

Ministries Committee report to the Council 2018

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Resolutions	38/1. The Council receives the report. 38/2. The Council commends the report and its recommendations to the Conference.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To bring the Methodist Council up to date with the work of the Ministries Committee.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the 2017 Report: Worship Leaders and Local Preachers, the Ministry of Supernumeraries, Sabbaticals Policy, Transferring Ministers, Update on responses to Memorial M1 to the 2016 Conference. • Other work: Criteria and Competencies, Supporting Local Ministry, Fresh Expressions, The Membership and Work of the Ministries Committee.

Introduction

1. The Ministries Committee is accountable through the Methodist Council to the Conference for:

(i) developing and supporting the processes relating to the oversight, accountability and professional development of those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
(ii) developing and supporting programmes for nourishing, equipping and resourcing those engaged in the ministries and offices of the Church;
(iii) developing and supporting the Church's structures and resources for learning, training, scholarship, research and development;
(iv) in collaboration with other bodies, supporting the development of structures that enable the use of various forms of ministry as resources for mission within Circuits and Districts;
(v) overseeing connexional policy regarding its ordained ministries, including that relating to the processes for offering as a candidate, the oversight of students and probationers, and stationing, but without adjudicating on individual cases, which shall remain the task of the bodies appointed to fulfil that responsibility. (SO 32A1(2))

To that end the Ministries Committee has met three times since the 2017 Conference.

2. At the second of those meetings in January, the committee met with the Faith and Order Committee and was invited to comment on a draft of the Faith and Order report on 'Ministry in the Methodist Church'. The committee welcomed the opportunity to reflect on the ministry of the whole people of God and how that is expressed through the work of those in ordained and lay ministry in the Church's name, The committee saw a second draft (including part C) at its meeting in March and noted that the issues the Faith and Order committee had identified were those which the Ministries Committee has been discussing over the last six years.

3. The Council at its meeting in April 2017 received the report of the Training Review and directed the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC), in consultation with the Ministries Committee and the Faith and Order Committee, to undertake evaluations of the recommendations in order to make detailed provision for any implementation and to make regular reports to the Council. At its March meeting, the committee received the draft responses of the SRC to the eleven recommendations of the Training Review and commented on them. As directed by the SRC, a separate report on ministerial training has been prepared for the Conference. Whilst the Ministries Committee has continued to receive regular updates on the work of the Queen's Foundation in initial training and probation studies, no further comment on pre-ordination training is therefore included in this report.
4. The committee reports on its work in two sections. The first notes items that were signalled as continuing in the report to the Council in 2017 and the second brings together a number of other pieces of work. Finally, the report notes the way in which the workload of the committee has developed and the significant changes in its membership.

From the 2017 Report: Worship Leaders and Local Preachers, the Ministry of Supernumeraries, Sabbaticals Policy, Transferring Ministers

5. Worship Leaders and Local Preachers

- 5.1 The committee recognised the priority of equipping and encouraging Local Preachers and the potential of the Local Preachers' Meeting to be a place of encouragement and renewal. The Connexional Team will work to ensure that high quality resources for continuing development are available to all LP Secretaries. Work is also underway to provide clearer guidance to Local Preachers of their responsibility for continuing local preacher development (CLPD), in particular what the Church expects of them under Standing Orders 563(3)(iii) and 561(v). The committee stressed the value of an annual service at which Local Preachers are invited to reaffirm the promises made at admission and asked the Faith and Order Committee to draft an authorised liturgy for this service.
- 5.2 The importance of Local Preachers reflecting on their ministry was linked in a response to a memorial in 2013 with the length of appointment of worship leaders.

M9 (2013) Length of appointment for worship leaders

The Gordano Valley (7/15) Circuit Meeting (Present: 33; Voting: 24 for, 6 against) draws the Conference's attention to the three-yearly appointments of Worship Leaders by local churches and asks the Conference to direct the Faith and Order Committee and/or the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster to review this period taking into consideration the lifetime admission of Local Preachers to their office.

There has been growing participation of Worship Leaders in the conduct of worship over the last 20 years. The 2012 report to the Conference, The Fruitful Field Project, acknowledged that "Local Preachers and Worship Leaders make an immense contribution to the life of the Connexion".

It is the view of this Circuit Meeting that this level of acceptance is not reflected in the requirement for a three year review of a Worship Leader's appointment.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Gordano Valley Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for raising the issue of the term of service of Worship Leaders between reviews.

As noted in The Fruitful Field Project report to the 2012 Conference, flexible and accessible pathways are currently being developed under the oversight of the Ministries Committee for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. These pathways are currently being developed within the framework of existing Standing Orders; however, the Conference acknowledges that it would be appropriate to revisit these Standing Orders in the future in the light of this work. The Conference is grateful for the feedback of the Gordano Valley Circuit Meeting in this process, and acknowledges that in revisiting Standing Orders it would be helpful to reconsider the period of time between reviews. The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Ministries Committee to consider as part of their work on Worship Leader training and directs the committee to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

In 2015, the Conference adopted the following further reply from the Ministries Committee: The Ministries Committee recommends that no changes be made to the current length of appointment of Worship Leaders noting that there is already provision to extend appointments subject to review. In the light of increased expectations related to the initial training of Worship Leaders, the Committee recommends that Circuits pay careful attention to who is appointed to the role of Worship Leader noting that a Worship Leader is someone who regularly takes a leading or coordinating role in the conduct of worship. The Ministries Committee also recommends that the possibility of a quinquennial review of Local Preachers be included as part of a consultation process with Local Preachers' Meetings during 2015-16 with recommendations to the Ministries Committee in 2016-17 and, as appropriate, to the 2017 Conference. [2015 DR 7/13/1]

- 5.3 The committee consulted with Local Preachers meetings as requested; a quinquennial review was considered but the Ministries Committee thought that too infrequent. The committee has agreed to recommend that all preachers should undertake peer review of their ministry every three years and that those refusing to participate in a review would be deemed unavailable to take appointments. Guidance on the listing of those who were not available to take appointments will be issued by the Connexional Team

- 5.4 The committee agreed to recommend that SO 561 should be amended by the addition of a clause requiring the Local Preachers' Meeting to:

vii) Review the list of local preachers not available to be planned because they are unable or unwilling to attend to the duties of local preachers in SO 563. This list should be published on the circuit plan.

- 5.5 The consultation also took in the requirement to respond to M7 and M8 of 2013:

M7 (2013) Local Preachers on trial

The Glossop (19/21) Circuit Meeting (Present:22; Voting: unanimous) suggests to the Conference that the title 'Local Preacher on trial' (sic) is outdated and ambiguous and asks the Conference to find a name that more appropriately reflects the nature of the role, for example, 'Preacher in Training' or 'Student Preacher'.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Glossop Circuit Meeting for its memorial. The development of new flexible and accessible pathways for Local Preachers (as outlined in The Fruitful Field Project report to the 2012 Conference) will provide the best opportunity to reconsider the title 'Local Preacher on Trial'. The Conference directs the Ministries Committee to continue to oversee work on the development of these new pathways. The pathways are currently being developed within the framework of existing Standing Orders (including terminology); however, the Conference acknowledges that it would be appropriate to revisit these Standing Orders in the future in the light of this work. The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Ministries Committee to consider as part of their work on Local Preacher training and directs the committee to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

In 2015, the Conference adopted the following further reply from the Ministries Committee: The Ministries Committee recommends, at this stage, that no changes are made to standing orders but that consideration of the appropriate title form part of a consultation process with Local Preachers' Meetings during 2015-16 with recommendations to the Ministries Committee in 2016-17 and, as appropriate, to the Conference of 2017. [2015 DR 7/13/1]

- 5.6 The Ministries Committee has returned to this memorial on a number of occasion in the past few years. A consultation was undertaken with superintendents, Local Preachers' Secretaries, Chairs of District and District Local Preachers' Secretaries in 2016 and the results have been carefully analysed by the Ministries Committee. Whilst it is clear that many people surveyed agreed with the sentiments of the memorial that the title "preacher on trial" should be changed there was far less agreement about what a revised title might be. A number of suggestions were made: Preacher in Training, Student Preacher, Local Preacher in Training, trainee preacher, Probationary Preacher, Novice Preacher to name but a few . However, it has been impossible to find nomenclature that adequately captures the different elements of the trial period.

First, it should be noted Standing Orders refers to a "person on trial" not a preacher, as a way of indicating that a person has not yet been admitted into the fellowship of preachers. The *trial* in question refers to the person trialling (or trying out) whether a call to the office of Local Preacher is the right one for them as well as signifying the role of the Local Preachers' Meeting as it seeks to assist a person to discern their call through training, trial services, conversation and appraisal via *Worship: Leading and Preaching*.

The suggested title Preacher in Training fails to capture the nuances of what is happening during the trial period. Although it is correct in these circumstances to say that a person leading worship is in training, they neither have the status of preacher nor can it be guaranteed that they will automatically be admitted as a Local Preacher should they get to the end of the training course.

The Ministries Committee unpacked numerous other suggestions made through the consultation process, none of which quite managed to sum up what is happening in the process of becoming a Local Preacher. It is of course also true to say that a person on trial is also a preacher in training and it might well be appropriate to use that title in certain contexts. However, on official documents, such as the preaching plan, the Ministries Committee believes that on balance, despite its limitations "on trial" offers a better summary of the various elements of becoming a Local Preacher in the Methodist Church.

The Committee therefore recommends that no formal change be made to the title 'person on trial'.

5.7 M8 (2013) Responsibilities of Worship Leaders

The Sheffield (West) (25/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 21; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the current situation relating to Worship Leaders and their relationships with presbyters and Local Preachers and asks the Conference to take the following actions:

To review the responsibility of Worship leaders within Methodist worship, taking into account the variety of gifts now offered by Worship Leaders and the considerable variety of patterns of worship in current Methodist practice and to provide guidance as to the Worship Leader's relationship to and with the planned presbyter or Local Preacher.

To review the membership, agenda and title of the Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting to include Worship Leaders as members of that meeting and to enable them to participate in and to vote on appropriate parts of the agenda. To revise Standing Orders as necessary.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Sheffield (West) Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for raising the issue of the responsibilities and relationships of Worship Leaders. Since the introduction of Worship Leaders, their role has changed. We believe that the new pathways for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders that are currently under development will reflect these changes, including a "greater emphasis on the skills required for preaching and leading worship" (The Fruitful Field Project report to the 2012 Conference, para 134). As noted in The Fruitful Field Project report, the new pathways will present an opportunity for far greater shared training and development for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. These pathways are currently being developed within the framework of existing Standing Orders (including the responsibilities of Worship Leaders and the constitution of the Local Preachers' Meeting); however, the Conference acknowledges that it would be appropriate to revisit these Standing Orders in the future in the light of this work. This may include a review of the membership, agenda and title of the Local Preachers' Meeting. The Conference notes that many Circuits already invite Worship Leaders to be present and participate at Local Preachers' Meetings. The Conference therefore refers this memorial to the Ministries Committee to consider as part of their work on worship leader training and directs the committee to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

In 2015, the Conference adopted the following further reply from the Ministries Committee: SO 685 reads as follows: At each service in which a worship leader shares the person appointed on the circuit plan of preaching appointments shall retain overall responsibility for the act of worship, but shall seek to work collaboratively with the worship leader appointed to share in that service by the Church Council.

(See also SO 681(1), which draws attention to the role of Worship Leaders in assisting in the leadership of God's people in worship.)

The Ministries Committee believes that the current Standing Order is clear in identifying the nature of the working relationship between a Worship Leader and those who retain overall responsibility for an act of worship. The Committee recognises that this is not always the case in practice and recommends that consideration of a Code of Practice form part of a consultation with Local Preachers' Meetings in 2015. The Committee notes that in future Worship Leaders and Local Preachers on Trial will share in significant parts of their training together (Modules 14 of Worship: Leading and Preaching). The new pathway for Local

Preachers and Worship Leaders includes examples of good practice in collaborative working and the Committee encourages Local Preachers' Meetings together with Worship Leaders to make use of the relevant part of these resources.

The Ministries Committee recommends that a consideration of the title and agenda of the Local Preachers' Meeting form part of a consultation process with Local Preachers' Meetings during 2015- 16 with recommendations to the Ministries Committee in 2016-17 and, as appropriate, to the 2017 Conference. [2015 DR 7/13/1]

- 5.8 The consultation process carried out in 2015-2016 raised few objections to changing the name of the Local Preachers' Meeting to something more inclusive. However, a number of responses led the Ministries Committee to review the roles and training of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. The review reinforced the need for clarity around the oversight of both: Local Preachers are overseen by the fellowship of Local Preachers through the functions of the Local Preachers' meeting whilst Worship Leaders are overseen by the local Church Council (taking advice from the Local Preachers' Meeting). It is right that Local Preachers and Worship Leaders benefit from the sharing in leading worship and fellowship. However, there is a case to be upheld for Local Preachers to continue to offer oversight to other Local Preachers and the Local Preachers' meeting is the space we as a Church make for this. The Ministries Committee therefore continues to encourage Local Preachers' meetings to invite Worship Leaders to join them for fellowship and continuing development and has instructed the Ministry Development Team to develop guidelines and suggested agendas in order to develop creativity and best practice. The Ministries Committee was not minded that the name of the Local Preachers' Meeting should be changed.
- 5.9 A number of queries had been raised with the Connexional Team about the training of worship leaders. The committee agreed that there should be some flexibility allowed and that a local tutor could recommend to the Local Preachers' meeting selected parts of modules 1-4 to be studied. These should be selected to best meet the needs of the potential worship leader and local congregation. In these cases it is still the responsibility of the Local Preachers' meeting to monitor the candidate's progress in and completion of training and probation and the assessment of their suitability for appointment (SO 680(iii)). The committee noted that SO 710 requires those wishing to candidate for the diaconate to have completed units 1-4 in full.

6. The Ministry of Supernumeraries

- 6.1 The committee received the conclusions of a consultation around the ministry of supernumeraries. The consultation confirmed the value of the continuing ministry of those who have sat down and the different stages of life that those who have retired experience and the varying care that they should be offered. The committee asked that revised guidance be offered to superintendents and district chairs about the pastoral care of supernumeraries and their involvement in the life of a circuit, to circuit stewards and circuit meetings about the remuneration and letters of understanding for those supernumeraries offering significant time to a circuit, and to supernumeraries themselves about how to decide where to live after sitting down and how to be accountable for the ministry in which they are engaged. There was a general feeling that this stage of ministry has not attracted the theological resources that it needs and the committee asked that there be a section of the Methodist Church website devoted to supernumerary ministry. Overwhelmingly, those consulted were resistant to the withdrawal of the supernumerary's preaching fee and the committee reported that to the Connexional Allowances Committee.

7. The Purpose, Frequency and Duration of Ministerial Sabbaticals

7.1

7.1 Introduction

The committee presents recommendations on the purpose, frequency and duration of ministerial sabbaticals in response to memorials M7 (2016), M11 (2015), M7 (2009) and M8 (2009), following an online survey of ministers, chairs of district, district sabbatical officers and senior circuit stewards, conducted during April and May 2016.

7.2 Background

Current Practice

Current practice in relation to the purpose, frequency and duration of sabbaticals is enshrined in Standing Order 744: 'A presbyter or deacon in Full Connexion stationed in an appointment within the control of the Church shall (in the performance of his or her duties as a minister) at intervals undertake a sabbatical, that is a period of release from the ordinary duties of the appointment, in addition to normal holidays, for the purpose of pursuing an approved programme of study, research, work or experience. Normally the length of the sabbatical shall be three months. Special permission is required for any longer period. Subject to Standing Order 807A(6), the years in which sabbaticals may be taken shall normally be the tenth and each seventh year of travel after it, but sabbaticals may for good reason be taken one year earlier or later and in particular shall not be taken in the first year of a new appointment. Special permission shall be required for any greater departure from the normal dates.' (Standing Order 744(1)-(3)).

Memorials to Conference

Memorial M11 (2015) from the Plymouth and Exeter District Synod asked the Conference to review the duration and frequency of ministerial sabbaticals to provide a greater measure of flexibility, proposing that participants accrue two weeks of sabbatical entitlement a year, with each sabbatical to be taken between three and seven years after the last and with entitlement to a sabbatical to commence three years after reception into full connexion. The memorial suggested that such additional flexibility would:

- allow ministers the possibility of following through particular areas of interest/study on a more regular basis;
- prevent some ministers coming to their sabbatical exhausted, and provide a pattern of rest;
- offer better provision for those in the last years of their active ministry;
- facilitate better dovetailing between sabbaticals and ministers moving between appointments;
- enable ministers to take a sabbatical before the current ten years;
- prevent the difficulties some ministers experience transitioning into sabbaticals and then re-entering work afterwards, and the loss of focus and questioning of role some experience through prolonged absence;
- enable sabbaticals to fit more easily into ministers' personal and family circumstances; and
- be less disruptive to the life of the churches, circuits and local communities, and less onerous on the provision of cover.

A subsequent memorial M7 (2016) from the Bradford North Circuit Meeting asked that consideration be given in a review to:

- i) extending the time interval between sabbaticals beyond seven years, in order to reduce financial strain on circuit resources and reduce strain on the other circuit ministers and congregations; and
- ii) reducing the duration of sabbaticals to two months, in order to obviate the difficulties some ministers suffer when returning to circuit duties after a long break and to reduce strain on the churches.

Previously, memorial M7 (2009) from the South Ribble Circuit Meeting had proposed amending Standing Order 744(3) in order to entitle ministers to their first sabbatical in their seventh (rather than tenth) year of travel. A similar memorial – M8 (2009) was received from the Bolton and Rochdale Synod. Both memorials were referred to the Methodist Council for report and consideration and then subsequently referred to the Ministries Committee.

In response to these memorials, an online survey of ministers, chairs of district, district sabbatical officers and senior circuit stewards, was conducted during April and May 2016, and a literature review, investigating perspectives on the purpose, frequency and duration of ministerial sabbaticals.

7.3 Context

Sabbaticals and Methodism

The term ‘sabbatical’ derived originally from the Old Testament and related to the *Sabbath*, the weekly day of rest and delight in God (Exodus 34:21; Isaiah 58:13-4), and the *sabbatical year*, in which, every seven years, complete rest was commanded for the land, with no sowing or reaping, and the remission of debts and release of Hebrew slaves (Leviticus 25:4; 1 Maccabees 6:49; Deuteronomy 15:1, 12). By extension, in the nineteenth-century, ‘sabbatical’ became used by universities to denote a period of study leave for their academic staff, originally every seven years. Later, other professions and occupations embraced the practice, as a means of vocational development and refreshment. The 1985 Methodist Conference report, ‘Sabbaticals for Ministers’, noted that the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Church and some Anglican dioceses had already pioneered the use of sabbaticals for their ministers before their introduction in Methodism (*Conference Agenda* 1985, 240).

Sabbaticals had already been made available to some Methodist ministers prior to the mid-1980s, but provision had been variable and inequitable. A sabbatical entitlement for all presbyters and deacons appointed to stations within the control of the Church began to be phased in and piloted in 1986-87. It was stressed that this should not be regarded as ‘an extended vacation’ and should have ‘a serious purpose’, such as i) short-term experience of related other work; ii) experience of other churches, different cultures and development of personal spirituality; iii) formal or informal courses of study; or iv) writing a book, series of articles or a thesis, to share insights and expertise more widely within the Church (*Conference Agenda* 1985, 241-2).

From the outset, the sabbatical break was defined as a period of three months, normally available every seven years, beginning in the tenth year of travel. It is worth noting that, although ministers currently normally begin travelling when they are first stationed, prior to 1985 travel had mostly started at the point when someone was accepted as a candidate and entered training (see SO 800(4)). The year of travel of those who were accepted as candidates prior to 1985 is still calculated according to the previous method. Hence, practices relating to the frequency of sabbaticals were established at a time of transition. It is unclear whether the original intention was to grant the first sabbatical ten years after stationing or, alternatively, ten years after entry to training. As it now stands, the first sabbatical may often coincide with a year when the minister is due to move.

The sabbatical proposals had been sent to Districts and Circuits for consultation in 1985-86. Some of those consulted argued for shorter more frequent sabbaticals; some felt a sabbatical every seven years would be too frequent; whilst others argued for longer sabbaticals. A degree of potential flexibility was built into, and remains within, the Standing Orders: special permission may be obtained for a longer sabbatical (SO 744(2)) or departure from the normal dates (SO 744(3)). A review of the sabbatical scheme was conducted in 1995-96 and a report was made to the Board of the Division of Ministries. Initially sabbaticals were intended to be normative but not compulsory (*Conference Agenda* 1986, 11). However, in 2000 sabbaticals became a required part of the minister or deacon's 'performance of his or her duties' (CPD 2000, SO 757(1)), in the light of the acknowledged 'benefits of sabbaticals for ministers, deacons and the church at large' (*Conference Agenda* 1999, 320).

7.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

a) The Purpose of Sabbaticals

Originally, sabbaticals were seen as opportunities to 're-train, refresh and renew the very base from which future activity may spring'. It was assumed that they would not only be beneficial for the minister concerned but also for the health of the whole church: 'The stimulation and confidence deriving from learning a new skill, the refreshment and renewal of a period in which one is distanced from regular commitments, as well as the direct benefit of spiritual and intellectual pursuits could only enhance the whole ministry of the people of God' (*Conference Agenda* 1985, 240).

By contrast, the benefits of sabbaticals in current connexional documentation are largely couched in terms of benefits to the individual presbyter or deacon, who are said to receive a 'gift from the Church' and a 'time of grace', for doing 'something different', that will 'inform and perhaps re-enthuse' them, 're-energise', and be 'a time for refreshment and renewal' and an opportunity to 'hear the still small voice of God', as well as being an antidote to ministerial burn out and stress ('Sabbaticals in the Methodist Church' - <http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/1034418/cl-sabbaticals-in-the-mc-210214.pdf>). The pro forma letter from the District Sabbaticals Officer to those due a sabbatical speaks of the sabbatical as 'a time for renewal, study, reflection and recreation. It is a gift from the Church to use as you wish,' (<http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/933867/cl-letter-from-district-to-minister-140116.doc>).

Arguably, these descriptions of the benefits of sabbaticals could be perceived as quite self-indulgent. There is, however, a steer in the 'Guidelines for the Local Sabbatical Support Group' that the presbyter or deacon should ensure that 'what they have learnt can be used by the individual and the church' (<http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/cl-guidelines-local-sab-sup-gp-220909.doc>) and the agenda for Presbyteral Synods provides scope for presbyters to report on their 'sabbatical study' (Standing Order 488 C (6)). Additionally, the District Sabbaticals Advisory Group and the local Sabbatical Support Group are charged with ensuring that 'fruits of the programme are properly shared' (SO 744(5),(6)). One District Sabbaticals Officer suggested, in survey feedback, that there should be greater clarity about whether or not ministers should be expected to provide 'some practical outcome which will benefit the local church or circuit in tangible form' or whether the sabbatical should simply remain a 'gift' from the Church to its ministers.

There is scope here to explore ways in which sabbaticals could currently better 'enhance the whole ministry of the people of God'. In their survey responses, ministers identified a wider set of key benefits of sabbaticals than those already itemised in online and hard copy Connexional sabbatical guidance (reporting, for instance, that sabbaticals strengthened relationships with friends and family). This suggests that the benefits of sabbaticals could be

more comprehensively described in connexional guidance. Also, there may be better ways of communicating to lay people the purpose and benefits of ministerial sabbaticals, especially in view of the fact that church members generally do not receive sabbaticals in their own working lives.

When identifying the key benefits of sabbaticals, surprisingly, ministers tended not to refer explicitly to how this affected their relationship with God. Equally 'retreat' and 'time to simply be with God' were not prioritised when they described the nature of their sabbaticals. Ministers may need greater encouragement and help, via, for instance, Ministerial Development Review (MDR) and ongoing supervision processes, in ensuring that this dimension is a key part of their sabbatical. Such processes could also make sure that there is due accountability in the process so that ministers can properly account for their sabbatical activities. Similarly, the process of agreeing sabbaticals might benefit from the introduction of benchmarks, linked to any Continuing Development in Ministry (CDIM) benchmarks which may, from time to time, emerge, to ensure proper coverage and balance.

Ministers sometimes reported that they had spent their sabbatical dealing with a substantial personal pastoral issue, including such things as: caring for ill/ aged/ dying relatives; recovery from pregnancy loss/ illness/ accident/ burnout; and developing physical fitness prior to an operation. It is significant that a number of these personal pastoral issues might have warranted a period of compassionate leave, rather than sabbatical leave. Ministers also suggested that more work should be done on enabling healthy re-entry to ministry after sabbaticals.

Recommendations

- That a review of sabbatical paperwork be undertaken with a particular focus on:
 - the benefits of sabbaticals for both the individual and the wider Church;
 - identifying mechanisms through which the fruits of a sabbatical can be shared more widely;
 - reflection on the use of sabbaticals as an opportunity to deepen relationship with God and neighbour;
 - the integration of CDIM benchmarks into sabbatical aims and objectives;
 - development of links between sabbaticals, supervision and MDR;
 - ensuring that the literature is clear concerning when periods of compassionate leave should be sought rather than a sabbatical;
 - suggestions on successful re-integration into circuit life after a period on sabbatical.

b) Frequency of Sabbaticals

It is noteworthy that the memorials presented to the Conference point in different directions regarding frequency with arguments made both for more and less frequent sabbaticals. The survey evidence across a range of people surveyed, including both circuit stewards and ministers, expressed a strong preference for the gap between sabbaticals remaining at 7 years. There is at present no strong *prima facie* evidence for a change in the current system regarding frequency of sabbaticals.

There is currently a lack of clarity about accrual of sabbatical entitlement on the part of ministers who are serving, or who have served, in appointments outside the control of the Church. In particular, there is evidence that standing orders concerning sabbaticals have been interpreted in different ways once ministers have returned into an appointment within the control of the Church. There are arguments which point to different conclusions in assessing this evidence. On balance, however, it should be noted that in a period in an appointment outside of the control of the Church, a minister serves under quite different terms of service from those serving in appointments within the control of the Church.

Bearing this in mind, ministers should accrue entitlement on the basis of numbers of years served in appointments within the control of the Church with sabbatical accrual being paused when ministers undertake appointments outside of the control of the Church.

M7 (2009) from the South Ribble Circuit suggested that SO 744(3) should be amended to enable ministers to undertake their first sabbatical after seven rather than ten years of travel. The literature review indicates that the current position is slightly anomalous dating back to a period when years of travel were calculated according to the date on which someone entered ministerial training rather than the date on which someone entered their first station. There are also arguments that the ministers would be better served by a sabbatical in the earlier years of ministry contributing to well being and resilience at what is for some a critical point on their journey.

Recommendations

- SO 744(3) should be modified to enable a first sabbatical after 7 years and every 7 years thereafter. Consultation with the Connexional Allowances Committee has taken place on this point and the effect on the sabbaticals budget overall is manageable.
- The guidance on frequency of sabbaticals should make clear that the qualifying period for sabbaticals relates to the number of years spent in appointments within the control of the Church.
- There are special provisions for ministers from other Conferences and Churches. Although Standing Order 744 refers only to ministers in Full Connexion, SO 732(5) states that ministers who are 'Recognised and Regarded' serve under the same terms and conditions as those who are in Full Connexion. Hence, they should be expected to take a sabbatical in the seventh year of their travel in the Methodist Church in Britain (and every seventh year thereafter), regardless of any sabbatical provision in their previous appointments. Those who transfer into Full Connexion should be expected to take a sabbatical in the seventh year of travel in the Methodist Church in Britain (and every seventh year thereafter).

c) Duration of sabbaticals

Survey evidence expressed a preference for sabbaticals of fixed length, largely opting for the current 3 months. Although some favoured a variable length, a majority still expressed a preference for fixed length sabbaticals.

Recommendations

- There is broadly a consensus around the current duration of sabbaticals. Given the lack of a strong desire to change the current system, and the provision within the current standing order which indicates simply that three months is the 'normal' rather than mandatory length of a sabbatical, it is recommended that no change take place to SO 743(2) regarding the duration of sabbaticals.

d) Date of First Sabbatical and Impact Assessment

Recommendations:

The Ministries Committee recommends a change in the date of first sabbatical from the 10th to the 7th year of travel.

Some factors to be considered include:

- Whilst there are pressures on circuit ministerial numbers and this proposal takes more ministers out of circulation for a sabbatical period, the counter argument is better welfare for ministers by reducing the period before first sabbatical and a consequent increase in ministerial retention – it should be noted though that this is difficult to quantify in practice without further research.

- The survey – which involved ministers, senior circuit stewards, district sabbaticals officers and chairs of district, revealed a majority wanted to reduce the period before the first sabbatical to 7 years although circuit stewards revealed a slight preference for retaining the current arrangements. The relevant figures were Chairs (**68%**, with 21% opting for continuing the current arrangements), Ministers (**52%**, with 30% opting for continuing the current arrangements), District Sabbatical Officers (**53%**, with 35% opting for continuing the current arrangements), and Senior Circuit Stewards (**38%**, with 45% opting for continuing the current arrangements).

The Sabbatical Eligibility Calculator below is premised on the new scheme beginning in the connexional year, 2019-20. In that year, those whose ‘year of travel’ began in 2013 will be eligible for a sabbatical as 2019-20 will be their seventh year. In order to bring things into line, those whose ‘year of travel’ began in 2011 will have their sabbatical brought forward one year (ie to the ninth year of travel) and those whose ‘year of travel’ began in 2012 will have their sabbatical brought forward two years (ie to the eighth year of travel). They will then be eligible for sabbaticals every seventh year thereafter. This will mean an increase in the numbers of ministers taking a sabbatical in 2019-20 but the numbers will stabilise thereafter with increases every seventh year until these cohorts work through.

SABBATICAL ELIGIBILITY CALCULATOR											
CONNEXIONAL YEAR		YEAR OF BEGINNING TRAVEL									
2018-	2019				2009	2002	1995	1988	1981		
2019-	2020	2013			2010	2003	1996	1989	1982	2011	2012
2020-	2021	2014				2004	1997	1990	1983		
2021-	2022	2015				2005	1998	1991	1984		
2022-	2023	2016				2006	1999	1992	1985		
2023-	2024	2017				2007	2000	1993	1986		
2024-	2025	2018				2008	2001	1994	1987		
2025-	2026	2019				2009	2002	1995	1988		
2026-	2027	2020	2013			2010	2003	1996	1989	2011	2012
2027-	2028	2021	2014				2004	1997	1990		
2028-	2029	2022	2015				2005	1998	1991		
2029-	2030	2023	2016				2006	1999	1992		
2030-	2031	2024	2017				2007	2000	1993		
2031-	2032	2025	2018				2008	2001	1994		
2032-	2033	2026	2019				2009	2002	1995		
2033-	2034	2027	2020	2013			2010	2003	1996	2011	2012
2034-	2035	2028	2021	2014				2004	1997		
2035-	2036	2029	2022	2015				2005	1998		
SABBATICAL NUMBER	Sabb #1	Sabb #2	Sabb #3	Sabb #1	Sabb #2	Sabb #3	Sabb #4	Sabb #5			
	NEW SYSTEM			OLD SYSTEM				TRANSITION			
YEAR OF TRAVEL	7th	14th	21st	10th	17th	24th	31st	38th			
Those who began travelling in 2011 or 2012 will start their first sabbatical 1 or 2 years earlier, respectively, than originally expected											

The impact on numbers can be broadly identified from the following chart although it should be noted that some presbyters and deacons eligible for a sabbatical will choose to delay.

Yearofstatus	Deacon	Deacon Without Appointment	Presbyter	Presbyter Without Appointment	Probationer Presbyter	Rec_ & Regard_ Presbyter
2009	9		30			3
2010	7		32	1	1	1
2011	9		39	2		1
2012	13		32	1		1
2013	8	2	51			1

In the year of the ‘bulge’ (2019-20 – when those who started in 2011, 2012, 2013 would have sabbaticals to equalise the system) there would be on average about 50 potential extra sabbaticals per year group (ie up to 150 in total). Thereafter there would be an average increase of between 40-50 each year with an increase every seventh year until this worked through the system. The potential numbers would then begin to drop reflecting the fall in accepted candidates (approximately 30 per year). There would also be a significant drop off in numbers with the increase of retirements over against those entering probation although there is currently no way of quantifying these numbers.

e) Financial Impact

Conversations have been ongoing with the Connexional Allowances Committee (CAC) throughout this period - the financial review of sabbaticals is the responsibility of the CAC. The CAC estimates that if these proposals are accepted, there will be an additional cost of approximately £120,000 in 2019-20 to the Sabbatical Fund. This could be funded by bringing forward an existing proposal to increase the levy level from £60 to £100 in September 2018 rather than September 2019, ie a year early. This would bring in an extra £50,000 in 2018-19. However, a further payment will be required from somewhere else (eg the Methodist Church Fund) of about £70,000 to fund the proposed catch up which is equivalent to another year’s worth of sabbaticals. Further, the shortening of the period before the first sabbatical leads to more sabbaticals being taken overall and this will cause the levy to increase. Whilst formal recommendations are not being made at this point – there are far too many uncertainties – a rough indication might be an increase in the levy to £120 in September 2020.

8. Transferring Ministers

- 8.1 Last year the Ministries Committee reported on the extensive work of the Transferring Ministers Policy Review group. The Conference asked the Connexional Allowances Committee (CAC) to consider one of the recommendations in response to a concern that the financial demands placed on circuits would be unreasonable. The CAC suggested that rather than the cost of a minister’s removal to a circuit being borne by the circuit, SO 528(4) be invoked. SO 528(4) provides for the Methodist Church Fund (MCF) to pay removal costs to/from mainland Britain when ministers move to/from the islands, Malta and Gibraltar, leaving the circuit to pay only the mainland element of the costs (ie port and airport to/from manse). This would extend a policy designed to apply to ministers being stationed within the Methodist Church of Britain to those of other Conferences and Churches.
- 8.2 On the advice of the CAC, the committee concurred that when a minister who is recognised and regarded ends her/his appointment, the costs of removal are not the responsibility of the MCB, unless the minister is sitting down in which event some discretionary help can be made available from the Fund for Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD) to cover removal expenses.

- 8.3 On the prompting of the CAC, the committee looked at the fact that ministers whose right to work in the UK is a Tier 2 (MoR) visa are not entitled to make any demand on the public purse. It agreed that the Connexional Team should spell out clearly to ministers from other Conferences and Churches in the Guidelines document their entitlements to UK state benefits, not least those they may not receive, so that they do not arrive in the UK with unreal expectations of their financial situation. However, it seems unjust that a minister from outside the EU should experience hardship that his/her peers do not and therefore recommends that the Methodist Church Fund should pay the equivalent state benefit substitutes (child benefit and tax credit) until Ministers of other Conferences and Churches (MOCCs) can legitimately claim them.
- 8.4 The Committee also asked members of the Connexional Team to review the guidance offered to circuits looking to receive a MOCC in order to encourage the development of suitable appointments.
9. **Update on response to Memorial M1 to the 2016 Conference - Qualifications for Candidating for the Ministry**
- 9.1 **M1 (2016) Criteria for candidating for the ministry**

The Wales Synod, Presbyteral Session (Present: 71; Voting: 69 for, 1 against) recognises the hurt and disappointment felt when for a variety of reasons and at a very late stage in the process a candidate for presbyteral ministry was unable to appear before the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee because of not meeting the three year membership qualification required under Standing Order 710.

Accordingly, the Synod requests the Conference to:

- (a) ensure that all future information about candidating for ordained ministry makes it clear that the three year membership qualification (under SO 710) refers to membership of the Methodist Church in Britain;*
- (b) clarify the end date by which this period of qualification needs to be completed; and*
- (c) ask the Ministries Committee to examine whether the current period of qualification (three years) is the best one and whether there may be some flexibility allowed where a candidate has been a member of another Methodist Church.*

Reply

The Wales Synod raises some important questions for which the Conference is grateful. That the memorial was prompted by a particular and unfortunate circumstance has been noted and the connexional officers concerned have already acted to ensure that as far as possible ambiguity around the requirement of Standing Order 710 (1)(a) is removed from the candidating documentation.

Standing Orders are silent on the question of the date from which the three year period is calculated. Given that the date determined by the Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee (MCPOC) under Standing Order 711(3) is 30 September, it would seem appropriate that that be the date by which a person should be qualified to candidate. It would, however, make sense for the Conference to bring the membership requirement into line with the other requirement of SO 710(1) that the candidate be a fully accredited local preacher or (if not local preacher and offering for the diaconate) a Worship Leader by stipulating that these qualifications should also be met by 30 September in the connexional year in which the candidate offers.

The period of qualification as a member was examined by the 2011 Conference which decided not to change current practice. Offering for ministry requires a level of embeddedness in the life of the Methodist Church in Britain which can only come with time and engagement as a member in the life of a Circuit or a number of Circuits. The 2011 debate was prompted by the desire of recently baptised Christians to offer for ordained ministry. A slightly different question is raised by this memorial in relation to those coming into the Methodist Church in Britain from another Conference. The Conference directs that this question be referred to the Ministries Committee but asks that committee to note that any who train for ordained ministry without being fully conversant with the life and mission of the Methodist Church in Britain will enter a comparatively brief period of formation at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

The Conference also notes that membership is used as a measure of a person's involvement in the life of the Church. There is growing anecdotal evidence of resistance to or even neglect of the opportunities and discipline of membership amongst those who count themselves as Christian and part of the Church. As this memorial demonstrates in one instance, membership frees a baptized person to answer a call to serve the church in a number of ways. The Conference would therefore encourage all Circuits to review the ways in which they encourage those who have not already made the commitment to explore becoming full members of the Church and the ways in which the joys and privileges of membership are celebrated.

The Conference accepts the memorial and directs that the Ministries Committee bring a considered response to the 2017 Conference. The Conference further directs MCPOC to bring a proposed revision to SO 710(1) to the 2017 Conference in accordance with the second paragraph of this reply.

- 9.2 The Ministries Committee has considered the memorial accepted by the Conference in 2016 and the response on which that acceptance was based.

The Ministries Committee remains minded of the value of a period of committed service in the life of the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) before a person offers as a candidate for ordained ministry and of membership as the appropriate measure of that commitment. It notes that members of other Methodist Churches resident in Britain can transfer their membership under SO 051 and are encouraged in that SO to do so. However, it also notes that (in spite of SO 055) there has often been an apparent reluctance to transfer membership between churches within the Connexion and suspects that the same has been true when the member in question is from another autonomous Conference. It therefore urges that all ministers encourage the transfer of membership to a church in the locality of the member's home and where s/he is a regular worshipper and that where appropriate the provisions of SO 051 for dual membership be taken into consideration.

For the sake of clarity, the Ministries Committee understands that those who hold dual membership can offer as candidates for ministry in the MCB but only if that dual membership has been held for three years or more.

This will still mean that an enthusiastic potential candidate from another Conference would need to live and be a member here for three years prior to candidating. This can prove frustrating particularly for those (of whom there is a small number) who feel called by God to come here in order to candidate for ministry in MCB. SO 714 permits us to interview candidates who have already been recommended by their own Conference without their appearing before a District Committee. This SO (being silent on the subject) has been interpreted as not requiring a candidate to be a member of the MCB for three years; however, the training recommendations from the MCSC for candidates who have moved here from

other Conferences and Churches will sometimes identify additional needs due to the candidate's limited knowledge and experience of British Methodism. Recent experience has also revealed very different processes of candidating in other Conferences; the Ministries Committee believes that it is time for this SO (which appears to have originated in the days of overseas districts and not to have been designed for current circumstances) to be reviewed and (through its report to the Council) supported the revision of process in this area proposed by the Transferring Ministries Policy Review Group.

The Ministries Committee agrees that the date from which the three year period is calculated should be 30 September in the connexional year that the offer is made and that this be included in SO 710(1). It also proposes that with the introduction of the new training course for worship leaders and preachers the other minimal requirements of SO 710 also be achieved by 30 September in the connexional year that the offer is made.

The 2016 response noted that one reason that this qualification has proved challenging has been the apparent hesitancy of some worshippers in Methodist churches to embrace the opportunities of membership and that there is anecdotal evidence of churches in which membership preparation is not offered on a regular basis. The committee therefore asks the Conference to urge all churches to encourage those who are not members to consider the joys and benefits of membership and to draw on the resources available through the Connexional Team and elsewhere in this work of encouragement.

Ongoing work: Criteria and Competencies, Supporting Local Ministry, Fresh Expressions, The Membership and Work of the Ministries Committee

10. Criteria and Competencies

- 10.1 The Criteria for Selection approved by the Conference in 2016 revised the existing criteria by expanding the six headings of the 2003 version into eight and clarifying that the first has two important dimensions. Each criterion needs to be visibly met in the life and practice of a presbyter or deacon at every stage of her/his ministry in order that the presbyter or deacon might continue to affirm a continued sense of call in the Presbyteral Session of the Synod or the Convocation of the Diaconal Order.
- 10.2 At its March meeting, the Ministries Committee received a report on work done since the 2016 Conference to produce a set of competencies for particular roles in the life of the Church, to cover the Church's expectations of:
- Those requesting a note to preach
 - Those to be received onto Full Plan as Local Preachers
 - Those recommended for pre-ordination training
 - Those entering their first appointment in the MCB (as probationers or MOCCs)
 - Those to be received into Full Connexion
 - Those to be stationed as Superintendents
 - Those to be designated District Chairs.
- 10.3 The committee approved the competencies for use in different ways. Those for those in formation for ordained ministry are binding requirements against which the suitability of a student for initial stationing or a probationer for reception into Full Connexion is assessed by MCPOC and those reporting to MCPOC. Those proposed for Superintendents and Chairs are to guide those presbyters considering whether or not they might be called to that ministry and to assist the task of discernment by others (formally or informally).

10.4 The criteria for selection will come into force for the candidates in 2018-19. The Committee agreed that the competencies be brought into use by asking the MCPOC to adopt the revised competencies for initial stationing and reception into Full Connexion from 2021 onwards. Those for Local Preachers, Superintendents and District Chairs can be used forthwith.

11. Supporting Local Ministry

11.1 In January 2015 the Ministries Committee received a paper entitled 'A Framework for Local Ministry Development' which made a number of suggestions about how various lay ministries in the life of the Methodist Church which act as foci of pastoral care and mission in local churches, circuits and districts might be supported. Whilst this work is still in its infancy, there is a number of encouraging developments which will be built on in the coming years.

11.2 A new set of pages went live on 12 December 2017 on the Methodist Church website entitled, 'Supporting Local Ministry'. The pages can be found at:
<http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/employees-and-volunteers/supporting-local-ministry/>

11.3 It is hoped that the site will continue to evolve and provide a hub for resources supporting local churches and circuits in nourishing local, lay ministry. The development of work in this area required a definition of local, lay pastoral ministry. The following description was agreed with the Faith and Order Committee:

'Those engaged in lay ministry authorised by a local church or circuit and acting in a pastoral and mission leadership role in a local congregation. They may be paid or voluntary, full-time or part-time. They are commissioned to engage in pastoral ministry and mission on behalf of, and in collaboration with, local church members, for specified periods of time. An individual's ministry will vary according to their gifts and skills, and the local situation.'

11.4 Much work has been done to help to equip people for these local lay ministries and the Ministries Committee discussed in January a set of competencies which would assist in the design of job descriptions and person specifications, the provision of district based induction programmes supporting local, lay pastoral ministry and related lay ministries, and the work of communities of practice which will offer a broadly based diet of learning and development over a period of time.

11.5 Related to this is the significant work that has been undertaken with ecumenical partners on the development of an Apprenticeship Standard for local, lay ministry. The 'trailblazer' group is now working on a single standard for ministry which apprentices can enter at the start of HE levels 4, 5 or 6, providing opportunities for those in local, lay pastoral ministry to enter training (funded through the Apprenticeship Levy) through an apprenticeship degree at a level appropriate to their needs and experience and with a variety of exit points. At this stage, the University of Durham is open to the possibility of the Common Awards being used to support a standard which would enable the Queen's Foundation to offer provision if it chose to become an apprenticeship provider. A number of conversations have taken place with Cliff College in recent months and the college is keen to respond creatively to this developing opportunity.

12. Fresh Expressions

12.1 The Fresh Expressions Ecumenical Team has made a number of changes this year as it prepares for the next quinquennium of activity with a smaller core team and more resources deployed within the partner denominations, as embedding becomes a more central theme.

This has led to a review of all activities as the resourcing for the movement is reduced; the Team sees its work now as a catalyst encouraging others to develop resources and helping them to be publicised widely.

- 12.2 Research has been completed and will shortly be published into the recent developments in Fresh Expressions. The Ministries Committee has been made aware both of the success stories that are narrated from fresh expressions and some of the tensions that have been reported. In order to oversee some of the processes of change, the Ministries Committee has agreed to the establishment of a guiding team to be appointed by and report to the Ministries Committee on developments in fresh expressions and the ways in which those developments contribute to the mission of churches and circuits.
- 12.3 The Ministries Committee receives each year a report on the work of those pioneers who are part of the VentureFX scheme. The scheme has proved a fruitful way of engaging with people who would be unlikely or reluctant to engage with the Church in its more conventional forms. The learning and experience which has emerged from VentureFX has contributed significantly to the formation of Methodist Pioneering Pathways (MPP) within the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network. Around sixty pioneers around the Connexion have been identified and are now supported by MPP through the DMLN regions. Vocational discernment is offered both to those exploring a call to pioneering and those already exercising it. Pioneer communities of practice gather across the Connexion for mutual learning and support and a cohort of coaches has been created and trained to help pioneers develop themselves and their work in a healthy way. Formal learning opportunities are being made available to help pioneers grow in their ability to reflect theologically on their work, and MPP has been working with Cliff College and The Queen's Foundation to develop new courses. The most recent development has been the creation of 'MPP Central' a virtual environment for pioneer learning, sharing and encouragement. In these and other ways, VentureFX and its pioneers continue to seek to fulfil their task of exploring the most appropriate ways of pioneering in a Methodist context and help to embed pioneering at the heart of the Church's mission and ministry.

13. The Membership and Work of the Ministries Committee / Appointments

- 13.1 The committee is conscious of an increasing workload. It has inherited responsibility for many aspects of the relationship between the MCB and the Queen's Foundation and Cliff College from the Network Committee; it has agreed to receive reports from the subcommittees overseeing the work of Fellowship groups and Ministers of Other Conferences and churches and from the Fresh Expressions Guiding Team. Whilst at one level that can lead to overcrowded agendas (and therefore the committee has resolved to resume the practice of meeting residentially once a year), it is also a sign of the growth and diversity of ministry that is exercised in the name of the Methodist Church.
- 13.2 A significant number of members of the committee came to the end of their term of office or indicated that they were no longer able to serve this year. The nominations group constituted under SO 32A0(6) will therefore be bringing eight nominations to the Conference.
- 13.3 The committee is very grateful to Miss Sarah Cave, Mr Michael King, Mrs Hayley Moss, the Revds Olufemi Cole-Njie, Joanna R Rand, Dr Russell Herbert and Dr Roger Walton, and Deacon Jennifer A J Jones for the service that they have offered to the Church through the Ministries Committee.

*****DRAFT RESOLUTIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE**

1. The Conference receives the Report.

2. The Conference adopts the further replies contained in section 5 of the report to Memorials M7, M8, M9 (2013).
3. The Conference adopts the recommendation set out in paragraph 5.3 that all local preachers be required to engage in a process of peer review every three years.
4. The Conference amends SO 561, inserting the following clause:
(vii) Review the list of local preachers not available to be planned because they are unable or unwilling to attend to the duties of local preachers in SO 563. This list should be published on the circuit plan.
5. The Conference amends SO 744(3) as follows:
6. The Conference amends SO 528(4) as follows:
7. The Conference adopts section 7 of the report as its further reply to Memorial M11 (2015).
8. The Conference directs the Connexional Allowances Committee to ensure that the Methodist Church Fund pays the equivalent state benefit substitutes to those ministers from other Churches and Conferences who are unable to claim them from the state.
9. The Conference adopts section 9 of the report as its further reply to Memorial M1 (2016).
10. The Conference amends SO 710(1) as follows:

*****RESOLUTIONS FOR THE COUNCIL**

38/1. The Council receives the report.

38/2. The Council commends the report and its recommendations to the Conference.