

CANDIDATING FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

G.4 SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

(As approved by the Conference 2016)

Note:

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

1 VOCATION (CALL AND COMMITMENT)

The starting point of Christian ministry is the call of Christ to follow him; the call to ordained ministry is a specific development of the vocation to discipleship which is shared by all members of the Church.

As the Deed of Union says, "It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of Christian ministry depends upon the call of God."¹ More than any of the other criteria, this is necessary but not by itself sufficient. However competent candidates may appear or be proven to be in meeting the other criteria, they will not be accepted unless those who explore the questions with them discern that they have a distinct call to be a presbyter or deacon.

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

- personal (as a personal assurance and conviction which is still also open to testing) - and corporate (being heard through the witness of others and affirmed in and through the Church's testing of not just calling but also gifts and graces, which involves recognition of the needs of the Church).

This requires a high level of self-awareness which informs and is informed by a disciplined spiritual life and a deep commitment to the life of the Church.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

An inner sense of call that is:

- 1.1 Confirmed by others
- 1.2 Obedient, based on an understanding of the demands of ordained ministry in terms of training, deployment and sacrifice and the candidate's capacity to be a servant in a community of servants
- 1.3 Realistic in terms of the candidate's capacity to meet the expected competencies for reception into Full Connexion and ordination after a period of training and probation
- 1.4 Informed by a clear understanding of the representative nature of ordained ministry and the discipline of the Methodist Church
- 1.5 Transformative, in that the candidate is being changed by this sense of call and is willing to continue to be changed
- 1.6 An ability to articulate clearly this sense of call to a particular order of ministry and its development

For diaconal candidates only:

- 1.7 A commitment to membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

¹ Deed of Union Clause 4.

2 VOCATION (MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN BRITAIN)

Candidates for the diaconal or presbyteral ministries in the Methodist Church offer in the understanding that we ordain “not to a denomination, but to the presbyterate and diaconate of the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”² As part of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Methodist Church receives its ordinands into Full Connexion which demands a willingness to exercise ministry within and as a representative of the Methodist Church in Britain.

The British Methodist Church rejoices in its ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and recognises that it is important to balance the variety of expressions of Methodism with the common identity of the Church as a whole. Candidates are asked to explore with selectors how their call fits with Methodism’s self-understanding (as it is expressed in, eg, *Called to Love and Praise* and *A Catechism for the Use of the People called Methodists*) and how their particular experience of Methodism has shaped their sense of call. They need to develop an understanding of ministry in its widest sense.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

- 2.1 Knowledge and understanding of the Methodist Church in Britain
- 2.2 Demonstrable and enthusiastic commitment to and desire to serve the Methodist Church in Britain
- 2.3 Understanding of ministry within the Methodist Church in Britain including the distinctiveness of the two orders of ministry
- 2.4 Willingness to work with diversity within the Methodist Church in Britain.

God ‘bestows the gifts of the Spirit the grace and fruit which indicate those who he has chosen’.³ The remaining criteria are designed to enable those examining candidates to see evidence of the gifts of the Spirit, although the development of those gifts may still be at an embryonic stage.

3 RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Presbyters and deacons are first and foremost people of prayer; candidates need to be able to speak about their spiritual life in a way that is authentic and offers a clear understanding of themselves both as those confident in God’s love for them and as those who are still being made into the saints that God wants them to be.

They should therefore be able to articulate an appreciation of, and regular engagement with, the means of grace individually and in the life of the Church and to express how they understand this engagement both as gift and as discipline.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of a relationship with God that is:

- 3.1 Grounded in an understanding of God’s loving acceptance and a personal commitment to Christ
- 3.2 Both mature and child-like with the capacity to grow
- 3.3 Nourished by a commitment to individual and corporate prayer and worship, and engagement with the means of grace
- 3.4 A means of sustenance and encouragement in the candidate’s daily life and in his or her relationships with others and the wider world.

² Methodist Worship Book p. 298.

³ Deed of Union, Clause 4.

4 PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

“This ministry will make great demands upon you.”⁴ Those demands are spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical, and therefore those who offer for ministry as presbyter or deacon need to be able to demonstrate the resources necessary to cope with the stresses and strains that we anticipate they will face in training and in active ministry.

They also need to exhibit a willingness to be challenged and changed by the process of formation and to show that they understand their own vulnerability. Candidates should be able to show that they can care for themselves and that they have the capacity to engage with, and to work on, areas of perceived weakness.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

- 4.1 Self-awareness and self-acceptance grounded in God’s loving acceptance
- 4.2 Emotional stability
- 4.3 Maturity, honesty and integrity
- 4.4 Appropriate self-confidence and humility
- 4.5 Stamina, robustness and resilience
- 4.6 Potential for self-development and growth.

5 BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

All ministry is relational. A candidate needs to be able to demonstrate his or her understanding of the gift of human love in all its manifestations and her or his recognition of and ability to honour appropriate boundaries. Candidates are asked to talk about their own relationships as a secure basis from which ministry can be offered and to show the capacity to engage with a wide range of other people appropriately as a representative of the Church

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

- 5.1 An ability to relate to a variety of people
- 5.2 Capacity to develop open and healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships
- 5.3 Capacity to relate to the same people in a number of different roles without confusion and with generosity
- 5.4 Potential to exercise effective pastoral care
- 5.5 Acceptance of the discipline of the Church and respect for the diversity of views within Methodism

6 THE CHURCH’S MINISTRY IN GOD’S WORLD

The Church and the world beyond the doors of the church have changed rapidly and greatly in recent years and are changing still. Candidates should be able to articulate an understanding of social holiness that is appropriate to their contemporary context. This means that candidates need to be able to demonstrate

- an understanding of the mission of the Church within God’s world
- the priorities that the Methodist Church has identified as it plays its part in God’s mission,
- and the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives and asks to be used in fulfilling that mission.

Candidates will need to demonstrate proven ability and further capacity to exercise appropriate gifts in serving God’s mission and a coherent (if as yet undeveloped) theological understanding of mission in the

⁴ Methodist Worship Book pages 302 and 317.

21st century including an appreciation of, and a preparedness to engage with, the multiplicity of ecclesial forms the Church takes in serving God's mission.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

- 6.1 Knowledge and understanding of mission and evangelism, including the variety of approaches within the Methodist Church
- 6.2 Personal commitment to mission and evangelism and the Methodist Church as its vehicle
- 6.3 Out of engagement with the world of work and contemporary culture in a multicultural society, the ability to make connections imaginatively between today's world and the gospel
- 6.4 Ability to work for change, with particular attention to the marginalised
- 6.5 Potential for engaging in mission-shaped ministry.

7 LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

The call to **presbyteral ministry** is a call to "a principal and directing part in [the] great duties [of the Church]"⁵

the call to the **diaconate** is to "represent the servanthood of Christ, exercising a formal role of leadership in the Church."⁶

Candidates therefore need to demonstrate an ability to work with others in a variety of ways, exhibiting a willingness to collaborate, to delegate, and to take responsibility as appropriate. Candidates should be able to recognise, to nurture and to cherish the gifts of others.

Candidates should demonstrate an appropriate degree of both humility and confidence in the way in which leadership is discussed and be able to give examples of how they are already exercising leadership within and outside the Church.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

- 7.1 Knowledge and understanding of leadership
- 7.2 Ability to exercise leadership in the Church community and beyond
- 7.3 Capacity to offer an example of faith, discipleship and humble service
- 7.4 Ability to inspire, enable and empower others
- 7.5 Potential for creative leadership
- 7.6 Willingness and ability to work collaboratively, and capacity to exercise appropriate authority
- 7.7 Ability to work with supervision and to supervise others
- 7.8 Ability to develop administrative skills
- 7.9 Flexibility, adaptability and willingness to take risks.

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 Christian faith to those who have received the gospel and to those who are yet to receive it. Their practice of ministry must be informed by an understanding of the doctrines of the Church and an ability to use a wide range of resources creatively in order to reflect theologically. For that reason, initial formation for ministry almost always takes place at least in part within an academic setting. Candidates need to be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to benefit from

⁵ Deed of Union Clause 4

⁶ What is a Deacon? 7.3.

the programme of learning that will be offered to them by already having some theological understanding and by having the gifts that are needed to engage with a multi-disciplinary programme of study. Within this understanding, the Church is committed to welcoming candidates from a range of academic backgrounds and to treating particular educational needs with sensitivity.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

- 8.1 Ability to learn and to benefit from theological study
- 8.2 Enthusiasm for lifelong learning and formation
- 8.3 Curiosity and flexibility of mind
- 8.4 Capacity to use a range of ways of thinking and models of reflection and to select the most appropriate for each situation
- 8.5 Appreciation of the significance of theology to the Church.

9 COMMUNICATION

To articulate the truths of the Christian faith demands the skills of communication. Whilst some of these can be taught, candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of what makes communication effective in a variety of media and with a multiplicity of conversation partners.

Particularly because not all have English as their first language, candidates are encouraged to express themselves and to be heard in ways that are culturally appropriate both to their own background and to the ministry for which they are offering. Candidates are also expected to be able to communicate effectively in the wider Church with cognizance of 21st century Methodism's cultural diversity.

The Church is therefore seeking evidence of:

- 9.1 Ability to express faith naturally and effectively in ways that are appropriate, accessible and sensitive to the situation, using biblical and theological understanding
- 9.2 Ability to select and use the most appropriate media and approach for the context
- 9.3 Careful and appropriate use of language
- 9.4 Understanding and appropriate use of symbols, gestures and space
- 9.5 Effective communication skills for mission and evangelism.