondent that the complaint has been made, if the respondent is not aware of that fact and supply him or her with the written statement of complaint if he or she does not have it. Formal resolution means that the complainant and the respondent agree to a form of resolution and sign a written record of what is agreed.

(4) The complainant may at any time withdraw the complaint by notifying the local complaints officer in writing that he or she wishes to do so.

(5) If the complaint cannot be resolved formally and is not withdrawn, the local complaints officer may either:

- (i) refer the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel; or
- (ii) decline so to refer the complaint.

If the local complaints officer declines to refer the complaint he or she must give the complainant the information necessary to enable the complainant to do so if he or she wishes. The complainant must make such a referral within 21 days of receiving notice from the local complaints officer.

S.O. 1156 provides that a person will be taken to have received a notice sent by first class post or recorded delivery on the second day after the notice was sent unless he or she can show that it was received later.

(6) A reference to the connexional Complaints Panel is made by notice of intention to refer the complaint given in writing to the relevant Connexional Team member. The person referring the complaint must send the written statement of complaint and any reply by the respondent either with the notice or as soon as possible afterwards and may also send any other documents he or she believes are relevant.

(7) (a) Upon making a decision under clause (5) above, the local complaints officer must write a brief record of the steps taken to seek resolution and, if he or she declines to refer the complaint, of the reasons for that decision.

(b) A copy of the record must be sent to the complainant and to the respondent, unless the respondent is unaware of the complaint. If the local complaints officer declines to refer the complaint he or she should retain a copy of the record and other documents, in accordance with guidance adopted by the Council, for two years from the date of the decision. Thereafter the local complaints officer may retain a record of the outcome only, in accordance with guidance adopted by the Council, until five years after the decision.

(c) If the local complaints officer decides to refer the complaint to the panel then

- (i) the record must be sent to the relevant Connexional Team member for transmission to the relevant complaints team;
- (ii) a copy of the record must be deposited with the Secretary of the Conference, to be retained in accordance with Standing Order 1104(1); and
- (iii) the local complaints officer must within 90 days of the date of referral under Standing Order 1121(5)(i) destroy any record or documentation retained.



(8) If a complaint is formally resolved or withdrawn, the local complaints officer must record in writing the outcome of the complaint and annex the relevant written document and the written statement of complaint to the record. The local complaints officer shall retain the record with relevant documents and statements for two years from the date of resolution or withdrawal. The local complaints officer may after two years retain a record of the outcome only, in accordance with guidance approved by the Council, for a further three years. The record of the outcome may be consulted if a dispute arises as to the resolution or the withdrawal.

(9) Where the complaint is an abuse complaint or a criminal complaint and is not treated as having been referred directly to the connexional Complaints Panel in accordance with Standing Order 1120(5)(ii) or (6), the local complaints officer must inform the relevant Connexional Team member of any steps proposed to be taken to seek formal resolution after consulting the district Reconciliation Group but before taking such steps. The relevant Connexional Team member must then consult the complainant and may treat the complaint as having been referred directly to the panel without those steps being taken.

(10) [*not used*]

(11) Where the complaint is an employment complaint, the local complaints officer must continue to take and to act upon advice when taking steps in relation to the complaint.

(12) Subject to the preceding provisions of this Standing Order and to the principles and general matters set out in Standing Orders 1100 and 1102, the local complaints officer may decide on his or her own procedure for dealing with the complaint. In particular, the local complaints officer may meet either of or both the complainant and the respondent and if he or she thinks fit may be accompanied in doing so by an observer. Any observer is bound by the same principles of confidentiality as is the local complaints officer. It is not part of the responsibility of the local complaints officer to reach a conclusion on the merits of a complaint or on any facts in issue, or to investigate the complaint except to the extent necessary properly to perform his or her duties under this Standing Order.

(13) If a local complaints officer wishes to make a complaint in his or her own right, the officer must inform the relevant Connexional Team member, who must then nominate another person to perform the functions of the local complaints officer in the particular case. That person is also to be treated as the recipient of the complaint.

(14) Where as a result of:

- (i) legal proceedings (criminal, civil, matrimonial or otherwise);
- (ii) a caution given by the police; or
- (iii) a matter of public knowledge the local complaints officer considers that a person's standing in relation to the Church should be reviewed, but no complaint has been made, the local complaints officer must refer the matter to the connexional Complaints Panel. The matter must then be treated as if the local complaints officer had made a complaint against the person concerned and that complaint had been referred to the panel in accordance with clause (5) (i) above.

(15) Where a complaint made or passed to a local complaints officer has subsequently been withdrawn but the local complaints officer considers that, in the light of information including the matters raised in the complaint, the standing of the respondent in relation to the Church should be reviewed, he or she may refer the matter to the connexional Complaints Panel and clause (14) above will apply. Before referring a matter under this clause, the local complaints officer must inform the complainant of his or her intention to do so and invite the complainant to make any objections in writing within a week of being so informed. If the complainant does object, the local complaints officer must take the objection into account and if he or she decides nevertheless to refer the matter, a copy of the objection must be included with the papers sent to the relevant Connexional Team member, together with a statement by the local complaints officer of the reasons for referring the complaint which he or she believed outweighed the complainant's objection.

(16) The local complaints officer must keep copies of documents and notes of conversations while acting in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order. Such documents and notes, together with any documents or notes passed on by the recipient, should be retained with the record of any formal resolution. If no formal resolution is reached, they should be passed with the record to the person who will be responsible for dealing with the complaint after the local complaints officer ceases to act.

(17) The local complaints officer may seek the advice of the connexional Complaints Officer at any time in carrying out his or her responsibilities under this and the preceding Standing Order.

**1122 Reference to the Connexional Complaints Panel.** (1) On receiving a complaint referred under the provisions of this Section, the relevant Connexional Team member must, as soon as reasonably possible:

- (i) except where Standing Order 1102(2)(b)(iii) applies, appoint a complaints team consisting of three members selected from the connexional Complaints Panel to consider the complaint;
- (ii) designate one of the team members as the lead member;
- (iii) provide all the members of the complaints team with the documents so far received in connection with the complaint;
- (iv) inform the complainant and the respondent (unless the respondent is unaware that the complaint has been made) of the identity of the lead member and the other team members.

(2) The person appointed as lead member must, whenever possible, have undergone relevant training in the last two years and must additionally, if possible, have had experience under the present or a previous church complaints and discipline process. The other team members must be selected having regard to their skills in matters relevant to the particular complaint, the need for balance within the complaints team (including in particular any need which may arise in connection with issues of gender, race or disability or status within the Church) and the geographical location of all concerned.

(3) If a complaint is referred to a complaints team but the respondent is not aware that the complaint has been made, the relevant Connexional Team member must inform him or her of that fact as soon as is possible thereafter without prejudicing a police inquiry. The relevant Connexional Team member must then also inform the respondent of the identity of the lead member and the other members of the complaints team and must inform the lead member that the respondent is now aware of the complaint.

**1123 Initial Steps by Complaints Team.** (1) On receiving the documents relating to a complaint, the lead member must:

- (i) inform the convener of the relevant district Complaints Support Group that the complaint has been made and has been referred to a complaints team, stating whether or not the respondent is aware of the complaint;
- (ii) note the date of receipt of the documents and make an initial assessment in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(2) On being informed that a complaint has been referred to a complaints team, the convener of the relevant district Complaints Support Group must offer two members of the group to the complainant as advisers and friends (but not representatives) during and after the complaints and discipline process. The convener must make a similar offer to the respondent unless the respondent is not aware that the complaint has been made. If there is more than one complainant or respondent in relation to the complaint, the offer must be made individually to each person concerned. The offer may be taken up at any time even if it is not initially accepted.

(3) If the respondent was not aware that the complaint had been made when the lead member received the documents, the lead member must notify the convener as soon as he or she is informed by the relevant Connexional Team member that the respondent is now aware of the complaint. The convener must then offer support to the respondent in accordance with clause (2) above.

(4) The lead member must also keep under review at all times while dealing with the complaint whether support should be offered to a Local Church or Churches or to the Circuit or to any other body. If the lead member decides that such support should be offered, he or she must inform the convener of the relevant district Complaints Support Group, who must offer such support (to be given by at least two people) as may seem appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

(5) The initial assessment to be made by the lead member is an assessment of whether or not the complaint:

- (i) ought to be dealt with under an alternative procedure specified in clause (6) below instead of under the complaints and discipline process; or
- (ii) ought to be summarily dismissed on a ground specified in clause (7) below.

No complaint referred to the connexional Complaints Panel by a local complaints officer may be dismissed summarily. In other cases, no complaint may be dismissed summarily without consideration of whether or not any reconciliation between the complainant and the respondent is or might be possible.

- (6) The following are alternative procedures for the purposes of clause (5) above:
- (i) requesting the appointment of a committee under Standing Order **388** or 544;
  - (ii) referring the case to a Chair under Standing Order 040(4);
  - (iii) where the respondent is a student minister or probationer, referring the case to a connexional Review Committee with a request to consider discontinuance under the provisions of Standing Order 030(2A);
  - (iv) requesting the President to inquire into a relevant Circuit;
  - (v) requesting the relevant employer to make use of any applicable disciplinary procedure in a contract of employment of a lay employee;
  - (vi) requesting the complainant to make use of any grievance procedure available to the complainant and relevant to the subject matter of the complaint.

As to (i), S.O. 388 deals with the curtailment before its intended termination of a connexional appointment and S.O. 544 applies to a curtailment of a current period of invitation of a circuit appointment (presbyteral or diaconal).

As to (ii), S.O. 040(4) provides for the Chair to request the appointment of a Consultative Committee to deal with a question of ministerial competence.

As to (iv), S.O. 111 deals with the right of the President to visit a Circuit, inquire into its affairs and take any steps open to the President which are judged beneficial.

- (7) The following are grounds for summary dismissal under clause (5) above:
- (i) that the complaint should not have been treated as a complaint within the definition contained in Standing Order 1101(1)(i) above;
  - (ii) that the matters complained of are so trivial that further steps would be inappropriate;
  - (iii) that the matters complained of occurred so long ago that, considering the nature of the complaint, further steps would be inappropriate;
  - (iv) that the matters complained of have been considered previously and dealt with (whether under this Part or under any other existing or previous procedure) or found to fall under this clause or a previous clause in Standing Orders permitting a complaint to be disposed of in a summary manner;
  - (v) that:
    - (a) there has been a breakdown in a relationship between the respondent and complainant which existed primarily outside the context of the Church and the complainant appears to be making the complaint as a result of hurt or anger connected with that breakdown; and
    - (b) the interests of the Church (taking into account in particular the risk of damage to the Church's mission and witness if no action is taken) do not appear to require further formal investigation of the complaint;
  - (vi) that it cannot reasonably be contended that the reasons for which the Church has established its complaints and discipline process as set out in Standing Order 1100(1) and (2) mean that further formal investigation of the complaint is required (taking into account in particular the risk of damage to the Church's mission and witness if no action is taken).

(8) If the lead member is of the opinion, after making the initial assessment, that the complaint ought to be dealt with under paragraph (i) or (ii) of clause (5) above, he or she must inform the other team members of that opinion and seek their views (whether by post, telephone or electronic communication). If the other members agree, the lead member must prepare a brief record of the complaints team's decision and the reasons for it and send the record to the relevant Connexional Team member on behalf of the Secretary of the Conference for safe custody.

(9) (a) On receiving a record prepared under clause (8) above, the relevant Connexional Team member must send a copy of the record to the complainant and to the respondent, unless the respondent remains unaware of the fact that the complaint has been made.

(b) Where the complaints team has decided that the complaint should be dealt with by an alternative procedure, the relevant Connexional Team member must also give the complainant and the respondent (if he or she is aware of the complaint) appropriate information about the alternative procedure and any steps to be taken by that person. The relevant Connexional Team member must take any other steps required to initiate the alternative procedure.

(c) The relevant Connexional Team member must also inform the complainant in writing of his or her right of appeal and how it may be exercised.

(10) If, after making the initial assessment, the lead member is of the opinion that the complaint should be fully considered or if the other team members do not both agree with the lead member's opinion that the complaint should be dealt with under clause (5) above after the initial assessment, the provisions of Standing Order 1124 apply.

(11) The lead member's initial assessment and, if clause (8) above applies, the decision of the other team members must be made within three weeks of the date on which the lead member receives the documents or as soon as possible thereafter.

(12) In taking the initial steps provided for by this Standing Order, the complaints team must not come to any conclusion on the facts or merits of the complaint except to the extent necessary to reach the decisions required.

(13) The complaints team may seek the advice of the connexional Complaints Officer at any time in carrying out its responsibilities under this and the following Standing Order.

**1124 Full Consideration by Complaints Team.** (1) As soon as possible after it becomes clear that the complaint is to be fully considered, the complaints team must agree what further steps are to be taken to investigate the complaint. They may subsequently agree that additional steps must be taken or that certain steps are no longer required.

(2) (a) The steps to be taken must include at least one separate meeting with both the complainant and the respondent, attended by at least two members of the complaints team, unless it is not reasonably practicable to hold such a meeting. If the respondent remains unaware of the complaint, the process must be halted until he or she can be informed.

(b) The complainant and the respondent have the right to be accompanied by a friend at any meeting with members of the complaints team and to be represented.

(3) The steps to be taken may include a meeting with any other person whom the complaints team believes it relevant to meet. The complaints team may also request any person to provide documents which the team believes it relevant to see.

(3A) The meetings referred to in clauses (2)(a) and (3) above may, if not physically face-to-face, be by any telephonic, video or other means which in the circumstances enables everyone involved to participate orally or, where necessary, in sign language, and the words 'attended', 'accompanied' and 'represented' shall be construed accordingly.

(4) The steps to be taken may also include an investigation of the conduct of a person other than the respondent (including the complainant) if the complaints team believes that such an investigation is relevant.

(5) Notes must be taken of all meetings held by members of the complaints team and may be used as the basis of a statement which the person in question may be invited to sign, with any alterations or amendments which he or she may wish to make. A written statement must be obtained from both the complainant and the respondent, unless either of them refuses to give a statement.

(6) Both the complainant and the respondent must be informed that they might wish to obtain legal advice before signing a statement or producing documents requested by the complaints team. They must each be given a fair opportunity to comment on statements made or documents produced by the other.

(7) When the complaints team is satisfied that it has taken all necessary and proper steps, the members must meet and consider (as far as necessary and subject to the provisions of clause (8) of Standing Order 1102) the following questions in the following order:

- (i) whether or not there is merit in the complaint, could the situation be helped by some form of reconciliation?
- (ii) if not, should the complaint be dismissed on one of the grounds specified in clause (10) below?
- (iii) if not, so that further action is required, which of the courses specified in clause (11) below should be followed?

(8) If the complaints team is of the opinion that a form of reconciliation agreed by the complainant and the respondent would help the situation, the team must consider with them whether a form of reconciliation which the team believes is suitable in all the circumstances can be agreed. A suitable form of reconciliation may, but need not, include any of the following:

- (i) an acceptance by the complainant and the respondent that the other person has honestly interpreted admitted facts differently;
- (ii) an admission of fault by any person;
- (iii) an acknowledgment by the complainant or the respondent of hurt inflicted on or loss suffered by the other;
- (iv) a commitment by the complainant or the respondent not to repeat conduct which has caused hurt or loss;

- (v) a commitment by the complainant or the respondent to take or not to take certain action;
- (vi) an offer of appropriate restitution by the respondent, where possible;
- (vii) an agreement by the complainant and the respondent to meet face to face;
- (viii) an agreement by the complainant and the respondent to participate in a formal act of forgiveness and reconciliation.

(9) If the complainant and the respondent agree to a form of reconciliation but thereafter:

- (i) either of them fails to act in the manner then agreed;
- (ii) either of them becomes aware for the first time of a material fact or material facts which:
  - (a) he or she did not know and could not reasonably be expected to have known before agreeing to the form of reconciliation; and
  - (b) might reasonably have affected his or her decision whether or not to reach agreement; or
- (iii) either of them becomes aware for the first time of a procedural error in the course of the complaints team's consideration of the complaint which:
  - (a) might reasonably have affected the complaints team's decision that the agreed form of reconciliation was suitable; or
  - (b) might reasonably have affected his or her decision whether or not to reach agreement then the person aggrieved by the failure (where paragraph (i) applies) or becoming aware for the first time of the fact or error (where paragraph (ii) or (iii) applies) may apply for reconsideration of the complaint under Standing Order 1126 within three weeks of becoming aware of the relevant matter.

(10) If in the opinion of the complaints team the situation could not be helped by a form of reconciliation or no suitable form of reconciliation is agreed, the complaints team may decide to dismiss the complaint on either of the following grounds:

- (i) that after full consideration of the complaint the complaints team has decided that any of the possible grounds for summary dismissal set out in clause (7) of Standing Order 1123, with any necessary modifications, applies;
- (ii) that there is no reasonable prospect of establishing that the conduct forming the substance of the complaint took place.

(11) If the complaints team decides that the complaint should not be dismissed, the courses open to it are the following:

- (i) to decide to refer the complaint to a Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge so that the matter can be dealt with by a discipline committee; or
- (ii) to decide that one of the alternative procedures specified in clause (6) of Standing Order 1123 should be followed;

or, if neither (i) or (ii) is adopted, one or more of the following:-

- (iii) to make a ruling on any point of dispute between the complainant and the respondent (including a point of dispute relating to the conduct of the complainant) as to:
  - (a) the interpretation of the 1976 Act, the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts or Standing Orders;
  - (b) the usage of the Church; or
  - (c) the responsibilities and obligations generally associated with a particular office within the Church;
- (iv) to issue advice to the complainant or the respondent relating to matters raised by the complaint or emerging from the complaints team's consideration of the complaint (including advice about training, mentoring and supervision);
- (v) to give directions to the complainant or the respondent about how to conduct the relationship between them in the church context (including directions about how responsibilities are to be allocated for the time being or duties discharged).

In deciding whether or not the complaint should be dealt with by a discipline committee, the complaints team must have regard to the definition of a charge contained in Standing Order 1130(3) below.

(12) Any ruling made, directions given or advice issued by the complaints team must be formulated in consultation with the relevant Connexional Team member and the relevant District Chair and Superintendent. The complaints team may also direct that notice is given of the direction, ruling or advice to such persons or bodies and in such terms as the team considers appropriate and helpful.

(13) If the complaints team decides that the complaint should be dealt with by a discipline committee, the team may also, subject to the requirements of clause (14) below, decide that the conduct relating to the subject matter of the complaint of any other person should be considered by a discipline committee and refer that conduct to the same Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge. In such circumstances the complaints team may recommend that the charges should be heard together.

(14) If the complaints team is considering exercising the power given by clause (13) above, it must:

- (i) give the person concerned written notice that that is the case, stating the reasons for which it is considering exercising the power and inviting him or her to make representations in response by a specified date;
- (ii) ensure that the person concerned has the documents and information necessary to enable him or her to understand the team's reasons and has sufficient time to respond in all the circumstances of the case;
- (iii) take into account any response received from the person concerned in deciding whether or not to exercise the power.

(15) When the complaints team has decided how the complaint is to be dealt with, the lead member must prepare a report on the decision making process and of the complaints team's decision and the reasons for it and send the report to the relevant



Connexional Team member on behalf of the Secretary of the Conference for safe custody. The lead member must retain a copy.

(16) (a) On receiving a report prepared under clause (15) above, the relevant Connexional Team member must send a copy of the report to the complainant and the respondent. He or she must also send a copy to the local complaints officer if the complaints team has made a ruling, issued advice or given directions.

(b) Where the complaints team has decided that the complaint should be dealt with by an alternative procedure, the relevant Connexional Team member must also give the complainant and the respondent appropriate information about the alternative procedure and any steps to be taken by that person. The relevant Connexional Team member must also take any other steps required to initiate the alternative procedure.

(c) If the complainant or the respondent has a right of appeal against the complaints team's decision under Standing Order 1126 below, the relevant Connexional Team member must also inform the complainant in writing of that right and how it may be exercised.

(17) The complaints team's full consideration of the complaint must be completed within two months of the date on which the lead member receives the documents or as soon as possible thereafter.

(18) In taking the steps provided by this Standing Order, the complaints team must not come to any conclusion on the facts or merits of the complaint except to the extent necessary to reach the decisions required.

**1125 Possible Criminal Offences.** (1) This Standing Order applies in the case of a criminal complaint as defined in Standing Order 1120(4) which is referred to the connexional Complaints Panel under Standing Order 1120(6) on the ground that the matter has not been reported to the police.

(2) If in the view of the relevant Connexional Team member the criminal offence to which the matters alleged amount or may amount is an offence mentioned in the First Schedule to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 as currently in force or is one which is included in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or Schedule 15 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and (in any such case) the offence if committed is against a person under 18 or a vulnerable adult, the relevant Connexional Team member must report the matter to the police. If the matters alleged relate to a minister or office holder (paid or voluntary) working with children or young people a report of the matter must be made by the relevant Connexional Team member to the Local Authority Designated Officer or, if no such officer or equivalent office or body is appointed, to the local children's services in addition to being reported to the police.

(2A) Clause (2) above shall have effect in relation to persons in any jurisdiction within the home Districts other than England and Wales as if, in any such jurisdiction in which any of the legislative provisions there mentioned does not have effect, there were substituted a reference to the legislation, if any, of similar substance in force in that jurisdiction from time to time.

(3) In any other case, the relevant Connexional Team member may report the matter to the police.

(4) Before reporting a matter to the police under this Standing Order, the relevant Connexional Team member must inform the lead member of the complaints team and the complainant of his or her intention to do so and, if clause (3) above applies, must invite the complainant to make any objections in writing within a week of being so informed. The relevant Connexional Team member must then take any objections received into account in reaching a final decision whether or not to report the matter.

(5) (a) The relevant Connexional Team member must inform the lead member and the complainant of any report made under this Standing Order immediately upon making it.

(b) The relevant Connexional Team member must inform the respondent of any report made under this Standing Order as soon as is reasonably possible without prejudicing any police inquiry.

(6) Where a report is made under this Standing Order but the complaints and discipline process has not been halted under Standing Order 1124(2)(a), the lead member may decide that the complaints team should suspend any proceedings in connection with the complaint to await the result of any such report and any criminal proceedings which may follow, but is not obliged to do so.

(7) If at any time a complaints team considering a complaint becomes aware that matters alleged in the complaint are under investigation by the police or form the subject matter of criminal proceedings, although no report has been made under this Standing Order and the complaints and discipline process has not been halted under Standing Order 1124(2)(a), the team may decide to suspend any proceedings in connection with the complaint to await the outcome of the investigation and any criminal proceedings which may follow or of the criminal proceedings, but is not obliged to do so.

**1126 Appeals and Reconsiderations.** (1) The complainant has a right of appeal against a decision of a complaints team that the complaint should be dismissed, whether made summarily or after full consideration, unless clause (2) below applies.

(2) No appeal may be brought against a decision that a complaint should be dismissed if the complaint was referred to the connexional Complaints Panel by the complainant rather than having been referred by the local complaints officer or being treated under Standing Order 1120(6) as having been referred directly to that panel.

(3) Both the complainant and the respondent have a right of appeal against a decision of a complaints team to make a ruling under Standing Order 1124(11)(iii).

(4) (a) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought. The person appealing must bring the appeal within two weeks after receiving notice of the decision.

(b) The Secretary must give notice of an appeal to the respondent or the complainant (as the case may require), who must then be given an opportunity to respond to the grounds of appeal. The person appealing must then be given an opportunity to reply.

(5) (a) The appeal will be considered by a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)** appointed for the purpose by the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf.

(b) He or she must consider the documentary material before the complaints team (including notes of any meeting between members of the complaints team and any other person) and the team's record of its decision and the reasons for it.

(c) He or she has power either to uphold the decision of the complaints team or to refer the complaint or any part of it back to that team or another team convened from the connexional Complaints Panel for further consideration and must give reasons for his or her decision.

(6) The procedure set out in clauses (4) and (5) above applies equally to an application for reconsideration made under Standing Order 1124(9), except that the person deciding the appeal may not refer back for further consideration part only of a complaint.

(7) The decision of the complaints team when reconsideration has been directed under this Standing Order must be notified to the relevant Connexional Team member in the same manner as an original decision. He or she must then act as if receiving notice of an original decision, subject to clause (8) below.

(8) Only one appeal may be brought in respect of any complaint, except that if on reconsideration a complaints team makes a ruling on a different point in dispute which was not raised on a previous appeal, either the complainant or the respondent may bring a further appeal in respect of the new ruling.

## Section 113 Charges: First Hearing

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**1130 Referrals to a Connexional Presenting Officer.** (1) Upon receiving notice of a decision by a complaints team to refer the matter to a Connexional Advocate for the preparation of a charge, the relevant Connexional Team member must select an Advocate for the purpose who will act as the connexional Presenting Officer in relation to the charge, and must supply him or her with all the documentary material before the complaints team and with the record of the team's decision and its reasons.

(2) The Presenting Officer must prepare such charge or charges as he or she thinks appropriate in the light of the material received.

- (3) For the purposes of this Part, a charge is an allegation that the respondent:
- (i) has committed a serious breach of the discipline of the Church as contained in the 1976 Act, the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts or Standing Orders;
  - (ii) has shown serious disregard of a resolution of the Conference or the usage of the Church as generally understood;
  - (iii) has or might have seriously impaired the mission, witness or integrity of the Church by his or her words, acts or omissions (including words, acts or omissions in situations of confidentiality or pastoral care), having regard to his or her office or standing in relation to the Church.

As to racism, see S.O. 013B. In 2010 the Conference received a report which dealt with the relationship between allegations of racist words, acts or omissions and the Complaints and Discipline process (Agenda pp. 228–239).

As to the acts or omissions, and conduct generally, see the Commitments and Expectations published at Part 6 of Book IV.

(4) A charge must state the nature of the allegation made by reference to the sub-paragraphs of clause (3) above and must summarise the particulars which it is contended will establish the allegation, giving sufficient detail for the respondent to understand the nature of the case he or she has to meet.

- (5) In preparing the charge or charges, the Presenting Officer:
- (i) must act in liaison with the lead member of the relevant complaints team;
  - (ii) must have in mind the importance of ensuring that all conduct necessary to be examined comes before the discipline committee, using alternative charges where appropriate for that purpose; and
  - (iii) may, if he or she thinks fit, meet the complainant and any witnesses whom he or she may wish to call at the hearing.

(6) (a) Once preparation of the charge or charges is complete, the Presenting Officer must send a copy to the relevant Connexional Team member.

(b) On receiving a copy of a charge or charges, the relevant Connexional Team member must notify the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Discipline Committees that a charge or charges is or are to be brought and must send him or her a copy. The relevant Connexional Team member must also send a copy of the charge or charges to the complainant, the respondent and, except as provided in paragraph (c) below, the Chair of the District containing the respondent's Circuit.

(c) The exceptions to paragraph (b) above are:

- (i) where Standing Order 1110(3) applies, the copy must be sent to the Secretary of the Conference (or the President in the case of a charge against the Secretary);
- (ii) where Standing Order 1110(5) applies, the copy must be sent to the relevant oversight tutor;
- (iii) where Standing Order 1110(6) applies, the copy must be sent to the Secretary of the Conference.

On the winding up of the Methodist Missionary Society in 2013, the role of local complaints officer in complaints against ministers or probationers covered by S.O. 1110(6), formerly held by the Society's Secretary, was transferred to the Secretary of the Conference.

(7) The connexional Presenting Officer may seek the advice of the connexional Complaints Officer at any time when carrying out his or her responsibilities under this Part.

(8) In this Standing Order and in the subsequent provisions of this Part, 'respondent' includes a person other than the original respondent whose conduct has been referred to a discipline committee under Standing Order 1124(13).

**1131 Preparation for Hearing by a Connexional Discipline Committee.** (1) Upon receiving notice that a charge is to be brought, the convener of the Panel responsible for connexional Discipline Committees becomes the reporting officer in relation to that charge.

(2) The reporting officer, acting with the Secretary of the Conference as necessary, must as soon as possible choose the members of the connexional discipline committee which is to hear the charge. The composition of the discipline committee must satisfy the requirements of clauses (3) to (7) below.

On the winding up of the Methodist Missionary Society in 2013, responsibilities in Part 11 formerly held by the Society's Secretary were transferred to the Secretary of the Conference.

(3) The discipline committee is to consist of five members. Except where Standing Order 1102(2)(b)(ii) or 1110(6) applies, the members of the committee are to be chosen from the connexional Panel. Where Standing Order 1110(6) applies, three members are to be chosen from that Panel and two are to be chosen by the Secretary of the Conference. Account must be taken of any known disqualifications under Standing Order 1102(2).

On the winding up of the Methodist Missionary Society in 2013, responsibilities in Part 11 formerly held by the Society's Secretary were transferred to the Secretary of the Conference.

The connexional Panel referred to is that appointed under S.O. 290.

(4) The members chosen from the connexional Panel must include:

- (i) a person appointed under Standing Order **290(3)**, who will be the chair of the committee;
- (ii) (if not already appointed under that clause) an ex-President or ex-Vice-President.

The members must be chosen with regard to the need to achieve a fair ethnic and gender balance.

(5) The composition of the committee must reflect the status of the respondent, so that, subject to clause (6) below:

- (i) if the respondent is a presbyter, presbyteral probationer or presbyteral student, the committee must include three presbyters;
- (ii) if the respondent is a deacon, diaconal probationer or diaconal student, the committee must include three deacons;
- (iii) if the respondent is a local preacher, the committee must include three local preachers;
- (iv) if the respondent does not fall within any of the preceding heads, the committee must include three lay members.

(6) If in accordance with any provision of this Part the committee is hearing charges against more than one respondent and the respondents are of different status, the reporting officer must seek and follow the direction of the chair of the committee as to the membership of the Committee.

(7) No person may serve on a discipline committee who resides for the purposes of the stations in, or is a member in, the District in which the person charged resides or is a member or office-holder.

(8) When the members of the discipline committee have been chosen, the reporting officer must inform the Presenting Officer, the complainant and the respondent of the membership of the committee and of their rights under clause (9) below.

(9) (a) If the Presenting Officer, the complainant or the respondent objects under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member of the committee, he or she may, not later than seven days before the hearing to be held pursuant to Standing Order 1132(5) below, make that objection in writing and with reasons to the reporting officer.

(b) The reporting officer must pass any such objection to the chair of the committee. The chair may make such inquiries as he or she thinks fit and must rule on the objection at the hearing.

(c) If the chair does not uphold the objection, the objector may renew the objection before the committee when it first meets if he or she has given the reporting officer notice at least seven days beforehand of his or her intention to do so. A decision by the committee is final and may not be the subject of an appeal.

(d) Subject to paragraph (e) below, if the Presenting Officer, the complainant or the respondent knows of facts amounting to a ground of objection under Standing Order 1102(2) but does not object within the time specified in paragraph (a) above he or she may not afterwards object on that ground.

(e) If, as a result of a previous objection to a member of the committee or the withdrawal of a member of the committee or otherwise, the Presenting Officer, the complainant or the respondent is informed of a proposed member of the committee at such a time that it is not reasonably practicable for any objection to be made in accordance with paragraph (a) above, he or she must make the objection as soon as is reasonably possible and the chair must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(10) Further on receiving notice that a charge is to be brought, the reporting officer must obtain from the Presenting Officer and supply to the respondent:

- (i) a copy of any documents which the Presenting Officer intends to place before the committee;
- (ii) a statement of the facts relevant to the charge which the Presenting Officer believes to have been agreed between the complainant and the respondent during the complaints process so far and of the facts which remain in dispute;
- (iii) any further particulars of the charge which the reporting officer thinks, or the chair of the Committee, exercising the powers given by Standing Order 1132(2) directs, are necessary to enable the respondent to be aware of the substance of the case alleged.

(11) The reporting officer must supply to the complainant such of the papers referred to in clause (10) above as he or she, in consultation with the chair of the committee, from time to time thinks appropriate in all the circumstances of the case.

(12) The reporting officer must ensure that the respondent is aware of the importance of attending the hearing and of the right to be represented in accordance with the provisions of this Part. Where the reporting officer thinks it necessary, he or she must encourage and assist the respondent to make use of that right. If so requested by the respondent, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf must suggest the names of three persons willing to act as representatives in the case, one of whom may be a Connexional Advocate.

(13) (a) After complying with the provisions of this Standing Order, the reporting officer must convene the committee.

(b) The hearing must not begin earlier than 21 days after the reporting officer has supplied the respondent with the papers referred to in clause (10) above. If following the hearing held in accordance with Standing Order 1132(5) or as a result of any direction given by the chair of the committee the Presenting Officer intends to place additional documents before the committee, the hearing must not begin earlier than such date as the chair of the committee decides is reasonable in all the circumstances.

(c) The hearing must begin within three months of the date on which the reporting officer is notified that a charge is to be brought, unless the chair at his or her sole discretion grants an extension. The grounds on which an extension may be granted are:

- (i) that the respondent, the complainant, the Presenting Officer involved in the matter or a key witness:
  - (a) is ill;

- (b) is affected by family bereavement or illness;
- (c) is unavoidably and legitimately absent from Britain;
- (ii) that there will be unavoidable delay in securing vital evidence, including the evidence of the outcome of civil or criminal proceedings; or
- (iii) that for some other good reason the extension is necessary to enable the charge to be dealt with fairly.

**1132 Case Management and Preliminary Hearing.** (1) As soon as the reporting officer has chosen the chair of the committee, he or she must supply the chair with copies of the documents he or she then has to enable the chair to consider the exercise of preliminary case management powers. The reporting officer must pass on copies of all relevant documents subsequently received to the chair as soon as possible.

- (2) The chair's preliminary case management powers are to give directions:
- (i) that obvious gaps in the evidence be filled as far as possible;
  - (ii) about the participation of the complainant in the preliminary hearing to be held as provided in clause (5) below;
  - (iii) about the supply of documents to the complainant;
  - (iv) that charges against more than one respondent (including charges where conduct has been referred by the complaints team under Standing Order 1124(13)) be heard together;
  - (v) that the charges should be heard by a specially constituted committee if the conduct of more than one person is in issue and differently constituted committees would otherwise be required because the respondents are of different status;
  - (vi) that such other steps be taken as appears to the chair suited to ensuring that the committee is able to give full and fair consideration to the charges before it.

(3) The chair may exercise his or her powers of preliminary case management from time to time as he or she thinks fit, but must always observe the principles of natural justice in doing so. The Presenting Officer and the respondent may, through the reporting officer, refer case management matters to the chair for decision.

(4) If the Presenting Officer or the respondent objects to any decision made by the chair in the exercise of preliminary case management powers, he or she shall inform the chair of the objection in writing as soon as possible, giving reasons. If the chair does not alter his or her decision or the objector remains dissatisfied with any revised decision, he or she may renew the objection at the preliminary hearing to be held as provided in clause (5) below.

(5) The reporting officer must convene a preliminary hearing to be conducted by the chair of the committee at a convenient date prior to the hearing in front of the committee. The hearing may take the form of a meeting or a conference call.

(6) Those participating in the preliminary hearing are to be the Presenting Officer and the respondent. The complainant may also participate in the preliminary hearing if and to the extent that the chair permits.



- (7) The purpose of the preliminary hearing is:
- (i) to deal with any objections to the membership of the committee which either party is at that stage in a position to make;
  - (ii) to deal with any objections to the chair's preliminary case management directions;
  - (iii) to determine any outstanding procedural matters; and
  - (iv) generally, to ensure that the matter is ready to be heard by the full committee.

No discussion of the merits of the charge is to take place at the preliminary hearing.

(8) The provisions of Standing Order 1133 as to the rights of the respondent, the Presenting Officer and the complainant to be represented or accompanied by a friend apply to the preliminary hearing except that the respondent is not required to give 21 days' advance notice of his or her intention to be legally represented. Notice of such an intention should be given as soon as possible.

(9) A decision of the chair made at the preliminary hearing may not be challenged at the full hearing unless the chair consents, but for the purposes of the provisions of this Part relating to appeals from a discipline committee it is to be treated as a decision of the full committee made at the time of the hearing.

(10) (a) The chair may permit the Presenting Officer to withdraw a charge at the preliminary hearing if in all the circumstances of the case it appears just to the chair to allow him or her to do so.

(b) The chair must record in writing any decision to permit withdrawal and the reasons for that decision, but no appeal may be brought against the decision.

(c) If a charge is withdrawn, it cannot be reinstated subsequently.

(11) Following the preliminary hearing the chair may give such further directions for the management of the case as may appear to him or her to be necessary to achieve a fair and proper hearing. The provisions of clause (9) above apply to such further directions.

**1133 Hearing by a Connexional Discipline Committee.** (1) The Presenting Officer will be responsible for presenting the charge or charges at the hearing. The lead member of the relevant complaints team may give evidence relating to the investigation of the complaint and may be present throughout the hearing to answer any questions which members of the committee may have about the investigation.

(2) The respondent has the right both to be represented and to be accompanied by a friend. If he or she chooses to be represented by a legally qualified person, he or she must give notice of that decision to the reporting officer not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing. The reporting officer must then immediately give notice of that fact to the Presenting Officer and to the complainant.

(3) If the respondent has chosen to be represented by a legally qualified person the Presenting Officer may, through the reporting officer, ask the chair to agree that he or she should be similarly represented. The chair will only agree to such a request in

exceptional circumstances. If the chair does agree, the reporting officer must then immediately give notice of that fact to the respondent and the complainant. The reasonable costs of legal representation for the Presenting Officer are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)**.

(4) (a) Subject to paragraph (b) below, the complainant has the right to attend the hearing and to be accompanied by a friend. The complainant may be represented if the chair of the committee so permits.

(b) The chair may exclude the complainant from such part of the hearing as he or she thinks fit, if it appears necessary to do so in order to deal fairly with the charge.

(5) If the respondent, after being made aware of the importance of attending the hearing, refuses or fails to attend, the committee must consider the reason for his or her absence and may adjourn for that purpose. The committee may then, if it thinks fit, hear the charge and reach a decision in the absence of the respondent.

(6) If the respondent is represented, he or she may be called by the representative to give evidence and must answer questions from members of the committee, but may not normally otherwise intervene in the proceedings. If witnesses called by the Presenting Officer are to be cross-examined, the representative must do so.

(7) If the complainant is represented, the role of his or her representative is to watch over his or her interests. The representative may not assume responsibility for presenting the charge.

(8) (a) The committee must investigate every charge properly before it and reach a decision both as to whether the charge is established and, if so, as to any action to be taken.

(b) The committee's decisions must be reached solely on the charge brought and on evidence before the committee and available to both the Presenting Officer and the respondent. The evidence must include in all cases the written report prepared by the complaints team under Standing Order 1124(15).

(c) The standard of proof required to establish a charge is the balance of probability.

(9) (a) The chair of the committee at his or her sole discretion may adjourn a hearing from time to time for a period not exceeding one month, unless the grounds of the application for the adjournment are such that, if an adjournment is granted, it should be for a longer period. The date and time when the hearing is to be resumed must always be stated.

(b) More than one adjournment may be granted in any case.

(c) If the committee finds the charge is established, the chair must consider whether to exercise the power of adjournment so that the committee can receive expert evidence to assist it in deciding upon the appropriate action to be taken.

(10) The chair of the court may permit the Presenting Officer to withdraw a charge at the hearing before the committee on the terms and conditions set out in Standing Order 1132(9).

(11) The chair of the court has discretion to allow the Presenting Officer to amend the wording of the charge but must exercise the discretion against the amendment or

adjourn the hearing if to allow the amendment without adjournment would be unfairly prejudicial to the respondent.

(12) If in the course of legal proceedings (whether criminal, civil, matrimonial or otherwise) a court of competent jurisdiction has made a finding of fact in relation to a matter which is in dispute at the hearing, the committee is bound by those findings unless it is satisfied by further evidence that it should reach a different conclusion. Evidence may not be called for that purpose unless:

- (i) the evidence was not before the court which made the formal finding of fact; and
- (ii) the person seeking to call the evidence could not with reasonable diligence have placed it before the court, or had some other reasonable justification for not having done so; and
- (iii) the evidence would have been likely materially to affect the view of the court on a matter of significance to its decision.

(13) The reporting officer must take notes of the oral evidence heard by the committee and of its findings on that evidence and the other material before it. Those notes, together with any documents in evidence before the committee and the committee's decisions and reasons, will form the basis of the report referred to in Standing Order 1142(4) in the case of an appeal.

**1134 Decisions by a Connexional Discipline Committee.** (1) If the committee finds a charge is established, it may, as the case permits, decide that the person charged:

- (i) if a minister, probationer or student:
  - (a) shall cease to be a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion;
  - (b) shall not continue on probation or in training;
  - (c) shall be without appointment at his or her own charges or become a supernumerary;
  - (d) shall not resume or shall lose the status of a local preacher;
  - (e) shall cease to be a member;
  - (f) shall pay such sum of money as may be appropriate to remedy any loss suffered;
- (ii) if a local preacher, shall lose that status;
- (iii) if a local preacher or member, shall or shall also be removed:
  - (a) from any connexional, district, circuit or local office;
  - (b) from membership; or
- (iv) in any of such cases, shall suffer some lesser penalty specified by the committee.

(2) It is open to the committee to decide that the finding that the charge is established is a sufficient penalty in the circumstances of the case.

(3) If the committee decides that the respondent shall cease to be a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, or shall not continue on probation or in training, it must make a declaration as to the status of the respondent as a local preacher and member.

(4) If the committee decides that the respondent shall cease to be a presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion, it must consider whether or not to specify the earliest date at

which he or she may apply for reinstatement and must specify such a date if it thinks fit to do so. The respondent will not thereby acquire a right to, or legitimate expectation of, reinstatement after that date.

For reinstatement, see S.O. 761.

(5) If the committee decides that the respondent shall be without appointment at his or her own charges, the committee must inform the Stationing Advisory Committee of its decision. If the respondent subsequently seeks to return to the active work, he or she must apply to the President. In that case the application must be considered and determined as set out in Standing Order 761(1) to (10) with any necessary changes.

(5A) If the committee decides that the respondent shall pay a sum of money it must decide by what date that money shall be paid, and to whom it shall be paid. It may also decide that the money shall be paid by deduction from the minister's stipend, in which event it must decide how much is to be deducted from the said stipend each month. The Connexional Team with responsibility for payment of the stipend shall pay any sum deducted from the stipend to such person identified by the committee to receive such sum.

(6) The decision of the committee must be communicated immediately to the Presenting Officer, the respondent and the complainant and additionally:

- (i) if the respondent is a minister or probationer, the President of the Conference and his or her Chair and Superintendent (if any);
- (ii) if the respondent is a student, the President and the oversight tutor with overall responsibility for the relevant training institution;
- (iii) if the respondent is a deacon, diaconal probationer or diaconal student, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- (iv) if the respondent is a local preacher, the secretary of the relevant Local Preachers' Meeting and any other body which needs to know for the proper performance of its duties;
- (v) if the respondent is a lay person who is not a local preacher, any body which needs to know for the proper performance of its duties.

(7) (a) The communication of the committee's decision to the Presenting Officer, the respondent and the complainant must be made orally at the end of the hearing if they are present. In any case it must be confirmed or made (as the case requires) in writing by the reporting officer.

(b) The written communication to the Presenting Officer and the respondent must be accompanied by the relevant information about their entitlement to appeal under these Standing Orders.

(c) A body which receives a notice under clause (6) above must take all necessary steps to give effect to the decision.

(8) Without prejudice to Standing Order **376(6)** the committee may at its discretion direct that expenses incurred by the respondent and the complainant in connection with the hearing and notified to the committee before it disperses are to be reimbursed in whole or in part from the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)**.

(9) (a) In every case the committee must determine, before it disperses, whether or not to direct that the outcome be officially announced.

(b) The committee will normally direct an official announcement where the respondent has been suspended or where it is a matter of public knowledge that a charge has been brought.

(c) The committee must determine the terms and manner of any announcement which it directs and the persons to whom it is to be made. Those persons will normally include the members of the Circuit Meeting in the case of a person appointed to or holding office in a Circuit.

(d) The reporting officer is responsible for ensuring that the announcement is duly made when the time for appeal has expired.

(10) In all cases the committee must also deal with the matters specified in Standing Order 1150.

## Section 114 Charges: Appeals and Reports

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**1140 Appeal to a Connexional Appeal Committee.** (1) Either the Presenting Officer or the respondent (called 'the parties' in this Standing Order and in the subsequent provisions of this Section) may appeal against the decision of a connexional Discipline Committee on one of the grounds set out in clause (2) below.

(2) The grounds of appeal for the purposes of this Standing Order are that:

- (i) there was a material procedural irregularity in the initial hearing;
- (ii) the initial committee made a mistake about a relevant point of law or of the constitution or discipline of the Church;
- (iii) the initial committee erred in its conclusion on the question whether such of the words, acts or omissions complained of as it found to have been established:
  - (a) amounted to a serious breach of the discipline of the Church or disregard of a resolution of the Conference or the usage of the Church as generally understood; or
  - (b) seriously impaired or might seriously have impaired the mission, witness or integrity of the Church, having regard to the respondent's office or standing in relation to the Church;
- (iv) the initial committee erred in its interpretation of the doctrines of the Church;
- (v) the penalty imposed was too severe or too lenient, as being either disproportionate to the gravity of the charge as found established, or unjustly inconsistent with that previously imposed in similar cases, or was not available;
- (vi) in the light of events occurring since the decision, or of evidence of which the person appealing could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at that time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the correctness of the decision.

(3) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under clause (2)(vi) above.

(4) (a) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought. The person appealing

must bring the appeal within two weeks after receiving the written communication of the decision.

(b) When the person appealing gives notice or within two weeks afterwards he or she must supply to the Secretary of the Conference a written statement indicating on which of the grounds specified in clause (2) above the appeal is brought and the specific nature of the error, omission or other matter relied on in relation to each ground.

(c) When the Secretary has received the statement, he or she must send the notice and statement to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Appeal Committees.

(d) If a notice or statement is received outside the specified time limit, the Secretary must nevertheless send the documents to the convener, together with a note of the date on which the delayed document was received and any explanation given for the delay. The convener, taking into account all the circumstances, may either deal with the appeal as if the document had been provided in time or refer the matter to the President of the Conference, the Vice-President and the Secretary, who must then decide whether the appeal should be allowed to proceed.

(5) If neither party appeals but the President, having consulted with the Vice-President and the Secretary, considers that the penalty imposed should be reconsidered on the ground set out in clause (2)(v) above, he or she may, within three weeks of receiving the written communication of the initial committee's decision, refer the matter to the convener. The reference must be in writing, setting out the reasons for seeking reconsideration.

(6) If a matter is referred to the convener under clause (5) above, he or she must arrange for it to be dealt with by a connexional Appeal Committee as if an appeal had been made by one of the parties on that ground, but no person is to be regarded as the person appealing.

(7) If the initial committee heard charges against more than one respondent and more than one appeal is brought arising out of the initial committee's decisions, both or all the appeals must be heard by a single Appeal Committee.

**1141 Preparation for Hearing by a Connexional Appeal Committee.** (1) Upon receiving notice of an appeal, or, if the appeal is made late, when it is decided that the appeal may proceed, the convener of the Panel responsible for connexional Appeal Committees becomes the reporting officer in relation to that appeal and must notify the respondent to the appeal and the complainant that an appeal has been brought.

(2) The reporting officer, acting with the Secretary of the Conference as necessary, must as soon as possible choose the members of the connexional Appeal Committee which is to hear the appeal. The composition of the Appeal Committee must satisfy the requirements of Standing Order 1131(3) to (7) with the substitution of references to the appeal for reference to the charge or charges.

On the winding up of the Methodist Missionary Society in 2013, responsibilities in Part 11 formerly held by the Society's Secretary were transferred to the Secretary of the Conference.

(3) When the members of the Appeal Committee have been chosen, the reporting officer must inform the parties of the membership of the committee and of their rights under clause (4) below. The reporting officer must also inform the complainant of the membership of the committee, but the complainant has no right to object to any member of the committee unless additional evidence is being admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi). In that case, clause (4) below applies as if the complainant were a party.

(4) (a) If a party objects under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member of the committee, he or she may, within seven days of being informed that that person will be a member of the committee, make that objection in writing and with reasons to the reporting officer.

(b) The reporting officer must pass any such objection to the chair of the committee. The chair may make such inquiries as he or she thinks fit and must then rule on the objection.

(c) If the chair does not uphold the objection, the objector may renew the objection before the committee when it first meets if he or she has given the reporting officer notice at least seven days beforehand of his or her intention to do so. A decision by the chair upholding an objection is final.

(d) Subject to paragraph (e) below, if a party knows of facts amounting to a ground of objection under Standing Order 1102(2) but does not object within the time specified in paragraph (a) above he or she may not afterwards object on that ground.

(e) If, as a result of a previous objection to a member of the committee or the withdrawal of a member of the committee or otherwise, a party is informed of a proposed member of the committee at such a time that it is not reasonably practicable for any objection to be made in accordance with paragraph (a) above, he or she must make the objection as soon as is reasonably possible and the chair must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(5) Further on receiving notice that an appeal is to be brought, the reporting officer must obtain from the reporting officer of the initial committee and supply to the parties a copy of the report prepared by that reporting officer under Standing Order 1133(13).

(6) (a) After complying with the preceding provisions of this Standing Order, the reporting officer must convene the committee.

(b) The hearing must not begin earlier than 21 days after the reporting officer has supplied the parties with the papers referred to in clause (5) above.

(c) The hearing must begin within two months of the date on which the reporting officer is notified that an appeal is to be brought, unless the chair at his or her sole discretion grants an extension. The grounds on which an extension may be granted are those set out in Standing Order 1131(13)(c).

(7) The reporting officer, if so requested by the chair, must convene a preliminary hearing to be conducted by the chair of the committee at a convenient date prior to the hearing in front of the committee. The hearing may take the form of a meeting or a conference call.



(8) The purpose of any preliminary hearing is:

- (i) to deal with any objections to the membership of the committee (if not otherwise dealt with);
- (ii) to determine any outstanding procedural matters; and
- (iii) generally, to ensure that the matter is ready to be heard by the full committee.

No discussion of the merits of the appeal is to take place at the preliminary hearing.

(9) A decision of the chair made at the preliminary hearing may not be challenged at the full hearing unless the chair consents, but for the purposes of the provisions of this Section relating to appeals from an Appeal Committee it is to be treated as a decision of the full committee made at the time of the hearing.

(10) Whether or not a preliminary hearing is convened, the chair may give such directions to ensure that the matter is ready to be heard by the full committee as he or she may think fit. Clause (8) above applies to such directions as it applies to decisions of the chair made at a preliminary hearing.

(11) (a) The chair may permit the person appealing to withdraw an appeal if in all the circumstances of the case it appears just to the chair to allow him or her to do so.

(b) The chair must record in writing any decision to permit withdrawal and the reasons for that decision, but no appeal may be brought against the decision.

(c) If an appeal is withdrawn, it cannot be reinstated subsequently.

**1142 Hearing by a Connexional Appeal Committee.** (1)(a) The parties have the right to attend and be heard. The respondent at the initial hearing has the right to be represented and accompanied by a friend. The Presenting Officer has the right to be legally represented if he or she was legally represented at the initial hearing or if the respondent at the initial hearing is legally represented and, in exceptional circumstances, the chair agrees to such representation.

(b) The complainant may attend the hearing if he or she so requests, but the chair may exclude the complainant from such part of the hearing as he or she thinks fit, if it appears necessary to do so in order to deal fairly with the appeal. The reporting officer must supply the complainant with such additional papers as he or she, in conjunction with the chair of the committee, from time to time thinks appropriate in all the circumstances of the case.

(2) (a) If the respondent at the initial hearing, not then having been legally represented, chooses to be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, he or she must give notice of that decision to the reporting officer not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing. The reporting officer must then immediately give notice of that fact to the Presenting Officer.

(b) If the chair agrees that the Presenting Officer, not having been legally represented at the initial hearing, may be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, the reporting officer must immediately give notice of that fact to the respondent. Notice must be given not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing unless the

Presenting Officer sought legal representation in response to a notice given under paragraph (a) above.

(c) The reasonable costs of legal representation for the Presenting Officer are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)**.

(3) If neither the person appealing nor his or her representative is present at the hearing of the appeal, the committee must consider the reason for the absence, adjourning for the purpose if necessary, and may dismiss the appeal.

(4) (a) Unless the appeal is dismissed under clause (3) above, the reporting officer of the initial committee must first summarise the evidence and report the findings and decision of that committee.

(b) The person appealing and his or her representative (if any) may then address the committee and call any evidence which may be admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi), followed by the other party and his or her representative (if any). The person appealing or his or her representative may then reply, but in doing so may only answer points made by the other party.

(c) The committee must then proceed to consider its decision in the absence of all other persons except the reporting officer. The chair must remind the committee that:

- (i) it is acting in a judicial capacity;
- (ii) its decision must be taken solely on the material already presented; and
- (iii) an appeal may be allowed only upon one of the grounds set out in Standing Order 1140(2).

(5) If the hearing is upon a reference under Standing Order 1140(5) above, the committee must adapt the procedure set out in clause (4) above as appropriate. The convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Discipline Committees, if not the reporting officer of the initial committee, must attend in addition to that reporting officer, in order to provide information relevant to the grounds upon which the written reference is made.

(6) (a) The chair of the committee at his or her sole discretion may adjourn a hearing from time to time for a period not exceeding one month, unless the grounds of the application for the adjournment are such that, if an adjournment is granted, it should be for a longer period. The date and time when the hearing is to be resumed must always be stated.

(b) More than one adjournment may be granted in any case.

(c) If the committee allows an appeal against a decision that the charge is not established, the chair must consider whether to exercise the power of adjournment so that the committee can receive expert evidence to assist it in deciding upon the appropriate action to be taken.

(7) The reporting officer must take notes of any oral evidence heard by the committee which is admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi) and of its findings on that evidence and the other material before it. Those notes, together with any documents in evidence before the committee and the committee's decisions and reasons, will form the basis of the report referred to in Standing Order 1145(11)(a) in the case of a further appeal.

**1143 Decisions by a Connexional Appeal Committee.** (1) The committee may decide to dismiss the appeal or to uphold it wholly or in part.

(2) If the committee decides to uphold the appeal, it may either substitute its own decision as to:

- (i) whether or not the charge is found to be established;
- (ii) the penalty imposed

or both, or, if the committee thinks it more appropriate, refer the matter back to a newly constituted Discipline Committee for a rehearing.

(3) The provisions of Standing Order 1134(3) to (9) apply to decisions under this Standing Order as they apply to decisions under that Standing Order.

(4) If the committee refers the matter back for a rehearing, the reporting officer must also communicate the decision to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Discipline Committees, who must then arrange for the rehearing.

(5) When a rehearing is held under clause (4) above, the provisions of Standing Orders 1131 to 1134 apply and the Presenting Officer will continue to be responsible for presenting the charge. If he or she is no longer available, the relevant Connexional Team member must nominate another Presenting Officer. The decision of the committee hearing the case must be treated as an initial decision for the purposes of an appeal under Standing Order 1140.

**1144 Further Appeal to the Conference.** (1) Except as provided in clauses (4) and (5) below, either the Presenting Officer or the respondent may appeal against the decision of a connexional Appeal Committee in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(1A) An appeal under clause (1) above may be made on any of the grounds set out in Standing Order 1140(2), but so that references to the initial hearing are to be understood as including additionally or alternatively the appeal hearing.

(2) Before bringing an appeal, the Presenting Officer or the respondent, as the case may be, must obtain permission from the committee to appeal against its decision. The committee may only give permission if one of the conditions set out in clause (3) below is satisfied.

(3) The conditions on which permission to appeal may be given are that:

- (i) the committee was evenly divided or reached its decision by a margin of one vote;
- (ii) the interpretation of the Church's doctrine is in dispute;
- (iii) the interpretation of Standing Orders or resolutions of the Conference is in dispute;
- (iv) the committee in its discretion considers that there is some other substantial matter to be resolved.

(4) If the decision of the committee was made after the matter was referred under Standing Order 1140(5), there is no appeal.

(5) If the committee decided to refer the matter back for a rehearing, there is no appeal.

(6) The appeal will be by way of report and there will be no rehearing or further evidence, except evidence admitted under Standing Order 1140(2)(vi).

(7) Unless clause (8) applies, the party wishing to appeal must apply for the permission of the committee before it disperses after the hearing. The committee must state its reasons for granting or refusing the application by reference to the conditions set out in clause (3) above.

(8) (a) This clause applies if at the hearing a party informs the committee that he or she wishes to take time to consider whether to bring an appeal.

(b) The relevant party may then make a written application for permission to appeal to the chair of the committee within seven days of receipt of written communication of the decision, setting out in the application the matters relied on to support it.

(c) The chair of the committee must make a written decision on the application within seven days from receiving it, stating his or her reasons for granting or refusing the application by reference to the conditions set out in clause (3) above. The chair must also notify the decision to the relevant party and the reporting officer of the committee, who must in turn notify the other party.

(9) (a) An appeal must be brought by notice in writing to the Secretary of the Conference stating the grounds on which the appeal is brought. The person appealing must bring the appeal within two weeks after receiving notice of the decision, except that if he or she is appealing after permission has been granted in accordance with clause (8) above, the time for bringing the appeal is extended to seven days after he or she receives notice of the grant, if that would be a longer period.

(b) When the person appealing gives notice he or she must supply to the Secretary of the Conference a written statement indicating on which of the grounds specified in Standing Order 1140(2) the appeal is brought and the specific nature of the error, omission or other matter relied on in relation to each ground.

(c) If a notice or statement is received outside the specified time limit, the Secretary must consult the President and Vice-President of the Conference and the convener of the Appeal Committee which made the decision, and must then decide whether the appeal should be allowed to proceed.

**1145 Proceedings on a Further Appeal.** (1) (a) If the grounds of appeal include the ground specified in Standing Order 1140(2)(iv) or permission is given because the condition specified in Standing Order 1144(3)(ii) is satisfied and the case is not a case against a deacon, diaconal probationer or diaconal student, the appeal must be heard by:

- (i) the Presbyteral Session in cases against presbyters, presbyteral probationers and presbyteral students;
- (ii) *[deleted]*
- (iii) the Representative Session in other cases.

(b) If the decision appealed against is made later than three weeks before the opening of the relevant session of the next or current Conference, the appeal must be dealt with by the following Conference.

(c) At a hearing by the Presbyteral Session, the President must preside unless he or she is disqualified from sitting under Standing Order 1102(2). In that case, the former President who has most recently held the office and who is present and willing to act and is not so disqualified must act as President. At a hearing by the Representative Session either the President or the Vice-President must preside, unless both are so disqualified, in which case the ex-President or ex-Vice-President who has most recently held office and who is present and willing to act and is not so disqualified must act as President. When two persons are equally qualified and entitled or obliged to preside, they must agree between themselves who is to preside and in the absence of agreement the question must be determined by the Secretary.

(d) Any suspension imposed under Standing Order 1105 and any directions given under clause (10) of that Standing Order will continue, subject to any directions made by the President by virtue of the powers conferred by clause 29(b) of the Deed of Union and Standing Order 774(9), until the appeal has been heard.

Cl. 29(b) of the Deed of Union and S.O. 774(9) deal with the power of the President to remove from, appoint to or change the station of a minister or deacon.

(2) (a) All other appeals must be heard by a committee of 15 persons (in this Standing Order referred to as 'the committee') appointed by the President or the Vice-President in accordance with sub-clause (b) below.

(b) The committee shall comprise:

- (i) in cases against presbyters, presbyteral probationers and presbyteral students, 15 persons appointed by the President from among the members of the Presbyteral Session of the preceding Conference, and, if it proves impractical to find 15 such persons qualified and able to hear the appeal, from among the members of the Representative Session;
- (ii) in cases against deacons, diaconal probationers and diaconal students, the Conference Diaconal Committee constituted in accordance with clause 25A(b) of the Deed of Union, supplemented, if the number of members of this body qualified and able to hear the appeal is fewer than 15, by persons appointed by the President or the Vice-President from among the members of the Representative Session of the preceding Conference;
- (iii) in other cases, 15 persons appointed by the President or the Vice-President from among the members of the Representative Session of the preceding Conference.

(c) The persons appointed must, in the judgment of the President or Vice-President, as the case may be, represent the diversity of the Conference and will include such of the officers specified in Standing Order 101 as he or she determines.

(d) The committee must include as the person presiding the President or a former President or (in the case of an appeal to which sub-clause (b)(ii) or (iii) above applies)

the Vice-President or a former Vice-President. Any former President or Vice-President presiding must if possible be a member of the preceding Conference, who is to preside.

(e) The committee will meet at a time determined by the President or Vice-President making the appointment.

(f) The provisions of Standing Order 1102(2) apply and the Secretary of the Conference must draw it to the attention of the members of the committee.

S.O. 1102(2) contains a list of reasons why a person may not sit as a member of a particular court.

(g) The findings of the committee have the effect of findings of the Conference and must be recorded in the Journal.

(3) When the members of a committee under clause (2) above have been chosen or otherwise identified, the Secretary must inform the parties of the membership of the committee and of their rights under clause (4) below.

(4) (a) If a party objects under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member of the committee, he or she may, within seven days of being informed that that person will be a member of the committee, make that objection in writing and with reasons to the President.

(b) The President or Vice-President, as the case may require, may make such inquiries as he or she thinks fit and must then rule on the objection.

(c) If the President or Vice-President does not uphold the objection, the objector may renew the objection before the committee when it first meets if he or she has given the President notice at least seven days beforehand of his or her intention to do so (but subject to paragraph (cA) below).

(cA) If, as a result of a previous objection to a member of the committee or the withdrawal of a member of the committee or otherwise, a party is informed of a proposed member of the committee at such a time that it is not reasonably practicable for any objection to be made in accordance with paragraph (a) above or for its renewal to be notified in accordance with paragraph (c) above, he or she must make the objection or notify the President as soon as is reasonably possible and the President or the Vice-President, as the case may require, must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(d) A decision by the President or Vice-President upholding an objection is final. He or she must then appoint a substitute, qualified in accordance with clause (2)(b) above, and inform the parties of the identity of the new member.

(e) If a party knows of facts amounting to a ground of objection under Standing Order 1102(2) but does not object within the time specified in paragraph (a) above he or she may not afterwards object on that ground.

(5) *[revoked]*

(6) The Secretary is responsible for providing the parties (so far as necessary) and all those hearing the appeal with the documents which were before the connexional Appeal Committee and any documents produced in connection with the appeal.

(6A) (a) The Secretary, if so requested by the person who is to preside at the full hearing in accordance with sub-clauses (1)(c) or (2)(d) above, must convene a

preliminary hearing to be conducted by that person, with the assistance of such person or persons as the person presiding may require as advisers, at a convenient date prior to the hearing of the appeal. The hearing may take the form of a meeting or a conference call.

(b) The purpose of any preliminary hearing is to deal with such matters as the President may think fit (which may include any objections to the membership of the committee, if the appeal is to be heard by a committee) and generally to ensure that the appeal is ready to be heard.

(c) A decision of the President at the preliminary hearing may be challenged at the hearing of the appeal provided that the party making the challenge has given the Secretary at least two days' prior notice in writing of his or her intention to challenge the decision.

(d) No discussion of the merits of the appeal is to take place at the preliminary hearing.

(7) The appeal must be heard in closed session if it is being heard by the full Conference. Whether it is heard by the full Conference or by a committee, no one may be present except:

- (i) members of the Conference entitled to vote on the business under consideration and not disqualified under Standing Order 1102(2) or (as the case requires) members of the committee;
- (ii) in accordance with clause (8) below, the parties, their representatives and any accompanying friend;
- (iii) the reporting officer of the relevant Appeal Committee;
- (iv) any persons whom the Conference or committee may require to be present as advisers; and
- (v) the Secretary, who is entitled to be present throughout in order to advise upon matters of procedure and practice, even if he or she has a previous involvement with the case which would preclude him or her from speaking on the substance of the case or voting on the appeal.

(8) The parties have the right to attend and be heard. The respondent at the initial hearing has the right to be represented and accompanied by a friend. The Presenting Officer has the right to be legally represented if he or she was legally represented at the appeal to the connexional Appeal Committee or if the respondent at the initial hearing is legally represented and, in exceptional circumstances, the person presiding agrees to such representation.

(9) (a) If the respondent at the initial hearing, not previously having been legally represented, chooses to be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, he or she must give notice of that decision to the Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing. The Secretary must then immediately give notice of that fact to the Presenting Officer.

(b) If the person presiding agrees that the Presenting Officer, not having been legally represented at the initial hearing, may be represented by a legally qualified person on the appeal, the reporting officer must immediately give notice of that fact to the

respondent. Notice must be given not less than 21 days before the date of the hearing unless the Presenting Officer sought legal representation in response to a notice given under paragraph (a) above.

(c) The reasonable costs of legal representation for the Presenting Officer are to be borne by the Methodist Church Fund under Standing Order **376(5)**.

(10) If neither the person appealing nor his or her representative is present at the hearing of the appeal, the Conference or committee must consider the reason for the absence, adjourning for the purpose if necessary, and may dismiss the appeal.

(11) (a) Unless the appeal is dismissed under clause (10) above, the reporting officer of the Appeal Committee must first summarise the evidence and report the findings and decision of that committee.

(b) The person appealing and his or her representative (if any) may then address the Conference or committee, followed by the other party and his or her representative (if any). The person appealing or his representative may then reply, but in doing so may only answer points made by the other party.

(c) The Conference or committee must then proceed to consider its decision. The person presiding must remind the Conference or committee that:

- (i) it is acting in a judicial capacity;
- (ii) its decision must be taken solely on the material already presented; and
- (iii) an appeal may be allowed only upon one of the grounds set out in Standing Order 1140(2).

If the appeal is being heard by the full Conference, he or she must also remind the members of the requirements of Standing Order 1102(2).

(12) The Conference or committee may decide to dismiss the appeal or to uphold it wholly or in part.

(13) If the Conference or committee decides to uphold the appeal, it may substitute its own decision either as to:

- (i) whether or not the charge is found to be established; or
- (ii) the penalty imposed

or both.

(14) The provisions of Standing Order 1134(3) to (9) apply to decisions under this Standing Order as they apply to decisions under that Standing Order, with the substitution of references to the Conference for references to the committee where required.

(15) Unless the Conference or committee exercises its power of reconsideration under Standing Order 1151(4) or the case is later reopened under Standing Order 1146, its decision is final. This does not prevent the exercise of powers under Standing Orders 761 and 053(1).

S.O. 761 deals with ministerial reinstatement, both to presbyteral or diaconal status and to local preacher status. S.O. 053(1) deals with re-admission to membership after discipline.

(16) (a) Subject to paragraph (b) below, the person presiding may grant an adjournment of the hearing in exceptional circumstances if the interests of justice



so require. Any such adjournment must be for such period as is necessary in all the circumstances of the case.

(b) There may be no adjournment of any issue raised by the appeal which involves the interpretation of the Church's doctrine, except an adjournment from the close of business or (as the case requires) proceedings on one day to the commencement of business or proceedings on the next.

(c) Where the appeal is being heard by the full Conference, the person presiding may direct that any issue not involving the interpretation of the Church's doctrine is to be determined by a committee appointed under clause (2) above.

(17) (a) The person presiding may permit the person appealing to withdraw an appeal if in all the circumstances of the case it appears just to the person presiding to allow him or her to do so.

(b) The person presiding must record in writing any decision to permit withdrawal and the reasons for that decision.

(c) If an appeal is withdrawn, it cannot be reinstated subsequently.

**1146 Applications for Reconsideration.** (1) If a charge is found to be established and the respondent did not appeal in time, or did appeal but the appeal (whether under Standing Order 1143 or 1144) was wholly or partly dismissed, he or she may subsequently apply to the convener of the connexional Panel responsible for Appeal Committees for the case to be reopened. The application must be made in writing and must set out the reasons for the application, having regard to clause (2) below.

The absence of a specified time limit here is deliberate.

(2) An application under clause (1) above may be granted only on the ground that, in the light of events occurring since the case was disposed of, or of evidence of which the applicant could not reasonably be expected to have been aware at that time, substantial doubt has been cast upon the decision disposing of the case.

(3) Upon receiving such an application, the convener must arrange for three members of the panel not previously involved with the case to hear and consider the application. The group may determine its own procedure.

(4) If the group decides that the applicant has established the ground set out in clause (2) above, it must so inform the convener. The convener must then arrange through the relevant convener a hearing by an appeal committee constituted for the purpose. The provisions of Standing Order 1142 apply to any such hearing.

(5) There is no appeal against the decision of the group.

**1147 Reports.** (1) (a) A decision by a connexional discipline committee or connexional appeal committee takes effect as soon as the time for appeal or further appeal has expired without the giving of a notice of appeal.

(b) A decision by the Conference or a committee of the Conference hearing an appeal under this Section takes effect immediately.

(c) If a late appeal is allowed to proceed, such steps as may be practicable must be taken to undo any effect given to the decision.

(2) All decisions referred to in clause (1) above must be reported:

- (i) in the case of presbyters, presbyteral probationers and presbyteral students, to the Presbyteral and Representative Sessions;
- (ii) in the case of deacons, diaconal probationers and diaconal students, to the Conference Diaconal Committee and the Representative Session;
- (iii) in other cases, to the Representative Session,

except that a decision made by the full Conference need not be reported to the Session making the decision.

(3) Any report made under clause (2) above or under clause 23(e) or 25A(f) of the Deed of Union in the case of the Representative Session must be made in closed session. A report to the Representative Session under clause (2) above must be confined to:

- (i) the number of charges and appeals heard and determined during the year, the numbers of charges ultimately dismissed and found established, in whole or in part, and the nature of the orders made in the case of charges being established;
- (ii) the names of persons who have ceased to be presbyters, deacons, probationers or students, or who have become supernumeraries, as the result of such orders; and
- (iii) the substance of any interpretation of or ruling as to doctrine involved in the determination of a doctrinal charge, whether dismissed or found established.

The Conference of 2007 resolved for the purpose of clarification that if a doctrinal matter arises in the course of proceedings under the Complaints and Discipline Standing Orders the Faith and Order Committee shall be consulted as appropriate but any decision in those proceedings themselves shall remain a matter for those authorised to take it under these Standing Orders.

(4) In addition to any reports under clause (2) above, a general report must be made to the Conference in both sessions and to the Conference Diaconal Committee (as constituted by clause 25A of the Deed of Union) by a convener of the connexional Panel at least once every three years. The general report must deal with any questions of principle raised in the cases dealt with, but without reference to any personal details. It will be open to either session and to that committee to debate those questions.

(5) Nothing said or resolved in any debate on a report under clause (2) or clause (4) above may be used as grounds, under Standing Order 1146 or otherwise, on which further steps may be taken under this Part by or against a person with regard to a case which has already been disposed of in the ordinary course.

## Section 115 Other Matters

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**1150 Decisions, Supervision and Pastoral Care.** (1) In this Standing Order references to ‘the committee’ include references to the full Conference where required in respect of an appeal under Standing Order 1144 and references to ‘the reporting officer’ or ‘the relevant reporting officer’ are to be read as references to the Secretary of the Conference in respect of such an appeal.

(2) If the committee finds that a charge brought under this Part is established and directs any course of action to be taken as a result, the committee must also name a person or persons who is or are to be responsible (in the absence of any appeal) for ensuring that the directions are followed and for reporting on that within a specified time to the relevant reporting officer.

(3) If the reporting officer, on receiving a report under clause (2) above, is not satisfied that a direction is being properly complied with, he or she must reconvene the committee, or as many members of it as are still available, for the purpose of reconsidering the question of penalty.

(3A) (a) If a committee so reconvened would have fewer than three members, the reporting officer must appoint additional members to make the number of members up to five in such a manner that the composition of the committee complies with Standing Order 1131(4) and (5).

(b) If a committee so reconvened would have at least three members but the original chair is not available, the reporting officer must appoint another person appointed under Standing Order **290(3)** to chair the committee.

(c) If additional members are appointed under this clause to a reconvened committee, the reporting officer must inform the respondent of the new members and the respondent has the right to object under Standing Order 1102(2) to any member by giving notice of objection to the reporting officer in writing and with reasons. The chair, whether original or newly appointed, must deal with the objection fairly having regard to all the circumstances.

(4) If the committee is reconvened under clause (3) above:

- (i) the respondent, any other person to whom the direction was given and the person responsible for its being followed have the right to address the committee. The relevant Presenting Officer has the right to attend and may address the committee at the committee's discretion;
- (ii) the committee may:
  - (a) give directions for the purpose of ensuring fulfilment of its original decision; or
  - (b) substitute for its original decision as to penalty any other decision which it could originally have reached.

(5) If the committee substitutes a new decision under clause (4)(i)(b) above, it may do so either unconditionally or conditionally upon non-compliance with its original decision by a specified date or time.

(6) The decision of the committee made after being reconvened under clause (3) must be communicated in the same way, as far as possible, as the original decision.

(7) A new decision given under clause 4(i)(b) above is subject to appeal as if it had been the original decision. The time for appealing runs from the date of written communication of the committee's decision.

(8) In a case in which the respondent is a minister or probationer and the charge is found to be established either wholly or in part, the committee must give appropriate directions for ensuring that on each occasion when the respondent takes up a new appointment the terms of the committee's decision are communicated to any person then becoming his or her Chair and Superintendent.

(9) It is the responsibility of:

- (i) the Secretary of the Conference, in the case of a minister, probationer or ministerial student; or
- (ii) the Superintendent of the Circuit, in the case of a local preacher or member to ensure, whenever discipline charges are being dealt with, that the respondent and, where relevant, the complainant, and those connected with them, are entrusted to appropriate local pastoral care both during the process and at its conclusion.

(10) Clause (9) above does not affect the responsibilities of the district Complaints Support Group under this Section and in carrying out his or her responsibilities under that clause the Secretary or Superintendent, as the case may be, must take account of the support given by that group.

**1151 Ministerial Complaints and Charges: Special Cases.** (1) If it is proposed that a charge be brought against the President, all functions under this Part which would otherwise be performed by the President must be performed by the Vice-President or if he or she is disqualified from acting or unwilling to act by the former President who most recently held office as such and is able and willing to act.

(2) If it is proposed that a charge be brought against a Chair all functions under this Part which would otherwise be performed by the Chair must be performed by the President.

(3) The provisions of this Part are modified as set out in clauses (4) to (7) below where the respondent is for the time being:

- (i) recognised and regarded as a presbyter of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion by virtue of clause 43(b), 44(b) or 45(a) of the Deed of Union; or
- (ii) recognised and regarded as a deacon of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion by virtue of clause 45A of the Deed of Union.

(4) Complaints and charges may be investigated and heard only if they relate to matters alleged to have arisen in the home Districts or, subject to clause (5) below, an overseas District and, in the case of ministers of the Irish Conference, only if the minister concerned is appointed to a station in one of the home Districts or an overseas District. All other cases must be referred to the appropriate authority of the person's own conference or church.

(5) If the complaint or charge relates to matters all or most of which are alleged to have arisen in an overseas District, it may be investigated and heard only if:

- (i) the circumstances set out in Standing Order 1110(6)(iii) exist;
- (ii) the respondent is expected to be present in the home Districts for the greater part of the period of six months beginning with the date on which the complaint is made; and
- (iii) the Secretary of the Conference is satisfied that the complaint can fairly be investigated in the home Districts.

On the winding up of the Methodist Missionary Society in 2013, responsibilities in Part 11 formerly held by the Society's Secretary were transferred to the Secretary of the Conference.

See also S.O. 322(7).

(6) If a committee or the Conference finds a charge to be established, it may:

- (i) administer an admonishment;
- (ii) recommend a change of station, if the respondent is available for stationing elsewhere;
- (iii) determine that the respondent be removed from the stations and so cease to be recognised and regarded as a presbyter or (as the case may be) a deacon of the Methodist Church;
- (iv) in the case of a respondent serving on the stations by virtue of an arrangement with a conference or church overseas, recommend to the appropriate authority of the conference or church that the person be recalled;
- (v) make recommendations to the respondent's own conference or church concerning further action which it judges should be taken.

(7) When the Secretary of the Conference or, as the case may be, the President receives a report of a decision of a complaints team or of a committee or the Conference made under this Part, he or she must send a report of the case to the appropriate authority of the respondent's own conference or church, including any recommendations for further action which the complaints team, committee or the Conference may have made.

(8) The provisions of clause (9) below apply to cases concerning ministers, probationers and ministerial students.

(9) (a) If at any time the respondent gives notice of wishing to resign from Full Connexion or to withdraw from probation or training under Standing Order 760, the proceedings under this Part must be adjourned until a decision is made by the person or body with authority to do so under that Standing Order, unless that person or body or the respondent requires that the complaint or charge be disposed of first under this Part.

(b) If the resignation or withdrawal is accepted, no further steps may be taken under this Part by any person in relation to the matters forming the basis of the complaint or charge.

(c) If the resignation or withdrawal is not accepted, the proceedings under this Part continue. The person or body making that decision must supply to the complaints team (if a complaint has been referred to the connexional Complaints Panel but no charge has been brought) or relevant committee or the Conference (if a charge has been brought) a formal statement of the reasons together with any documentary evidence upon which the decision was based. The person responsible at the relevant stage under this Part for supplying documents must ensure that copies are provided to those entitled to receive documents.

**1152 Complaints and Charges against Local Preachers, Members and Office-Holders: Special Cases.** (1) Where a complaint is referred to the connexional Complaints Panel:

- (i) relating to matters alleged to have arisen outside the home Districts; and
- (ii) made against a local preacher or member appointed to serve overseas in accordance with arrangements for overseas appointments as regulated by the [...] **Connexional** Council whose membership has remained in or been transferred back to a Circuit in a home District

the complaints team must consult the Secretary of the Conference in performing its functions under this Part.

On the winding up of the Methodist Missionary Society in 2013, responsibilities in Part 11 formerly held by the Society's Secretary were transferred to the Secretary of the Conference.

(2) If a complaint to which clause (1) applies proceeds to a charge, the Secretary must ensure that the respondent is able to be present for the hearing of the charge and any subsequent appeal.

(3) If, when a charge is brought against a local preacher or member, there are grounds for believing that a complaint has been or may be made about a minister, or ministerial probationer or student arising out of the same or similar facts, the reporting officer must consult the relevant Connexional Team member and, where applicable, the complaints team dealing with that complaint.

(4) After consultation in accordance with clause (3) above, the reporting officer may decide to delay the hearing of the charge:

- (i) for the purpose of enabling that charge to be heard together with any charge arising out of that other complaint; or
- (ii) pending the outcome of any consideration of the material facts or complaint by a complaints team or the hearing of any charge arising out of that other complaint.

(5) If the reporting officer exercises the power given by clause (4) above, there is no appeal against the decision and any resulting delay will not be a ground for any complaint or appeal.

(6) If a charge is proposed relating to matters alleged to have arisen in a home District against a person who has the status of or equivalent to a local preacher, or is a member, in an overseas District or another conference or church overseas and who has not been admitted into membership of the Church under Standing Order 051(2), the reporting officer must consult the Secretary of the Conference and clauses (7) to (10) apply.

(7) If the appropriate authority overseas requests the Conference to deal with the charge the Secretary must arrange for it to be dealt with in accordance with this Part.

(8) If a committee or the Conference acting under this Part considers that any decision should be reached on the charge other than its dismissal or rehearing, it may not give effect to that decision, but must refer it to the President. The President must send the decision forthwith to the referring authority overseas.

(9) If clause (8) does not apply, the reporting officer in relation to any connexional Discipline Committee or Appeal Committee hearing the charge or an appeal must send a report of the decision to the Secretary, who must communicate its contents to the referring authority overseas.

(10) If the appropriate authority overseas does not request the Conference to deal with the charge, no further steps may be taken under this Part.

(11) When an appeal is brought against a decision depriving a local preacher of status as a local preacher or removing a local preacher from membership or tenure of office (whether at an initial hearing or on appeal), that status, membership or tenure of office is or remains suspended until the appeal is determined.

(12) The decision on any appeal involving a local preacher or member (whether or not falling within clause (11) above) must be communicated to the Secretary of the Conference in addition to any other person or body to whom this Section may require it to be communicated.

(13) Members of other communions who are not members of the Methodist Church but who hold office in it or are members of its church courts, and persons who are members both of the Methodist Church and of another communion are subject to discipline in accordance with this Part, but any decision may only affect their standing in relation to the Methodist Church, unless any further effect is given to decisions taken under this Part by virtue of the constitution of any other communion or of any local ecumenical partnership or ecumenical area.

**1153 Previous Complaints and Charges.** (1) When a complaint is passed to the lead member of a complaints team, the relevant Connexional Team member must make a search of the records kept under Standing Order 1104(1) to discover whether any previous complaint has been made or charge brought against the respondent.

(2) No record of any previous complaint or charge which may be found on such a search may be disclosed to the members of the complaints team unless:

- (i) the respondent expressly asserts that he or she has not been the subject of a previous complaint or charge; or
- (ii) the complaint under investigation is in the opinion of the relevant Connexional Team member and the connexional Complaints Officer appointed under Standing Order 1114 so similar in general nature and in specific matters of fact to a previous complaint or charge that the existence of that previous complaint or charge is a material fact to be taken into account by the complaints team in determining how to dispose of the present complaint.

(3) (a) Where the condition specified in clause (2)(i) is satisfied, the relevant Connexional Team member must disclose all previous complaints and charges against the respondent to the members of the complaints team.

(b) Where the condition specified in clause (2)(ii) above is satisfied but sub-clause (a) does not apply, the relevant Connexional Team member must disclose only such previous complaints and charges as cause the condition to be satisfied.

(4) When the relevant Connexional Team member sends a copy of a charge to a reporting officer under Standing Order 1130(6) and the material required to be supplied to that officer does not disclose any previous complaint or charge, the relevant Connexional Team member must also send, under separate cover, a statement of the result of the search conducted under clause (1) above and particulars of any previous complaint or charge discovered.

(5) The record of any previous complaint or charge must not be disclosed to the members of the committee hearing a charge before it has decided whether or not the present charge is established, unless:

- (i) paragraph (i) of clause (2) above is now satisfied; or
- (ii) in the opinion of the reporting officer and of a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)**, other than the proposed chair of the committee, the existence of a previous complaint or charge is a material fact to be taken into account by the committee on the grounds set out in paragraph (ii) of clause (2) above.

(6) (a) Where the condition specified in clause (5)(i) is satisfied, the reporting officer must disclose all previous complaints and charges against the respondent to the members of the committee.

(b) Where the condition specified in clause (5)(ii) above is satisfied but sub-clause (a) does not apply, the reporting officer must disclose only such previous complaints and charges as cause the condition to be satisfied.



(7) If a committee hearing a charge finds it to be established, the reporting officer must then disclose to the committee any record previously undisclosed in order to assist the committee in deciding upon the appropriate action to be taken.

(8) If the existence of a previous complaint or charge which is not a matter of public knowledge becomes known to members of a complaints team or a Connexional Discipline Committee otherwise than through the operation of this Standing Order, it must not be further disclosed except in accordance with the provisions set out above. Those members of the team or committee who have become aware of its existence may continue to act as such members only with the consent of the respondent.

(9) If any person involved in the complaints and discipline process becomes aware that the complainant has knowledge of the existence of a previous complaint or charge, he or she must inform the relevant Connexional Team member (if a charge has not been brought) or the reporting officer (if a charge has been brought). The person informed must bring the provisions of this Standing Order to the attention of the complainant and require him or her not to refer to the previous complaint or charge in the course of the process unless it has already been disclosed in accordance with those provisions.

**1154 Provision of Information.** (1) At each stage of the complaints and discipline process as it applies to a particular complaint, the person responsible for preparing the record or report relating to that stage must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the outcome is communicated orally to any local complaints officer, convener of a Complaints Support Group and member of a complaints team, Complaints Support Group or committee which has been involved in the process relating to that complaint, if the outcome would not otherwise be communicated to that person.

(2) Any communication under clause (1) above is confidential.

(3) A local complaints officer to whom an outcome is communicated under clause (1) above is entitled on request to a copy of the relevant record or report held by the Secretary of the Conference, but must treat any document supplied following such a request as confidential.

**1155 Complaints about the Process.** (1) In this Standing Order:

- (i) 'the aggrieved person' means a person who has been involved in the complaints and discipline process in any way who makes repeated complaints to the relevant Connexional Team member about the manner in which the process has been carried out or about any related matter;
- (ii) 'a persistent complainant' means an aggrieved person in respect of whom it has been decided in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order that any future complaint by him or her should in all cases be dealt with immediately by a team convened from the connexional Complaints Panel which would be required before taking any further steps to consider whether in all the circumstances of the case, including the apparent merits of the particular complaint, that complaint should or should not be allowed to proceed;

- (iii) 'the referee' means the person to whom a matter has been referred under clause (9) below.

(2) Subject to clause (3) below, if the relevant Connexional Team member is unable to resolve the aggrieved person's complaints, he or she may refer the aggrieved person to the connexional Reconciliation Group and the subsequent provisions of this Standing Order will apply.

(3) Clause (2) above does not apply if the complaints are made during the course of the complaints and discipline process and could be raised on an appeal.

(4) If the relevant Connexional Team member refers an aggrieved person to the connexional Reconciliation Group, he or she must inform the aggrieved person that the reference has been made, that the Group will contact the aggrieved person to discuss his or her concerns and that until the Group has carried out its work the relevant Connexional Team member will not communicate further with the aggrieved person in relation to the complaints made.

(5) The relevant Connexional Team member makes a reference under clause (4) above by writing to the convener of the connexional Reconciliation Group setting out the reasons for which the reference is being made and supplying the convener with the relevant documents. A copy of the reference must be sent to the aggrieved person, together with a list of the documents supplied.

(6) (a) On receiving a reference under this Standing Order the convener must appoint a team of three members of the Group, one of whom must be a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)**, to act in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order and must appoint one member of the team as the contact member.

(b) The convener must inform the aggrieved person that the team has been appointed, stating the names of the team members, and that the contact member will contact the aggrieved person.

(c) The convener must further inform that aggrieved person that the duties and responsibilities of a team convened from the connexional Reconciliation Group are:

- (i) to listen to the concerns expressed by the aggrieved person;
- (ii) to make any inquiries the team thinks fit of any other person;
- (iii) to explore with the aggrieved person whether there is any means of resolving his or her concerns, including achieving resolution by a form of reconciliation with a person or persons involved in the complaints and discipline process; and
- (iv) to make any recommendations for the improvement of the process which the team thinks appropriate.

The convener must also state expressly that the duties and responsibilities of the team do not extend to making any decision on the merits of the complaint or charge in relation to which the complaints of the aggrieved person have been made.

(7) When a team is appointed under Standing Order 1155(6) above, the contact member must invite the aggrieved person to an initial meeting with the team to enable the aggrieved person to explain his or her concerns face to face. The team may

otherwise carry out its duties and responsibilities as set out in clause (6)(c) above as it thinks fit.

(8) When the team has completed its work as far as is possible in the circumstances, the contact member must prepare a brief report of the steps taken and the outcome of the team's work. The report must state whether or not the aggrieved person's concerns have been resolved and any recommendations made by the team and must be sent to the relevant Connexional Team member, who must take appropriate steps to give effect to any recommendations.

(9) If the aggrieved person's concerns have not been resolved and he or she is not willing to agree not to pursue them further, the relevant Connexional Team member must refer the matter to a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)** for consideration whether the aggrieved person should be declared to be a persistent complainant.

(10) (a) The relevant Connexional Team member makes a reference under clause (9) above by writing to the referee setting out the reasons for which the reference is being made and supplying him or her with the relevant documents.

(b) If the relevant Connexional Team member refers a matter to a referee, he or she must inform the aggrieved person that the reference has been made and what would be the effect if the aggrieved person is declared to be a persistent complainant. A copy of the reference must be sent to the aggrieved person, together with a list of the documents supplied. The relevant Connexional Team member must also state that he or she will not in future communicate further with the aggrieved person in relation to the complaints made.

(c) The relevant Connexional Team member must further inform the aggrieved person that if he or she wishes to make representations to the referee, those representations must be sent in writing to the relevant Connexional Team member within 14 days from the day on which the aggrieved person is so informed.

(d) The relevant Connexional Team member must pass any representations received to the referee, who must not make a decision until the time for making representations has expired.

(11) The referee must consider the documentary material supplied to him or her and decide whether there is such a risk that the aggrieved person will make complaints of a repetitive nature in relation either to the respondent or to some or all of the subject matter identified in the reference that fairness requires that all future complaints by the aggrieved person should be considered at a connexional level by a team which is aware of the history of the aggrieved person as respects the complaints and discipline process. The referee must record his or her decision in writing, giving reasons, and send the record to the relevant Connexional Team member for safe custody.

(12) The relevant Connexional Team member must inform the aggrieved person of the decision of the referee. If the decision is that the aggrieved person should be declared a persistent complainant, the relevant Connexional Team member must also inform the Chair of the District and the Superintendent or other person who is the local complaints officer of the Circuit in which the aggrieved person is stationed or a member or with which he or she (if not a member of the Methodist Church) appears to have the closest connection.

(13) Any person who becomes aware that a persistent complainant is making a complaint under this Part must take all necessary steps to ensure that the complaint is dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(14) No appeal lies against a decision that an aggrieved person is a persistent complainant.

**1155A Repetitive Complainants.** (1) In this Standing Order:

- (i) "a repeated complaint" means a complaint which is the same or substantially similar to another complaint made by the same complainant against the same person or a different person or persons in respect of which consideration is being given or has been given in accordance with this Part and which is not a complaint of the type referred to in Standing Order 1155;
- (ii) "a multiple complainant" means a person who has made two or more repeated complaints;
- (iii) "a repetitive complainant" means a multiple complainant in respect of whom a declaration has been made under clause (6) below to the effect set out in that clause;
- (iv) "the referee" means the person to whom a matter has been referred under clause (4) below.

(2) This Standing Order shall apply when the relevant Connexional Team member is aware or is informed that a person is or may be a multiple complainant.

(3) Any person receiving a complaint which he or she believes may be a repeated complaint shall, before taking any steps in respect of such complaint, inform the relevant Connexional Team member of the details of the complaint and the grounds on which he or she believes it to be a repeated complaint.

(4) If the relevant Connexional Team member considers that the complainant may be a multiple complainant he or she may refer the matter to a person falling within Standing Order **290(3)** for consideration whether the complainant should be declared to be a repetitive complainant.

(5) (a) The relevant Connexional Team member makes a reference under clause (4) above by writing to the referee setting out the reasons for which the reference is being made and supplying him or her with the relevant documents;

(b) If the relevant Connexional Team member refers a matter to a referee, he or she must inform the complainant that the reference has been made and what would be the effect (as set out in clause (8) below) if the complainant is declared to be a repetitive complainant. A copy of the reference must be sent to the complainant, together with a list of the documents supplied. The relevant Connexional Team member must also state that until the referee has reached a decision he or she will not communicate further with the complainant in relation to the complaints made;

(c) The relevant Connexional Team member must further inform the complainant that if he or she wishes to make representations to the referee, those representations must be sent in writing to the relevant Connexional Team member within 14 days from the day on which the complainant is so informed;

(d) The relevant Connexional Team member must pass any representations received to the referee, who must not make a decision until the time for making representations has expired.

(6) The referee must consider the documentary material supplied to him or her and decide whether to make a declaration that the complainant is a repetitive complainant. Any such declaration must be made on the ground specified in clause (7) below and will have the effect set out in clause (8) below. The referee must record the decision in writing, giving reasons, and send the record to the relevant Connexional Team member for safe custody.

(7) The ground on which it may be declared that a complainant is a repetitive complainant is that the referee is satisfied that there is such a risk that the complainant will make one or more further repeated complaints that fairness requires that all his or her future complaints must be referred immediately to a team, convened from the connexional Complaints Panel, which is aware of the history of the complainant as respects the complaints and discipline process and which must, before taking any further steps, consider whether in all the circumstances of the case, including the apparent merits of the particular complaint, that complaint should or should not be allowed to proceed and must give a direction accordingly.

(8) The effect of a declaration that the complainant is a repetitive complainant is that:

- (i) a team must be convened from the Complaints Panel to consider the complaint referred to in clause (3) and to direct whether or not the complaint should be allowed to proceed. If the complaint does proceed, the provisions of this Part apply as if the complainant had referred the complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel and the team convened from the Complaints Panel had decided that the complaint was to be fully considered;
- (ii) any future complaint by the complainant must be referred immediately to a team convened from the Complaints Panel to act as set out in paragraph (i) above.

(9) The relevant Connexional Team member must inform the complainant of the decision of the referee made under clause (6) above. If the decision is that the complainant should be declared a repetitive complainant, the relevant Connexional Team member must also inform the Chair of the District and the Superintendent or other person who is the local complaints officer of the Circuit in which the complainant is stationed or a member or with which he or she (if not a member) appears to have the closest connection.

(10) Any person who becomes aware that a repetitive complainant is making a complaint under this Part must take all necessary steps to ensure that the complaint is dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this Standing Order.

(11) No appeal lies against a decision under clause (6) above to declare that a complainant is a repetitive complainant or a direction of a complaints team given under clause (8) above.

**1156 Notice Provisions.** (1) Where under any provision of this Part a person is required to inform another person of a decision, then unless the relevant provision expressly provides otherwise the obligation is performed if written notice is sent by first class post or recorded delivery to the last known ordinary postal address of the second person or to such other address as he or she has requested in writing should be used for the purpose of giving notice.

(2) A person will be taken to have received a notice sent by first class post or recorded delivery on the second day after the day on which the notice was sent unless he or she can show that it was received later.

S.O. 1121(5) provides that a complainant dissatisfied with a local complaints officer's decision not to refer a complaint to the connexional Complaints Panel has 21 days from the receipt of the notice from the complaints officer to refer the matter himself. Clause (2) above means that the 21 days runs from the day after the date of receiving the local officer's report.

(3) Clause (1) does not exclude the use of any other means of informing a person of a decision which is not excluded by the provision imposing the obligation.

**1157 Breaches of Confidentiality.** (1) In this Standing Order, "the conducting officer" means the person who most recently became responsible, with respect to a particular complaint or charge, for exercising the functions of:

- (i) a local complaints officer;
- (ii) the lead member of a complaints team;
- (iii) the chair of a discipline committee;
- (iv) the chair of an appeal committee;
- (v) the person presiding or intended to preside at the hearing of an appeal to the Conference.

(2) If a complainant is in breach of the obligation of confidentiality imposed by Standing Order 1104(7) in relation to a particular complaint or charge, the provisions of clause (3) apply.

(3) Subject to clause (4) below, where this clause applies the conducting officer may:

- (i) decline to provide the complainant with copies of further documents or further information in connection with the relevant complaint or charge until the complainant has provided a written acknowledgment that all documents and information already received or hereafter received in connection with that complaint or charge are confidential and a written undertaking to comply with Standing Order 1104(7) at all times;
- (ii) decline to provide the complainant with copies of further documents or further information in connection with that complaint or charge at all;
- (iii) determine that the complainant shall be excluded from further participation in the complaints and discipline process relating to that complaint or charge either altogether or as set out in the determination.

(4) The powers given by clause (3) above may be exercised more than once in relation to the same process and either by the same conducting officer or by different conducting officers and either on the same occasion or different occasions but so that:

- (i) any exercise of the powers must be in writing and must identify the breach of the obligation of confidentiality which is the ground for the exercise of the power;
- (ii) the powers may not be exercised more than once as a result of the same breach, but the conducting officer from time to time may take account of any and all previous breaches in deciding whether and if so in what manner to exercise the powers under clause (3) if there is a subsequent breach;
- (iii) when a new person becomes the conducting officer, he or she may decide to vary any exercise of the powers by a previous conducting officer, but may not do so in a way adverse to the complainant;
- (iv) no power under clause (3) may be exercised while a determination that the complainant is excluded from further participation in the complaints and discipline process altogether remains in force;
- (v) the power under clause (3) (i) or (ii) may not be exercised on an occasion on which a determination that the complainant is excluded from further participation in the complaints and discipline process altogether is made;
- (vi) the powers under clause (3) (i) and (ii) may not both be exercised on the same occasion and the power under clause (3) (i) may not be exercised while an exercise of the power under clause (3)(ii) above remains in force;
- (vii) if the conducting officer is a local complaints officer, he or she may not exercise the power under clause (3)(iii).

(5) If a respondent is in breach of the obligation of confidentiality imposed by Standing Order 1104(7) in relation to a particular complaint or charge, the provisions of clause (6) apply.

(6) Subject to clause (7) below, where this clause applies the conducting officer may:

- (i) decline to provide the respondent with copies of further documents or further information in connection with the relevant complaint or charge until the respondent has provided a written acknowledgment that all documents and information already received or hereafter received in connection with that complaint or charge are confidential and a written undertaking to comply with Standing Order 1104(7) at all times;
- (ii) determine that the complaint or charge shall hereafter be dealt with as if it included a complaint by the complainant or charge prepared by the Presenting Officer on a referral in accordance with Standing Order 1130(1) (as the case may require) relating to that breach.

(7) The powers given by clause (6) above may be exercised more than once in relation to the same process and either by the same conducting officer or by different conducting officers and either on the same occasion or different occasions but so that:

- (i) any exercise of the powers must be in writing and must identify the breach of the obligation of confidentiality which is the ground for the exercise of the power;

- (ii) the powers may not be exercised more than once as a result of the same breach, but the conducting officer from time to time may take account of any and all previous breaches in deciding whether and if so in what manner to exercise the powers under clause (6) if there is a subsequent breach;
- (iii) when a new person becomes the conducting officer, he or she may decide to vary any exercise of the powers by a previous conducting officer, but may not do so in a way adverse to the complainant;
- (iv) when a conducting officer makes a determination under clause (6)(ii) at any time after a referral under Standing Order 1130(1), he or she must also direct the relevant Presenting Officer to prepare a charge in relation to the breach of the obligation of confidentiality on the basis of the material contained or referred to in the determination (copies of which must be supplied to the Presenting Officer for the purpose).

(8) A conducting officer who becomes aware of a breach of the obligation of confidentiality but does not exercise his or her powers under clause (3) or, as the case may be, clause (6) in relation to that breach must pass to the person who next becomes the conducting officer all the information which he or she has in relation to that breach.

(9) The powers given by this Standing Order:

- (i) are exercisable without prejudice to the exercise by any person of any right or power, whether under this Part 11, any other Standing Orders or arising in any other way;
- (ii) are exercisable by a conducting officer although a previous conducting officer, being aware of a breach of the obligation of confidentiality, has not exercised any of those powers, unless that conducting officer formally considered the exercise of those powers and gave notice in writing to the person in breach of the obligation of his or her decision not to do so, stating the reasons for that decision;
- (iii) override any other provision of this Part 11, in the case of conflict.

(10) There is no right of appeal against the exercise of the powers given by clause (3) and (6) above, but if the complainant or respondent (as the case may be) satisfies the conducting officer (whether the conducting officer who exercised the power or another conducting officer) that the apparent breach of confidence on the basis of which such a power was exercised did not in fact occur, the relevant exercise is to be treated as if it had not taken place and all necessary steps must be taken to put the complainant or respondent in the position in which he or she would have been but for the exercise, so far as reasonably practicable.

(11) For the avoidance of doubt, a person does not commit a breach of the obligation of confidentiality by:

- (i) disclosing confidential material to a person acting as a friend or representative for the purposes of the provisions of this Part or to a member of the relevant district Complaints Support Group;
- (ii) disclosing confidential material to another person or persons for the purpose of obtaining pastoral support, provided that if the complaint



has gone beyond the informal complaint stage the requirements of clause (12) below are satisfied.

(12) The requirements referred to in clause (11)(ii) above are that:

- (i) the name of the person or persons to whom disclosure is to be made must be given to the conducting officer in advance of disclosure; and
- (ii) any person to whom disclosure is to be made must agree to treat the disclosed material as confidential.



# BOOK IV OTHER LEGISLATION AND CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

## B. OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS

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3	<i>[Deleted] (This Part contained the Constitution of the Methodist Missionary Society, wound up in 2013)</i>	
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## Part 4 World Methodist Council

For the connexional Global Relationships Committee see S.O. 322.

### **Purpose:**

The World Methodist Council is a worldwide association of Methodist, Wesleyan and related Uniting and United Churches. It engages, empowers and serves member Churches by encouraging Methodist unity in witness, fostering ecumenical and inter-religious activities, and facilitating mission in the world.

### **Membership:**

Membership is open to all Churches in the Wesleyan tradition (or in the case of United or Uniting Churches, those that are related historically to the Wesleyan tradition), and Churches are elected into membership, normally following nomination by an existing member Church and recommendation by the General Secretary.

There are currently 177 member Churches, with a worldwide membership of over 42 million.

### **History:**

World Methodism was one of the first Christian world communions to organise itself, holding the first Ecumenical Methodist Conference in 1881 at Wesley's Chapel, London. From then on world conferences were held every ten years until 1931. World War II intervened and the next conference was held in 1947, when it was decided to establish a more permanent organisation. This was effected in 1951 at the world conference held in Oxford, when the title World Methodist Council was adopted and it was decided to meet every five years.

The constitution drafted in 1951 was adopted in 1956 and subsequently revised in 1961 and 1971. The Council meeting in Durban in 2011 adopted a new constitution. This provides for a Council, appointed by the member Churches, for a five year period, with the expectation that it will meet three times in the five years.

The Council works through its Standing Programme and Operational Committees and relates closely to certain Affiliated Organisations.

In between Council meetings, a Steering Committee will continue the Council's work as directed by the Council.

The Constitution also provides for a World Methodist Conference to be held at least once every ten years, but more frequently if desired.

### **Elected Staff:**

WMC Staff, elected by the Council, include: the General Secretary, the Geneva Secretary, The Youth and Young Adults Coordinator and the Director of World Evangelism.

### **Committees:**

The Council's current Standing Programme Committees include: Ecumenical Relationships Committee; Education Committee; Evangelism Committee; Family

## *Book IV Other Legislation and Constitutional Documents*

Life Committee; Social and International Affairs Committee; Theological Education Committee; Worship and Liturgy Committee; Youth and Young Adult Committee.

The Council's current Standing Operational Committees include: "Achieving the Vision" Investment Committee; Audit Committee; Budget and Finance Committee; Ministerial Exchange Committee; Conference Programme Committee; Nominating Committee; Personnel Committee.

### **Affiliated Organisations:**

World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women; World Fellowship of Methodist and Uniting Church Men; International Association of Methodist Schools, College and Universities; Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies; Wesley Works Editorial Project; World Methodist Historical Society; Epworth Old Rectory

## Part 5 Rule of Life of the Methodist Diaconal Order

The Conference of 2022, in accordance with S.O. 750(3), approved the following Rule of Life for the Methodist Diaconal Order.

### Methodist Diaconal Order Rule of Life

As a religious order we recognise the unconditional love of God as known in Jesus Christ. Out of this springs our calling to the sacrificial servant ministry of Christ and to be a dispersed community living by a rule of life.

***Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit to live a life of:  
Prayer . Witness . Service***

We seek to do these things through God's grace and by following the pattern of Jesus Christ who lived among us. In humility he washed the feet of his disciples and calls us to follow his example.

The rule is life affirming and is a means by which we might be liberated to find a sense of wholeness in the rhythm of life. Our desire and hope are that freely followed and adapted to personal needs and circumstances, it will enrich our own life, the life of the Order, and the life of God's world.

**May it be to us a blessing and a joy, and bring glory to God.**

### Living and Working with the Rule

***Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding.***

***Proverbs 3: 5***

As a religious order we recognise the unconditional love of God as known in Jesus Christ. Out of this springs our calling to the sacrificial servant ministry of Christ and to be a dispersed community living by a rule of life.

***We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19***

***Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit to live a life of:  
Prayer . Witness . Service***

We seek to do these things through God's grace and by following the pattern of Jesus Christ who lived among us. In humility he washed the feet of his disciples and calls us to follow his example.

***For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. Mark 10:45***

***Unless I wash you, you can have no share with me...I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you. John 13: 1 - 20***

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The Order provides the means for: fellowship and encouragement, pastoral care and mutual support, prayer and discipline, a gracious space to grow and opportunities to explore, celebrate and share in God's purpose and plan.

As members of the Order, we have a communal sense of identity and belonging, a collective responsibility, a mutual accountability, a shared life of prayer, a common calling, and a lifelong commitment. We recognise God's image in all that God has made. We welcome and celebrate the gifts and talents of all. Through our diversity we gain a greater insight into the Kingdom of God.

This Rule provides a framework to enable us to live out our vocation as those who are committed to the Life of Prayer, prophetic Witness and Service.

We desire to live by the Rule, yet we acknowledge our human frailty and the imperfection of our lives and know that at times we will fall short. However, we trust in the transforming grace and loving mercy of God, the wisdom of the Rule, the encouragement and upholding of one another in prayer.

***The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. Romans 8: 26***

As part of our response to the love of God we follow this rule of life to deepen our fellowship and bind us together as a dispersed community. This enables us to continue to become the people God wants us to be, both individually and as an Order, and with all the people of God proclaim the mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ and serve in the Church and in the World.

***For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12***

The rule is life-affirming and is a means by which we might be liberated to find a sense of wholeness in the rhythm of life. Our desire and hope are that freely followed and adapted to personal needs and circumstances, it will enrich our own life, the life of the Order, and the life of God's world.

***For God so loved the world John 3: 16a***

**May it be to us a blessing and a joy, and bring glory to God.**

**With God's help we endeavour to:**

### ***Prayer, Lectio and Worship***

#### ***Pray without ceasing***

- attend worship regularly, including Holy Communion
- set aside time to read the Bible devotionally
- set aside time for prayer and reflection, including a time of intercession for the world, the church, the Order and our own needs and concerns
- set aside time for self-examination and reflection
- find and commit to meeting regularly with a spiritual director/ companion, who will accompany, help, challenge, and affirm us.



## Part 5 Rule of Life of the Methodist Diaconal Order

### **Witness and Service**

*Remember your call. Support the weak, bind up the broken, gather in the outcast, welcome the stranger, seek the lost. So minister care that you make glad those whom you help in their need. Let the concerns and sorrows of others be as your own.*

- intentionally nurture, encourage and build community wherever we are
- discern and relate to the needs of the community in which we live and work and those we minister to and alongside
- serve faithfully with patience and understanding
- minister Christ's love and compassion
- proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ through our words and actions
- promote justice and challenge inequality through prayer and action
- help those we serve to offer their lives to God.

### **Balance**

*This ministry will make great demands upon you and upon those close to you, yet in all this, the Holy Spirit will sustain you by grace.*

- order the rhythm of our lives according to personal circumstances,
- which will differ from person to person
- be attentive to our own wellbeing, recognise when we need help and
- accept support and encouragement from others
- Make time for regular times of rest and relaxation, appropriate time off, holiday, quarter days, retreats/quiet days, sabbaticals and those things which resource us, including study and learning, hobbies and interests
- be sensitive to the needs of those closest to us; our families, dependents, and friends.

### **Mutual Accountability**

*You are to share fully in the life of your Order and to keep its discipline.*

- attend Convocation (unless a dispensation is granted)
- attend the Service of rededication or, if unable to attend, find another appropriate way to do so
- adapt the rule to our own needs and experiences and review annually
- offer a lifetime of service which typically includes the discipline of itinerancy and direct stationing
- participate as fully as possible in the life of Area Groups
- offer pastoral care and hospitality to one another
- bear with each other and call one another on to growth, wholeness and holiness
- be willing to be open and truthful, offer wise counsel, and share in one another's joys and sorrows.

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### **Stewardship**

*Fulfil your calling as disciples of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. In all things, give counsel and encouragement to all whom Christ entrusts to your care. Let no one suffer hurt through your neglect.*

- Acknowledge, enjoy, and share God's gifts to us of time, talents, money and possessions and, through God's grace, be able stewards of these
- Live as conscientious stewards of the planet
- Care for what and who is vulnerable and fragile
- Model our living on the pattern and example of Jesus Christ.

***May Christ your master, when he comes in glory, count you among his faithful servants. To God be the glory forever.***

## Part 6 Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations

The Conference of 2022 adopted the Commitments and Expectations set out below and directed that they be published here, as Part 6 of Book IV. The Conference of 2023 confirmed that the annual Commitments are to be made in the Representative Session of the Conference, provision for which is set out in S.O. 13A1. This first took place at the Conference of 2024, as part of the closing Holy Communion service.

### 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

*<sup>7</sup> But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift...*

*<sup>11</sup>The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until 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...*

*<sup>15</sup>Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from 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

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<sup>1</sup> New Revised Standard Version.

## *Book IV Other Legislation and Constitutional Documents*

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 Session of the Conference, and may also be made in other local and connexional meetings as appropriate.

For the making of the annual Commitments in the Representative Session of the Conference see S.O. 13A1.

#### **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!".

## *Part 6 Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations*

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 wellbeing 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.

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### 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 unflinching 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.

## Part 6 Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations

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.<sup>2</sup>*

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:

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<sup>2</sup> *Methodist Worship Book* (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."

## *Book IV Other Legislation and Constitutional Documents*

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*



## Part 6 Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations

approved by the Conference. The various sub-sections may best be used separately as occasion makes them appropriate.

### 3.1 VOCATION (CALL AND COMMITMENT)<sup>3</sup>

'It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of Christian ministry depends upon the call of God'.<sup>4</sup> 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'.<sup>5</sup> 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 (e.g. at times of stationing) in dialogue with the Church and its processes.

#### ***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.

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<sup>3</sup> The Retreat Association, of which the Methodist Church is a member, provide details on finding spiritual directors, see [www.retreats.org.uk](http://www.retreats.org.uk).

<sup>4</sup> Deed of Union clause 4.

<sup>5</sup> *What is a Presbyter?* Conference 2002 Agenda, report 43, pp 446-454, paragraph 4.

### **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.'<sup>6</sup> 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.

#### ***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,

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<sup>6</sup> *Methodist Worship Book* pp. 303, 318.

## *Book IV Other Legislation and Constitutional Documents*

emotionally, and physically demanding. As the Ordination service puts it 'This ministry will make great demands upon you.'<sup>7</sup>

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.

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 wellbeing 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,<sup>8</sup> 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

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<sup>7</sup> *Methodist Worship Book* pp. 302, 317.

<sup>8</sup> *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church Book VII Guidance, Part 3 Holidays.*

## Part 6 Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations

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;
- 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'<sup>9</sup> 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<sup>10</sup>; and with the statements and guidance regarding principles of good relating, cohabitation and the understanding of marriage, including same-sex marriage.<sup>11</sup> 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 (e.g. 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.

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<sup>9</sup> *Methodist Worship Book* Ordination of Presbyters para 16 p. 306; Ordination of Deacons para 16 p. 321.

<sup>10</sup> 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).

<sup>11</sup> 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 2022 set out in *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church Book VII Part 8 Guidance for the Methodist Church regarding Marriage and 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;
- 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 wellbeing 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, safeguarding<sup>12</sup> and on equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- conduct all pastoral work in accordance with the Church's directions and guidance<sup>13</sup> and keep accurate and meaningful records of pastoral visits and encounters<sup>14</sup>;
- 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

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<sup>12</sup> See Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, published under 'Safeguarding' at [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)

<sup>13</sup> E.g. see Conference reports, 'With Integrity and Skill' and 'Positive Working Together.'

<sup>14</sup> See Code of Safer Working Practice with Adults in Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, published under 'Safeguarding' at [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk).

## *Part 6 Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations*

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.

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 wellbeing 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<sup>15</sup>;
- 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;

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<sup>15</sup> For the last of these, see Psalm 85:10.

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- 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]”.<sup>16</sup> Deacons “in many different contexts ... embody, proclaim and point to the transforming love of Christ and it is their responsibility as representative persons to lead the people to share with them in that calling”.<sup>17</sup>

Both presbyters and deacons are called to “accept our discipline and work together with... sisters and brothers in the Church”.<sup>18</sup> 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.”<sup>19</sup>

#### ***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.

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<sup>16</sup> Deed of Union, Section 2, clause 4.

<sup>17</sup> Conference report Agenda 2019, report 25, pp 259-299 *The Theology and Ecclesiology Underpinning the Diaconate* para 2.2.1.

<sup>18</sup> Methodist Worship Book pp. 303, 318.

<sup>19</sup> Conference report Agenda 2006, report 14, *Living with Contradictory Convictions* para 7.4.



***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;
- 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.

## *Part 6 Renewing Full Connexion: Commitments and Expectations*

### ***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.



## BOOK V HISTORIC TEXTS

### Part 5 Resolutions on Pastoral Work

#### [Deleted]

Following the introduction in 2022 of the Commitments and Expectations in *The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers* (found in Book IV, Part 6 above), the Conference of 2023 directed that the Resolutions on Pastoral Work formerly published here be removed from *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*.

For earlier documents see 'The Twelve Rules of a Helper' (Vol. 1, p. 69) and the 'Liverpool Minutes' (Vol. 1, p. 71).



# BOOK VI REGULATIONS ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE

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# Part 1 Qualification for Appointment under S.O. 010(3), and Duty to Obtain Disclosures

## 1. Qualification for Appointment

As a result of the adoption of the resolutions brought to the Conference of 2024 by the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (Agenda 2024, report 50, section 3), Standing Order 010 quoted below, has been amended, as indicated.

See also the note below the text of clause (3) below.

*Standing Order 010(2)(ii) provides that, subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (or any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force and any regulations or orders made or having effect thereunder):*

*no person who has been convicted of or has received a simple or conditional caution from the police concerning an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or mentioned in Schedule 15 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003 or who is barred by the Disclosure and Barring Service from work with children, young people or vulnerable adults or who is the subject of a risk assessment under Standing Order 235 as a result of which the Safeguarding Committee concludes that he or she presents a significant risk of serious harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults shall be appointed or re-appointed to any office, post or responsibility or engaged or re-engaged under any contract to which this sub-clause applies unless authority for the appointment or employment has been obtained under clause (5).*

Clause (5) lays down a process whereby, in exceptional cases, the Secretary of the Conference may be requested to refer the question of disqualification to the Safeguarding Committee appointed under Standing Order 230.

*Clause (3) provides that the above sub-clause shall apply to the following categories:*

- ...
- (iii) first appointment to a station as a presbyteral or diaconal probationer or, if no such appointment has been made, admission into Full Connexion as a presbyter or deacon;*
  - (iv) first appointment to a station as a presbyter or deacon recognised and regarded as such under the Deed of Union or first entry upon the stations as a person authorised by the Conference to serve as a presbyter or deacon;*
  - (ivA) first appointment to undertake specific acts of ministry under permission given by the Conference to a person granted the status of associate presbyter or deacon;*
  - (v) re-admission into Full Connexion as a presbyter or deacon;*
  - (vA) any appointment or re-appointment to the office of local lay-pastor under the provisions of Section 56A of Standing Orders;*

(vA) was added in 2022.

- (vi) any other appointment or re-appointment to any office, post or responsibility or any engagement or re-engagement under a contract of service or for services which is at the date of appointment, re-appointment, engagement or re-engagement specified for this purpose by the [...] **Connexional Council**,*

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*either generally by reference to categories or by a ruling in the particular case.*

Until the amendment was made to (vi), the body charged with specifying the appointments and engagements was the Methodist Council.

The Conference of 1999 directed that the appointments and engagements specified under head (3)(vi) above, together with any rulings made in particular cases, should be published here. Accordingly, the list below sets out the categories specified by the Methodist Council in December 1999.

The Conference in 2024 resolved that this list of categories of persons disqualified from appointment, as previously specified by the Methodist Council, should continue to have effect from 1 September 2024 as if specified by the Connexional Council.

The reference in the "Representational" list has been duly amended to replace "Methodist Council" by "Connexional Council".

1. Any duty or responsibility exercised on behalf of the Methodist Church which involves:
  - (a) lone access to church premises;
  - (b) face to face contact with children and young people without the presence of another adult; or
  - (c) carrying out duties off church premises in circumstances in which the person concerned may be seen as a representative of the Church.
2. Any office within the following categories:

<b>[...] Governance</b>	<b>Liturgical or pastoral</b>
Membership of the:	Local Preachers
Church Council	Worship leaders
Circuit Meeting	Organists/choir leaders
District Synod	Pastoral visitors/Class leaders
<b>[...] Connexional Council</b>	Communion Stewards
Methodist Conference	Workers with children and young people

### 2. Duty to Obtain Disclosures

*The Conference of 2003 adopted resolutions concerned with the circumstances in which persons whose work brings them into contact with children and young people should apply through the Churches Agency for Safeguarding (CAS) for disclosures from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) or Central Registered Body in Scotland (CRBS). The CRB for England and Wales is now the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The Conference directed that the resolutions should be printed here.*

The Conference directs that, subject to the policy of the CRB and CRBS at the time, the following category of persons shall obtain *enhanced* disclosures:

- Presbyters and deacons in Full Connexion, including supernumeraries who continue to perform any of the functions a presbyter or deacon
- Student and probationer ministers
- Recognised and Regarded and Authorised presbyters and deacons, unless their own denominations already require enhanced disclosures, in which case documentary evidence should be submitted to the CAS

## Part 1 Qualification for Appointment under S.O. 010(3)

- Workers with children and young people
- Local lay-pastors
- Lay Workers.

Though caretakers were included in the 2003 Conference resolutions, recent legislation has removed them from the list of those to whom these resolutions apply. Local lay-pastors were added to this list in 2022.

The Conference directs that, subject to the policies of the CRB and CRBS at the time, those who undertake recognised caretaking duties at times when children and young people are likely to be on church premises should be required to obtain standard disclosures from the CRB or the CRBS. Where there are existing contracts this shall be a matter of negotiation, and advice from the Personnel Office shall be sought.

The Personnel Office is now the HR team in the Connexional Team.

The Conference directs that, on the recommendation of the Connexional Team, the Council shall have the authority to require other categories of person or office-holder to obtain either an enhanced or a standard disclosure.

### Note on the resolutions of the Conference of 2024

*The reference to the "Council" above referred to the Methodist Council. As a result of the adoption of the resolutions brought to the Conference of 2024 by the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (Agenda 2024, report 50, section 3) the Methodist Council has ceased to exist after 31 August 2024. The Conference therefore resolved that the authority conferred by the Conference on the Methodist Council in 2003 to require other categories of person or office-holder, in addition to those then directed by the Conference, to obtain either an enhanced or a standard disclosure shall be exercisable from 1 September 2024 by the Connexional Council.*

*The Conference also adopted a resolution in 2024 (Daily Record 6/11/2), reaffirming the requirements as to obtaining disclosures and that checks should be renewed every five years, application being made in time for the necessary certificate to be issued before the end of the period. It further drew attention to the responsibility of the relevant office-holders themselves to comply with the requirements of the Church's safeguarding policy, noting that failure to do so constitutes a possible ground for suspension under Standing Order 013. It further resolved that it "expects responsible officers within the meaning of that Standing Order to consider the exercise of their power of suspension in cases of breach of these requirements for the purpose of mitigating the risk of damage to those who are vulnerable and enhancing confidence that within the Methodist Church safeguarding precautions are taken seriously."*

### **Note for Information**

*In England and Wales, the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 made changes to the criminal record check regime, in terms of eligibility, extension to vulnerable adults and the process to be followed.*

*In Scotland, the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act sets out the equivalent requirements for Scotland. The Safer Recruitment Guidance for Scotland was updated 2014 and is available at [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk).*

*The Methodist Council in 2015 approved the Practice Guidance for DBS Checks (as part of Safer Recruitment) which can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk). The Methodist Conference in 2017 received a report which*

## Book VI Regulations Adopted by the Conference

*requires all accredited local preachers and worship leaders to have an up to date DBS and undertake the required safeguarding training unless they are no longer active in preaching or leadership within the Church, and have signed a declaration logged with their superintendent minister.*

*The Practice Guidance for DBS Checks requires the following officeholders or roles to have an enhanced criminal record check:*

- (a) All those who undertake regulated activity or have substantial contact with children or vulnerable adults, including those who do so on a rota*
- (b) All ministers including probationers and students, candidates and supernumerary ministers still capable of preaching or undertaking pastoral ministry*
- (c) All local preachers and worship leaders still capable of preaching or undertaking leadership within the Church*
- (d) All those who manage workers who undertake regulated activity or have substantial contact with children.*

*The Practice Guidance for DBS Checks provides further detail on when a barred list check should be obtained.*

*Further information may be available from District Safeguarding Officers, from the Connexional Team or through the safeguarding page on the Methodist Church website: [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk).*

## Part 2 Model Trusts – Consultation Regulations

These regulations have been adopted and subsequently amended by the Conference. The amendments to (4), (5), (6), and (8) in this 2024 volume are to reflect the change from Methodist Council to the Connexional Council, in accordance with the report of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (2024 Agenda, report 50). Although the references to the Methodist Council remain unaltered in the Model Trusts referred to below, because the Conference of 2024 was unable to confirm the Special Resolution amending them, the Conference authorised the Connexional Council to perform and exercise the Methodist Council's functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council under the Model Trusts – see S.O. 904 and the note thereunder.

(1) These regulations shall have effect in accordance with Standing Order 902 to prescribe what shall be 'appropriate consultation' for the purposes of paragraphs 3(2), 6(1), 8(1), 8(3) and 9 of the Model Trusts.

See Book III, Part 9, and Book II, Part 2.

(2) Subject to regulation (10) below, in these regulations to 'consult' means to invite the views, oral or written, of the person or body consulted on the matter under consideration and 'consultation' has a corresponding meaning.

(3) For the purposes of these regulations the requirement of consultation with any of the following bodies (in these regulations called 'church bodies') shall be satisfied by consultation with the person or persons specified against the church body in question:

- (i) [...] **the connexional trustees: [...] the chair of the Connexional Council and one other member;**
- (ii) a District or its district trustees: the Chair and a district property secretary;
- (iii) a Circuit or its Circuit Meeting: the Superintendent and a circuit steward;
- (iv) a Local Church or its Church Council: the presbyter in pastoral charge and a church steward.

(4) Before giving a direction under paragraph 3(2) of the Model Trusts the [...] **Connexional** Council shall consult the following:

- (i) the District and Circuit in which the new model trust property is situated; and
- (ii) the church body or bodies, if any, in whose favour a declaration of preference in respect of that property or any part of it has been made or is deemed to have been made; and
- (iii) the church body or bodies, if any, who have applied moneys in the acquisition of that property or any part of it.

For para. 3(2) of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2.

As to declarations of preference see ss. 12 and 15 of the 1976 Act (Vol. 1, pp. 15-16) and paras. 3(3) and 22 of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2).

(5) Before giving a certificate under paragraph 6(1) of the Model Trusts the [...] **Connexional** Council shall consult the following:

- (i) where more than one church body claims to be the managing trustees of all or any part of the relevant property, each body so claiming; and
- (ii) where any such church body is a Church Council, the Circuit of which its Local Church forms part; and

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- (iii) where any such church body is a Circuit Meeting, the District of which its Circuit forms part; or
- (iv) where no church body so claims, or in any case not otherwise provided for, the District and Circuit in which the property is situated.

For para. 6(1) of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2.

(6) In any case of doubt or dispute as to the District or Circuit in which any property is situated for the purposes of regulation (4)(i) or (5)(iv) above the [...] **Connexional** Council shall at its absolute discretion consult such one or more as it thinks fit of the Districts or Circuits, as the case may be, which appear to it to be in question, and such consultation shall conclusively be deemed to satisfy the requirements of regulation (4)(i) or (5)(iv), as the case may be.

(7) Subject to regulation (10) below, before agreeing or amending terms of management under paragraph 8(1) or 9 of the Model Trusts the managing trustees concerned shall consult the following:

- (i) where any such managing trustees are a Church Council, the Circuit of which their Local Church forms part; and
- (ii) where any such managing trustees are a Circuit Meeting, the District of which their Circuit forms part.

For paras. 8(1) and 9 of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2.

(8) Before determining terms of management under paragraph 8(3) of the Model Trusts the [...] **Connexional** Council shall consult the following:

- (i) the several sets of managing trustees of the relevant property; and
- (ii) where any such managing trustees are a Church Council, the Circuit of which their Local Church forms part; and
- (iii) where any such managing trustees are a Circuit Meeting, the District of which their Circuit forms part.

For para. 8(3) of the Model Trusts see Book II, Part 2.

(9) No omission by inadvertence or mistake to comply with regulation (4), (5), (7) or (8) above shall amount to failure of appropriate consultation for the purposes of the relevant paragraph of the Model Trusts or invalidate or avoid any purported direction, certificate, agreement, amendment or determination given or made in good faith under that paragraph.

(10) Where a scheme for sharing the use of a chapel or other local property is approved under Standing Order 942(2) the submission of that scheme to, and its approval by, the Circuit Meeting or Meetings and the Synod or Synods involved shall be appropriate consultation in relation to any draft terms of management included in the scheme, and no further or other consultation shall be required.

(11) These regulations shall be construed and applied in conjunction with the Standing Orders for the time being of the Methodist Church and all words and expressions shall be given the meanings which they bear in those Standing Orders.

## Part 3 Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Presbyters to Preside at the Lord's Supper

The Conference of 2023 adopted new criteria for granting authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper and directed that they be printed here in place of the previous criteria.

1. Sustained need for the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper which cannot be met from the presbyters available, leading to deprivation from that sacrament, is the ground on which a person other than a presbyter may be authorised to preside at that sacrament. The regulations governing the applications for and the granting of such authorisations are contained in Standing Order 011, and these criteria should be read in conjunction with and subject to the provisions of that Standing Order.

2. To be granted an authorisation a Circuit must demonstrate on application to the Authorisations Committee:

- (a) The sustained need for the celebration of Holy Communion which cannot be resourced from the presbyters available in a circuit.
- (b) A mission strategy that supports the need for an authorisation.
- (c) A suitable person nominated by the Circuit who can be trusted to hold an appreciation of the significance of Holy Communion in the life of the church.

There may be different reasons why the sustained need cannot be met from the presbyters available which may include, for example, lack of numbers or the particular needs of specialised mission contexts.

3. Authorisations are granted for someone to assist across a Circuit and should be exercised at the direction of the Superintendent. Appropriate consideration should be given to ensure that the exercise of the authorisation responds to the particular needs for which it was sought and helps to meet them. Authorisations are not related to any particular local role (eg lay employee or local lay-pastor) a person may have and the holding of any such role is not a relevant factor in determining suitability to be granted an authorisation. In circumstances where the committee judges that such an arrangement might lead to a blurring of the distinctions between particular callings and ministries, the Authorisations Committee may decline to recommend an authorisation for a given named individual even when the other criteria are met. An authorisation will not normally be granted to those whose offer as candidates for presbyteral ministry has been declined. Where this is nevertheless deemed appropriate, such an application would not be granted within five years of the declined offer. In such cases, the vocational issues should first be thoroughly explored by the superintendent with the person concerned before the application goes to a circuit meeting.

4. To assess the suitability of the person proposed, evidence shall be presented to the district Policy Committee of his or her

- (a) general competence, gifts and graces in leading worship with respect to the contexts in question, and
- (b) understanding of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The written consent of the person proposed is also required.

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5. Authorisations may be granted to presbyteral probationers and other lay persons. Persons authorised must be members in the relevant Circuit or presbyteral probationers appointed to it.



## Part 4 The Church and Public Protection: Procedures Necessary to Enable those who Present a Safeguarding Risk to be Involved in a Church Community

The text of this Part 4 was revised and adopted by the Conference of 2020 to reflect changes to safeguarding procedure in recent years.

The Conference of 2000 adopted a report, *The Church and Sex Offenders*. Included within it, in the section on 'Practical Implications', was a set of suggested procedures to be followed where an offender seeks to be involved in a church community. Section 69 of Standing Orders deals with the subject. The 2008 Conference directed that the language of this Part be amended to make it gender-neutral, and again in 2012 to reflect the change of usage from 'minister' to 'presbyter'.

The 2017 Conference adopted the recommendation to replace Covenants of Care with Safeguarding Contracts for all those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences. The Conference also adopted recommendations in the Covenant of Care report to introduce a formalised process for risk assessments and the maintenance of records and review of Safeguarding Contracts. Section 69 of Standing Orders should be read alongside the below procedure. Standing Order **235** [as re-numbered by the Conference of 2024] sets out the process for assessment of risk.

Since the Conference of 2000, when procedures were put in place to facilitate the risk assessment, oversight and engagement of sex offenders in church activities, there has been significant development in the world of safeguarding both inside and outside the Church. The Methodist Church recognises that safeguarding provisions must now extend beyond sexual offences to the wider public protection agenda. For this reason, in 2017, the Methodist Council approved the extension of the requirement for safeguarding contracts under Standing Order 690 to include not only sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 but also those contained within Schedule 15 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. These offences are those which may be managed within Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for statutory agencies.

Standing Orders 690 and 690A specify the arrangements for involvement not only of those convicted of or cautioned for offences but also of those who, following a risk assessment and a recommendation by the Safeguarding Committee, represent a significant risk of serious harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults. The term offender is no longer appropriate as safeguarding contracts may be applied whether or not the person has a conviction or caution for an offence.

For the protection of the whole church community, it is important that careful consideration and preparation is undertaken, prior to the engagement in church activities of a person deemed to be a risk to vulnerable groups. This will include exploring the circumstances of safeguarding concerns, identification of risks and the development of a safeguarding contract that is specific to the individual, their location

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and the nature of their engagement with the Church. In all cases, the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance of the Methodist Church must be followed in the set-up and management of safeguarding contracts.

The Church recognises that any risk assessment process may involve the processing of personal special category and criminal data as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Therefore, it is important that the full procedures contained within the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church are followed at all stages of the process.

The implementation of a safeguarding contract will follow a 4-stage process with all stages undertaken consecutively. Each stage will inform the next to ensure that any safeguarding measures are proportionate, necessary and legitimate with regard to the specific risk presented by any individual.

The 4 stages are as follows:

- (a) Collation of information from relevant sources
- (b) Identification of risks from that information
- (c) Consideration of current safeguarding practices and mitigating factors
- (d) Drafting of a contract which addresses the risks identified and makes provision for positive support in developing the person's engagement with the Church.

The Safeguarding Officer for the relevant district (the DSO) will undertake the process on behalf of the Local Church but working closely with the presbyter in pastoral charge or circuit superintendent. They will liaise with statutory authorities in all cases to confirm relevant information and work in partnership with probation services and police where they have a supervisory role over the person who will enter the contract. Where the person is due to be released from prison, the DSO and presbyter will also liaise with the chaplain from that prison, in addition to the statutory agencies planning for reintegration into society.

A meeting will be held with the person who will enter the contract for the following purposes:

- (a) To provide information about the process
- (b) To provide a privacy notice
- (c) To allow the person to offer their own perspective on the circumstances
- (d) To confirm the activities in which the person wishes to participate in the Church
- (e) To identify support networks already in place from family, friends, employment or volunteering and to consider new opportunities to engage in positive activities.

The presbyter in pastoral charge or circuit superintendent will work with the DSO to identify a chairperson and appropriate members for the Monitoring and Support Group (MSG). At least one member must be from the Local Church. Any members who have not undertaken this role before will only be appointed after a safe recruitment process

## *Part 4 The Church and Public Protection*

and completion of a confidentiality notice. A briefing will be provided by the DSO before a new MSG is set up so that all parties have a clear understanding of the role and its responsibilities. All MSG members must attend specialist training to support their participation in the role.

The DSO will not be a member of the MSG so that they can be called upon both to provide independent advice and to undertake the review processes required by Standing Order 690A.

At all stages, recording of information must follow the procedures outlined in the Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Guidance for the Methodist Church and use the forms provided for this purpose.

The following risk areas should be considered when identifying specific risks:

- Risks to survivors and those from vulnerable groups
- Risks to those who engage with the Church and provide support to the person entering a contract
- Risks posed to the person entering a contract and their family (disclosure, health etc.)
- Risks to the wider community using church facilities
- Risks to the Church (including compliance with legislation, policy and procedure, data protection, reputation etc.).

All conditions contained within safeguarding contracts must address specific, identified risks that relate to the individual's circumstances and engagement with the Church. Safeguarding contracts should include one or more conditions that demonstrate the Church's commitment to supporting the person to develop positive future goals through their interaction with the Church. The contract must also demonstrate the commitment of the signatories to follow the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church and relevant standing orders in the oversight of the contract.



# BOOK VII GUIDANCE

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# A GUIDANCE RELATING TO MINISTERS

## Part 1 Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers

The Conference of 2000 (Agenda pp. 216–218), in response to a Memorial to the Conference of 1999, adopted a proposal that, to encourage good practice and to increase awareness, a Charter for Incoming Ministers be printed in this volume. It was re-phrased to reflect the inclusive usage of 'minister' in 2012. It was substantially revised to become a Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers by the Conference of 2016.

1. In the study/office incoming ministers can expect to find:
  - all the information they need to begin their ministry in their new place
  - complete and up-to-date membership lists and pastoral rolls with a list of since November 1st last
  - complete and up-to-date committee lists
  - all files tidied with old material either deposited with the County Records Office or filed neatly and separately
  - the legal formalities about Authorised Persons for marriages completed
  - a list of work currently in hand giving whatever details are needed for them to take up that work
  - a pastoral list of those who are currently ill, recently bereaved or in need of a priority visit
  - safeguarding records including any Covenants or Care or Safeguarding Contracts
  - a list of diary dates
  - a minimum of outstanding work.
  
2. In the house outgoing ministers should ensure that:
  - all carpets are cleaned and vacuumed (the Circuit should ensure that they are shampooed if necessary)
  - all curtains are cleaned (if dry-clean only, the Circuit should bear the cost) and re-hung
  - all interior paintwork is washed down
  - tiled floors are left clean
  - light fittings are clean
  - all cupboards are emptied, cleaned and washed (inside and out) so that all shelves are usable immediately
  - the cooker is cleaned
  - sinks and any built-in appliances (such as fridges, freezers, washing machine, dishwasher) are cleaned
  - bathrooms (floors, tiles, bath/shower, toilets and cupboards) are washed down and cleaned

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- all domestic refuse has been removed from the premises and that household bins are emptied (if possible) or left out for collection
- any furnishings which are the property of the Circuit are checked so that they can be disposed of (if damaged) or are put back, rearranged and made good
- no furniture is left behind unless provided by the Circuit or by arrangement with the incoming minister
- any personal arrangements for telephone or internet have been discontinued and the manse telephone and broadband connection are ready for the new minister
- the gas/electric meters have been read and readings sent to the supplier.

The following additional information should be provided:

- the alarm code if present
  - details of the broadband provider including wireless password
  - details of the final gas/electric readings and a note of the current suppliers
  - a note of where to find the water stopcock and the main/off switch for electricity and gas
  - a current energy performance certificate
  - the latest Health and Safety and Fire Risk assessments
  - the updated manse (property) 'log book' including remedial work carried out etc.
  - information regarding the day and frequency of refuse and recycling collection
  - a list of local doctors and dentists
  - bus/train timetables if appropriate
  - local information (e.g. shops) if appropriate.
3. In the garden ministers can expect to find:
- that all hedges and shrubs have been trimmed or pruned at the appropriate time
  - all lawns cut
  - all beds weeded
  - all garden rubbish removed from the premises
  - all greenhouses and sheds emptied and swept out
  - the garage emptied and swept out – anything left must be in agreement with the Circuit Stewards (e.g. equipment or tins of paint)
  - that the lawn mower provided by the Circuit, adequate to the needs of the garden, is clean and in working order
  - that the boundaries are identifiable and secure.



## *Part 1 Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers*

The care of manses is at all times a matter of partnership and co-operation between the occupants and the circuit stewards. To carry out their responsibilities, circuit stewards, for example, whilst respecting the privacy of the manse, must have whatever access is necessary to ensure that the property is kept in good repair and that an annual and ongoing programme of maintenance and redecoration is sustained. Such things should not be left to the few days when a manse may be vacant at a changeover. In this partnership it is the responsibility of the Circuit (as set out in Standing Orders 533, 803 and 954) to provide a suitable manse, to decorate it and to furnish it with carpets, curtains, a cooker, office furniture and a lawnmower. It is the clear responsibility of the occupants, on the other hand, to keep the manse clean and presentable and at a changeover to make sure that the manse and its circuit furnishings are left clean and tidy. Exceptional circumstances will occasionally arise in which, for various reasons, occupants are unable to fulfil this basic obligation – in which case arrangements should be negotiated with the circuit stewards. Normally, however, incoming ministers can expect to find that their predecessors have left the manse clean and habitable in the ways indicated above. It will not be acceptable for outgoing occupants to leave manses with damage to the premises or to the furnishings which they have caused, nor will it be acceptable for them to leave manses with alterations which have not been approved by the circuit stewards.

## Part 2 Guidelines on Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses

In 2009 the Conference adopted S.O. 803(1)(b), which requires that accommodation to be provided as a manse for a presbyter or deacon in the active work or probationer appointed to a station within the control of the Church shall satisfy such guidelines as the Conference approves for the purpose, unless permission to depart from them has been granted under S.O. 803(1)(c). The 2009 Conference then approved these guidelines (derived in part from the previous S.O. 803(3)) and directed that they be printed in this volume.

Para. 3 was amended in 2010 (and see also the note to S.O. 803(4) on that specific matter) and in 2012 the guidelines were re-phrased to reflect the changed usage as to 'presbyter' and 'minister'.

1. Whilst it is impossible to prescribe exactly the number and use of rooms in a manse because of the wide variation in the internal arrangements of houses, a manse must provide adequate accommodation for a mixed family and visitors. This should include:

- enough bedrooms (normally four)
- at least two separate living rooms and a kitchen
- a separate study (one of the bedrooms may be used for this purpose provided that all other requirements of these guidelines are met).

2. Adequate garage or other parking facilities should be provided.

3. Using Energy Performance Certificates and advice, Circuits should undertake measures to meet the potential energy efficiency ratings of their manses. Circuits should seek to provide manses to meet a minimum of a 'C' energy efficiency rating.

4. Arrangements for the use of a manse for the work of ministry must be such as to protect the confidentiality of all parties.

5. If possible the study should be downstairs. There should be no necessity for anyone visiting the manse on church business to go upstairs.

6. If there is no study downstairs and a bedroom is used as a study it must be possible for pastoral interviews or church business to be conducted in one of the downstairs rooms without disturbing the privacy of other family members or compromising the minister's own privacy. These arrangements must be thoroughly explored with the prospective minister before a match is concluded in the case of a circuit manse. Circuits, Districts or other bodies providing manses should note that this requirement may cause difficulties in a house with fewer than four bedrooms.

7. If the arrangement of the rooms downstairs in the manse makes the above impossible, or in any case if there is no downstairs cloakroom, proper provision must be made elsewhere (e.g. a properly appointed study at a church).

8. Since the manse is to be used as a home as well as a base for the work of ministry, proper arrangements must be made for protecting the privacy of ministers and their families. Such arrangements must include:

- maintaining their safety
- allowing them to carry out the activities of daily life without undue restriction
- protecting them from intrusion and embarrassment.

9. Circuits must be aware that providing a small manse may lead to the need to change it with a change of minister.

### Part 3 Holidays

The Conference of 2013 adopted these Guidelines on holidays in the form printed here, to replace those originally adopted in 1977 and subsequently amended.

The Conference recognises the impossibility and the undesirability of too strict a rule on a minister's use of time and it also recognises the economic restrictions which make the ideal unachievable; but it recognises that the Stationing Committee works on the assumption that a full time appointment involves 12 sessions (a session being a morning, afternoon or evening) a week and considers that the application of the principles of any person's need of rest, recreation, exercise, fellowship, and above all a full family life, would require:

1. 35 days' holiday each year, plus the equivalent of statutory public holidays. Such entitlement would include five Sundays free of duties, of which at least two would be consecutive Sundays.
2. A break of three consecutive weekdays (if possible away from home) each quarter, in addition to the 35 days holiday each year.
3. Where there is a Sunday between Christmas and New Year probationers should be free on that Sunday.

The Conference recommends each minister to cultivate healthy patterns of family life, recreation, exercise and outside interests from the outset.

The relationship between the ministers and the Methodist Church is not legally governed by the European Working Time Regulations (WTR) but for the health and wellbeing of churches and ministers, ministers and circuit stewards should seek to apply the principles underlying those principles and encourage working practices which better enable appropriate alternative ministerial cover to be provided during absences. (The WTR was brought into force as Health and Safety Legislation and is thus designed to ensure the health and wellbeing of an individual and those who are around them):

- a maximum of 48 hours per week, averaged over a 17 week reference period
- a minimum of 11 consecutive hours rest in each 24 hour period
- a minimum of 24 hours rest in each 7 day period
- a minimum of 20 minutes rest break after 6 continuous hours

## Part 4 Connexional Appointments

The Conference of 1987 adopted the following Guidelines, which are printed below as amended in 1996, in 1998 as to diaconal appointments and in 2012 as to the inclusive usage of 'minister'. Amendments to paragraphs 1, 2, 13 and 14 reflect the consequential changes arising from the adoption by the Conference in 2024 of the report of the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group (Agenda 2024, Report 50, section 3), which the Law and Polity was authorised to make.

1. Paragraphs 2 to 13 apply to all appointments made by or on the authority of a specific resolution of the Conference under Standing Order **385** or **386**, and to the stationing of ministers to serve in the Connexional Team on the recommendation of the **[...]** **Connexional** Council under Standing Order **387**.

2. Because the requirements of each appointment differ, no rigid procedures can be laid down, but these guidelines offer a general code of practice for the **[...]** **Connexional** Council and other bodies proposing nominations and for those who are considered for appointment.

3. The general principle should be observed that the procedures followed will be open and understood by those involved, and that the Church's equal opportunities policy will be adhered to.

4. In all appointments involving a deacon the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order should be consulted.

5. All appointments should be advertised unless the body responsible has particular reasons for not doing so, the advertisement making clear to what category or categories of persons the appointment is open.

6. Normally details of these appointments will also be circulated to district Chairs and others who may know of suitable candidates, so that they can encourage people to apply or suggest names for consideration.

7. Many ministers may hesitate to offer themselves for consideration, either because they are already committed to circuit appointments which they would be happy to fulfil, or because they believe they should be under the direction of the Church in such matters and should not put themselves forward. For that reason reliance should not normally be placed on advertisement alone. On the other hand it is impossible to offer to a minister a clear directive from the Church to accept an appointment until it has been discussed with him or her. This inevitably means that first approaches must be tentative. Ministers should not hesitate, therefore, if invited to submit an application for a connexional appointment, as this may be an important step in discovering the will of God for the Church and for themselves.

8. Such an invitation to apply for an advertised appointment may come from a district Chair or other interested person, including a member of the nominating committee acting in a personal capacity. It may also come from the nominating committee itself, in the form 'Your name has been suggested to us as a suitable candidate and details of the post are enclosed, so that you may apply if you wish to do so.' Where an appointment has not been advertised, or has been advertised unsuccessfully, the committee may approach one or more people to discuss the possibility of an

## Part 4 Connexional Appointments

appointment. It must be clearly understood that the nominating committee must eventually consider all the names before it. An approach from the committee does not imply a commitment to offer the appointment. The person approached always has the right to decline.

9. It is not always possible or appropriate to seek permission before a person's name is suggested (e.g. by a district Chair) for consideration, but all those who know they are being considered should be informed of the outcome (either by the nominating committee or the person who proposed their name); they should be told how long they may have to wait before they are likely to hear the outcome and they should be notified as soon as they have been eliminated from consideration.

10. Every applicant, whether the post is advertised or not, should be invited to submit a curriculum vitae and to name appropriate referees. Guidance should be given both to applicants and to referees as to the kind of information required. References will normally indicate the degree of acquaintance from which they are written. In addition the nominating committee should indicate whether, as a matter of course, it wishes to approach the candidate's district Chair or Circuit Superintendent (e.g. concerning implications for stationing), and the candidate should have the right to state whether there are any persons (e.g. the present employer of a lay applicant) who should not be informed at this stage. Ministers should keep their circuit stewards informed as a matter of course. References should normally be taken up after short-listing. The nominating committee will reserve the right to require a medical examination.

11. Candidates should be furnished with a job description and (at least for those called for interview) terms and conditions of service, including stipend and housing, where provided, and to whom the appointee will be answerable. Opportunity should be given for shortlisted persons and their spouses to discuss such issues as housing and the travelling and absence from home which the appointment may involve.

12. Shortlisted candidates should be interviewed, although the curriculum vitae and references should be taken into account and other forms of assessment may also be used. The interview should be two-way, providing an opportunity for the candidate to make up his or her own mind whether to accept the post if offered. The interviewing committee will be entitled however to establish a time limit within which the person offered the post must reply, or to stipulate in advance that all those who come for interview will have completed their own inquiries and be willing to accept the post.

13. The [...] **Connexional** Council or other body responsible should delegate the selection of a candidate to a smaller nominating committee. It should be clearly understood that the parent body must endorse the nomination proposed, and undue delay at this stage should be avoided.

14. The appointment of other persons by the [...] **Connexional** Council, not covered by paragraphs 2 to 13, should follow the accepted standards of good employment practice and will conform to any specific directions which the Conference or the Council may from time to time lay down for the employment of lay persons in the Church.

## Part 5 Ministers Affected by Impairment: A Guide to Good Practice

The Conference in 2007 approved this Guide to Good Practice and directed that it be included in the Guidance Section of CPD. Paragraph 7(b) was amended in 2009, to reflect the re-naming of the Auxiliary Fund as the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons, and the language was generally rephrased in 2012 to reflect the adoption of the inclusive usage for the word 'minister'. This Guide to Good Practice is currently under review, particularly Section 3 "Candidature" which needs updating to refer to the Equality Act 2010 and to reflect the new candidating process adopted by the Conference in 2022, as to which see Section 71 of Standing Orders. Paragraph 2(b) was amended to make new provision once the Medical Committee (which had previously had functions under 2(b)) ceased to be in existence in 2024.

1. Ministers affected by impairment at any stage in their ministry from candidature to retirement are to be affirmed as those whom God has called and the Church has accepted as having a ministry to fulfil within a covenant relationship. The Church shall endeavour in its theological statements, training of personnel, practical actions in management decisions and pastoral care to ensure that such persons are enabled to fulfil their calling with as much flexibility and appropriate understanding as is possible.
2. Fundamental to this is good communication between the relevant Church authority and the person so affected and their family, friends and carers. All should be encouraged to be open about the issues arising, and be able to be confident that they will be dealt with sensitively and positively, in accordance with disability legislation, with due regard to considerations of confidentiality and in the light of current best practice. To enable this:
  - (a) There should be training for Superintendents, Chairs of District, the Warden and deputy Warden of the Diaconal Order and circuit stewards. This should include awareness training, understanding of the law and familiarisation with basic sources of help and advice. It could be done within the structures of training programmes already provided for such office holders.
  - (b) ***[...] The relevant members of the Connexional Team should make available as early as practicably possible occupational health advice to the minister concerned and, as appropriate, to those in any local or other situation [...] related to candidature, stationing, adaptation of appointments etc. Where they or their designated representatives judge it to be necessary an Occupational Health assessment as specified in Standing Order 715(2) shall be undertaken by each person concerned and the Health Policy adopted for candidates under Standing Order 715(1) applied, subject to making any necessary modifications including, in particular, substituting 'person concerned' for 'candidate' and 'interviewing committee' for 'Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee' throughout.***
  - (c) There should be a system of regional networks of those who can offer advice and support from professional, carer, and/or personal experience. This would simply consist of those with such experience being willing to be listed in accessible ways and someone who co-ordinates the list to enable people to find appropriate help. This should be co-ordinated through existing personnel

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such as District Disability Advisors and District Training and Development officers, although the responsibility for obtaining permissions, compiling and maintaining such a list will be differently allocated in different Districts.

- (d) There should be a section of the Methodist Church website devoted to disability matters.

### **3. Candidature**

- (a) Sometimes, candidates with impairments/disabilities are seen as offering less to the role of ordained ministry. Learning to live with disabilities that we are born with, or acquire, opens up gifts and experiences that otherwise would not be discovered.
- (b) All candidates have their call tested. Some will have the call affirmed; others will be encouraged to explore a different direction. Where the disability or impairment forms part of the reason, reference should be made to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Accepted candidates are offered different patterns of training, allowing for varying home and work circumstances. This flexibility can also be used to accommodate applicants with disabilities. As candidates for an order of ordained ministry, their call is tested at circuit, district and connexional level:
- Circuit: It is probable that the candidate's gifts will be known and there may be a better understanding of the possible pattern of ministry which this candidate is offering. This must be conveyed to the District.
  - District: It is vital that a candidate with a disability is not seen as a problem candidate. The committee needs to keep before it that God's work can be accomplished in different ways, and it must not make the person's impairment the only focus of the questions.
  - Connexional committee: As with all candidates the committee seeks to learn about each individual candidate, the gifts they offer and the challenges they face and how the Church can work with both. An understanding is needed of how the impairment has impacted on the candidate's life and calling.
- (c) Throughout each stage of the candidature process, it must be remembered that the call is not for the person despite the disability but rather for the whole person, with the disability seen as one attribute of the whole self offering.
- (d) The candidature process should help the church community to understand that our differences enrich the whole.

### **4. Pre-ordination training**

The varied availability and flexible nature of training patterns should be used to the full to accommodate students with disabilities. Work should be begun as soon as possible during training to identify an appropriate probationer appointment.

### **5. Probation**

Full use should be made of the outcome statements to ensure that an appropriate probationary experience will enable the individual to develop in all aspects of ministry.

## **6. Stationing**

- (a) When ministers with disabilities meet with circuit Invitation Committees there needs to be the opportunity to be open about the way their disability impacts on their life and what they perceive to be needed in order for them to fulfil their pattern of ministry. Ways of working with the congregations can then be addressed.
- (b) Circuit invitation committees should seek to understand the sort of ministry being offered, and what the role of the Circuit would be in supporting it. It is important that good communication and understanding are established. The Chair or the Warden of the Diaconal Order should ensure that this happens.
- (c) Chairs of District, Lay Stationing Representatives and the Warden of the Diaconal Order, in consultation with, and with the permission of the minister, should not hesitate to seek advice connexionally or consult professional experts, where additional information would be helpful in assisting in the matching and stationing process.
- (d) The District Disability Advisor may also be contacted for advice on practical matters.
- (e) The Methodist Church website will be a source of further information and guidance.
- (f) Stationing a minister with disabilities should be regarded in the same way as any other stationing procedure: that of working with the whole person as they seek to fulfil their calling and together further the work of the Kingdom.
- (g) As with the candidature process, the stationing process should help the church community to understand that our differences enrich the whole.

## **7. Ongoing Ministry**

Particular care needs to be given at periods of change.

- (a) To assist in the process of discerning and enabling a pattern of ministry, the minister concerned, the Circuit, District and those charged under Standing Order 781 with handling the discussions about initial deployment and subsequent reviews of deployment, should together seek answers to the following questions:
  - What could it mean for the person, within their circumstances, to live out the life-long vocation to ordained ministry?
  - How can God best be served in the particular situation?
  - How can the skills, training and experience of the person be best used in the current or some other appointment?
  - What additional skills or training may be needed?
  - How can the person be affirmed, valued and accountable?
  - What will it mean for the minister's local churches, the Circuit and the District to enable and support any changes needed?
  - How might the expectations of the local churches be influenced?
  - What physical changes might be needed to the minister's environment and working conditions to make it possible for them to take up or continue an



## Part 5 Ministers Affected by Impairment: A Guide to Good Practice

- appointment?
  - What assistance in terms of people, equipment and/or resources would make it possible for them to work as a minister in this appointment?
  - The answers to some of these questions can come only with time and through further discovery of the nature of the impairment. Flexibility belongs to the nature of this process.
- (b) In a situation where a minister so affected needs to consider changing or adapting their appointment, as wide a vision as possible is needed so that they are enabled to think of all the varieties of ways in which ministry is, or could be, exercised. Chairs, the Warden, Superintendents and others with an overview of the situation should be helped to offer as many ways of proceeding as are possible within the available funding, and assistance from local and connexional sources. To this end the following would be primary sources of advice and help and should be consulted as early as possible:
- Colleagues who have experience in similar situations.
  - The Methodist Ministers' Housing Society.
  - The Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons.
  - Pensions Service within the Methodist Church.
  - Social Services in the local authority for provision of adaptations to the manse and/or occupational therapist for advice on adaptations that the Church can make.
  - Welfare and benefits advisors from a relevant disability charity.
  - Local officers – e.g. community support workers – of the same.
  - The Methodist Church website and websites of the major disability charities.

### 8. Early Retirement

If it becomes necessary to consider early retirement, provision needs to be made for the minister to be enabled to face such potentially unwelcome and difficult circumstances. There are various aspects to this, namely:

- (a) Mentoring, counselling and listening to the person and their family/friends.
- (b) Appointment of a mentor or enabler who will assist in the setting-up of a support group or other appropriate resource for the situation. This should be arranged by the Chair of District/Warden of the Diaconal Order in consultation with the minister and family/friends. When the group/resource has been set up, the mentor should ensure that the Superintendent and Chair are informed that this has been done.
- (c) Provision of space and time – e.g. retreat, leave, holiday, for proper adjustment to the situation. If it is deemed necessary for the person to change appointment or to retire early, the matter must be sensitively handled. All official communication should involve the person affected at every stage and all assistance should be given to allow the person, family and friends, to work through the issues raised by major life transition without undue time or other pressure.

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- (d) Retirement preparation through courses etc. Special courses may need to be arranged or taken advantage of – such as those provided by disability charities and mentoring by lay people and or other ministers with appropriate experience. Moving into retirement is a crucial period in the life of the person, family and friends, and needs to be undertaken thoroughly and sensitively.
- (e) Detailed, accurate advice on pension, housing possibilities, part-time work and earnings in addition to pension and funds that may be available from charitable and connexional sources.
- (f) Provision of information of this kind in forms accessible to people, including printed material.

The presence of ministers affected by impairment enriches the Church. We are called to live in the holy society of the whole wide diversity of God's people and the more that ordained ministry reflects this, the richer the gift it is to the service of the Church. At all stages in ministry, there needs to be awareness of the needs and understanding of the issues for those in ministry in such situations.

It should not be assumed that people will feel guilty, angry, traumatised – or indeed hopeful, defiant, and upfront. These and many other feelings are stages and signposts on the journey of ministry by those so affected, but there should be the openness in the procedures of the Church to enable any such feelings to be honoured, attended to and transformed as God gives grace through the Spirit.

## **Part 5A Guidance for the Breakdown of a Marriage or Civil Partnership**

The Conference of 2023 agreed to revoke SO 111(3) (as to informing the President of the Conference where a minister's marriage or civil partnership had broken down, and provision being made on behalf of the President of appropriate support), with effect from the Conference of 2024, noting that guidance would be produced in its place. The guidance below was duly produced, adopted by the Conference in 2024, and directed to be published here.

Note that paragraph 1.1 extends the reference to "minister" to include in this instance reference to a probationer. The normal usage as provided in the Deed of Union is that "minister" means a presbyter or deacon who has been received into Full Connexion or recognised and regarded as such, and thus excludes a probationer (cl.(1)(xix)).

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This guidance is in relation to a breakdown of a recognised marriage or civil partnership that involves legal commitments between the parties. This guidance relates to the marriage/civil partnership of any minister (including probationers).
- 1.2 It is important to remember that all cases of a breakdown of a marriage will differ and the response will therefore need to be tailored to each situation.
- 1.3 All ministers have the benefit of reflective supervision as a place where risk and vulnerability can be discussed. The minister's relationships will contribute to the effective exercise of ministry and to the minister's own wellbeing, so it is advisable for ministers to be open with their supervisors if reference to this guidance is likely.
- 1.4 When a minister's marriage or civil partnership seems to be in difficulties, the minister is advised to discuss the situation with the District Chair in the case of a presbyter, or the Warden in the case of a deacon. The Chair and/or Warden will be able to advise on sources of counselling and other help.
- 1.5 The Chair must be informed whenever it appears to a minister that the breakdown of the marriage/civil partnership is irrevocable, as must the Warden if either party is a deacon. When a minister informs the District Chair or Warden that the breakdown of the marriage appears to be irrevocable, the District Chair or Warden shall inform the Conference Office and indicate to the parties involved what support is available. All support is offered to both parties. In all cases the Secretary of the Conference, via the Conference Office, will appoint a Connexional Support Officer for each party.
- 1.6 There will be a panel of Council-appointed Connexional Support Officers to support ministers, spouses and civil partners in these circumstances.

### **2. Connexional Support Officers**

- 2.1 The role of the Connexional Support Officer (CSO) is to ensure and check the correct level of support has been provided. CSOs will assist both parties to identify any needs they may have, for instance: pastoral, housing, spiritual, independent financial advice, therapeutic etc. The CSOs will, if necessary, signpost them to appropriately qualified persons (or services).

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- 2.2 The Conference Office shall maintain a list of CSOs. Where possible, ministers, spouses and civil partners will be allocated a CSO within an accessible geographical area.
- 2.3 The Connexional Team shall be responsible for ensuring that the CSO officers receive appropriate training, supervision and support to carry out their role on behalf of the Church.
- 2.4 The Connexional Support Officer shall report any safeguarding concerns to the District Safeguarding Officer and the Secretary of the Conference as soon as they have been made aware of them.
- 2.5 A role description for the Connexional Support Officer should be agreed by the Ministries Committee and held by the Conference Office, to be obtained on request.

### **3. Practical Support**

- 3.1 Practical support should be available for the minister(s), spouse, civil partner and any children. The Connexional Support Officer shall outline to the minister, spouse or civil partner concerned the support available. In cases where children are involved appropriate support will be highlighted.
- 3.2 The Connexional Support Officer should enquire if urgent alternative accommodation is needed for either the minister or the spouse or civil partner. If such accommodation is needed, the CSO should work with the District Chair to identify suitable options.
- 3.3 If a minister is leaving the manse (temporarily whilst the spouse or civil partner finds alternative accommodation or as part of a partnership in which both are ministers), the Connexional Support Officer should work with the circuit or other body to ensure that their ministry can continue safely and provisions are put in place to support their work outside of the manse.
- 3.4 As far as possible, provision should be made for the children whose home is the manse to continue their education and other activities with minimal disruption.
- 3.5 It is recommended that compassionate leave is offered to all ministers involved in the breakdown of the marriage or civil partnership. The length of time required shall be determined by the District Chair in consultation with Connexional Support Officer in each situation and with the Warden where one of the partners is a deacon.
- 3.6 The CSO should discuss with the spouse or civil partner any wish to continue to attend public worship. It should be recognised that, following a marital breakup, the non-clergy spouse or civil partner may struggle to identify a new supportive community in which to worship and may need assistance to be able to do so. Support should be given to ensure both parties are able to find suitable places to worship. The District Chair and/or the Superintendent should be alerted to the couple's intentions in this regard in order to provide appropriate guidance to local churches involved.

#### **4. Pastoral Support**

- 4.1 There should always be an identifiable line of pastoral support available. For a presbyter, spouse and civil partner, whether ordained or not, this will be the Chair of District or another person appointed by the District Chair. Where a Deacon is one of the parties, the Warden of the order will work with the District Chair. It is not appropriate for the same person to offer pastoral support to both parties.
- 4.2 If both parties are ministers it is appropriate for the District Chair to appoint alternate pastoral supporters to both parties.
- 4.3 Within the appropriate limits of necessary confidentiality, those offering pastoral support should be made aware of any discipline cases or concerns that may have an effect on the situation.
- 4.4 Counselling is available for both parties including support for children. The cost of six sessions and (if necessary) up to twelve sessions is covered by the Methodist Church Fund. This does not have to be used in the immediate term but will be made available until the parties are legally separated. The Connexional Support Officer shall have discretion to authorise additional counselling.

#### **5. Financial Support**

- 5.1 The Church recognises the obligation it has to ministers, spouses and civil partners, in particular when the manse is the family home. The Connexional Support Officer should therefore discuss with the minister or partner what additional costs they anticipate incurring.
- 5.2 Where the spouse or civil partner is not a minister, total payments of up to half a stipend may be made available to assist them financially. The grant should be paid in full to the spouse or civil partner and the minister advised to declare it on their tax return.
- 5.3 The Resourcing Committee should have discretion to authorise additional benevolent funding to either party where appropriate.

#### **6. Communication to the Local Church and Circuit**

- 6.1 When it has been agreed that the breakdown of the marriage is irrevocable and one or more of the parties is leaving the manse, a communication should be made to the Circuit or places of worship where the minister(s) has/have pastoral responsibility. The information will include details about the covering of pastoral responsibilities. The form of words used and the time the information is shared needs to be agreed, as far as possible, with both parties. This may be different in each case but needs to be clear, timely and in consultation with the Superintendent, District Chair and Circuit Stewards.
- 6.2 The Superintendent (or in the case of a Superintendent's marriage breaking down, the Chair) should ensure that pastoral care is offered to the affected Local Churches and Circuit.

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- 6.3 If required, the District Chair should find suitable cover for the minister's work. Financial support for this cover, if required, should be made available from the Methodist Church Fund.
- 6.4 In each case, the District Chair should explore with the minister(s) and the Circuit Stewards (or equivalent) the wisdom of the minister continuing in ministry in the current appointment and whether there is a need for the invitation or deemed invitation to be curtailed.

### **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 At the appropriate time, usually after six months, and by agreement between the parties and their CSOs, the CSO should cease to offer support. The CSO should report to the District Chair and, where appropriate, the Warden that their support has now come to an end. The Chair and/or Warden should arrange for any continuing support to be offered in the District as necessary.
- 7.2 The Connexional Support Officer should then notify the Conference Office that the support has come to an end. Any records that have been kept should be sent to the Conference Office for correct disposal, in line with Data Protection principles.

## B GUIDANCE RELATING TO CHURCH GOVERNANCE

### Part 6 Guidelines for the Business of District, Circuit and Local Church Meetings

Meetings may be held physically, electronically or in hybrid form (S.O. 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate see Part 6A, below.

#### District Synod – Representative Session

These headings are intended only to guide those responsible for preparing the agenda of the meeting. They are not that agenda. They do not attempt to be comprehensive. Items are listed only in summary form as reminders; for detail and further material Standing Orders and the second schedule to the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 ('1960') need to be consulted, not only as indicated in relation to specific items below, but throughout Part 4 and Section 96 of Standing Orders especially, as required. See also the Guidelines for the district Policy Committee below.

1. Preliminary – attendance, apologies, dispensations and conflicts of interest/  
duty.

741, 411(1A), 411(1B), 019A.

Note the requirement for the Synod to adopt a suitable process for disclosing and managing any conflicts of interest of its members due to their membership of other bodies.

2. The work of the District –

- (a) general conversation, reports

400A, 412, 930, 963(3), 966.

- (b) reports of treasurer(s) and auditor or examiner

012(3), 012A(6).

- (c) local, circuit and district property schedules

3. The District and the Circuits

501, 412(2), (3), 438, 440, 516(6), 744(7), 930, 960–966, 350(1).

4. The District and the Conference –

- (a) Special and provisional resolutions

122, 126.

- (b) Memorials and resolutions

419, 516(4).

- (c) Authorisations

011(3).

- 4A. ***[deleted]***

- 4B. The District and the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly – report of those attending the Assembly.

240.

5. Communication with the Presbyteral Session – including reports concerning probationers, early retired presbyters, presbyters without appointment, those who have ceased to be recognised as being in Full Connexion, deaths.

480-488.

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6. Diaconal matters – including reports concerning probationers, early retired deacons, deacons without appointment, those who have ceased to be recognised as being in Full Connexion, deaths.
7. Appointments, elections and nominations
  - (a) Nomination of Chair of the District (where applicable)  
423A(6).
  - (b) Synod secretary, assistant secretary, presbyteral secretary  
414.
  - (c) Representatives to the Conference  
417.
  - (d) *[deleted]*
  - (e) Representatives to connexional bodies  
418, 435.
  - (f) Synod-elected members of the Synod  
410.
  - (g) District Policy Committee  
402.
  - (h) District Officers  
403, 414, 435A, 451, 470, 473, 484.
  - (i) Committees, Panels and Groups  
402, 421A, 440(1), 445, 450, 471, 472, 484, 803(2), 1111(1).
  - (j) Auditors or independent examiners  
012(3).
  - (k) District trustees  
966.
  - (l) Lay Stationing Representative  
417B.
8. Notices of Motion  
413(4).
9. Constitution of the Synod  
410.
10. Date and place of next meeting  
411.

### District Policy Committee

These headings are intended only to guide those responsible for preparing the agenda of the meeting. They are not that agenda. They do not attempt to be comprehensive. Items are listed only in summary form as reminders; for detail and further material Standing Orders, the Deed of Union ('DU') and the second schedule to the Methodist Church Funds Act 1960 ('1960') need to be consulted, not only as indicated in relation to specific items below, but throughout Part 4 and Part 9 of Standing Orders, as required.

1. Attendance, minutes, matters arising.
2. General policy [...]  
431, 432, 442.
3. The Circuits



## Part 6 Guidelines for the Business of District, Circuit and Local Church Meetings

- (a) Boundaries  
501.
  - (b) Discontinuance of worship, closure of chapels  
943(1).
  - (c) Extensions of invitations  
438, 545(4).
  - (d) *[deleted]*
  - (e) Additional and fewer presbyters and deacons  
438, 529.
  - (f) Stationing Priorities  
**260(4)**
  - (g) Probationers' appointments  
723(2).
  - (h) Authorisations  
011(2), (5).
  - (i) Grants  
439, 528(3).
  - (j) Assessment  
432.
  - (k) City Centres  
440.
  - (l) New Towns and New Areas  
**324.**
4. Ecumenical
- (a) General  
434.
  - (b) Sharing agreements, local ecumenical partnerships, ecumenical partnerships in extended areas that do not require shared governance, ecumenical areas.  
434(3)(iv)–(vii).
  - (c) Presbyters and deacons recognised and regarded, presbyters and deacons authorised, associate presbyters and deacons  
DU45, DU45A, 438, 732, 733, 733A.
5. Property  
440, 470–4, 960–6.
6. Finance
- (a) District accounts  
012, 432.
  - (b) Advance Funds and model trust money  
437, 955, 963, 975.
7. Ministers
- (a) Sabbaticals  
744.
  - (b) *[deleted]*

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- (c) Manses  
472, 965.
- 8. Lay Employment and Appointments  
018, 438A, 491(5), 570(2)(b).
- 9. Education  
272, 444.
- 9A. Methodist Children and Youth Assembly  
240, 417A.
- 10. Nominations  
435.
  - (a) Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Presbyteral Secretary of Synod  
414.
  - (b) Treasurers  
403.
  - (c) Property Secretaries  
470, Section 96.
  - (d) Disabilities Adviser  
435A.
  - (e) Archivist  
473.
  - (f) Synod-elected members of Synod  
435(2).
  - (g) Members of connexional bodies (Memorials Committee, [...] Central Finance Board)  
138(2)(viii), 418, 435.
  - (h) *[deleted]*
  - (i) Probationers Committee  
484.
  - (j) *[deleted]*
  - (k) Complaints Support Group and Convener and Deputy Convener; Reconciliation Group  
1111.
  - (l) District Chair's Nomination Panel  
421A(2).
  - (m) Other Officers and Committees  
403.
  - (n) Auditor or independent examiner  
012(3).
  - (o) Trustees  
966(1).
  - (p) Lay Stationing Representative  
417B.
- 11. Appointments

## Part 6 Guidelines for the Business of District, Circuit and Local Church Meetings

- (a) *[deleted]*
  - (b) Sabbaticals Advisory Group  
744(5).
  - (c) Tutors for workers with children and young people
12. Other matters
- (a) Data protection  
019.
  - (b) Chair's Nomination (when applicable)  
423(1), 423A(1), DU42(c).
  - (c) Chair's Deputy  
426.
  - (d) International Houses  
445.
  - (e) Training for members of Complaints Support Group  
1111(6).
13. Report to Synod.
14. Date and place of next meeting.  
411.

### Circuit Meeting

These headings are intended only to guide those responsible for preparing the agenda of the meeting. They are not that agenda. They do not attempt to be comprehensive. Items are listed only in summary form as reminders; for detail and further material Standing Orders and the Model Trusts ('MT') need to be consulted, not only as indicated in relation to specific items below, but throughout Part 5 and Section 95 of Standing Orders especially, as required.

1. Preliminary – the members of the meeting and conflicts of interest/duty.  
514(2), 514(2A), 019A, 510(7).

Note the importance of this requirement, in the light of the legal status of the Circuit Meeting, to establish a conclusive list of the persons of whom the meeting consists and to note any potential conflicts of interest those persons may have due to membership of other bodies.

2. Conversation on the work of God and the development of circuit policy.  
500, 515.
3. (a) Report from circuit stewards, including accounts, assessments and budget.  
515(3)-(4), 532, 955.
- (b) Auditor's or examiner's report.  
012(3).
- (c) Report from connexional funds treasurer.  
505(2).
4. Report from Local Preachers' Meeting, including admission of local preachers.  
566(4), 566A(1), 566B(1).
5. Report from Invitation Committee.  
534, 541(5).
6. Report from any other committee appointed by the meeting.  
551.

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7. Property matters, including resolutions for property transactions, quinquennial inspections, annual schedules and returns, and visits to manses  
MT 26(2)(c), 950, 952, 953, 954.
8. (a) Matters referred by Conference or Synod.  
(b) Communications from the Connexional Team or district committees.
9. Numbers of representatives from each Church Council.  
510(1)(viii), 510(6).
10. (a) Annual appointment of Invitation Committee, circuit stewards, circuit meeting secretary, connexional funds treasurer, auditor or examiner, additional members to Circuit Meeting and representatives to Synod.  
012(3), 410(1)(iv), (v), 505(1), 510(1)(v), (ix), 530, 541(1), 550.  
(b) Other appointments, as required, and delegation of tasks.  
541(5), 551, 553, 570, 612(1), 903(3), 1110(2).

Other matters which will need attention from time to time, or which will arise in particular circumstances, include:

- Delegation of powers to Invitation Committee – 541(5).
- Cessation of small Local Churches – 605A, 612(2).
- Invitations to attend Circuit Meeting – 510(7).
- Authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper – 011(2).
- Property projects for approval – 930, 951.
- Memorials to the Conference and other communications to be made – 516.
- Archive material – 015.
- Formation of circuit leadership team, if desired – 515(2).

### Local Preachers' Meeting

These headings are intended only to guide those responsible for preparing the agenda of the meeting. They are not that agenda. They do not attempt to be comprehensive. Items are listed only in summary form as reminders; for detail and further material Standing Orders and the Deed of Union ('DU') need to be consulted, not only as indicated in relation to specific items below, but throughout Section 56 of Standing Orders, as required.

1. Worship  
561(1).
2. Presentation/discussion/review  
Topics might include: worship, preaching, mission, development, creativity, contemporary relevance  
561.
3. Record of decisions, advice and recommendations from the previous meeting  
562(1)(i).
4. Preparation for service: reports [from sub-groups] on, and arrangements for:
  - local preachers on note  
564A.
  - local preachers on trial  
564B.
  - worship leaders: advice to church councils  
569, 680.
5. Oversight and organisation:  
See generally 560-569, 680-685.
  - accountability and review

## Part 6 Guidelines for the Business of District, Circuit and Local Church Meetings

- recruitment of new local preachers
  - continuing development
  - pastoral care and support
  - possible calling to other ministries
  - LWPT: friends, local activities and fundraising
  - administration and appointments.
6. Church, circuit and other news.
  7. Date and place of next meeting  
560(3).

### Church Council

These headings are intended only to guide those responsible for preparing the agenda of the council. They are not that agenda. They do not attempt to be comprehensive. Items are listed only in summary form as reminders; for detail and further material Standing Orders and the Model Trusts ('MT') need to be consulted, not only as indicated in relation to specific items below, but throughout Part 6 of Standing Orders and Standing Order 941, especially, as required.

Guidance on shaping a Church Council meeting agenda around *Our Calling* is published in the Ministers' Handbook on the Methodist Church website.

1. Preliminary – the members of the meeting and conflicts of interest/duty.  
613(2), 613(2A), 019A.

Note the importance of this requirement, in the light of the legal status of the Church Council, to establish a conclusive list of the persons of whom the meeting consists and to note any potential conflicts of interest those persons may have due to membership of other bodies.

2. Conversation on the work of God and the development of local church policy.  
603.
3. Report from General Church Meeting.  
621.
4. (a) Report from church treasurer, including accounts and budgets of general church fund, benevolence fund and model trust fund.  
635(2), 650, 651, 652.  
(b) Any other financial reports.  
653.  
(c) Auditor's or examiner's report.  
012(3), 636.
5. (a) Report from Pastoral Committee.  
054(5), 644.  
(b) Report from any other committee appointed by the council.  
603, 604, 642.
- 5A. (a) Arrangement of preparation classes for membership.  
(b) Report on preparation classes and approval of candidates for membership.  
050.
6. Property matters, including resolutions for property transactions, quinquennial inspections, annual schedules and report to Circuit Meeting.  
MT 26(2)(c), 941.
7. (a) Matters referred by Conference, Synod or Circuit Meeting.

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- (b) Communications from the Connexional Team or district or circuit committees.
- 8. (a) Annual appointments of class leaders and pastoral visitors, church treasurer, auditor, additional members of council and representatives to Circuit Meeting and their substitutes.  
012(3), 510(1)(viii), (7), 610(1)(xi), 630(1), 635(1), 636.
- (b) Other appointments, as required, and delegation of tasks.  
570, 610(1)(ix), 637(1), 642, 644(6), 941(v).
- 9. (a) (In churches with a membership of 49 or less) Resolution under S.O. 610(1)(x) (if desired) and list of persons willing to serve.  
610(1)(x), 610(2).
- (b) (In churches with a membership of 49 or less) Decision as to constitution of Pastoral Committee if desired.  
644(4).

Other matters which will need attention from time to time, or which will arise in particular circumstances, include:

- Services of reception into membership and confirmation – 050(5).
- Candidates for a note to preach – 564.
- Review of baptismal roll, children in the church and remainder of community roll – 054(2), (7)–(10), 050(2).
- Acceptance of candidates, training and accreditation of workers among children and young people and appointment of counsellors – Section 66.
- Appointment and training of worship leaders – Section 68.
- Pastoral Committee business, if so desired, in small churches – 644(4).
- Communications to be made to the Circuit Meeting or other bodies.
- Consideration of the needs of all members of the congregation and local community, including minority groups, and steps to be taken to ensure their full involvement.
- Archive material – 015.
- Formation of leadership team, if desired – 633.
- Appointment of lay leaders for services of extended communion – 609.
- Re-admission to membership after lapse, exclusion or resignation – 052(3), 053, 057(2).
- Appointment of Authorised Persons and additional Authorised Persons under the Marriage Act 1949 (as amended).
- Registration and use of Methodist place of worship for solemnisation of marriage, same-sex marriage and services of blessing for a marriage previously solemnised – Part 8 (B.11-15) below.
- Property projects for consent – 930, 951.
- (Isle of Man only) Quarterly returns to the Registrar-General under the Civil Registration and Dissenters Marriage Act 1924.

### General Church Meeting

These headings indicate only the essential business of the meeting. For its functions generally see Standing Order 621.

- 1. Conversation on the ministry and witness of the church.  
621.
- 2. Financial affairs.  
621.
- 3. Appointment of church stewards.  
632.
- 4. Election of representatives to Church Council.  
610(1)(x), 623.

### Local Pastoral Committee

These headings indicate only some of the most essential business of the committee. For its responsibilities generally see clauses 9 and 10 of the Deed of Union ('DU') (Book II, Part 1 above) and Standing Orders 050 – 056, 631, 644.

1. Conversation on pastoral care in the church.  
644(7), 644(8)(viii).
2. (a) Preparation classes for membership, if so required by the Church Council, and report to the council on such classes.  
644(8)(ii), 050(1).  
  
(b) Annual review of membership.  
644(8)(i), 054(5)–(6).
3. (a) Allocations to classes.  
DU9, 631(3).  
  
(b) Encouragement of fellowship through class meetings and other groups.  
DU9, 644(8)(vii).

*Other matters which require attention regularly, or as need arises, include:*

Tickets of membership – DU9.

Services of recognition of class leaders and pastoral visitors – 630(2), 644(8)(viii).

Transfer on removal into and out of the area – 055.

Commendation and pastoral care of students.

Pastoral care of persons connected both with this and another Local Church, and liaison with that church.

Persistent absence and lapse of membership – DU10, 054(11).

Resignation from membership – 057(1) and (3).

## Part 6A Guidance Relating to the Form in which Meetings should be Held

The Conference of 2023 adopted the guidance below and directed that it be published here. See also Standing Order 019B.

### Church Council meetings

1. A Church Council has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church, including the management of its property, and is responsible for its aims and methods, the determination and pursuit of policy and the deployment of available resources (S.O. 603). So far as possible, the Council should be constituted so as to ensure that all areas of the church's life are adequately represented and in particular that, wherever possible, young people are included (S.O. 610). It is therefore important that meetings should be held in a form which enables the maximum attendance and the most effective participation.
2. Experience since the use of Zoom and similar platforms became commonplace, including experience of remote court hearings, suggests that people find it easier to concentrate on and to understand what is being said if they are face to face, can see more of the person who is speaking and can take into account body language. Some people do not give the same weight and the same quality of attention to electronic meetings. If all other considerations are equal, a physical meeting may be more effective.
3. This is, however, likely to vary very considerably from place to place, bearing in mind the size of the local church, the age of its members, how close they live to the church, the time of day at which meetings may be held, the time of year and many other circumstances. Matters for particular consideration are:
  - 3.1 does the current practice for holding meetings exclude the same people repeatedly?
  - 3.2 do some members have difficulties in attending physical meetings?
  - 3.3 do some members lack access to Zoom (or an equivalent) at all, or are some members for any reason inhibited or uncomfortable in using it?
  - 3.4 do some members have significant problems with bandwidth or connectivity, so that even if they are able to attend they are not able to participate effectively?
  - 3.5 if a hybrid meeting is under consideration, would that disadvantage the members attending remotely?
4. It is important to bear in mind that the form of meeting which may be most convenient for the majority may be exclusionary as respects the minority.
5. Environmental concerns (the avoidance of travel) and possibly the cost of heating a building are relevant but should not outweigh the need to ensure full participation.



## *Part 6A Guidance Relating to the Form in which Meetings should be Held*

### **Circuit Meetings**

6. The Circuit Meeting is the principal meeting responsible for the affairs of the circuit and has to determine the assessment payable by each local church (S.O. 515). The considerations set out in paragraphs 1 to 5 are likely to apply equally to a Circuit Meeting, or possibly more so in the case of environmental factors. In addition:
  - 6.1 a Circuit Meeting may potentially be very large. It is harder to manage larger meetings effectively if they are in electronic or hybrid form.
  - 6.2 care will need to be taken in deciding on the form of meeting to ensure that the representatives from all the churches can participate effectively.

### **Synods**

7. In addition to dealing with matters of business, many Districts use the opportunity of coming together at Synod as a means of fellowship within the District and for purposes going beyond the conduct of business. That object is unlikely to be achieved if the Synod always meets online. The District should consider whether that is significant within the life of the District.
8. There are clearly significant environmental implications of a physical meeting in the case of many Districts which will need to be weighed against other concerns.

### **Procedure, rules of debate and voting**

9. Probably relatively few Circuit Meetings, and certainly few Church Councils, will often have occasion to consider the formal rules of debate (see S.O. 517(2) and S.O. 615(2)), but the rules are framed in the expectation of a physical meeting and may not so readily apply to an electronic meeting or hybrid meeting. If either such form of meeting is adopted, it will be necessary to ensure that all participants, including the chair, are familiar with techniques for catching the chair's eye and that those techniques work satisfactorily. The rules of debate also provide for procedural motions, some of which may lead to a vote. It is important to ensure that there is a clear and well understood process for taking votes, even when no vote is expected, or at least that a clear explanation can be given at the time.
10. Where elections are to be held, consideration should again be given to voting processes if the meeting is not a physical meeting.
11. If a meeting is in electronic form, and perhaps also if it is in hybrid form, it may be desirable to agree rules about the use of the 'chat' facility (both as a means of general communication and as between individuals) and the 'reactions' facility.
12. If confidential business will be discussed, consideration should be given to how effectively confidentiality can be maintained if the meeting is not a physical meeting, having regard in particular to the possibility that when a person attends a meeting electronically others, without the agreement of the members of the meeting, may be present in or need to pass through the same room or otherwise may be able to hear what is said.

## Part 7 Permitted Gambling

The Conference of 1992 authorised the publication here of the guidance as to the forms of gambling which trustees might permit on Methodist premises under Standing Order 924. It was amended by the Conference in 2010 to take account of the changed wording of the Gambling Act 2005. This guidance has been compiled for the assistance of trustees and others, but in so far as it deals with matters of law it is not offered by way of legal advice, and neither the Conference nor anyone else associated with its publication accepts any liability in law for its accuracy. Anyone in doubt as to the current legal position should obtain appropriate professional advice. As to Methodist discipline, reference should be made to Standing Order 924 itself for the full and definitive statement of our rules on the subject. Note also Standing Order 926, as to the rules where Methodist premises are leased on commercial terms.

The Gambling Act 2005 makes provision for minor forms of gambling.

### Non-Commercial Events

*Minor forms of gambling may take place at non-commercial events where no part of the proceeds are appropriated for private gain:*

'A bazaar, sale of work, fete, dinner dance, sporting or athletic event or other entertainment of similar character whether limited to one day or extending over two or more days'.

### Forms of Gambling Permitted at Non-Commercial Events

The law allows at such events incidental non-commercial lotteries, and other non-commercial prize gaming and betting.

Methodist discipline, however, does not allow funds to be raised for Methodist purposes at such events by race nights, poker nights or private gaming.

### Incidental non-commercial Lotteries

Raffles may be held at fundraising functions, usually for donated prizes, and subject to the following rules:

According to the law

1. The amounts deducted from the proceeds of the lottery in respect of (a) the cost of prizes, and (b) the costs incurred in organising the lottery must not exceed the sums prescribed by the Secretary of State;
2. The lottery must be promoted wholly for a purpose other than private gain;
3. No rollovers are allowed;
4. Lottery tickets may only be sold on the premises on which the event is taking place, and while the event itself is in progress;
5. The result of the lottery must be made public while the event is taking place.

According to Methodist discipline

1. The 1992 Conference set a limit of £50 for the total amount of money that can be spent on prizes and the costs incurred in organising the lottery for non-commercial

## *Part 7 Permitted Gambling*

lotteries held on Methodist premises. In this regard £50 is the limit allowed by our discipline. This limit does not include donated prizes.

2. The award of cash prizes is prohibited on Methodist premises by Standing Order 924(3). The award of prizes containing alcohol or other intoxicants is prohibited on Methodist premises by Standing Order 922(1).

### **Other non-commercial gaming and betting**

Provision is made under part 14 of the Gambling Act 2005 to allow activities like rolling a penny, wheel of fortune, bingo etc. at non-commercial events.

The award of cash prizes and the use of gaming machines in connection with non-commercial gaming and betting is prohibited on Methodist premises by Standing Order 924(3).

## C GUIDANCE RELATING TO PASTORAL AND ETHICAL MATTERS

### Part 8 Guidance for the Methodist Church regarding Marriage and Relationships

The current text of this Part 8 was adopted by the Conference in 2022 and consolidates what was previously contained in Parts 8, 9 and 10, with some revisions. Parts 9 (*Guidelines for Inter-Faith Marriages*) and 10 (*Marriage and Relationships: Good Relating, Cohabitation and Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage*) have been deleted and incorporated within this Part 8. See Conference Report 28 (2022): *Marriage Guidance* available on the Methodist Church website.

Reference should also be made to Standing Orders 011A and 011B, for the regulations governing this area.

#### A. Marriage and Relationships in the Methodist Church

1. All significant relationships should be built on the example of Christ, in whom we see the supreme example of self-giving love, commitment, fidelity, loyalty, honesty, mutual respect, equality and the desire for the mutual flourishing of the people involved.
2. It is through that self-giving, rather than through self-seeking, that the self flourishes and begins to experience life in all its fullness (John 10:10) (though it needs to be recognised that the universal Church's historic emphasis on self-sacrifice has often been misunderstood and misused [eg by abusive partners] in a way that is destructive of the wellbeing of the ones abused [often women]).
3. The Conference, affirming the joy of human sexuality as God's gift and the place of every human being within the grace of God, recognises the responsibility that flows from this for us all. It therefore welcomes the serious, prayerful and sometimes costly consideration given to this issue by the Methodist Church.
4. All relationships which are promiscuous, exploitative or demeaning in any way are unacceptable forms of behaviour and contradict God's purpose for us all.

#### Summary understanding of cohabitation

5. The Church recognises that the love of God is present within the love of two human beings who are drawn to each other, and who enter freely into some form of life enhancing committed relationship with each other, whether that be through informal cohabitation or a more formal commitment entered into publicly.
6. As a Church we wish to celebrate that the love of God is present in these circumstances, even if that grace is not responded to or even discerned by the people concerned.
7. The Church has an important calling, therefore, to point to the presence of God's love within such relationships, and to encourage people to respond to it in the renewing and deepening (by whatever means) of their commitment.

### **B. A Methodist Church Policy for Marriages**

8. The Methodist Church welcomes everyone, whether or not a member, who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship. It looks for an openness to God in them, not necessarily a developed understanding of the Christian faith.
9. Legally, marriage is a contractual relationship entered into by two people who make solemn vows and commitments to each other. In the understanding of the Methodist Church, marriage encompasses that but is also deeper and richer. The Methodist Church understands that marriage is a covenant relationship between two people, within God's covenant of love with them. Through it, they may experience, explore and express God's gracious love. As the marriage services remind us, marriage is a way of life which God has created and, in Christ, has blessed.<sup>1</sup>
10. Methodist Church understands that marriage is an exclusive relationship, freely entered into with a life-long intention of uniting two people in body, heart, mind and soul in ways that are appropriate to each partner. In it, God's Spirit enables both partners to know the security of love and care, bringing to each other comfort and companionship, enrichment and encouragement, tenderness and trust. Through such marriage children may be nurtured, family life strengthened, and human society enriched. Within the Methodist Church marriage is understood in two ways: that marriage can only be between a man and a woman; that marriage can be between any two people. The Methodist Church affirms both understandings and makes provision in its Standing Orders for them.<sup>2</sup>

### **Registration of buildings**

11. Where there is a desire to use places of worship for marriage services or for services of blessing for a marriage previously solemnised, the managing trustees of those premises should actively consider whether they wish to do so solely for marriages of mixed-sex couples, or for marriages of same-sex couples as well as mixed-sex couples. The managing trustees should re-consider the question of the use of the place of worship for such services every five years or sooner.
12. A marriage service may only be conducted in a Methodist place of worship or elsewhere when it can be shown that the requirements of the legislation in the appropriate jurisdiction regarding the registration of buildings and personnel have been met and that the couple have complied with the requirements of such legislation which are their responsibility. Where a service of blessing of a marriage previously solemnised is requested, the person conducting the service must be satisfied that the couple are legally married.
13. Where the managing trustees wish to use a place of worship for marriage services, and the legislation of the relevant jurisdiction requires church buildings or personnel to be registered or authorised for the solemnisation of marriages, the managing trustees should take the relevant steps to comply. When nominating an

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<sup>1</sup> The Marriage Service, *Methodist Worship Book*, 1999, p.369.

<sup>2</sup> Standing Order 011A(1)

authorised officiant to be registered the managing trustees should ensure those nominated are, or are willing to be, appropriately trained for the role. This training should include the leading of public worship, pastoral care and safeguarding.

14. Whether or not the law of the relevant jurisdiction requires that Methodist premises must be registered for same-sex marriages before such marriages can take place, no same-sex marriage may take place on Methodist premises unless the managing trustees or, if none, the trustees, have approved the use of the premises for that purpose and taken any steps which may be necessary under the applicable law.<sup>3</sup>
15. The managing trustees or, if none, the trustees of any Methodist premises which are registered for the solemnisation of the marriage of same-sex couples shall ensure that the District Chair is notified of such registration.<sup>4</sup>

### **Responding to enquiries for marriage**

16. It will be appropriate to find ways, often in co-operation with other Local Churches, to encourage contact from couples at a very early stage. The process of marriage preparation and the subsequent confirmation of the request for a Christian marriage service may otherwise be improperly constrained by arrangements for the provision of other aspects of the celebration. Since for most couples many matters require early planning, this will raise the question of the marriage service to a similar level of priority.
17. At the moment of initial enquiry, each couple should be directed to an authorised officiant who is not prevented by conscience from considering their request. A presbyter has no power to refuse the use of a place of worship for a marriage service in such circumstances by virtue of being in pastoral charge of a congregation which worships there.
  - 17.1 When:
    - (i) a minister or probationer is stationed in a new appointment; or
    - (ii) it is proposed that a member should become authorised to conduct marriages and he or she for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the marriages of couples in particular circumstances, the person concerned shall participate in a pastoral conversation on the matter with the District Chair and the Superintendent of the relevant Circuit (if he or she is not the Superintendent). Every effort shall be made to ensure that no individual is placed under any pressure to act against the dictates of conscience.<sup>5</sup>
  - 17.2 An authorised officiant who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a mixed-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Standing Order 011B(4)

<sup>4</sup> Standing Order 011B(8)

<sup>5</sup> Standing Order 011B(3)

<sup>6</sup> Standing Order 011B(5)

- 17.3 An authorised officiant who is asked to officiate at the marriage of a same-sex couple in Methodist premises which are appropriately registered for the purpose (where registration is required) but who is prevented from officiating for reasons of conscience shall notify the District Chair, who shall refer the couple to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented.<sup>7</sup>
- 17.4 A couple who seek to be married in Methodist premises which are not appropriately registered for the purpose shall be referred, if registration is required, to the persons responsible for the conduct of marriages at premises which are so registered, preferably in the same circuit. If the person receiving the request is not willing for reasons of conscience to make such a reference, they shall so inform the District Chair, who shall make the reference in that person's place.<sup>8</sup>
- 17.5 If within a Circuit it becomes clear that all the authorised officiants are prevented by conscience from ever officiating at the marriage service of a couple in particular circumstances, and/or there are no premises which are appropriately registered, it will be necessary to seek assistance outside the Circuit. Even where geographical factors make this difficult, there can be no exception to the basic policy stated at 17 above.
18. At the initial interview, the authorised officiant will seek to establish a good relationship with the couple; explore the appropriateness of their marriage taking place in an act of worship in a Methodist church; and ascertain whether there have been any previous approaches to other churches and, if so, to explore the outcome (e.g whether another authorised officiant has had difficulties or uncertainties in fulfilling their request, see 20.3 below).
19. At the initial interview some couples will present a firm date for their proposed marriage service; in such a situation the authorised officiant may indicate whether or not a marriage service in a particular church is possible on the chosen date, but should make it clear that this is a provisional arrangement which will need to be confirmed following marriage preparation. It is recognised that this may lead to questions and problems concerning other arrangements. Nevertheless, there is an important principle involved: namely, that the Christian marriage service is not something to be assumed and undertaken without careful thought.

### **Preparation for marriage**

20. Because Christian marriage and family life are held in high regard, to engage each couple seeking marriage in a process of preparation:
- 20.1 Where marriage preparation courses are available they should be used flexibly and, as far as practicable, geared to the specific needs of each couple.
- 20.2 Marriage preparation should include:
- an encouragement to couples to explore their own expectations of marriage;

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<sup>7</sup> Standing Order 011B (6)

<sup>8</sup> Standing Order 011B (7)

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- an opportunity for the couple to explore the principles and ideals which the Methodist Church attaches to marriage and family life;
- an opportunity for the couple to examine the wider network of relationships which the couple bring to their partnership, with special reference to the duty of care owed to any dependent children, and, where applicable, the complex dynamics involved in establishing step families;
- an assurance of continuing pastoral support, and an indication of the particular ways in which this support is expressed in the programmes of Local Churches;

20.3 In consultation with the church council and presbyter in pastoral charge, there should be a collaborative approach to marriage preparation, drawing on the experience and skills of ministers, local lay-pastors, lay workers, other lay people, and colleagues in other churches and partner organisations.

### **The decision to conduct a marriage**

21. To reach with each couple a clear decision relating to their request for marriage in a Methodist church.
- 21.1 At the conclusion of a conversation or marriage preparation course, the authorised officiant should ascertain from each couple whether they still wish to be married in a Methodist church. If the couple re-affirm their request for marriage, the authorised officiant shall normally honour this request. If the couple decide not to seek to be married in a Methodist church, the authorised officiant shall explore with the couple appropriate ways in which the Methodist Church can continue to exercise its pastoral ministry towards them.
- 21.2 An authorised officiant, in consultation with the presbyter in pastoral charge, alert to the sensitivities in a Local Church or community, may make a provisional pastoral judgment that a particular marriage in a particular Methodist church may have a destructive impact on the unity of the congregation or the good name of the Methodist Church in the community. (It is impossible to offer comprehensive illustrations at this point, but for example, it may be that relatives from a previous marriage are members of the congregation and have not come to terms with the breakdown of that marriage.) In such a situation, after obtaining the couple's permission, the authorised officiant and presbyter in pastoral charge must consult with the Chair of the District and the Superintendent Minister before any consent is given to celebrate the marriage in church. If the authorised officiant feels compelled to refuse the request for the sorts of pastoral reasons identified above, they must advise the couple about what may or may not be possible in another Methodist church in a different location. Sometimes the advice will be that they may wish to pursue their request in another Circuit; on rare occasions, the advice may be that they should not pursue their request in any Methodist church.



- 21.3 It may be that an authorised officiant, having discussed with a couple at the end of their period of preparation a request for marriage in church, has difficulties or uncertainties in fulfilling their request. (Such difficulties could arise, for example, because an authorised officiant believes that potentially serious weaknesses in the couple's relationship have been exposed but not acknowledged or addressed.) Before indicating to the couple unwillingness to conduct the marriage service, the authorised officiant may find it helpful to check out these concerns with a colleague. If difficulties or uncertainties remain, the authorised officiant should explain them to the couple. If, following further discussion with the couple, the authorised officiant is still unable to conduct the marriage service, they should offer to refer the couple to a colleague, on the understanding that the authorised officiant may first explain to their colleague the nature of the difficulties or uncertainties involved. The colleague should then make a decision about conducting a marriage service in the light of their conversation with the couple and with the first authorised officiant.

#### **Liturgical considerations**

22. Those who lead marriage services should provide a liturgical celebration which symbolises the joy, solemnity and deep significance of the occasion. They should be sensitive to the needs of any children from former relationships, and to the needs of other family members. Where appropriate, children may be incorporated into the liturgical celebration.

#### **C. Guidelines for Good Practice in applying the Church's policy**

23. Ministers and authorised officiants should review the whole process of responding to marriage enquiries, of marriage preparation, marriage services and support for marriage and family life. This review may take place within church councils, circuit staff meetings and from time to time in Presbyteral Synods. Presbyters in single station Circuits are encouraged to work collaboratively with colleagues in neighbouring Circuits. In either case, where appropriate, the review may take place with ecumenical colleagues.
24. The Methodist Church insists that no discrimination shall be permitted against any authorised officiant on the basis of sexuality, gender or race in the performance of duties relating to marriage. Nor shall any authorised officiant, in any circumstances, collude with the suggestion of such discrimination. (For example, a male superintendent or minister must refuse to step in and replace a female colleague if a couple cannot accept the ministry of a woman.)
25. The training of ministers for the full range of their responsibilities in responding to requests for marriage services in Methodist churches (which includes working collaboratively with others, including lay people) should be an integral part of their initial training. Each District should also make arrangements for probationers to reflect on their developing experience in this area of ministry, and should offer support and supervision as the District judges appropriate.

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26. Authorised officiants should consult with the presbyter in pastoral charge, church stewards or the leadership team in a Local Church or Circuit about the participation of the Methodist people in marriage preparation, marriage services and the support of marriage and family life. Ministers should provide opportunities for local congregations to explore the Church's teaching on marriage and relationships.
27. Churches and Circuits may wish to take initiatives to establish among themselves, with other denominations and with partner organisations, a system of marriage preparation which is open to as many as possible; should encourage Methodist people to play an active part in resourcing marriage preparation courses; and should keep existing systems under review to ensure a high quality of service.
28. When a divorced person who is seeking to be married is troubled by a sense of guilt and failure because they have breached their original marriage vows, it may be appropriate for them to share in an act of prayer which expresses penitence, forgiveness and new beginnings.
29. When one party to a proposed marriage in a Methodist church is a member of another Christian denomination, and wishes a representative leader of that denomination to participate in the marriage service, the authorised officiant shall do everything possible to accede to such a request. Care must be taken to adhere to the guidelines currently agreed between the Methodist Church and any other particular denomination.
30. For the purposes of the law (in England and Wales), the authorised officiant may not proceed with a marriage ceremony until they are in possession of the schedule supplied by the Registrar.
31. The authorised officiant shall see to it that the schedule is properly completed and returned to the Registrar following the ceremony.
32. It is inappropriate for an authorised officiant who, for whatever good reasons, and after appropriate consultations, declines to marry a couple in church, to recommend a civil marriage in a Register Office followed immediately by a Service of Blessing in a church. (The theological substance of the Service of Blessing coincides with the theological content of the Marriage Service. If there are well-founded reasons for the judgment that a particular marriage in church would contradict or tarnish the Methodist Church's teaching on marriage, these reasons will remain in force and lead to the conclusion that the Service of Blessing immediately after a civil marriage is not appropriate.)
33. When an authorised officiant receives a request for an inter-faith marriage, they shall discuss fully with the parties the religious, domestic and social implications of a marriage between a Christian and a member of another religion. The normal practice shall be to supplement a ceremony in the Register Office by prayers in the home. (Such prayers shall not take the form of the service of blessing.) Nonetheless, it is recognised that, after appropriate consultation and reflection, both parties may desire the marriage service. In such a case, the authorised officiant shall follow the guidelines as laid down from time to time by the Conference.

#### **D. Guidelines for Inter-Faith Marriages**

34. All faiths cherish marriage and most would agree that seeking God's blessing on a marriage is vital. In Britain's pluralist society, there are more and more opportunities for marriage between people of different faiths. There are some who would see this as a cause for celebration, for it can betoken the meeting of faiths at a very deep social level, that of the life of the family.
35. Several options are open for a couple from different faith backgrounds when they are planning the marriage ceremony. Some will decide to supplement a civil ceremony with informal prayers in the home. This gives maximum flexibility to the couple to invite religious leaders, friends and family members from both faith communities to offer prayers for the blessing and protection of the marriage. Others opt for two ceremonies, to reflect the two faiths within the marriage, but it must be clear that only one is legally effective. It is also possible that the couple will decide to have one ceremony only and will choose either the Christian marriage service or a ceremony in accordance with the practices of the other faith.
36. If the couple choose to be married according to the practice of the other faith concerned and the participation of a Christian minister is invited, the principles given in Paragraph 44 can be applied. To refuse such an invitation when it is acceptable to the persons to be married and their families could be inimical to the good relations between the two communities that the occasion requires.

#### **The need for pastoral care**

37. Within all faith communities in Britain, marriage outside the faith is a difficult and sometimes controversial subject. Fears can arise that the person concerned will be lost to their faith or that the whole community of faith will be weakened as a result of such a marriage. This can result in tension within the faith community, anguish for the parents and pain for the couple to be married. In some instances, prohibitions are in force, as when a woman is prohibited from marrying outside the faith. A person who seeks to marry someone of another faith can, therefore, feel abandoned by their community or family and deprived of pastoral advice, an experience intensified when the person is breaking tradition, custom or law.
38. Pastoral care of the couple both before and after the marriage service is, therefore, essential. It is particularly important that the couple should be encouraged to talk to each other both about their respective faiths, so that respect for the faith of the other can develop, and also about what becoming an 'inter-faith family' involves; for example, the necessity of reaching decisions about the religious education of children or the funeral rites to be followed when a family member dies. Care should be taken by the authorised officiant that any advice given does justice to and does not misrepresent the faith to which the partner who is not a Christian adheres.
39. Pastoral care of the couple will be enhanced if local links of friendship can be developed between the two religious communities concerned. This can help the marriage to be accepted in both communities and open up opportunities for hospitality, ongoing support for the couple and trust-building between faiths.

## **THE MARRIAGE SERVICE**

### **Conscience**

40. No-one should be required to officiate at a marriage service if it is against their conscience. However, it should be remembered that hesitancy or refusal on the part of the authorised officiant could convey condemnation of the other faith, reinforce the couple's sense of isolation and hinder good community relations. An authorised officiant who is prevented by conscience from officiating should ensure that the couple is referred to a colleague not so prevented.

### **Preparation**

41. It is important that the partner who belongs to another faith should be happy not only to take part in the Christian service but also to accept the Christian understanding of marriage as outlined in the Marriage Service. The authorised officiant, for example, should look for evidence in the couple of mutual respect and love, life-long commitment, faithfulness and the wish to grow together through life in friendship, wisdom and holiness.

### **Legal**

42. Legal requirements should be complied with.

### **Liturgical**

43. The **Methodist** marriage services and orders for blessing of a marriage each form a coherent and carefully-worded whole. However, it is possible within Methodism to add to or omit from the liturgy, as long as, in the Marriage Service, the words of declaration and the words of contract required by law remain. Therefore, in order to affirm respect for the beliefs and commitment of the partner from another faith, a prayer, hymns and/or readings from the other faith can be included. This could extend to an appropriate symbolic action from the other faith tradition. Consultation with the couple concerned is essential in this process. Nothing should be included without the consent of both parties and care should be taken that the additions are consonant with the Christian faith as a whole and the Christian concept of marriage.
44. Omissions from the liturgy should be minimal but examples might be phrases which one partner could not say in good conscience, for example the trinitarian formulations in Section 14 of the Marriage Service and Section 10 of the Blessing of Marriage Service. It might be acceptable to replace these with 'in the name of God' which could be said by both partners with good conscience.
45. The participation of a priest or religious leader from another faith community in a Christian marriage service would not normally be expected. However, where such participation
- a. is requested by the couple;
  - b. has the agreement of the other faith community; and

## *Part 8 Guidance for the Methodist Church regarding Marriage and Relationships*

- c. will not change the fundamental Christian nature of the service it should be welcomed. To debar a leader from another faith from making a contribution from that faith tradition, for instance, would imply a lack of openness and trust on the part of the Christian community which could be very hurtful to the other partner and their faith community and hinder the good relations between the two communities that the occasion requires. However, discernment should be used to ensure that any involvement by a person from another faith enhances the service for the couple to be married and is acceptable to all the parties concerned.

### **Further Help**

46. Further help, practical or pastoral, or referral to local contacts or specialist resource people, can be gained from the Connexional Team at Methodist Church House.

***[Part 9 (Guidelines for Inter-faith Marriages) and Part 10 (Marriage and Relationships: Good Relating, Cohabitation and Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage) were deleted in 2022 and combined into Part 8 (Guidance for the Methodist Church regarding Marriage and Relationships) above.]***

## **Part 11 The 1993 Conference Resolutions on Human Sexuality**

The Conference in 2006 resolved that the six resolutions on Human Sexuality adopted by the 1993 Conference should be published in Book VI (now Book VII) of CPD.

The Conference's current understanding of marriage and relationships is set out in Part 8 above, following the 2021 Conference vote on the provisional resolutions of 2019 relating to the Church's understanding of marriage, including same-sex marriage. See report to the Conference in 2019 "God in Love Unites Us" and report to the Conference in 2021 "Marriage and Relationships: Provisional Resolutions".

1. The Conference, affirming the joy of human sexuality as God's gift and the place of every human being within the grace of God, recognises the responsibility that flows from this for us all. It therefore welcomes the serious, prayerful and sometimes costly consideration given to this issue by the Methodist Church.
2. All practices of sexuality which are promiscuous, exploitative or demeaning in any way are unacceptable forms of behaviour and contradict God's purpose for us all.
3. A person shall not be debarred from the Church on the grounds of sexual orientation in itself.
4. The Conference reaffirms the traditional teaching of the Church on human sexuality; namely chastity for all outside marriage and fidelity within it. The Conference directs that this affirmation is made clear to all candidates for ministry, office and membership, and having established this, affirms that the existing procedures of our Church are adequate to deal with all such cases.
5. The Conference resolves that its decisions in this debate shall not be used to form the basis of a disciplinary charge against any person in relation to conduct alleged to have taken place before such decisions were made.
6. The Conference recognises, affirms and celebrates the participation and ministry of lesbians and gay men in the Church. The Conference calls on the Methodist people to begin a pilgrimage of faith to combat repression and discrimination, to work for justice and human rights and to give dignity and worth to people whatever their sexuality.

## **Part 12 *Through a Glass Darkly*: Recommendations as to Methodist Practice in Relation to Alcohol**

The Conference of 2000, in the context of the debate upon Alcohol on Methodist Church Premises, directed that the following recommendations as to Methodist practice from the 1987 Report of the then Division of Social Responsibility *Through a Glass Darkly* should be made more widely known throughout the Connexion, and further directed that they be printed here.

That all Methodists

- (1) consider seriously the claims of total abstinence;
- (2) make a personal commitment either to total abstinence or to responsible drinking;
- (3) give support wherever possible and by appropriate means to those who suffer directly or indirectly from alcohol misuse;
- (4) unite to support pressure on government and public opinion for a programme designed to control consumption and reduce harm;
- (5) recognise the importance of example and education in family life;
- (6) where they practise total abstinence take special care to avoid authoritarian attitudes which may be counter-productive;
- (7) where they practise responsible drinking take special care to demonstrate that this also involves self-control.

That the Methodist Church

- (8) actively engage in the promotion of responsible attitudes to alcohol and in the support (whether directly or indirectly) of those suffering the harmful consequences of their own alcohol misuse, or that of others.

## Part 13 Guidance for the Reception of Christians of Other Communion into the Membership of the Methodist Church and Joint Confirmations

The Conference of 2003 adopted a report from the Faith and Order Committee containing the following guidance, and directed that it be published here. The Conference in 2019 adopted a report from the Faith and Order Committee that amended the paragraphs on Joint Confirmations.

### Background

The Conference of 2000 adopted a report on 'Extended Membership'<sup>9</sup> which proposed that Christians of other communions could be received into membership of the Methodist Church whilst remaining 'members' of other communions. This required an amendment to the Deed of Union (clause 8(e)(i)), which was confirmed by the Conference of 2001. It also required liturgical provision that was provided in the form of an amendment to 'The Reception of Christians of Other Communion into the Membership of the Methodist Church'.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to clarify the nature of this decision in two ways:

- (A) A Christian of another communion may be received into Methodist membership in any Methodist Church whilst remaining a member of the other communion. That opportunity is not limited to Local Ecumenical Partnerships in which the Methodist Church is involved.
- (B) 'Extended' membership is not a different category of membership. Nothing said or done in the process of conferring 'extended membership', including the reception itself, should suggest otherwise.

### Guidelines

The Faith and Order Committee offers the following guidance on the variety of ways in which Christians of other communions may be received into the membership of the Methodist Church.

- (1) If the Christians of other communions to be received include those to be received 'by transfer' and those to be received into 'extended membership', the question at no. 1 in the service should be asked in an appropriate form (see below) to the former, then to the latter. The reception at no. 2 in the service should be said once in an appropriate form (see below) to all those being received.

In a Local Ecumenical Partnership involving the Methodist Church, the following ((2)–(4) below) should be noted:

- (2) When one or more Christians of communions other than those in the Partnership are being received 'by transfer' the service of Reception on pages 353–354 of *The Methodist Worship Book* may be used as printed.

<sup>9</sup> *Statements and Reports of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order, Volume 2, 1984–2000, Part Two* (available from Methodist Publishing, for which see details at the beginning of this volume), pp. 358–362.

<sup>10</sup> *The Methodist Worship Book*, pp. 353–354.



## Part 13 Guidance for the Reception of Christians

- (3) When one or more Christians of communions other than those in the Partnership are being received into 'extended membership' the following modification would be required in the words addressed in no. 1 of the service to those to be received:  
*N and N (N), you are members of other communions within the Church of Christ. Do you wish also to be members of the Methodist Church? Consideration may be given to using the name or names of the 'other communions'. If someone being received is also a member of another church in the same 'place' (village, suburb, town, etc), consideration may also be given to shortening the reception at no. 2 by omitting the words 'and of the church in this place'. This is not to deny the significance of Methodist membership being of the denomination and of the local church, but ecumenical and pastoral sensitivity may lead to those words being omitted.*
- (4) When one or more Christians of one or more of the other communions involved in the Partnership are being received into 'extended membership' the same modification in (3) above would be required in the words addressed in no. 1 of the service to those to be received. Stronger consideration should be given to using the name or names of the 'other communions' and the reception at no. 2 in the service should be shortened.

In other Methodist Churches, the following ((5)–(6) below) should be noted:

- (5) When one or more Christians of other communions are being received 'by transfer' the service of Reception on pages 353–354 of *The Methodist Worship Book* is recommended as printed.
- (6) When one or more Christians of other communions are being received into 'extended membership' the modification in (3) above would be required in the words addressed in no. 1 of the service to those to be received. Consideration may be given both to using the name or names of the 'other communions' and to shortening the reception at no. 2 in the service.

The 2000 report on 'Extended' Membership also addressed the situation in which extended membership might be conferred by another denomination, or more than one, as well as by Methodists, in the same service and said:

it might well be appropriate to produce a special liturgy for the occasion, incorporating the necessary elements of each denomination's rite. In these circumstances, the words and actions of nos. 1–3 (MWB pp. 353f), as amended above, should always be included.<sup>11</sup>

That advice still stands and it is hoped that the guidelines above will be helpful in the production of that special liturgy.

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<sup>11</sup> *The Methodist Worship Book*, pp. 353–354.

## Book VII Guidance

### Joint Confirmations

- (1) Joint Confirmation is appropriate in ecumenical contexts where there is a formal agreement in place for some form of local ecumenical cooperation.
- (2) An appropriate liturgy for confirmation should be used, which is acceptable under the practice and discipline of the participating churches. This may be the Joint Liturgical Group's liturgy for baptism and confirmation,<sup>12</sup> an order from *The Methodist Worship Book* which includes Confirmation and Reception into Membership, or an appropriate liturgy authorised by another participating church. There should be a presiding minister from each participating church at a service of joint confirmation. The presiding ministers share in presiding over the whole service.
- (3) Whatever liturgy is used, it must include the laying on of hands and a prayer of confirmation in which the presiding ministers join together, such as:

Lord, confirm your servant *N* by your Holy Spirit that *she/he* may continue yours forever. **Amen.**
- (4) Confirmation, as practised by Methodists, is always accompanied by Reception into Membership. If the intended liturgy does not include the act of reception into the membership of the Methodist Church, it should be added after the prayer of confirmation. A form such as the following should be used:

*N and N (N)*, we receive and welcome you as members of the Methodist Church.<sup>13</sup>  
This is followed by the offering of the hand of fellowship.
- (5) Where candidates are to be baptised and confirmed, it is highly desirable that this should take place in the same service.
- (6) The Conference requires all candidates for confirmation to be properly instructed in the teaching and discipline of the Methodist Church. Those to be jointly confirmed should be jointly prepared. The Church Council of the appropriate Local Church should have approved the admission of candidates to membership before the service of confirmation and reception into membership takes place. In the case of Methodist independent schools, attention is drawn to Standing Order 050(3).
- (7) In Methodist discipline, confirmation is administered by a presbyter (Deed of Union clause 8(b)). Normally, this should be the presbyter with pastoral charge of the Local Church whose Church Council has approved the admission to membership of the candidates.<sup>14</sup>
- (8) At a service of joint confirmation, all the candidates for confirmation should be jointly confirmed.

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<sup>12</sup> This has been commended by the House of Bishops of the Church of England pursuant to Canon B43.

<sup>13</sup> The 2003 Conference agreed that on the reception into Methodist membership at joint confirmations the reception should be shortened by omitting the words "and of the church in this place".

<sup>14</sup> There may be contexts in which another arrangement is necessary; for example where the local minister in an LEP is an Anglican priest who is Authorised to Serve as a Methodist presbyter but who would be prevented by the discipline of the Church of England from administering confirmation, or where the local minister is a presbyteral probationer. In such circumstances it would be appropriate for the Superintendent to preside.

## Part 14 Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care

The Conference in 2008 directed that this Section from the report *With Integrity and Skill - Confidentiality in the Methodist Church* be included in the Guidance section of CPD and made available on the Methodist Church Website. The Conference of 2024 noted that these Guidelines are to be reviewed and a report on the outcome will be brought to a subsequent meeting of the Conference.

### Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care

Within these Guidelines the expression 'Pastoral Worker' refers to lay, ordained, paid and voluntary persons who exercise a pastoral role within or on behalf of the Methodist Church.

1. In order to establish a relationship of trust within a pastoral relationship and within the wider church community, it is important that the things people share are treated in confidence. There are three exceptions to this.

If someone specifically gives the pastoral worker permission to pass on something they have said (eg, they give permission for a situation they are facing to be mentioned in the intercessions at church).

If a person discloses information that leads a pastoral worker to think that that person or another person is at risk.

If a person indicates that he has been involved in or is likely to become involved in the commission of a serious criminal offence.

2. In the second and third cases information should be passed on to the appropriate person or agency. Wherever possible the person disclosing information should be supported in sharing that information himself or herself. If that is not possible they should be encouraged to give permission for the information to be passed on.<sup>15</sup> Only if this is not possible should the pastoral worker disclose the information to the appropriate third party without permission. A child would not necessarily be expected to disclose information themselves, but they should be carefully consulted.

Guidance on the safeguarding of Children, Young People and vulnerable adults can be found on the Methodist Church website.<sup>16</sup>

3. When a person indicates that what he or she is saying is to be kept confidential, it should be understood that it will remain so, subject to the circumstances outlined above. There is a further responsibility on behalf of the person offering care in the pastoral context to assume confidentiality even without this being explicitly raised. Seeking the permission of the person disclosing information as to whom it might be shared with and in what circumstances is an important part of building up trust and demonstrating that they and their story are valued. A trust that is born of a community in which confidentiality is normally maintained will lead to confidence

<sup>15</sup> Care must be exercised to not prejudice or risk prejudicing any possible police investigation. See, for example, SO 1120(6) for guidance.

<sup>16</sup> [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)

that those who offer care are able to exercise proper judgement on those rare occasions when confidentiality needs to be broken.

4. **Supervision**

All those in a recognised pastoral relationship should be supported through a structure of formal reflective practice (called 'supervision'). Each church or Circuit should have a supervision system in place for their pastoral workers, providing someone they can talk to, seek advice from and share with, in confidence, issues and concerns about a visit or a series of visits. This may be an experienced pastoral visitor, pastoral secretary, a lay pastoral worker, a presbyter, deacon or a professional supervisor. Details about possible models of supervision can be found on the Methodist Church website.<sup>17</sup>

5. **Self-Awareness**

If the pastoral worker has an urge to pass on information, what is their motivation? Has the information shocked, alarmed or offended them? Has the information caused painful memories to surface from their own history? Is there a sense of power connected to knowing this information when others do not? On the other hand, would it help the person or people in the midst of a pastoral situation to pass the information on? If so, the person disclosing should be encouraged to share their own story, or give permission for it to be told. Three simple headings can help those in a pastoral relationship to develop their self-awareness in regard to confidentiality.

6. **When to tell**

When permission has been given by the 'owner of the story'.

When an individual/individuals will be at risk of harm if the information is not passed on.

When information has been disclosed about a serious criminal offence that has taken place or is planned.

In the context of supervision, with the prior knowledge of the individual that this may take place.

7. **What to tell**

What are the facts of the story? These need to be told without gloss or 'spin'. Only sufficient information should be passed on to enable the giving of support, practical help or informed prayer. Avoid sharing more than is needed.

In a supervision context it would be usual practice not to give details of names, but an outline of the situation and the pastoral worker's response.

8. **Who to tell**

Identify the most appropriate person (if any) to pass the information on to. Who can help or has the resources or access to support for the person concerned? Who will most appropriately support the pastoral worker in reflecting on what they have heard?

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<sup>17</sup> [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)

## Part 14 Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care

Identify any persons or groups who should not be told. It should not be assumed that the person concerned has told their family or friends.

It is not good practice for pastoral workers to share pastoral information about third parties with members of their family. People would not expect a GP to pass on to her or his spouse confidential medical information, yet often assumptions are made that to tell a pastoral worker information will lead automatically to their partner knowing. Boundaries of confidentiality need to be made clear to all concerned, and the family members of the person offering care should not be expected to carry the responsibility of holding such information.

### 9. Prayer Support

People's names and situations should only be mentioned in public worship and contexts of open prayer if they have given express permission. This applies to prayers written in books, hung on prayer trees and passed on to prayer chains and networks.

Care should be taken when a worship leader or preacher invites topics for intercessory prayer that people understand that they should only share information about people that is given with their permission.

### 10. Church Meetings

The limits of confidentiality within any church meeting need to be identified and kept to – not by implicit assumption but by explicit and agreed policy. Applying the general principles that information is only passed on when permission is given and that the person involved knows the context in which it will be shared will enable meetings to remain in good order.

Groups discussing the status of an individual need to be reminded of the confidential nature of their business. Disciplinary proceedings of the Church operate under strict rules of confidentiality, which are fully explained in *Complaints and Discipline in the Methodist Church: A Step by Step Guide to the Standing orders on Complaints and Discipline*.<sup>18</sup>

### 11. Dual Roles

The boundaries of a pastoral relationship can be blurred. A pastoral visitor may also be a former nurse and a volunteer visitor at the local hospital. This may give her access to church members as patients, in which case it is important that she and the church member are both clear about which 'hat' she is wearing. It may be that pastoral support would need to be offered by a different member of the church or Circuit.

Sometimes the person offering care has dual responsibilities on behalf of the Church (eg, a Chair of District who is responsible for pastoral care of presbyters as well as their discipline and their stationing). In such situations the status of the conversation should be made as clear as possible from the outset. The speaker

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<sup>18</sup> Later editorial note: this original reference was to Clifford Bellamy's very helpful Guide (Third Edition, 2008). Since then, Standing Order 1157 has been enacted, which deals extensively with questions of breach of confidentiality, and reference should now be made to that provision.

should be asked to state what his or her expectations are. The listener should make it clear whether he or she is willing to be bound to complete confidentiality in advance and explain in what circumstance they would feel an obligation to share or use the information given.

If during the course of a pastoral conversation a listener realises that there is material that might need to be used in a context beyond pastoral support, the speaker should be told.

**12. Multiple Contexts**

A pastoral worker may have privileged knowledge of an individual from another context (eg, barrister, GP, counsellor). Best practice is that information disclosed by an individual remains within the geographical or professional context in which it was disclosed.

If a person has given permission for their situation to be prayed about by a prayer group and a member of that group has contact with them in another pastoral setting, it is not appropriate for that information to be shared in that other setting without permission being sought.

**13. Multiple Needs**

Where there are multiple parties within the church or within a family with a range of needs, different sources of pastoral support for those parties will need to be offered. This is particularly the case in a situation of abuse, where victim and perpetrator should not have the same pastoral supporter.

It may also be that a church's pastoral system has visitors that care for particular groups within the life of the church, such as young people.

**Confidentiality and Technology**

**14. Data Storage**

When a computer is passed on, sensitive and confidential data from the hard drive should be permanently deleted. Security software can be purchased to do this. Alternatively hard drives should be removed from equipment being disposed of.

Where data is stored in such a way that there is shared access, proper use of passwords should be made to limit access to appropriate persons. This is true of those whose computers are based at home and used by family members, as well as those who work in an office.

When data is stored on portable media, including: CD and DVD ROMs, floppy discs, USB drives, mobile phones and laptops, care needs to be taken to password protect files and machines.

If using a Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) to store, send or receive confidential information, it is important to ensure that a high level of security encryption is enabled.

### **15. Social Networks and Websites**

Sites such as Facebook and Myspace are increasingly popular and are used by many people as a source of support and friendship. People are often quite relaxed about the amount of information they disclose about themselves and possibly about others. It is important to apply the principle about 'who owns the story' in what is shared about others online.

### **16. Remote Printing and Faxing**

If using fax machines or printers that are networked from a computer into another room, in a busy office for instance, it should be ensured that sensitive information is not left unattended.

### **17. Photocopiers**

Originals of sensitive material should not be accidentally left on the photocopier; the next person to use the machine may not understand the confidential nature of what has been left for all to see. Some copiers retain a scan of a document until the next document has been copied. If a print run is interrupted (due to lack of ink or paper) it may be that the next person to use the machine finds that the outstanding copies print out when they have stocked up the paper or ink.

### **18. Email**

In families and in offices it is not unusual for people to have shared mailboxes allowing general access. Where possible, in-boxes should be password protected.

Any email that contains personal data about a third party should only be sent with their permission and should be treated with the same care and attention as any other written information being passed on. It is important to take care not accidentally to 'reply to all' if the contents of your reply to an email should not appropriately be seen by the wider group. When emailing a group, if the members have not given permission for their details to be circulated within the group they should be mailed using the 'blind carbon copy' (i.e. bcc) facility.

### **19. Protecting Contents**

When sending documents, secure the contents against accidental or deliberate alteration by converting documents into a secure format such as PDF.

### **20. Mobile Technology**

The same care should be taken in passing on texts as when using any other method of passing on information. It is important not to discuss personal details of individuals whilst using a mobile phone in a public place.

Documents, images, sound recordings and videos can easily be made and passed on using various kinds of mobile technology. If sending data by Bluetooth it is important to remember that unintended people may have their Bluetooth connectivity set to 'on' and be able to receive information. When sending confidential or potentially sensitive data it is important to target a particular device (phone or laptop), rather than use a general broadcast, which may be picked up by other devices within range.

21. **Shredding**

The increase in cases of identity theft has brought to light the need for careful disposal of sensitive or personal information. Documents containing personal details or confidential information should be shredded before binning or recycling.



## **Part 15 Homophobia: Definition and Guidance**

The Conference of 2016 directed that the following definition and guidance, produced by the connexional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, be printed here.

### **Definition**

Taking into consideration the Methodist Church's history, our context and our reading of Scripture:

Homophobia is any statement, policy or action which denies the image of God in another person due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation; which is, treating someone in a discriminatory manner because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Homophobic attitudes, words, and behaviours are inconsistent with the nature of Christian conduct and a violation of the worth and dignity of all people.

Homophobia can be experienced in a number of ways, including:

- physical violence or emotional or psychological abuse, including the threat of or incitement to such behaviour (which may also be deemed hate crimes in law)
- applying stereotypes and assumptions to people based on their sexual orientation
- using language that is hostile, hurtful or offensive in its intent
- abusive or coercive 'spiritual practices' (i.e. demanding or requiring repentance or participation in healing or other types of service).

### **What homophobia is not**

Having defined what we believe homophobia to be, it is important that we also confirm what it is not. As a Church we would want to affirm that it is not homophobic to:

- disagree on matters of scriptural interpretation or to hold and express a view that same sex activity is wrong (provided that it is not repeatedly targeted at an individual because of their sexual orientation)
- have lots of questions to ask; although the boundaries of personal space should be respected
- 'get the language wrong' when talking about sexual orientation; it is more important to speak honestly and respectfully about our feelings.

## Part 16 Deliverance Ministry including Exorcism: Guidelines for Good Practice in the Methodist Church in Britain

The Conference of 2022 directed that the following guidance on Deliverance Ministry including Exorcism be printed here. Further details can be found in Conference Report 40 (2022): Deliverance Ministry. For the Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry see S.O. 292 in Book III.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. The nature of deliverance ministry

It is an important and cherished part of the Methodist tradition continually to hold in prayer any who may be experiencing times of suffering and anxiety. This may take place in gatherings for public worship, as well as in pastoral situations.

Some people may seek specific help when they become aware of what seem to be continuing experiences of evil within them or around them. For these people, it may be appropriate to offer the Church's deliverance ministry.

The Church regularly prays for deliverance from evil in the words of the Lord's Prayer; deliverance ministry is an expression of this intention.

Persons seeking deliverance ministry are very vulnerable. Deliverance ministry should only be offered according to the provisions of the Methodist Church as contained in these guidelines, and in a context of continuing pastoral care.

The following guidelines should therefore be followed.

#### 1.2. Theological basis

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the theological reflection in the Deliverance Ministry report to the 2022 Conference.

#### 1.3. Definitions

- i. Healing – The Church's healing ministry is a ministry which may include elements such as appropriate Christian prayer, sacrament or rituals/ practices with the intention of relieving suffering: mental, physical, spiritual or emotional.
- ii. Deliverance – The Church's deliverance ministry is a ministry which may include elements such as appropriate Christian prayer, sacrament or rituals/ practices with the intention of freeing individuals from what they understand to be the influence of evil within them or around them.
- iii. Exorcism – exorcism is a form of deliverance ministry, but is more specifically concerned with freeing individuals or places from what they understand to be possession by an evil spirit.  
N.B. Guidance offered in this document applies to both deliverance and exorcism ministries.

## *Part 16 Deliverance Ministry including Exorcism*

- iv. Terminology – For the purposes of this guidance:  
the word recipient denotes someone who is seeking, requesting and receiving deliverance ministry;  
the word practitioner denotes a person who is authorised to administer it;  
the word supporter denotes a person who assists a practitioner.

### **2. Context**

Deliverance ministry is an extension of the prayer life of the whole Church; recipients should therefore be able to have confidence that words, rites and intentions offered express the faith of the whole Church.

It is recommended therefore that:

- i. Deliverance ministry should only be offered when authorised, in each and every instance, by the Chair of the District in which it is to be given, or their appointed representative(s).
- ii. It is never undertaken by one person alone. Each practitioner should be assisted by up to two appropriate supporters, at least one of whom is involved in the ongoing pastoral care of the recipient.  
They should set aside time for spiritual preparation before offering deliverance ministry, and their ministry should also be simultaneously supported by a prayer team in a separate location.
- iii. The approved liturgy is used. This will be made available as part of the training. The service may also include Holy Communion or anointing with oil.
- iv. Deliverance ministry should not take place online.
- v. Deliverance ministry must not be exercised with the intention of attempting to change a recipient's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- vi. Deliverance ministry must not be offered to recipients who are under 18 years of age.

### **3. Safeguarding**

Deliverance ministry is an integral part of the Church's ministry of healing and these Guidelines for Good Practice in the Methodist Church in Britain should be followed in conjunction with the safeguarding policy and practices of the Methodist Church. Good safeguarding practice must be adhered to at all times and includes addressing the following areas:

- i. Deliverance ministry may only be undertaken by authorised practitioners as set out in these Guidelines for Good Practice in the Methodist Church in Britain and must ensure the safeguarding of recipients, practitioners and supporters.

## *Book VII Guidance*

- ii. Practitioners must have undertaken up to date Methodist Advanced Module safeguarding training and their supporters must have undertaken up to date Methodist Foundation Module safeguarding training.
- iii. Informed consent (including the limits to confidentiality) must be obtained from the recipient of deliverance ministry and any sacramental acts and rituals/ practices that may be used must be explained to the recipient in advance.
- iv. Information shared by a recipient should not be passed to others unless they give consent in advance for specific information to be shared or, the information indicates that they or another may be at risk of harm, or the recipient indicates that they are involved in or likely to become involved in a criminal offence, or the practitioner believes that another party is involved or likely to become involved in a criminal offence.
- v. Practitioners' language and body language should always be considerate and courteous, and touch and the anointing with oil may only be used with prior consent.
- vi. Practitioners must have regard to the mental capacity and mental health of an adult recipient and seek advice from a mental health professional if their capacity and/or judgement is in doubt. The District Safeguarding Officer must be informed in all cases of deliverance ministry.
- vii. Practitioners must consider whether there are safeguarding concerns and inform the District Safeguarding Officer of any identified.
- viii. Deliverance must be conducted with the minimum of publicity, in a safe space and by more than one person.
- ix. Practitioners must make a written record of deliverance ministry and issue privacy notices to the recipient and supporters.

### **4. Personnel**

#### **4.1. Authorisation and accountability**

- i. Deliverance ministry may be undertaken by ordained or lay persons, however anyone considering offering it, including both practitioners and supporters, must make themselves known to the Chair of the District in which the ministry is to take place.
- ii. Anyone wishing to be authorised as a practitioner must undergo the Connexional Training Course, after recommendation by their Chair of District or the Chair's appointed representative.
- iii. Authorisation to practise will be granted by the Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry after receiving feedback from those operating the

## *Part 16 Deliverance Ministry including Exorcism*

Training Course and the recommendation from the relevant District Chair (or their appointed representative).

The Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry will include people with comprehensive experience and knowledge of deliverance ministry.

### **4.2. Training**

4.2.1 The Connexional Training course in Deliverance Ministry will:

- i. be open to all (lay and ordained) who feel called by God to carry out this ministry;
- ii. take place over at least the equivalent of one day.
- iii. Components to include:
  - a) The Church's understanding of deliverance ministry;
  - b) Key skills, including intentional listening, allowing people to express themselves subjectively and objectively;
  - c) Different perspectives in terms of theological understanding, use of the Bible, and personal awareness;
  - d) Mental health awareness;
  - e) When and how to ask for help;
  - f) Liturgy, prayer and ritual.

4.2.2. After initial training has taken place:

- i. Practitioners must be offered ongoing training and support including active membership of a peer support group.
- ii. Practitioners will be invited to attend and contribute to subsequent training days.

### **4.3. Deliverance Ministry Supervision**

- i. The Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry will appoint a deliverance ministry supervisor for each authorised practitioner.
- ii. Formal supervision will include an account and discussion on any deliverance ministry that has taken place. A report on the case should be sent to the District Chair.
- iii. Formal supervision is required in addition to peer/group support.
- iv. Deliverance Ministry supervisors will be invited to attend and contribute to training days.

The formal supervision indicated here is to be distinguished from reflective supervision under S.O. 743A (in Book III)

## *Book VII Guidance*

### 4.4. **Multidisciplinary team**

Practitioners should always work alongside others to ensure the best possible response to the needs of the recipient. These may include the District Safeguarding Officer, psychiatric healthcare professionals, hospital/mental health chaplains, counsellors and the local pastoral team.

### 5. **Continuing care**

Every effort should be made to continue contact with the recipients of deliverance ministry, to ensure that they continue to be offered the support, prayer and care of the Church.

## List of Bodies Whose Constitution is Laid Down by Standing Orders

This list comprises committees and other bodies whose constitution is laid down by Standing Orders (or, in the case of the Connexional Council, also primarily by the Deed of Union). Committees whose constitution is prescribed by statute (e.g. the Central Finance Board), charitable scheme, trust instrument, articles of association or other legal instrument are not included here.

Note also the Conference Diaconal Committee, whose constitution is laid down by the Deed of Union (cl 25A).

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