

Ministerial Covenant

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- 1 The meeting of the Council in January 2020 received the report MC/20/26 detailing the progress that had been made with this work, and outlining changes that were being made to the material in the light of feedback received in previous consultations. Those changes included
 - (a) amending the title of the work from “Ministerial Code of Conduct” to “Ministerial Covenant”;
 - (b) changing the format of the material from a list of things that an ordained minister ‘should’ do to a series of questions against which ministers can examine themselves with the help of a supervisor or mentor;
 - (c) adding a list of questions against which those who deal with ordained ministers locally or connexionally can examine themselves as to how well they are fulfilling what those ministers might reasonably expect from the Church.

- 2 The Working Party is now pleased to bring its draft material to the Council, with a view to it being presented to this year’s Conference. It consists of two main documents. The first is a general paper entitled *Fully Connected: a Covenant Relationship with the Methodist Conference* which seeks to ground the work in the Ordinal and other foundational documents including the 2018 draft Conference Statement *Ministry in the Methodist Church*, and to enable the *Ministerial Covenant* to be integrated with the work on *Changing Patterns of Ministry* and on ministerial wellbeing. The second document is entitled *The Ministerial Covenant* and is in two parts: the first is an *Introduction* to the process that is being envisaged, how it might be of use in supervision, and how lay people bearing responsibility in dealing with ministers might be encouraged to use it; and the second the *Points for Reflection* about which ordained ministers and those who deal with them might be invited to ponder.

- 3 The Working Group has shared these documents with the Faith and Order Committee, Law and Polity Committee, Ministries Committee and EDI Committee. Any feedback from those groups received in time will be reported to the Council. Any feedback received later will be incorporated in the report to the Conference or reported to the Conference.

- 4 In the light of this understanding, the Working Group asks the Council to approve the material for submission to the 2020 Conference. Because the points for reflection for those who bear responsibility on behalf of the Church for how ordained ministers are treated are new and have not been subject to any widespread consultation, the Working Group proposes that the Conference be asked to submit it to the Connexion for consultation before it is brought for final approval at the Conference in a subsequent year.

***RESOLUTION

- 48/1. The Council receives the report, and directs that it be submitted to the Conference of 2020 as set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 above.**

**FULLY CONNECTED:
A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE METHODIST CONFERENCE¹**

Introduction

- 1 The Covenant Relationship with God is central to Methodist spirituality, understanding and experience of discipleship. Its origin lies in God's gracious offer to the people called 'Israel', summarised in the Hebrew scriptures as "I will be their God and they shall be my people".² This offer is then seen to extend beyond Israel to all races and nations. The New Testament describes how this inclusion of all women and men is fulfilled in particular in Jesus Christ, who also provides the supreme example of what it is to live in such a relationship with God.³
- 2 God's love for all means that God offers everyone a loving relationship. The Covenant is not a contract in which God and human beings agree to provide particular goods and services for each other. It is not something that they have to do in order to create a relationship with God. God has freely and graciously already made the relationship possible. The Covenant is therefore the means by which we accept the relationship with God and then seek to sustain it. It is not so much about acquiring a relationship with God, as it is about living within the loving relationship that God has already offered us.
- 3 In the Bible, the term covenant primarily applies to the relationship between God and God's people. Yet that primary relationship starts to have an influence on how we relate to other people. If we love God, we shall love the people and things that God loves (even if we would have found them somewhat unlovely if we were left to our own devices!). So if we love God, we will end up loving our neighbour as ourselves⁴, because we discover to our surprise that God loves not just us but also our neighbour. Our covenant relationship with God therefore extends to include the ways in which we relate to others. One example of this is the marriage relationship. John Wesley allowed his understanding of marriage and of covenant to influence each other. He saw the relationship with God in Covenant as being like a marriage between human beings (both as a community and as individuals) on the one side and God in Christ on the other (cf. Ephesians 5.21-33). His original Covenant Prayer involved taking Christ as "my Head and Husband, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, for all times and conditions, to love, honour and obey thee before all others, and this to the death".
- 4 As used in the Old Testament, however, the term covenant is drawn from language about forms of treaty between neighbouring powers in the Ancient Near East. It describes a relationship which normally includes a power imbalance, and often involves coercion. Should we therefore be careful about applying the idea of covenant to the ways in which human beings relate to each other, because to do so might legitimate subjection and oppression?
- 5 It is certainly true that when the term covenant is applied to our relationship with God there is an imbalance of power which we need to recognise. God is all-powerful and we are not, even if we would like to be. Yet the way God relates to us in a covenant does not involve coercion. As the

¹ This report is a reworking of sections of the report to the 2008 Conference *The Covenant Relationship for those who are Ordained and in Full Connexion* in the light of feedback at the time; subsequent developments, not least the draft Conference Statement on *Ministry in the Methodist Church* which the 2018 Conference commended for study, discussion and response; and the need to articulate a framework which holds together various ongoing pieces of work about ordained ministry.

² eg Leviticus 26:12, Jeremiah 31:33.

³ eg Romans chapters 8 to 11, 1 Corinthians 10:25, Galatians 3:28.

⁴ Mark 12:29-31

former Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, put it “Covenant is the attempt to create partnership without dominance or submission.... Covenant occurs when two individuals or groups, differing perhaps in power, but each acknowledging the integrity and sovereignty of the other, pledge themselves in mutual loyalty to achieve together what neither can achieve alone... There is a place for contracts, but covenants are prior and more fundamental. They form the matrix of mutuality within which contractual relationships can exist.... (Covenant) affirms the dignity of difference. The great covenantal relationships – between God and mankind, between man and woman in marriage, between members of a community or citizens of a society – exist because both parties recognise that ‘is not good for man to be alone’. God cannot redeem the world without human participation; humanity cannot redeem the world without recognition of the divine”.⁵

- 6 Christians would say that the supreme example of God’s power being expressed and exercised is in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Those events show that the amazing thing about God’s power is that it is the power of love, and so seeks to create a relationship characterised by dignity, mutuality and grace. This is the nature of God’s gracious offer to us. It is what God covenants to do.
- 7 This covenant relationship primarily involves the corporate life of the community of God’s people (ie Israel; the Body of Christ; the Church). It is then concerned with individuals (eg Christian disciples in general, not just those disciples who happen to be ordained) within that group. In every case there is an *initial calling* for the parties concerned to accept the relationship offered by God; and a *continuing calling* for them to allow themselves to be transformed by God as that relationship develops, and for them to become what God wills them to be.⁶ Wesley recognised that people needed not just to accept a relationship with God but also to grow in it. He therefore emphasised that God’s grace and love is constantly prompting and seeking to transform us. We should therefore be continually seeking and praying to grow in holiness and love.
- 8 As such, the covenant is a means of grace operating within a loving relationship. That fact sets a clear and distinctive framework for the ways in which the notion of calling and any related concept of accountability are to be understood within it. The initial and continuing callings within the covenant relationship represent the free offering and sustaining of commitments rather than a process of setting out obligations and then demanding that they are fulfilled. The one who calls people to accept a relationship and then to allow it to develop also expresses a commitment to care for them and to remain constant in doing so. The one who responds and reciprocates is similarly expressing a commitment to care for the well-being, and to fulfil the wishes and vision of the one who calls.⁷
- 9 God's gracious offer to us is also a challenge. If God is committed to us, are we prepared to accept that as a reality, and commit ourselves in return to God? Even if we do choose to accept it, how can we manage to live out our commitment adequately, frail and human as we are? The New Testament suggests that it is as we join the group of those seeking to follow the way of Jesus that we respond to God’s challenge and begin to share Jesus’s relationship with God as Father. Within this group of disciples, which we call ‘the Church’, this leads to the Holy Spirit bubbling up in us as individuals, encouraging and enabling us to live out our side of the relationship. In other words, it leads to the Spirit “writing God's ways on our hearts” as Jeremiah chapter 31 describes the Covenant.

The Church as the Covenant People of God

- 10 So far as the covenant relationship between God and the Church is concerned, the calling of the Methodist Church, like that of other Christian Churches, is to respond to the Gospel of God’s love in

⁵ Jonathan Sacks *The Dignity of Difference* Continuum 2004

⁶ Philippians 3: 7-16 is a classic statement of this in the New Testament.

⁷ In the Hebrew scriptures, Hosea shows how God does not give up on offering the chance of relationship to Israel; and the Prophets and the Psalmist often plead for God to behave according to God’s nature.

Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.⁸ If the Church is responding to this calling, its outlook is global and ecumenical. Fixing its eye on worship and mission, it holds discipleship in balance with apostleship, and holiness in balance with witness. Its common life has a rhythm of coming and going in which it is gathered around the Word and the Sacraments, and scattered in evangelism, social caring, the struggle for justice and concern for the integrity of creation. Through a sharing of resources, both material and spiritual, it becomes a community where worth and love are received from God, offered to God and mediated to others.⁹ At the centre of the Church's activity, therefore, are the twin aspects of worship and mission. Above all else the Church is called to worship God and to share in God's mission in the world. It is called to be one, seeking unity with God and within its own life, reflecting the rich diversity of being and grace within the oneness of God and realising it in the world. It is called to be holy, turned towards God in worship and discipleship, belonging to God in its inner dynamic and showing the marks of Christ in the outward expressions of its life. It is called to be catholic, seeking the redemption of the whole world and therefore sharing an authentic, common life in behaviour and belief with all God's people throughout history in this world and the next. It is called to be apostolic, turned towards the world in mission and witness, and thereby sustaining continuity with Jesus, his apostles and their successors through faithfulness to Christ, to his Gospel and to his call to be agents of God's love in the world in the fellowship of the Spirit.¹⁰

- 11 In so doing, the Church inherits Israel's mantle of being the "Covenant People of God".¹¹ The New Testament writers saw the Church as developing from the life and worship of the children of Israel. Whether the Church is to be seen in this as replacing Israel as God's covenant community (as some New Testament passages might be seen to imply) or as sharing the status with Israel (as other passages might be seen to imply) is not material to this discussion. In either case, the Church becomes a "new covenant" community within God's covenant people, a "new covenant" that is "sealed by Jesus's blood" (1 Corinthians 11.25; Luke 22.20).

*The idea of covenant has had a special place in the thinking of the Methodist people since John Wesley first urged them to renew their covenant with God. In the light of the emphasis on grace and obedience in the understanding of covenant, the distinctive Methodist emphases, on God's grace and on holiness, commitment and social action, place Methodism firmly within the tradition of the covenant people.*¹²

- 12 Methodism has always insisted that in Christian faith and discipleship any concern for the individual, or for what is personal, or for the "inner life", should be balanced by an emphasis on the community of fellowship, the social nature of holiness and the common or collective offering of worship. Methodist understanding of what it is to be the Church is therefore that of a corporate calling and discipleship. Within that corporate experience individuals discover that their own covenant relationships with God find a natural home, and that they are nurtured and called to develop their own expressions of discipleship.

⁸ The Statement of Purpose quoted here was adopted by the 1996 Conference. Since then, the 1999 Conference adopted a major statement entitled *Called to Love and Praise: The Nature of the Christian Church in Methodist Experience and Practice*; the 2000 Conference adopted the fruits of a programme of reflection and dialogue entitled *Our Calling*; continuing dialogue led to discussion at the 2003 Conference of a report entitled *Where are we Heading?*; after a further process of consultation, the 2004 Conference adopted *Priorities for the Methodist Church*; and the 2018 Conference began discussions of how *Our Calling* might enable the Church to serve the present age, in conjunction with resources for *A Methodist Way of Life*.

⁹ These phrases are adapted from the opening theological statement in the *Restructuring Report* of the 1993 Conference (Agenda pp. 802-4), a statement that in turn collates and rehearses many earlier reports and statements.

¹⁰ For these marks of what it is to be the Church, see further *Called to Love and Praise* Section 2.4

¹¹ For this and what follows, see further paragraphs 2.2.1 to 2.2.10 of *Called to Love and Praise: The Nature of the Christian Church in Methodist Experience and Practice* (1999).

¹² *Called to Love and Praise* para. 2.2.9, which is also quoted in the 2018 draft Conference Statement *Ministry in the Methodist Church* para 2.3.3.

- 13 There is therefore a primary covenant relationship in which God calls and forms God's people. Within that, individuals experience their personal covenant relationships with God in which each is formed in discipleship and called to ministry.

... Our affirmation of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers means that our primary understanding of ministry is that it is corporate. Ministry is essentially not only about individual vocation but the response of the whole faith community. How we resource, support and encourage each other as we share in God's mission in the world in a wide range of different contexts and roles is an ongoing challenge...

...All have a part to play. We participate in responding to God's call in that we have a share in ministry by virtue of belonging to the priesthood of all believers and only within that context do we explore our individual role. Therefore we always share in ministry, even when it does not feel as if we have a specific role to play, because we participate in the whole.¹³

The particular calling of the Ordained within the Covenant Community of Disciples

- 14 In Methodist understanding, this general calling to discipleship is a vital aspect of the covenant relationship with God that is expressed through the Covenant Service; and it is within this that the special calling to ordained ministry occurs. So far as this latter is concerned, the Deed of Union says:

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.....

All Methodist preachers are examined tested and approved before they are authorised to minister in holy things.¹⁴

The 1974 Conference report on *Ordination* comments further on this concept of a calling to ordained ministry as follows:

Such a call in no way abrogates the call to be Christ in the world which comes to the whole people of God. This applies equally to ministers and lay[people]. [People] are not called out of the Church to be a minister. What [they receive] is a special calling within a general calling. Such a special calling (to the ordained ministry) must be distinguished from other special callings (to many differing occupations) which are received within the general calling of the people of God.¹⁵

- 15 When the Deed was written, British Methodism had recognised only one order of ministry within the Church, namely that of the presbyter, but when the Methodist Diaconal Order was recognised as another order of ministry in 1993 the basic principles were seen to be applicable to deacons as well, and the wording amended accordingly. The Deed is seeking to define the relationship between those who are ordained and the whole Church. Some further extracts from Clause 4 are as follows:

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 sole occupation as presbyters or deacons. Presbyters have a principal and directing part in these great duties but they

¹³ 2018 draft Conference Statement *Ministry in the Methodist Church* paras 4.3 and 4.3.2 respectively

¹⁴ Clause 4 of the Deed of Union (2019 edition of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church [CPD]*).

¹⁵ *Ordination* Conference Statement 1974 para 11. The words in square brackets provide equivalent terms to what would now be considered to be sexist connotations in the original.

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....

The Methodist Church holds the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs to a particular order or class of people, 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...

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.¹⁶

- 16 The report *What is a Presbyter?* adopted by the Conference in 2002 comments on these extracts as follows:

Put negatively, the Deed of Union is keen to prevent particular types of understanding of priesthood or a priestly caste being applied to Methodist ministers and, by inference, particular types of understanding of what it is to be a church being applied to the Methodist connexion. Put positively, it suggests that being a minister (presbyter) and acting as such is a particular form or expression of a vocation or calling to discipleship. This general vocation or calling to become women and men of God constantly growing into the full stature of Christ is shared by all those who constitute the Church. As such, the ministry of presbyters is interdependent with all other forms of ministry (lay or ordained) within the ministry of the whole people of God. Neither the ministry of presbyters nor the ministry of the whole people of God can be dissolved in favour of the other. Neither can be said to have priority over the other. Each requires the other.¹⁷

- 17 This sense of a particular calling of the ordained within a general calling to discipleship is developed in the 1974 Statement on *Ordination* by expounding the reference in the *Deed of Union* to a concept of "representative selection". The Statement begins explicitly with the Church's calling to exercise discipleship in worship and mission and goes on to say:

... as a perpetual reminder of this calling and as a means of being obedient to it the Church sets aside men and women, specially called, in ordination. In their office the calling of the whole Church is focussed and represented, and it is their responsibility as representative persons to lead the people to share with them in that calling. In this sense they are the sign of the presence and ministry of Christ in the Church, and through the Church to the world.¹⁸

If a summary of the marks of the Church is that it is where *the word is duly preached, the sacraments duly administered, and the people duly formed in mission and discipleship*¹⁹, then those marks are matched by the Methodist Church's statement that presbyteral ministry is a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility.²⁰ Similarly, if the marks of the Church engaging authentically in

¹⁶ As footnote 14 above

¹⁷ *What is a Presbyter?* 2002 para. 2. Again, the basic principles apply also to deacons (see para 15 above).

¹⁸ 1974 Conference Statement *Ordination* para 14.

¹⁹ For the marks of the Church, see paragraph 10 and footnote 10 above. The first and second parts of the formulation quoted here (ie "the word..... the sacraments...") are inherited from the Anglican tradition, where it is to be found in Hooker and in Article XIX of the 39 Articles. The third part ("the people...") is a Methodist extension of this, in which "discipleship" carries both of its New Testament emphases of "learning" and "following".

²⁰ For these core emphases of presbyteral ministry, see para 6 of the report *What is a Presbyter?* adopted by the Conference in 2002, and Standing Order 700(1).

mission are *witness and service*²¹, then they are matched by the Methodist Church's statement that diaconal ministry is a ministry of witness through service.²²

A secondary covenant relationship between those who are ordained and the Church

- 18 As noted above, within a covenant relationship there is both an initial calling to accept the relationship, and a continuing calling to be transformed by God as the relationship develops. In each case the initial and continuing calling comes from God, but is often mediated through other parties. A primary (but not exclusive) way in which their initial and continuing calling comes to those who are ordained is by it being mediated through the Church. Similarly, those who are ordained are a vitally important (but not exclusive) means of mediating God's calling to people to be the Church; in other words, to become the people of God and the body of Christ in the world. In terms of accountability, this means that the Church's prime commitment is to God and it is primarily accountable to God. But it is also accountable to those who are ordained and who mediate God's calling; and it is therefore committed to them as well. Similarly, the primary commitment and accountability of those who are ordained is to God. But they are also accountable to the Church which mediates God's calling; and are therefore committed to it as well.
- 19 In Methodist understanding, both those who are ordained and the Church itself are in forms of covenant relationship with God. In both cases this relationship is made possible by God. In both cases their covenant relationship with God then influences the way the parties relate to each other. There is therefore a secondary covenant relationship between those who are ordained and the Church.²³ This is characterised by presbyters and deacons being "ordained and in full connexion" with the Conference (which is the supreme governing body of the Methodist Church under God). Ordination and "reception into full connexion" are linked inseparably in Methodism, and both are essential in the making of a Methodist presbyter and deacon: in general terms, if ordination relates to a presbyter's or deacon's status and role in the Church catholic, reception into Full Connexion concerns his or her particular relationship to the Methodist Church.²⁴
- The Methodist Conference ordains ministers (presbyters) [sc. and deacons] to exercise their ministry in and on behalf of the Church catholic..... The Methodist Conference receives into Full Connexion with itself those who are called to exercise their ministry through the Methodist Church in particular.*²⁵
- 20 As two parallel and complementary orders of ministry, the Methodist Conference receives into full connexion with itself those who are called to exercise their ministry as presbyters or deacons through the Methodist Church. They in turn enter a covenant relationship with the Conference and are thereby constituted as bodies of presbyters and deacons respectively. At the heart of these mutual relationships, both the presbyters or deacons on the one hand and the Conference on the other have appropriate privileges and responsibilities. Under the will of God, the presbyters or deacons are accountable to the Conference for the exercise of their ministry and for their execution of the Conference's vision and will. At the same time they are accounted for by the Conference in

²¹ The Porvoo statement signed by Anglican Churches in Britain and Ireland and eight Nordic and Baltic national Churches declares that each of the churches involved "as a whole has maintained an authentic apostolic succession of witness and service". Similarly, a joint statement from a meeting of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope in November 2006 stated that the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches "share a common witness and service".

²² For these core emphases of diaconal ministry, see Section 5 of the report *What is a Deacon?* adopted by the Conference in 2004, and Standing Order 701(1).

²³ In the case of the Methodist Diaconal Order, this covenant relationship also encompasses the fact that its members are not just members of an order of ministry in the Church, but also members of a religious order.

²⁴ This sentence is drawn from footnote 5 of the report *What is a Presbyter?* adopted by the Conference in 2002.

²⁵ Paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the report *Releasing Ministers for Ministry* adopted by the Conference in 2002. See also the 2018 draft Conference Statement *Ministry in the Methodist Church* section 7.4.2, especially para 7.4.2.4.

that the Conference is committed to deploying them all appropriately and to providing them with the resources and support necessary for them to fulfil their ministry.²⁶

- 21 In accounting for those who are ordained and in full connexion with it, the Conference is expressing a deep commitment to and caring for them. In 1977, 1979 and 1981 the then Division of Ministries submitted reports to the Conference on concerns and discussions about *The Pastoral Care of the Ministry*.²⁷ This led to an important report to the 1983 Conference on *Ministerial Development*, which based its thinking and recommendations in the idea of a covenant relationship with the Conference, which it characterised as a ‘Covenant of Grace’

*... against which the conflicting loyalties of the Methodist ministers’ work patterns and lifestyle must inevitably be set. ... It is suggested that development for ministers may result from the adoption of procedures for self or mutual assessment. ... The basis of the concept of development lies in the covenant relationship established by God. He offers grace and the appropriate response is obedience. ... The covenant operates at a deep personal level. The call of the minister should be seen within the covenant relationship. At this level the covenant of grace promises gifts from God which ministers aim to develop. The call is to be a servant in the covenant community and this needs the development of clear strategies.*²⁸

- 22 This covenant relationship is outlined in the Standing Orders relating to Presbyteral and Diaconal Ministry in the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (SO 700 and 701 respectively) as follows:

*By receiving persons into full connexion as Methodist presbyters/deacons the Conference enters into a covenant relationship with them in which they are held accountable by the church in respect of their presbyteral/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.*²⁹ [SO 700(2)/701(2)]

- 23 The accountability in this covenant relationship and the commitment to each other of both the Church and those who are ordained 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.
- 24 The Conference is therefore committed to enabling the Methodist Church to fulfil its calling in response to the needs of God’s Kingdom by discerning (amongst other things) how its presbyters and deacons may best be deployed in the light of their individual gifts and circumstances. At the same time all Methodist presbyters and deacons who are ordained and in full connexion are called to fulfil their ministry by responding wherever they are most required (in the collective view of the Church expressed through the Conference) to meet those same needs. Standing Order 740 expresses all this as follows:

²⁶ Paragraphs 20, 24, and 27-9 of this report are based on paragraphs 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7, and 4.8 of *Releasing Ministers for Ministry* 2002. See also the 2018 draft Conference Statement *Ministry in the Methodist Church* para 7.4.2.4

²⁷ It is from the process instigated by these reports that led to subsequent provision for Sabbaticals, Accompanied Self-Appraisal, Ministerial Further Training and Continuing Development, and the Ministerial Counselling Service.

²⁸ Extracts from 1983 Conference Agenda pp. 97-8

²⁹ SO 700(2)/701(2) as in 2019 edition of CPD, melded together here for ease.

740 Connexion with the Conference.³⁰

(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 700.³¹ 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.....³²*

25 What is meant in SO 740(1)(a) above by presbyters collegially exercising “pastoral responsibility for the Church on behalf of the Conference” is spelled out further in SO 700(3) and (7), and SO 520 (1) and (2).

700 Presbyteral Ministry

(3) *Presbyters in the active work exercise their ministry, including pastoral responsibility, primarily in the setting in which they are stationed, whether full-time or part time, and whether or not the appointment is directly within the control of 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.*

³⁰ The version quoted is from the 2019 edition of CPD

³¹ The relevant passages from Standing Orders 700 and 701 referred to in (1)(a) and (1)(b) of this Standing Order can be found quoted in paragraph 21 above.

³² Standing Order 740 goes on to describe some of those who exercise a form of ministry in and on behalf of the Methodist Church, but who are not in a full covenant relationship with it (ie are not in full connexion with the Conference):

740 (3) Probationer ministers 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 (sc. of other Churches) authorised to serve as ministers 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.*

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 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 633³³ 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, deacons and lay officers.*
- (2) *It is the duty of the Superintendent appointed to each Circuit to enable the relevant courts, officers, deacons and ministers to fulfil their specific responsibilities under Standing Orders and to ensure that they do so.*

26 The equivalent provisions for what it means in SO 740 1(b) for deacons to “enter into a covenant relationship with the Conference” is spelled out further in SO 701(3) and (7).

701 *Diaconal Ministry*

- (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 full-time or part-time, and whether or not the appointment is directly within the control of the Church.*
- (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.*

27 As people who represent the Conference, all Methodist presbyters and deacons who are ordained and in full connexion share a collegial responsibility for embodying, exercising and sharing with others (lay and ordained) the Conference’s oversight of the church both as it gathers in Christian community and as it disperses in the world for worship and mission. They are deployed as individuals to enact this collegial responsibility. To this end they are all stationed by the Conference, some within particular appointments, others without appointment or with permission to study. Wherever possible they should all be linked together with other presbyters and deacons in teams for mutual supervision and support.

28 Consequently, all Methodist presbyters and deacons who are ordained and in full connexion represent both the *catholic* and the *apostolic* nature of the Church. They are ‘stationed’ each year in particular appointments. In other words, they are all sent to particular situations to bring the goals, insights and resources of the wider church to bear on them, as well as to exercise their particular gifts and skills in them. Some appointments are based in Circuits (but also need to look to the wider Church and world), whilst others are based in other institutions in the Church or world (but also need to look to the Circuits in particular, and to the British Connexion in general). Some appointments are in the direct control of the Conference (eg those in Circuits, theological colleges, and the Connexional Team), whilst others are not (eg those in partner Churches overseas, other denominations or secular agencies).³⁴ In the language of Standing Orders, those in appointments within the direct control of

³³ These Standing Orders deal respectively with the responsibilities of the Circuit Meeting, Circuit Stewards, Church Council and Church Stewards.

³⁴ For presbyters, see Standing Order 700(11) [SO 701(11) makes a similar statement about deacons]:

the Conference are said to be “appointed to serve in them”; whereas those in appointments that are not in the direct control of the Conference are said to be “permitted or authorised to serve in them”. In the case of the latter, the performance of the presbyter or deacon in the role in which she or he is permitted to serve is subject to the control of the church, institution or agency concerned, but he or she is still accountable to the Conference for his or her overall character and vocation as a presbyter or deacon.³⁵

- 29 All Methodist presbyters and deacons who are ordained and in full connexion are therefore stationed under a common discipline. This means that there is a single process of stationing for all presbyters and all deacons respectively in light of the overall needs and resources (lay and ordained) of the Church, with equivalent procedures for those serving in each of the various types of appointment. What is primary is being a Methodist presbyter or deacon living and serving within the covenant relationship that constitutes being in full connexion with the Conference. That takes precedence over the different types of appointment and particular terms and conditions of service.³⁶
- 30 This in turn requires that both local churches, circuits, districts and connexional bodies on the one hand, and those whom the Conference ordains and receives into full connexion on the other, allow their own needs and gifts to be put into the context of the wider needs of the Kingdom, and allow them to be modified by those wider needs if necessary. John Wesley told his helpers “Go always, not only to those who want (ie need) you, but to those who want (ie need) you most”. He would also have wanted the Conference to “Send the ministers always, not only to those who need them, but to those who need them most”.
- 31 Similarly, those bearing responsibility in local churches, circuits, districts and connexional bodies need to allow their own needs and desires to be modified so that they support a minister and enable his or her particular gifts to flourish for the sake of the wider Church and God’s kingdom in the world. The weight of maintaining the relationship does not all fall on the ministers. All parties to a covenant make promises and commitments, and there needs to be regular review of how they are being embodied in practice, to enable both presbyters and deacons on the one hand, and representatives of the various bodies and expressions of the Methodist Church to express their accountability to God, to the Church, and to each other.
- 32 Ministers and others therefore need to reflect constantly how what we might term the “Ministerial Covenant” is working out in their situation. Such reflection should be marked by
- a common commitment to the requirements of the Kingdom;
 - a respect for the perceived needs of both the presbyters and deacons respectively and of the situations requiring their ministry, and at the same time a critical engagement with them both;

(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.

³⁵ For example, Standing Order 735 sets this out with reference to those who are given permission to serve another Conference or Church as follows:

735 (4) Permission may be given on terms that the minister will be accountable to the other conference or church both for his or her presbyteral or diaconal practice and for his or her 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.

³⁶ Material in this paragraph is based on the section entitled “Renewing Itinerancy” in the report *Releasing Ministers for Ministry* adopted by the Conference in 2002.

- a transparency about motives and all material factors affecting the process.³⁷

³⁷ This paragraph is based on paragraph 4.9 of *Releasing Ministers for Ministry* 2002.

THE MINISTERIAL COVENANT: INTRODUCTION

- 1 “Watching over one another in love” is the traditional hallmark of the Methodist experience and understanding of discipleship. It involves a free-will commitment to sharing in the discerning of God’s Spirit at work in the world through conferring with others, and a gracious offering of oneself to give and receive the fruits of that discernment so that all may grow in holiness (personal and social) and engage in worship and mission to the best of their ability.
- 2 In other words, it is the Methodist way of exercising oversight. It begins in the promises and commitments made in baptism, confirmation and becoming a member of the Methodist Church. Its classic expression spiritually is in the Covenant Service. Its classic embodiment practically is in Class and Band meetings (and their modern equivalents), and in the Conference (and its subsidiary meetings in Local Churches, Circuits, Districts and the wider Connexion).
- 3 The process of conferring and discerning always has to be open to the Spirit bringing new insights and fresh revelations of truth. But it also has to begin from somewhere; and it then needs to check that any apparent new insights that emerge are of God.
- 4 The primary starting point and checking point has always been the Bible. That is why the holiness being overseen is often termed ‘scriptural’ holiness. The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures set out the Torah: the story of God’s creative ordering of the universe and guidelines for how to live in harmony with its principles (hence better translated as ‘instruction’ than ‘law’). The biblical prophets then constantly take those principles and re-contextualise them in the light of changing historical circumstances. Similarly, the New Testament shows the early church taking the teachings Jesus had given to his followers who were predominately Galileans, Jerusalemites or other people “of the land”, and re-applying them to Greek-speaking Jews from the diaspora, Samaritans and Gentiles throughout the Roman world.
- 5 Early Methodism, as the name suggests, developed its own method of pursuing holiness in worship and mission. That method involved developing guidelines, and setting out aspirations and expectations, which applied the insights of scripture to the lives of the people. These were often termed ‘rules’, not in the sense of a legal code of commandments but of recommended standards for living and touchstones for reflection.
- 6 It is as if, in emphasising “watching over one another in love”, Wesley saw the process of living by Rule as a means of grace. He defined ‘means of grace’ as “*outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby He might convey to [sc human beings] preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace*”. He then immediately went on to quote the *Book of Common Prayer’s* phrase, “the means of grace and the hope of glory” before summarising the *Book of Common Prayer’s* definition of sacraments as “an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same”³⁸.

³⁸ *Standard Sermons number XII* (number 16 in the more recent edition by Outler). In the same sermon Wesley identified the chief of these means of grace as prayer (individual and communal); searching the Scriptures (by reading, hearing and meditating on them); and receiving the Lord’s Supper (regularly, and as often as possible). In the Minutes of the 1744 Conference, Wesley added two further ones: fasting; and Christian Conference (which we have more recently termed Christian Confering). These five things Wesley sometimes called the ‘Institutional Means of Grace’, in that he found scriptural warrant for them. But he also recognised other things which he called ‘Prudential Means of Grace’. These, by their very definition, could vary according to the people, contexts and situations concerned; but they were always directed towards “*watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, exercise of the presence of God*”. They included following particular rules of life or engaging in particular acts of holy living.

- 7 Predominant among these rules for the early Methodists were *The Character of a Methodist* (1742), *the Nature, Design and General Rules of the United Societies* (which included the rules for the Class Meeting) (1743); and *the Rules of the Bands* (1744).
- 8 Within the general calling of all the “people called Methodist” to “live by Rule”, there were focused callings and Rules for those performing particular functions (eg “the Rules for Singing”) or fulfilling particular offices. Of particular relevance for our current concerns are the group of Anglican priests and lay preachers that Wesley began to gather around him as his itinerant “Helpers” or “Assistants”, and with whom he held Conference. Over the years, and particularly as Methodism began to develop from being a movement within the Church of England to being a Church (and then Churches) in its own right, this group gradually developed into an order of ministers.
- 9 Wesley’s *Twelve Rules of a Helper* (1753, being a revised version of the *Rules of an Assistant* 1744) are therefore very important. They are clearly a Rule of Life. They are equally clearly a set of tools to enable personal and shared reflection on the experience and practice of ministry.
- 10 The *Twelve Rules* and other sections relating to the office of Preachers and Pastors were among the material included in the compilations of the Minutes of the Conference that were known as the *Large Minutes* in 1753, and revised and re-issued in 1763, 1770, 1772, 1780, and 1789. A copy of the *Large Minutes* or J S Simon’s *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline* which superseded them in 1905 was given to all those preachers and helpers who were received into full connexion with the Wesleyan Conference in the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. The inscription in them (which persisted until Methodist Union in 1932) said “As long as you freely consent to, and earnestly endeavour to walk by, these Rules, we shall rejoice to acknowledge you as a fellow-labourer”.
- 11 Further material was created in 1820 in what became known as the *Liverpool Minutes*. It was intended to supplement the *Twelve Rules of a Helper* and those other parts of the *Large Minutes* which related to the duties of Preachers and Pastors. It stated that both those documents should be read frequently and studied carefully. The new material was intended to re-apply their principles in the changed circumstances of “the present age” in the first quarter of the 19th century, which included the first recorded reduction in membership of Wesleyan Methodism (although Primitive Methodism was growing exponentially in the same period, particularly in the Midlands). The results were a set of resolutions to which those in full connexion with the Conference committed themselves, with a view to achieving “... the increase of Spiritual Religion among our Societies and Congregations, and ... the extension of the work of God in our native country”. They too set out guidelines, and criteria by which performance could be supervised and evaluated.
- 12 These resolutions in the *Liverpool Minutes* were revised in 1885, and remained for many years as a blueprint for ministry. A new set of *Resolutions on Pastoral Work* was then adopted by the Conference in 1971. This occurred in a period when the context for ministry was changing rapidly, leading to a series of theological restatements of the nature of ordained ministry. In 1960 there had been a statement on *Ordination in the Methodist Church* which was grounded in the major 1937 statement *The Nature of the Christian Church*. There then followed reconsiderations of ordained ministry. Some were prompted by ecumenical considerations in such as the *Anglican-Methodist Conversations*. Others came in response to pressure to diversify the contexts in which ministry was exercised so that, for example, it could be exercised in what were known as the ‘sectors’ as well as traditional circuit appointments. This led to the 1974 statement on *Ordination*.
- 13 Throughout all this period, and since, the important dynamic of “watching over one another in love” in ministry, and in exercising accountability and receiving support for it, has been expressed through weekly staff meetings; the response to the question asked during a communion service at the Presbyteral Session of each District Synod (“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 administer our

discipline?"); and the answer of each District in the Presbyteral Session of the Conference to the Annual Inquiry about the character and discipline of presbyters and presbyteral probationers. At the time of writing in 2020, a programme for the supervision of all ministers (presbyters and deacons) in the active work is being introduced across the Connexion.

- 14 The whole process has been summed up in the Ordinal for Presbyters in the 1999 Methodist Worship Book. After outlining a number of tasks of presbyteral ministry under the heading "In God's name you are to..." it goes on to say, "These things are your common duty and delight. In them you are to watch over one another in love."
- 15 Since the 1974 statement on *Ordination*, however, the Methodist Church has also closed the Wesley Deaconess Order, opened a Methodist Diaconal Order for both men and women, and declared that Order to be an order of ministry in the Church as well as a form of dispersed religious order. Although there are differences of emphasis between it and the presbyteral order (as two complementary orders of ministry) it inherits and shares the same tradition concerning rules of life, codes of conduct and "watching over one another in love". The Methodist Diaconal Order has a clear (or specific) expectation and practice in these matters articulated in the sharing of a common rule of life. The declaration in the diaconal ordination service states that "You are to share fully in the life of your Order and to keep its discipline". The sense of "watching over one another in love" is enacted in the area groups and through the Order's Convocation. The annual inquiry as to the character and discipline of deacons and diaconal probationers is conducted through a rededication service at the Convocation, and assurances then given by the Warden of the Order on behalf of the Convocation to the Conference Diaconal Committee and, thereby, the Conference.
- 16 In the same period since 1974, the diversification in the ways that both presbyteral and diaconal ministry have been expressed has also posed questions about what commonality there could be within each order as well as between them, when, for example, not everyone could be in a weekly staff meeting, and also when the criteria for discernment of ministerial vocation were no longer self-evidently appropriate for all contexts. That led eventually to the report *What is a Presbyter?* adopted by the Conference in 2002, and *What is a Deacon?* in 2004. The former restates the definitive characteristic emphases of presbyteral ministry. It then concludes with three sections outlining 'the Characteristics of a Presbyter', 'the Tasks of a Presbyter' and 'the Accountability of a Presbyter' (to God, to the Church, to ordained colleagues and to others).
- 17 In recent years attention has been given to identifying criteria of competence and standards of practice, so that they can be used by the Church and its ministers in the process of discernment. The 2003 Conference approved *Criteria for the Selection of Candidates for Ordained Ministry* which were revised by the 2016 Conference. Attention has also been given to the tasks of ministry and in 2002 the Conference adopted the report *Releasing Ministers for Ministry*. That report identified the need to discuss the life of the minister in three ways – the fundamental character of the Office to which a presbyter or deacon is called (the main features of which are expressed in the words of the Ordinal); the Being of the minister, by which we mean the *habitus* or intuitive way by which the presbyter or deacon lives out her or his calling; the Functioning of the minister, ie the way in which the presbyter's or deacon's being manifests itself in the tasks of ministry she or he undertakes.
- 18 What is offered here is a tool to enable presbyters and deacons on the one hand, and those representing the Church in local churches, circuits, districts or other connexional bodies who deal with them or relate to them on the other, to reflect on a particular experience or aspects of the last of those categories (Functioning) in the light of the former two (Office and Being). In order to be clear that the tool relates to our fundamental understanding of what it is to be a presbyter or deacon, the content is laid out according to the revised *Criteria for Selection* and the three dimensions identified in *Releasing Ministers for Ministry*. But because the Ministerial Covenant is a relationship between ministers and those representing the Church and the Conference in some expression or other of the Methodist Church, and because all parties make promises and

commitments, questions to prompt reflections on the functioning and performance of those who deal with ministers are included alongside those on the functioning and performance of the ministers.

- 19 None of this will appear unfamiliar to the presbyter or deacon who has nurtured her or his vocation and been faithful in watching over and being watched over in love. *What is a Presbyter?* reminded the Church that ministers are expected to behave “with integrity, competence and according to the best standards of practice towards those to whom she or he ministers.” The same is true of those who have to engage with or relate to presbyters or deacons.
- 20 This material therefore reminds ministers and those who deal with them of the exemplary standards of behaviour which befit their calling as representative people. 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 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 what follows a canon against which (in)appropriate conduct and (in)competence can be identified and assessed. However, this material should be seen primarily as aspirational; its purpose 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. It follows that the points for reflection in the Ministerial Covenant are not 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.
- 21 The commitment to being ‘watched over in love’ is a key element in discipleship and ministry for all Methodists. Much of the material offered here refers to the exercise of ordained ministry, and it might be helpful to remember that in its 2017 report to the Conference the working party argued that its content could have a close relationship to the process of supervision. But the covenant relationship between those who are ordained and in full connexion and the Conference extends to more than those ministers in the active work. The working party believes, therefore, that all ministers, in the active work, in circuit or non-circuit appointment, or in retirement would benefit from studying and using the material, but that the degree to which it applies to each minister will be proportional to the level of ministry in which each is engaged.
- 22 In the same way, the degree to which the points for reflection directed towards the Church apply to each individual or group who represent the Church locally or connexionally in dealing with ordained ministers will be proportional to the level of engagement which each is meant to have with ministers. There would be great value in such as the Stationing Committee, or groups of circuit stewards or church stewards regularly reviewing their experience and practice in the light of relevant sections of this material. Similarly, could meet simultaneously in lay groups and ministerial groups to discuss, respectively, the Questions for Ministers and Questions for the Church in a particular section of the Covenant.

THE MINISTERIAL COVENANT: POINTS FOR REFLECTION

VOCATION (CALL AND COMMITMENT)³⁹

Office

'It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of Christian ministry depends upon the call of God'.⁴⁰ Throughout the process of candidating and training, men and women 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 presbyters and deacons 'focus, express, and enable the ministry of the whole people of God.'⁴¹

Being

Presbyters and deacons are people who witness to a sense of a distinct call to serve in the ministry to which they are ordained; and who 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. Ministers therefore seek to discern their developing vocation (eg at times of stationing) in dialogue with the Church and its processes.

Functioning (In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I willing to give an account of my call to ordained ministry? • Am I prepared to explore my developing sense of call with others (eg minister exercising oversight, supervisor, spiritual director,)? • Am I able to affirm each year a continued sense of call to the ordained ministry of Christ's Church? • Do I recognise that the call to minister is discerned by the individual and by the Church together? Therefore • Am I committed to listen carefully to the narratives of vocation that others have to offer and to help them to discern their place in the body? How do I review my sense of vocation in the light of the Church's needs in serving God's mission in the world? • Am I committed to being faithful to the Church's processes of discernment and stationing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we recognise that the call to ordained ministry is discerned by both the individual and the Church together? • Are we willing to challenge a stereotypical model of ordained ministry? • Are we prepared to listen, consider, and where appropriate enable a variety of expressions of ordained ministries that may be discerned? • Are we committed in stationing to holding the balance between the needs of the Church and the individual gifts and skills of ministers? • Are we committed to help ministers to discern how they may flourish and thereby enable the Church to flourish through the exercise of their individual gifts and graces? • Are we willing to resource and develop the specific gifts of each minister so that they may offer those gifts in the ministry and mission of the Church?

³⁹ The Retreat Association, of which the Methodist Church is a member, provide details on finding spiritual directors, see www.retreats.org.uk.

⁴⁰ Deed of Union clause 4.

⁴¹ *What is a Presbyter?* paragraph 4.

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we help ensure that each minister is stationed according to their gifts as well as the needs of the Church?

VOCATION (MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN GREAT BRITAIN)

Office

Whilst the Methodist Church claims to ordain 'not to a denomination, but to the presbyterate and diaconate of the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church', Methodist presbyters and deacons exercise ministry within and as representatives of the Methodist Church in Britain.

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.

Being

Deacons are people whose calling is to focus a servant ministry 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.

Functioning *(In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)*

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I work collaboratively with all other members of the Church (presbyters and deacons, lay officers and lay members)? • Do I participate (as required by Standing Orders) in regular Circuit staff meetings (or equivalent body) as an expression of collegiality and shared leadership? • How do I respect and demonstrate respect for the significance and integrity of the ministry of the other order, and of lay officers and members? • Do I understand the power implicit in the role of minister? Do I use that power appropriately? • Do I accept that I am accountable for the exercise of the power inherent in my office? • Do I own the commitment to 'watch over one another in love' through attendance at and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we willing to work collaboratively with ministers in a covenantal rather than a type of 'employer/employee' relationship, recognising that together with the members of the Church we constitute the People of God? • Do we ensure that all our meetings are providing appropriate opportunities for collegiality and shared leadership? • Are we aware of any unhealthy power imbalances that are affecting our commitment to collaborative working between all members, lay and ordained, and what appropriate steps are we taking to rectify these where they occur? • Are we encouraging and seeking to express our God-given unity? • Are we engaging with our ministers in partnership with other Christians

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<p>participation in the Synod and through less formal gatherings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (For deacons) Am I committed to life as a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order? • Do I remember that my conduct at all times will be seen by others as the behaviour of a representative of the Methodist Church? • Am I committed to working with ecumenical colleagues in a spirit of trust and openness? 	<p>denominations in projects with mission opportunities?</p>

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Office

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.'⁴² It is recognised that there are diverse ways in which spirituality can be expressed and nurtured.

Being

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 perfect holiness. 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.

Functioning *(In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)*

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I a regular and disciplined life of personal prayer? • How do I express a commitment to the worship of the Church including times when I am not leading worship? • To whom am I accountable for my life of prayer? • (For deacons) am I faithful to the Order's common rule of life and use of the Daily Office? • Am I encouraging a commitment to 'A Methodist Way of Life'? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we provide time, opportunity, and appropriate encouragement and resources for the spiritual development of our ministers, recognising the breadth of spirituality found among them, and the potential for enriching the spiritual lives of the whole Church in so doing? • Are we encouraging our ministers to seek out opportunities for prayer and worship, both within and beyond the Methodist Church, which will nourish their relationship with God? • Are we encouraging a commitment to 'A Methodist Way of Life'?

⁴² *Methodist Worship Book* pp. 303, 318.

PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

Office

‘This ministry will make great demands upon you.’⁴³ The model is the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. Therefore, the life of the ministers can be spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, and physically demanding.

As those who live on the resources of the Church, freely shared by other disciples, ministers are those who are prepared to live simply and so far as their means allow to embody the generosity of Christ.

Being

Ministers need to develop and to maintain the resources to face these demands, not least through living and working within the Church’s policy that all ministers should operate under supervision.

They 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.

Presbyters and deacons should live modestly as those for whom the church has provided, conducting their own financial affairs with probity and appropriate transparency.

As representative people they are duty bound to 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.

Functioning (In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)

Questions for ministers’ reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I meet regularly with a supervisor, share honestly the tensions and joys of ministry, and make effective use of the space to reflect on ministry with a view to improving my practice? • How do I take care of myself, maintain reasonable working hours,⁴⁴ and take regular days off and holidays, including my quarter days?⁴⁵ • Do I seek advice and treatment and rest when unwell? • Do I accept the gift of the sabbatical at appropriate times? • Am I careful in managing money, keeping accurate records of all receipts of gifts or other monies in addition to my stipend, salary, or pension, and abiding by the Church’s policies in relation to occasional fees, gifts, and gratuities?⁴⁶ • Am I prudent in the use of material resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do we hold up before the whole Church the ideal of Christ-like character? • Are our policies and practices of Supervision, Ministerial Development Reviews, Training, Continuing Development in Ministry, and Safeguarding kept under review and modified accordingly to take account of changing times so that we continue to ‘watch over one another in love’? • Are we careful to ensure that in its processes of Ministerial Supervision, presbyters and deacons are matched with supervisors who can support, encourage, advise, and challenge them, and, where this is not the case, arrange for a more suitable match? • In the light of the stresses and strains of ministry, in what ways are we providing the necessary pastoral and wellbeing support to our ministers and their households?

⁴³ *Methodist Worship Book* pp. 302, 317.

⁴⁴ CPD Book VII Guidance, Part 3: Holidays, p. 778.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ SO 801 and 802 (5) – (7)

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I take care of the manse with which I have been provided?⁴⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are we seeking to reduce the pressures on our ministers? How are we helping to build the resilience of our ministers to face the changing demands and pressures of ministry? How are we helping to ensure that our ministers are housed in manses that are both appropriate to their needs and those of their families, and that their manses and equipment are up to standard and well maintained?⁴⁸

BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

Office

All ministry is relational and should reflect the loving communion of three persons that is God the Holy Trinity.
49

Both presbyters and deacons are called to have unfailing love' for those amongst whom they minister.

Ministers are people who live in relationship with others and are expected to live in accordance with the church's policies and statements on marriage, family life, and other relationships. All ministers have other vocations (eg 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.

Being

Ministers need to recognise themselves as whole people who are called to balance the various commitments to those whom they are called to love.

Ministers should be conversant with and live openly in accord with the guidelines on sexual relationships,⁵⁰ and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Presbyters and deacons should model good, wholesome, and loving relationships and demonstrate discretion in the use of physical contact or expressions of intimacy.

The conduct of the minister should be that of a loving servant who is called to live among those whom she or he may find it easy or difficult to like.

All human relationships have dimensions of power and vulnerability. Ministers should be alert to these and cautious of any words or actions that could be interpreted as an abuse of their power.

Ministers need to be conversant with and to advocate for the Church's policies and practices in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

⁴⁷ Unless in exceptional circumstances permission has been given under SO 803(10) not to live in the manse. For care of the Manse, see CPD Book VII Guidance, Part 1.

⁴⁸ For the standards of provision, see SO 803 and CPD Book VII Guidance Parts 1 and 2.

⁴⁹ *What is a Deacon?* paragraph 2

⁵⁰ 1993 Resolutions on Human Sexuality

Functioning (In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I live faithfully in my personal relationships? • Am I clear when and with whom I would need to discuss serious difficulties in or likely breakup of my relationships? • Am I willing to be vulnerable in order to receive help from the Church family? • Am I careful to identify and to maintain appropriate boundaries in pastoral relationships? • Do I conduct all my pastoral work in accordance with the Church's directions and guidance?⁵¹ • Am I conversant with and do I follow the stipulations in the Church's Safeguarding policies?⁵² • Am I conversant with and do I follow the Church's policies on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion? • Do I keep accurate and meaningful records of pastoral visits and encounters?⁵³ • Do I refer to supervision any relationship that might threaten to cross the boundaries of professional, pastoral care? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our covenant relationship with ministers, how are we exercising our responsibilities towards them so that they feel 'cared for' whilst exercising the Church's care for others? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Are ministers actively involved in all matters relating to their ministry and wellbeing? ❖ Do we sufficiently recognise that the manse is primarily a home as well as being a place of work where privacy is to be respected? ❖ Are ministers' study days encouraged and respected? ❖ Do we intervene and offer support where ministers believe they experience bullying, discriminatory, or belittling behaviour? ❖ Do we encourage and support ministers to maintain a healthy work / life balance, eg, to read the Scriptures, pray, study, make time for rest, exercise, and recreation in daily life, and to take regular days off, quarter days, holidays, and sabbaticals? ❖ How is pastoral care being offered to the ministerial household? • In carrying out the Church's Safeguarding policies, are those in office being trained to the necessary levels, and provided with the appropriate advice and support when faced with the cases that may arise? • Are we sufficiently attentive to the wellbeing and mental health of our ministers? What are our policies and practices to offer appropriate help and support before their wellbeing is affected and ill-health ensues? • What resources do we have to support ministers and their families when their relationships are in difficulty?

⁵¹ eg see Conference reports, 'With Integrity and Skill' and 'Positive Working Together.'

⁵² See Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/policies-and-guidance/>

⁵³ See Code of Safer Working Practice with Adults in Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/policies-and-guidance/>

THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY IN GOD'S WORLD

Office

Ministers are called to lead God's people in mission to the world. They are those in whom gifts have been identified which contribute to the fulfilling of the mission of the Church. They are therefore those whose lives are shaped by the calling of the Church to worship, learning and caring, service, and evangelism and who seek to reflect theologically on the Church's vocation in the context of the 21st century.

Being

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.

Theological reflection is central to the life of the presbyter or deacon. He or she will seek to be informed about the world and to ask where God is at work. Within the broad understanding of what it means to be God's people in this place and time, each minister will develop his or her own theological and other interests and aim to contribute to the life and witness of the Church in particular ways, proclaiming the good news of God's love in ways that are appropriate to their context.

Their political opinions should be informed by the use of reliable and authoritative media. It is wholly inappropriate for ministers to be members of any movements that implicitly or explicitly deny the equality of all God's children.

Functioning *(In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)*

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I speak respectfully of Christians of other denominations and of members of other faith communities? • Do I look to develop partnerships with members of other churches working with the guidance of connexional and district officers as and when appropriate? • Do I engage with social issues in ways that make clear Christ's compassion? • Do I try to exercise a prophetic ministry that is informed and takes into account all sides of a question? • Am I respectful of the views of others when I try to speak prophetically? • Do I seek to avoid language and attitudes that are in any way discriminatory, offensive or liable to incite hatred or inflame tensions? • Whilst being free to hold and to express party political views, do I seek to avoid denigrating the opinions or motivations of others within the political mainstream? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are we helping to inspire, train, equip, and empower our ministers with the strategic vision and practical tools to lead the Methodist people in meeting the mission challenges of the twenty-first century? • In what ways are we encouraging ministers to engage in theological reflection on their ministries, especially in relation to the pressing issues of our times, so as to inform and resource the whole Church in their ministry in God's world? • How are we enabling our ministers to engage with others in furthering God's mission for human flourishing and the wellbeing of creation? • How do we support, advise, and empower our ministers to engage in a prophetic ministry in the Church and in the world?

LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Office

The call to presbyteral ministry is a call to ‘a principal and directing part in [the] great duties [of the Church]’;⁵⁴ the call to the diaconate is to ‘represent the servanthood of Christ, exercising a formal role of leadership in the Church’.⁵⁵ Both presbyters and deacons are called to ‘accept our discipline and work together with... sisters and brothers in the Church’.⁵⁶ This requires an appropriate degree of both humility and confidence in the way in which leadership is exercised.

Being

Ministers need to have an ability to work with others in a variety of ways. They should be those who 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 delegate to others when appropriate.

Ministry in the Methodist Church at times also requires the presbyter or deacon to be able to act decisively on the part of the church, circuit, or other body and therefore to hold an appropriate understanding of her or his own authority.

The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church 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 the presbyter or deacon is called to represent the Conference within and beyond the Church. Particularly in the public arena, ministers 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.’⁵⁷

Functioning (In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)

Questions for ministers’ reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do I attend and contribute appropriately to the meetings of which I am a member according to the Standing Orders and the constitution of the circuit?• Do I participate in circuit staff meetings (or the equivalent body) as an expression of collegiality and shared leadership?• How do others view my leadership and practical collaboration?• Do I work with others to ensure that meetings in the life of the Church are properly constituted, effectively administered, and functionally efficient?• Is my practice of keeping records one that is helpful to me (and, where appropriate, to my colleagues)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways do we promote and embody the culture of shared leadership?• How do we invite and enable participation?• How do we support our ministers when circumstances have required that they act decisively, and, when such decisions may later be judged to be ill-advised?• In what ways do we seek to address bullying?• In what ways do we seek to address discrimination, including our own unconscious bias?• Have we recently reviewed the working of our complaints and grievance policies and provisions?

⁵⁴ Deed of Union clause 4.

⁵⁵ What is a Deacon? 7.3.

⁵⁶ *MWB* pp. 303, 318.

⁵⁷ 2006 Conference *Living with Contradictory Convictions*.

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I chair and contribute to meetings in ways which clearly encourage all present to express opinions and model respectful listening? • Do I consult (and act only in accordance with) the Standing Orders, Regulations, and Guidance contained in CPD when deciding on or implementing any course of action? • Do I uphold the decisions of the Conference and the work of its officers; and if there are aspects of the life of the Church or decisions of the Conference with which I disagree, do I raise my concerns in a manner appropriate to someone with a representative role? • Do I encourage those with whom they share in ministry to help to implement the decisions of the Conference? • Do I observe appropriate codes of confidentiality adopted or recommended by the Conference or otherwise approved by bodies authorised to act on its behalf? 	

LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING

Office

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. They are also required to engage in the practice of ministry which must be informed by an understanding of the great truths of the Faith and an ability to reflect theologically using a range of resources.

Being

Presbyters and deacons should 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. Ministers should also explore and develop their interests in other avenues of knowledge.

Presbyters and deacons will also be those who want to engage with a range of cultural pursuits and activities.

Functioning *(In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)*

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I have a programme of Bible reading? • Do I maintain habits of study and avail myself of the resources of the Church in developing my skills of theological reflection? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have a programme of Bible reading? • Do we maintain habits of study and avail ourselves of the resources of the Church in developing our skills of theological reflection?

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the particular areas of theological reflection with which I feel called to engage? • What other fields of study is it helpful for me to pursue? • What records do I need to keep of my reading and engagements with other media? • Am I using my study time well? • Do I participate in the study opportunities offered by the Circuit, District, or Connexion when possible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are we encouraging a culture of lifelong learning and continuing theological reflection among our ministers? • How are we providing our ministers with the necessary time and resources so that they may actively pursue their theological and other interests? • How do we encourage ministers to make theological study a priority? • In what ways are we engaging in the apologetic task? • In what ways are we taking steps to empower and equip our ministers for mission?

COMMUNICATION

Office

Much of ministry is concerned with speaking on behalf of God to people within and outside the Church. To articulate the truths of the Christian faith demands the skills of communication. Ministers are those who are constantly learning how to speak with clarity and passion about the Good News of Christ.

Being

Ministers need to be aware of the different methods of communication that are available to them and of the importance of using different methods to speak to people with different learning styles and abilities.

Ministers need to be alert to cultural differences and to those who do not find written or spoken English easy.

Ministers should be aware of the opportunities and the perils of information technology and social media and be conversant with and careful about using modern methods of communication.

Ministers should remember that whenever they communicate they do so as those who represent 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.

Functioning *(In answering each question, consider a practical example or particular experience)*

Questions for ministers' reflection	Questions for the Church (local, circuit, district and connexional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I improve my communication skills? • How do I obtain regular feedback on my preaching and other forms of public communication? • Is my use of information technology and social media competent and appropriate? • Am I careful to use words and language appropriate to each particular audience? • Do I avoid language or imagery that would be found offensive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways are we speaking of God in God's world? • How are we seeking to improve our communications with all generations? • How are we training and equipping ministers so that they understand and, where appropriate, practise the relevant and necessary communication skills for our age of social media and information technology?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Am I conversant with and do I abide by the Church's guidance on the use of social media?• Am I willing to own my own comments?• Do I keep away from any printed, broadcast, or Internet material that has gratuitously sexual or violent content?	
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INDEX OF EXISTING GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

1. What are ministers expected to do/be?

- The ordinal (*The Methodist Worship Book*, pp. 297-328)
 - Clause 4 of the Deed of Union – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/14766/conf-2019-cpd-vol-2.pdf> (pp. 213-214)
 - Criteria for the selection of candidates for ordained ministry (2003) – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/11855/g-4-selection-criteria-for-ordained-ministry-in-the-methodist-church.pdf>
 - Expected competencies at various points in ministry - <https://www.methodist.org.uk/competencies/>; including at the point of initial stationing https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/8435/competencies-4_those_entering_first_appointment.pdf, and at the point of reception into full connexion and ordination https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/8436/competencies-5_those_ready_to_be_rifc_ordination.pdf
- See also the *Handbook for Ministerial Probation* – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/12355/final-handbook-for-ministerial-probation-2019-2020-final.pdf>
- *The Superintendents' Handbook* – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/11077/superintendents-handbook-0319.pdf>
 - The Methodist Diaconal Order Rule of Life – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-diaconal-order/living-by-a-rule/>
 - *Ordination* (1974) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/Faith_and_Order_Statements_Vol1_0409.pdf (beginning on p. 108)
 - *The Ministry of the People of God* (1988) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/Faith_and_Order_Statements_Vol2_Part1_0409.pdf (beginning on p. 229)
 - *The Methodist Diaconal Order* (1993) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/Faith_and_Order_Statements_Vol2_Part1_0409.pdf (beginning on p. 291)
 - *Called to Love and Praise* (1999) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-called-to-love-and-praise-1999.pdf
 - *Releasing Ministers for Ministry* (2002) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-releasing-ministers-for-ministry-2002.pdf
 - *What is a Presbyter?* (2002) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-what-is-a-presbyter-2002.pdf
 - *What is a Deacon?* (2004) <https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-what-is-a-deacon-2004.pdf>
 - *The Nature of Oversight* (2005) – www.methodist.org.uk/conference/conference-reports/2005-reports

- *The Covenant Relationship for those who are Ordained and in Full Connexion* (2008) – www.methodist.org.uk/conference/conference-reports/2008-reports

2. How are they expected to do / be this?

- With regard to ways of working: *Flexible Patterns of Ministry* (1999) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-flexible-patterns-of-ministry-1999.pdf
- With regard to confidentiality: *With Integrity and Skill* (2008) – www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/Conf08_18_With_Integrity_and_Skill.pdf
- With regard to development: Ministerial Development Review – www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/leadership-and-ministry/ministerial-development-review
- With regard to conflict and positive working together – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/positive-working-together/>
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/4291/positive-working-together-long-report-0615.pdf>
- With regard to online presence and behaviour: Social media guidelines – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/technology-and-church/social-media-guidelines/>
- With regard to Safeguarding: Policy <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/15910/bookmarked-safeguarding-policies-procedures-and-guidance-for-the-methodist-church-october-2019.pdf> plus the learning and recommendations from the Past Cases Review (2015) <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/4409/past-cases-review-2013-2015-final.pdf>
For the full resources see also <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/>
- With regard to the well-being and care of ministers (including issues of ill-health, stress, disabilities etc), see <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/wellbeing/ministers-with-ill-health/>

3. Guidelines and standards regulating the life of the Church as a whole

- Legislation (eg the Equality Act 2010 – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/legislation/>)
See also, Equality, diversity and inclusion guidance – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>
- Standing Orders (see 700 and 701 for ordained presbyteral and diaconal ministry) – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/14766/conf-2019-cpd-vol-2.pdf> (pp. 548-550)
- Handbooks:
Circuit Stewards' Handbook – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/12529/circuit-stewards-handbook-2019.pdf>
Church Stewards' Handbook – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/15203/3321-church-stewards-handbook-2019-4.pdf>