



Setting the scene: what is the Local Preachers' Meeting?

The Local Preachers' Meeting (called the Meeting from here on) is a community that all Local Preachers (and Presbyters) in the circuit belong to. All members are obliged to attend the quarterly meetings.

We meet together to¹:

- worship together
- “consider the state of the work of God in the circuit”
- overseeing the training of new Worship Leaders and Local Preachers
- support each other as we aim to be better at what we do
- learn together through a programme of continuing development

Note the emphasis on worship, fellowship and lifelong learning. The Meeting is a learning community where all those involved in worship and preaching in the circuit can receive encouragement, support and training to assist in their work of mission and ministry across the circuit.

Note that some circuits have a Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Meeting to emphasise that Local Preachers (LPs) Worship Leaders (WLs) are also encouraged to attend. However, the name Local Preachers' Meeting is used in our Standing Orders, so for brevity, the term “LP Meeting” or just “Meeting” is used here to describe the community.



TO THINK ABOUT...

Worship is at the heart of who we are and what we do as Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. What can we do to support, encourage and equip each other in our shared calling to encourage the worship of the people of God?

What does the Local Preachers' Secretary do?

As a key member of the Meeting, the Local Preachers' Secretary's role is described in Standing Order 562. This says that the LP Secretary should:

- record decisions, advice and recommendations of each meeting held;
- 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;
- ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for all local preachers (including persons on note or on trial);
- help members of the meeting to obtain appropriate assistance and support, in conjunction with the Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Trust;
- encourage members of the meeting to support local action and fundraising for the Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Trust.

We look at the various parts of the role in more detail below.

¹ The role of the LP Meeting is described in more detail in Standing Order 561.

The Local Preachers' Secretary – role and responsibilities

Who can serve as Local Preachers' Secretary?

Normally, the LP Secretary will be a member of the meeting and will therefore be a LP, WL, Presbyterian or Deacon in the circuit. If this is the case, the LP Secretary will be able to take a full part in the meeting, including any voting that takes place.

However, the Standing Order also states that “The meeting may appoint an assistant secretary to assist the secretary in such manner as the meeting may determine.”

In practice, this means that the meeting may choose to appoint two or more people (even including people who are not members of the meeting) to undertake parts of the role. For example:

- A Circuit Administrator may help with arranging meetings and taking notes;
- If there are several people in training, someone could be appointed to look after all aspects of WL and LP training as part of a training sub-group, reporting back to the meeting as required;
- The roles of pastoral support and note-taking could be shared around to reduce the work that the Secretary has to do.

However the work is shared out, there should still be a named individual who is called the LP Secretary, and whose contact details are known by the Local Preachers' Office.



TO THINK ABOUT...

Are there those in the circuit who would willingly take on part of the role of LP Secretary (such as taking notes of meetings, or keeping in touch with those who are unable to meet) but couldn't take on the whole role? Maybe ask them if they would like to contribute what they are able and willing to do?

Keeping Records

The Secretary's role involves keeping records and passing information to those who need it:

1. **Notes** should be taken and kept for each meeting. These should record significant decisions and outcomes of conversations for future reference but need not be detailed records of all conversations that take place. The notes may be kept on paper or as computer files, but should be made available to all members soon after each meeting, available for reference at later meetings and passed on to the next LP Secretary.
2. **Safeguarding** is vitally important, and there should be an opportunity to discuss this at every meeting. Working in collaboration with the Circuit Safeguarding Officer, the Secretary should be aware of the current status of all LPs and WLs regarding DBS checks and training requirements.
3. **Training** – overseeing the formation of Worship Leaders and Local Preachers is a key role of the Meeting. The Secretary supports this by keeping records for each LP and WL currently in training in the circuit, including quarterly Assessed Services, trial services and interviews, so that the meeting is kept informed of the students' progress. More details on responsibilities for training are below.
4. **When things change**. The Secretary is the key contact between the circuit and the connexional team for all matters concerning LPs and WLs. After each meeting, the Local Preachers' Office should be advised of changes such as:
 - People receiving a Note to Preach or moving On Trial

The Local Preachers' Secretary – role and responsibilities

- Those recommended for admission as LPs, noting that one month's notice is required to enable the supply of a letter from the President and a bookplate for the Recognition Service
- Those to be appointed as WLs by their local church
- Those eligible to receive Long Service Certificates (25, 40, 50, 60 years of service). A month's notice is required to allow printing and supply of a certificate before the presentation date. Note that a generic certificate for local use in celebrating any length of service can be downloaded from the LP Secretaries' webpage (see below).
- Deaths of local preachers. Prompt reporting of these is important so that so that their names can be added to the Memorial Book for use at Conference.
- Changes of status, e.g. new or retiring Tutors and Mentors, preachers arriving in the circuit or moving on.

Normally, these changes should be reported using the Local Preachers' Return Form, but in case of any problems, you can email the information to localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Note that the LP Secretary needs to use personal information to fulfil their role. This must be handled and retained in accordance with your circuit's GDPR policy. This will include only using information for the purpose of your role, storing it securely, deleting it when no longer needed, and making sure you do not divulge people's email without their permission, e.g. by using the "blind copy" or BCC option in email.



TO THINK ABOUT...

It's more important to keep a record of key decisions, actions and events than to have a detailed record of conversations. If you are comfortable with computers, you could try recording training information in a spreadsheet or table if you find that easier. Or use traditional record cards for each student. Find the method that suits you.

Training of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

The LP Secretary plays an important role in the training process for WLs and LPs. For example, the Secretary:

- Reports new WLs and LPs to the Local Preachers' Office so that they can be enrolled on the Worship: Leading & Preaching course.
- Alerts the Meeting to the need for quarterly Assessed Services, Trial Services and interviews
- Keeps a record of each students' progress in training, noting that a maximum of 5 years can be spent "On Trial". Information on how to apply to your District for extensions is available on the LP Secretaries' webpage.

Guidance and training is available on many aspects of the training process for LPs and WLs. Information is available on the Methodist website, in particular on the LP Secretaries' page at www.methodist.org.uk/lpsecretaries.

The Learning Network also provide periodic online training sessions for LP Secretaries – check www.methodist.org.uk/wlptraining for the latest information.

The Local Preachers' Secretary – role and responsibilities



TO THINK ABOUT...

Discussions around training are really important but can be time-consuming. If you have a number of people in training in your circuit, perhaps the conversations could be taken offline by a small training sub-group including Tutors and Mentors, who can provide a summary report to the Local Preachers' Meeting. This also gives greater scope for discussion with each student outside the main Local Preachers' Meeting.

Pastoral Care

As a supportive community in the life of the church, we have a responsibility to look out for each other and to respond to pastoral needs amongst us. The Secretary sometimes becomes aware of people who need a little encouragement and can bring their concerns to the attention of the meeting (with their permission of course). The Secretary may be asked to send messages of encouragement, sympathy etc. on behalf of the meeting, but this task may be shared or taken on by a willing volunteer.

It is important to make sure that those who can't attend meetings in person are still included in fellowship. The LP Secretary should ensure that they are kept informed and included in any correspondence, if they wish to be. The meeting may decide to meet periodically online to enable those who can't attend meetings in person to take part.



TO THINK ABOUT...

There may be people who have stepped down from active preaching, but value the fellowship of the Local Preachers' Meeting. Perhaps they can't attend the meetings now. How could you plan some of the meetings to be accessible to them, perhaps by meeting online, or changing the venue or the time to suit them better?

The Local Preachers' Meeting

Whilst the Circuit Superintendent (or another delegated person) is responsible for chairing the meeting, the LP Secretary can make a big difference to the shape and character of the meeting. Suggestions, ideas and reminders are usually really appreciated by Chairs who are busy with other parts of their role.

The LP Secretary can suggest venues and times for the meetings, subject matter for continuing development (CLPD) and suggest ideas, resources from the Local Preachers' Office or other sources. Every LP is responsible for reviewing their ministry every three years, and their contributions can provide interesting CLPD items for the meeting, provided they are asked in good time before the meeting.

Before the meeting, it will be the Secretary's job to send out (in good time) notice of the meeting, perhaps reminding LPs of their duty to attend. You may also be responsible for liaising with the meeting venue about access, heating, refreshments etc.

At the meeting, they should check that someone (if not themselves) is taking notes. The Secretary will also pass on any pastoral news which can be shared, and news of the wider church received in the quarterly LPWL eNews from the Local Preachers' Office or other communications.

The Local Preachers' Secretary – role and responsibilities

After the meeting, the Secretary will distribute notes from the meeting and complete any actions. They will also contact the Local Preachers' Office with any updates.



TO THINK ABOUT...

People are more likely to attend meetings that are interesting and relevant, and the more people who come, the more possibilities exist for doing things differently. There are ideas for revitalizing your LP Meeting, including ideas for CLPD, at www.methodist.org.uk/clpd.

The Preaching Plan

The Circuit Superintendent is ultimately responsible for making the Preaching Plan, and the way the Plan is compiled varies between circuits. The LP Secretary should discuss with the Superintendent what role they might play in making the Plan.

This may include:

- sending out requests for preaching dates and collating the responses
- checking that those On Note have suitable appointments, and that those On Trial have suitable quarterly assessed services
- being involved in planning circuit services, especially where there are new LPs to be recognised, or long-service certificates to present

The Secretary should also (as part of their record-keeping) ensure that the contact information for WLs and LPs on the Plan is kept up-to-date.



TO THINK ABOUT...

Why not encourage meeting to look at the lectionary readings for the next quarter, and have some discussion about them to help everyone prepare better? Or choose some topical themes for services across the circuit using shared resources and ideas you develop together in the meeting?

Leaders of Worship & Preachers' Trust

The Standing Orders above make two references to the Leaders of Worship & Preachers' Trust (LWPT). This is a charity with Methodist roots which was formerly part of a charity known as Local Preachers' Mutual Aid (LPMA), together with LP Homes, which continues to provide residential care.

LWPT are partners in the Bible Month project, and also publish "Preach" magazine, both of which are helpful resources for preachers and worship leaders. They can also provide grants to help with training costs. You can find out more at their website: www.preachweb.org. LWPT welcome support from Local Preachers – perhaps some time could be set aside in your meeting to explore what they do.

Financial support for LPs, especially associated with training needs, is also available from the Necessitous Local Preachers' Fund (NLPF). Information about this can be obtained from the Local Preachers' Office at localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk.

The Local Preachers' Secretary – role and responsibilities



TO THINK ABOUT...

How could your circuit make use of Bible Month to encourage people to read, discuss and reflect on the Bible and how its words bring life and hope? Perhaps you could focus on a particular book of the Bible across the circuit and co-ordinate Sunday preaching with small groups and individual prayer?

Checklist

Here in summary are the main responsibilities of the Local Preachers' Secretary. These can be shared, and not all circuits share responsibilities in the same way. This list is for guidance only:

1. Ensure that meetings are held each quarter and that dates, times and venues are arranged and communicated to everyone.
2. Liaise with the Superintendent and/or Chair of the meeting in planning meetings and setting the agenda, suggesting ideas and resources.
3. Attend the meeting and ensure someone takes notes of key decisions and actions.
4. Assist the meeting in providing pastoral care for its members, including communicating messages of support as appropriate.
5. Share with the meeting news and resources from the Connexion and elsewhere.
6. After each meeting, let the Local Preachers' Office know of any updates to training or status of LPs, certificates required etc.
7. Keep records of assessed services for LPs on trial and liaise with the circuit tutor or training group on progress of WLs and LPs in training.
8. Provide support as requested in compiling the preaching plan, especially with the needs of student WLs and LPs in mind.
9. Encourage people to be aware and supportive of LWPT and of available assistance and support from LWPT and NLPF.

Part of a Team

There is lots of help and support available, from your District Local Preachers' Secretary, your aligned Learning Network Officer and from the Local Preachers' Office, who produce a quarterly email newsletter for those who sign up here: www.methodist.org.uk/lpwlnews.

The LP Secretaries' webpage at www.methodist.org.uk/lpsecretaries contains much useful information, and you can email the Local Preachers' Office at the address below.

I hope that you have been encouraged as you have read about this role, perhaps even to become a Local Preachers' Secretary, and help to encourage those who lead worship and preach the gospel week by week.

Bob Bartindale

Officer for Worship & Local Preachers

localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk