

RECOGNISED, AUTHORISED, ASSOCIATED: ORDAINED MINISTRIES OF OTHER CHURCHES IN THE SERVICE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN GREAT BRITAIN

Introduction

1. The Methodist Church in Great Britain welcomes those who are ordained by and currently in good standing with Other Churches to work formally on its behalf.
2. The Conference of the British Methodist Church is ultimately responsible for all decisions about who may serve it in this way, and where.
3. The British Conference will look for assurances of support, formal permission and, where appropriate, references from the appropriate officers of the Other Church (i.e. Denomination) in each case. Wherever possible it will seek to make a formal agreement with the Other Church concerning the terms of service under which ordained members of that Church will serve the Methodist Church. *[S.O. 736]*
4. There are three formal ways in which those exercising ordained ministry in other Churches may serve the Conference of the British Methodist Church:
 - **Recognised and Regarded:** for use where ministers (presbyters) or deacons are seconded by their own Church to work wholly or primarily for the British Conference and (for the period of their secondment) are fully under its discipline and at its disposal
 - **Authorised to Serve:** for use where ministers (presbyters) or deacons are partially seconded by their own Church to work for the British Conference, often in local situations where there are shared governance arrangements between different Churches (denominations) for the joint oversight of mission and ministry
 - **Associate:** for use in ecumenical situations where there are not shared governance arrangements between different Churches (denominations) for the joint oversight of mission and ministry, and where ministers (presbyters) and deacons work primarily for their own Churches but the Conference affirms and owns their work in particular circumstances as if it were done on its behalf.

The differences between these three categories are set out in detail below. They relate principally to

- (a) their levels of privilege with and responsibilities to the Conference
- (b) the ways in which they are accountable to the Conference and to their own Churches
- (c) the duties that they fulfil on behalf of the Conference, and the places in which they are permitted to fulfil them.

Recognised and Regarded

5. The first way is to be **recognised and regarded as a minister (presbyter) or deacon admitted into full connexion with the British Conference.** *[S.O. 732]*

Such people are treated exactly the same as a presbyter or deacon ordained by and in good standing and active relationship with the Conference [i.e. in Methodist terminology “in full connexion with the Conference”]:

- they share in the same privileges and responsibilities
[n.b. the former will normally include receiving a stipend, manse and pension contributions from the Methodist Church]
- they are as available for and subject to the same discipline of stationing
[n.b. All Methodist ministers (presbyters) and deacons in full connexion in the active work are stationed by the Conference to serve in a particular appointment in a Circuit or other body within the control of the Methodist Church, unless given permission either to serve another Church (denomination) or institution, or to study or be without appointment. Personal needs, vocational development and the needs of the Methodist Church both locally and connexionally are taken into account in stationing a particular person in a particular appointment. Appointments are made on the understanding that they are likely to be for a fixed number of years (normally five in the first instance, but with the possibility of extension), but are reviewed and renewed annually]
- they are accountable for their specific conduct and their general vocation through Methodist structures to the British Conference in the first instance, and through the Conference to the authorities of their own Church
- they may fulfil any and all of the duties of a minister (presbyter) or deacon of the British Conference anywhere within the jurisdiction of that Conference (but subject to its discipline): in the case of a minister (presbyter) this may include exercising charge within a Circuit or as Superintendent of a Circuit or in some other role
- they (like all those in full connexion) must be prepared to baptise infants in appropriate circumstances.

6. To all intents and purposes, therefore, those who are recognised and regarded as ministers (presbyters) or deacons admitted into full connexion are fully seconded by their own Churches to serve the Conference of the British Methodist Church for a period of time.

At the end of that time they may either return to the jurisdiction of their own Church, or seek to transfer to the jurisdiction of the Methodist Church in Great Britain.

[n.b. any ordained member of another Church or other autonomous Methodist Conference who applies to transfer to the jurisdiction of the Conference of the British Methodist Church will normally be recognised and regarded by the British Conference for a time at first in order to allow for a period in which both the Methodist Church and the person concerned may review their experience of each other before any recommendation is made to the Conference that the transfer be completed].

7. Ministers (presbyters) of the Irish Conference of the Methodist Church are automatically recognised and regarded by the British Conference as admitted into full Connexion with it whether they are stationed by the British Conference or not, and their names and details are recorded in the Minutes of the British Conference accordingly. No further paperwork is required of them.

8. Ministers (presbyters) and deacons of other autonomous Methodist conferences and other Churches (denominations) may be recognised and regarded by the British Conference as admitted into full Connexion only if stationed by the British Conference. The Conference cannot recognise and regard them if suitable appointments have not been found for them, and the Conference cannot station them if a recommendation has not been made that they are judged suitable to be recognised and regarded. The processes of seeking an appointment for them and checking their credentials (in particular whether they have the permission and support of their own Conferences or Churches) are therefore being brought together, and the paperwork for both inter-related. Applications are dealt with by the connexional bodies responsible for making recommendations to the Conference about stationing and about reception into full connexion respectively.

Authorised to Serve

9. The second way is to be **authorised to serve the British Methodist Church as a minister (presbyter) or deacon.** [S.O.733]

Such people are not treated exactly the same as a presbyter or deacon ordained by and in good standing and active relationship with the Conference:

- they share in some but not all of the same privileges and responsibilities *[e.g. they may or may not receive a stipend and manse from the Methodist Church in Great Britain; and they are not eligible for funds held under trust for ministers (presbyters) or deacons of the British Conference]*
 - they are stationed by the Conference to fulfil specific duties within a particular circuit or other appointment within the control of the British Conference, but are not authorised to do so elsewhere within the jurisdiction of the Conference
 - those duties may include, in the case of a minister (presbyter), the specific exercise of the ministry of the word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility, including the exercise of pastoral charge in Local Churches but not as Superintendent of a Circuit (but may include being a Lead Minister where one is appointed in an ecumenical area); and, in the case of a deacon, the specific exercise of a ministry of witness and service, including the undertaking of pastoral work, the leading of worship, the administration of Baptism and, where the person concerned is authorised to do so by his or her own Conference or Church, preaching
 - they may fulfil such duties for the Conference of the British Methodist Church full time or part-time; and in the case of the latter may also be appointed by their own Conferences or Churches to fulfil ministerial or diaconal duties concurrently on their behalf
 - they are accountable to their own Conferences and Churches for their general vocation, development and conduct as ministers (presbyters) or deacons, and will only be authorised to serve the British Conference when those Conferences and Churches agree to ensure through their own disciplinary processes that the ministers (presbyters) and deacons concerned exercise accountability under discipline to the British Conference for the duties which they fulfil on its behalf.
10. To all intents and purposes, therefore, those who are authorised to serve the Conference of the British Methodist Church as a minister (presbyter) or deacon are partially

seconded by their own Conferences or Churches to serve the Conference of the British Methodist Church for a period of time.

11. The identifying of an appointment in which someone may be authorised to serve the Conference as a minister (presbyter) or deacon and the checking of that person's credentials involves the completion of paperwork that is standard throughout the Connexion. It is mainly carried out in a particular District, but moderated by connexional officers.

Associate

12. The third way is to be granted the status of **associate minister (presbyter) or deacon.**
[S.O. 733A]

Such people are not treated as ministers (presbyters) or deacons who are recognised and regarded as admitted into full connexion or authorised to serve the British Conference :

- they serve under the condition and terms of service of their own Church
[e.g. do not receive stipend or manse from the Methodist Church in Great Britain]
 - they are wholly accountable to their own Church for all that they are and do
 - they fulfil duties primarily in their own Church but, by agreement with that Church, undertake specific functions in specific contexts (*as set out in the Standing Order*) which the Methodist Church in Great Britain agrees to affirm and own as done on its behalf
 - those functions do not involve the exercise of pastoral charge
13. To all intents and purposes, therefore, those who are granted the status of associate minister (presbyter) or deacon by the Conference of the British Methodist Church primarily serve their own Churches, but in specified ecumenical settings the Conference may affirm and own their work as if it were done on its behalf.
 14. Associate ministers (presbyters) or deacons are not formally stationed by the Methodist Church, but named in a separate list at the end of the stations with an note as to the circuit with which they are to be associated and in which their ministry is to be acknowledged.
 15. The identifying of an appointment with which someone may be associated and the checking of that person's credentials involves the completion of paperwork that is standard throughout the Connexion. It is carried out in a particular District, but moderated by connexional officers.

Ministers (Presbyters) and Deacons

16. The British Conference may only recognise and regard, authorise or grant the status of associate to minister (presbyters) or deacons of Churches whose ministry or diaconate is recognised by the Methodist Church.
17. The British Conference itself has two complementary orders of ministry, presbyteral and diaconal. Where deacons of other Churches are in a transitional diaconate on the

way to being ordained priest or presbyter, they are treated by the British Conference like its own probationer ministers (presbyters).

18. The Methodist Diaconal Order of the British Conference has a strong discipline of being a dispersed religious order as well as an order of ministry. Where deacons of other Churches are not intending to be ordained priest or presbyter but to remain as members of a permanent diaconate, they are required to associate with the Methodist Diaconal Order of the British Conference in appropriate ways as a condition of their being recognised and regarded, authorised or granted the status of associate.

Conference and the powers of the President

19. The annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Great Britain recognises and regards, authorises and grants to each person annually.
20. Only the Conference can recognise and regard people as admitted into full connexion. Between Conferences, the President can authorise people to serve in cases of pastoral urgency, and can grant the status of associate in cases of urgency or to further ecumenical cooperation.

Methodist Doctrines and Discipline

21. The forms to be completed with regard to the various categories of minister (presbyter) and deacon described above required appropriate assurances to be given in each case that the person concerned will respect and uphold Methodist doctrines and discipline.
 - The doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church in Great Britain are defined in Clause 4 of the Deed of Union
 - The discipline of the Methodist Church in Great Britain is constituted by the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts, Standing Orders and the Resolutions of the Conference.