

Ministries Committee Report

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolutions	<p>40/1. The Council receives the report.</p> <p>40/2. The Council recommends to the Conference that the maximum length of deferral of training should not normally exceed 7 years between acceptance as a candidate and reception into full connexion.</p> <p>40/3. The Council recommends the revised Selection Criteria for ordained ministry (as set out in paragraph 4) to the Conference.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To provide an update to the Methodist Council of work undertaken by the Ministries Committee since the 2015 Conference.
Main Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update on MLA 2. Maximum length of deferral of training 3. Continuing Development in Ministry 4. Selection Criteria 5. Status of Accepted Candidates 6. God's Worthship and our Worship 7. Fresh Expressions

Ministries Committee Report

This report brings the Methodist Council up to date with the work of the Ministries Committee. The Ministries Committee has met on three occasions since the 2015 Conference. In addition to the items listed below, the Committee has engaged in discussions resourced by the Faith and Order Committee concerning Ministry in the Methodist Church. The Committee was content with the general direction of that work, and will continue to be consulted. The Committee has continued work in the following areas: review of probationer training, ministry of supernumeraries, initial ministerial training student financial support, frequency and duration of sabbaticals, consultation with Local Preachers meetings.

1. Update on MLA

The Committee continues to consider this issue, and work has been undertaken to enable candidates to view limited deployment as an occasional option. However, further work needs to be done and the matter has been passed to the Faith and Order Committee to carry forward in the context of the work on Ministry in the Methodist Church. The Committee has noted the need for proper attention to be given to vocational discernment.

2. Maximum length of deferral of training

The Committee has agreed the policy that the maximum length of deferral of training should not normally exceed 7 years between acceptance as a candidate and reception into full connexion. Guidelines are being developed in support of this policy and further discussions will be held at the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee focusing on examples where some flexibility may be required. Proposed new Standing Orders are being prepared for the Conference, but the Council is asked to approve the policy decision.

3. Continuing Development in Ministry (CDIM)

The Committee has reaffirmed its commitment to life-long learning and the work on CDIM is an expression of that commitment. However, the Committee agreed that the work on Continuing Development in Ministry should be delayed, so that it can take account of other, linked pieces of work. These include the review of probationer training, the work of the Resourcing Leadership working group, progress in the area of supervision, a review of sabbatical policy, the small group of the Connexional Leaders' Forum working on ministerial excellence. The revised timeline will enable a period of consultation with the Chairs, Network Committee and the SRC to coincide with budget preparations for 2017-18. A report will be made to the Council in April 2017.

4. Selection Criteria

The oversight task group was given a mandate to propose revisions to the selection criteria for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain as it was observed that the context of this ministry had changed significantly since 2003 when the current criteria were approved.

The revised criteria proposed below have been adapted from the existing selection criteria approved by the 2003 Conference (www.methodist.org.uk/media/1679593/dev-per-selection-criteriafor-ordained-ministry-19062012.pdf). The oversight task group has also drawn inspiration from the selection criteria for ordained ministry in the Church of England.

The six headings of the existing selection criteria have been amended. The first two current headings – *Vocation (call and commitment)* and *Being in relationship (with God; with self; with others)* – have been divided into *Vocation (call and commitment)*; *Vocation (ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain)*; *Relationship with God*; *Personality and character*; and *Being in*

relationship with others. The criteria are set out as bullet points in the right hand column, below. On the left is a narrative to inform the work of both candidates, those who work with them, and those who are asked to recommend them (members of circuit meetings and district and connexional selection committees) in addressing the criteria.

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

It is anticipated that these revised criteria, if agreed by the 2016 Conference, would be approved for use from 2017-18 onwards (to avoid a change in criteria midway through the candidating cycle). It is also anticipated that should these revised criteria be approved, subsequent work would be needed on related sets of competencies and criteria to ensure cohesion. This work would include:

- Revisions to the existing expected competencies at the point of stationing and ordination (to align the headings with those of the revised selection criteria and to ensure appropriate competencies for both presbyteral and diaconal ministry).
- Proposals for expected competencies for Worship Leaders, Local Preachers and Superintendents.

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
1.1 Vocation (call and commitment)	<p>The starting point of Christian ministry is the call of Christ to follow him; the call to ordained ministry is a specific development of the vocation to discipleship which is shared by all members of the Church. As the Deed of Union says, ‘It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of Christian ministry depends upon the call of God.’¹ More than any of the other criteria, this is necessary but not by itself sufficient. However competent s/he may appear or be proven to be in meeting the other criteria, a candidate will not be accepted unless those who explore the questions with her/him discern that s/he has a distinct call to be a presbyter or deacon.</p> <p>We hear God speaking to us both through the personal life of prayer and through the encouragement of others (though the balance between the two varies for each of us). The criteria make it clear that candidates must be able to articulate a call that is both personal (as a personal assurance and conviction which is still also open to testing) and corporate (being heard through the witness of others and affirmed in and through the Church’s testing of not just calling but also gifts and graces, which involves recognition of the needs of the Church). This requires an high level of self-awareness which informs and is informed by a disciplined spiritual life and a deep commitment to the life of the Church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An inner sense of call that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ confirmed by others ○ obedient, based on an understanding of the demands of ordained ministry in terms of training, deployment and sacrifice and the candidate’s capacity to be a servant in a community of servants ○ realistic in terms of the candidate’s capacity to meet the expected competencies for reception into Full Connexion and ordination after a period of training and probation ○ informed by a clear understanding of the representative nature of ordained ministry and the discipline of the Methodist Church ○ transformative, in that the candidate is being changed by this sense of call and is willing to continue to be changed ● Ability to articulate clearly this sense of call to a particular order of ministry and its development ● For diaconal candidates only: Commitment to membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

¹ Deed of Union cl4

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
1.2 Vocation (ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain)	<p>Candidates for the diaconal or presbyteral ministries in the Methodist Church offer in the understanding that we ordain ‘not to a denomination, but to the presbyterate and diaconate of the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.’² As part of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Methodist Church receives its ordinands into Full Connexion which demands a willingness to exercise ministry within and as a representative of the Methodist Church in Britain.</p> <p>The British Methodist Church rejoices in its ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and recognises that it is important to balance the variety of expressions of Methodism with the common identity of the Church as an whole. Candidates are asked to explore with selectors how their call fits with Methodism’s self-understanding (as it is expressed in, eg, <i>Called to Love and Praise</i> and <i>A Catechism for the Use of the People called Methodists</i>) and how their particular experience of Methodism has shaped their sense of call.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of the Methodist Church in Britain • Demonstrable and enthusiastic commitment to and desire to serve the Methodist Church in Britain • Understanding of ministry within the Methodist Church in Britain including the distinctiveness of the two orders of ministry • Willingness to work with diversity within the Methodist Church in Britain.
<p>God ‘bestows the gifts of the Spirit the grace and fruit which indicate those whom He has chosen.’³ The remaining criteria are designed to enable those examining candidates to see evidence of the gifts of the Spirit, although the development of those gifts may still be at an embryonic stage.</p>		

² *Methodist Worship Book* p298

³ Deed of Union, cl4

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
2. Relationship with God	Presbyters and deacons are first and foremost people of prayer; candidates need to be able to speak about their spiritual life in a way that is authentic and offers a clear understanding of themselves both as those confident in God’s love for them and as those who are still being made into the saints that God wants them to be. They should therefore be able to articulate an appreciation of and regular engagement with the means of grace individually and in the life of the Church and to express how they understand this engagement both as gift and as discipline.	<p>A relationship with God that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded in an understanding of God’s loving acceptance and a personal commitment to Christ • Both mature and child-like with the capacity to grow • Nourished by a commitment to individual and corporate prayer and worship and engagement with the means of grace • A means of sustenance and encouragement in the candidate’s daily life and in his or her relationships with others and the wider world.
3. Personality and character	‘This ministry will make great demands upon you.’ ⁴ Those demands are spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical, and therefore those who offer for ministry as presbyter or deacon need to be able to demonstrate the resources necessary to cope with the stresses and strains that we anticipate they will face in training and in active ministry. They also need to exhibit a willingness to be challenged and changed by the process of formation and to show that they understand their own vulnerability. Candidates should be able to show that they can care for themselves and that they have the capacity to engage with and to work on areas of perceived weakness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness and self-acceptance grounded in God’s loving acceptance • Emotional stability • Maturity, honesty and integrity • Appropriate self-confidence and humility • Stamina, robustness and resilience • Potential for self-development and growth.

⁴ *Methodist Worship Book* p302/317

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
4. Being in relationship with others	All ministry is relational. A candidate needs to be able to demonstrate his or her understanding of the gift of human love in all its manifestations and her or his recognition of and ability to honour appropriate boundaries. Candidates are asked to talk about their own relationships as a secure basis from which ministry can be offered and to show the capacity to engage with a wide range of other people appropriately as a representative of the Church.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to relate to a variety of people • Capacity to develop open and healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships • Capacity to relate to the same people in a number of different roles without confusion and with generosity • Potential to exercise effective pastoral care • Acceptance of the discipline of the Church and respect for the diversity of views within Methodism.
5. The Church's ministry in God's world	The Church and the world beyond the doors of the church have changed rapidly and greatly in recent years and are changing still. Candidates should be able to articulate an understanding of social holiness that is appropriate to their contemporary context. This means that candidates need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the mission of the Church within God's world, the priorities that the Methodist Church has identified as it plays its part in God's mission, and the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives and asks to be used in fulfilling that mission. Candidates will need to demonstrate proven ability and further capacity to exercise appropriate gifts in serving God's mission and a coherent (if as yet undeveloped) theological understanding of mission in the 21 st century including an appreciation of and a preparedness to engage with the multiplicity of ecclesial forms the Church takes in serving God's mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of mission and evangelism, including the variety of approaches within the Methodist Church • Personal commitment to mission and evangelism and the Methodist Church as its vehicle • Out of engagement with the world of work and contemporary culture in a multicultural society, the ability to make connections imaginatively between today's world and the gospel • Ability to work for change, with particular attention to the marginalised • Potential for engaging in mission-shaped ministry.

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
6. Leadership and collaboration	<p>The call to presbyteral ministry is a call to ‘a principal and directing part in [the] great duties [of the Church]’;⁵ the call to the diaconate is to ‘represent the servanthood of Christ, exercising a formal role of leadership in the Church.’⁶ Candidates therefore need to demonstrate an ability to work with others in a variety of ways, exhibiting a willingness to collaborate, to delegate, and to take responsibility as appropriate. Candidates should be able to recognise, to nurture and to cherish the gifts of others. Candidates should demonstrate an appropriate degree of both humility and confidence in the way in which leadership is discussed and be able to give examples of how they are already exercising leadership within and outside the Church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of leadership • Ability to exercise leadership in the Church community and beyond • Capacity to offer an example of faith, discipleship and humble service • Ability to inspire, enable and empower others • Potential for creative leadership • Willingness and ability to work collaboratively and capacity to exercise appropriate authority • Ability to work with supervision and to supervise others • Ability to develop administrative skills • Flexibility, adaptability and willingness to take risks.

⁵ Deed of Union cl4

⁶ What is a Deacon? 7.3

	Narrative	The Church is therefore seeking evidence of...
7. Learning and understanding	<p>Presbyters and deacons are required to undertake duties on behalf of the Church in which it is essential that they can explicitly and lucidly articulate the Christian faith to those who have received the gospel and to those who are yet to receive it. Their practice of ministry must be informed by an understanding of the doctrines of the Church and an ability to use a wide range of resources creatively in order to reflect theologically. For that reason, initial formation for ministry almost always takes place at least in part within an academic setting and candidates need to be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to benefit from the programme of learning that will be offered to them by already having some theological understanding and by having the gifts that are needed to engage with a multi-disciplinary programme of study. Within this understanding, the Church is committed to welcoming candidates from a range of academic backgrounds and to treating particular educational needs with sensitivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to learn and to benefit from theological study • Enthusiasm for lifelong learning and formation • Curiosity and flexibility of mind • Capacity to use a range of ways of thinking and models of reflection and to select the most appropriate for each situation • Appreciation of the significance of theology to the Church.
8. Communication	<p>To articulate the truths of the Christian faith demands the skills of communication. Whilst some of these can be taught, candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of what makes communication effective in a variety of media and with a multiplicity of conversation partners. Particularly because not all have English as their first language, candidates are encouraged to express themselves and to be heard in ways that are culturally appropriate both to their own background and to the ministry for which they are offering. Candidates are also expected to be able to communicate effectively in the wider Church with cognizance of 21st-century Methodism's cultural diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to express faith naturally and effectively in ways that are appropriate, accessible and sensitive to the situation, using biblical and theological understanding • Ability to select and use the most appropriate media and approach for the context • Careful and appropriate use of language • Understanding and appropriate use of symbols, gestures and space • Effective communication skills for mission and evangelism.

5. Status of an Accepted Candidate

The Committee has undertaken some work on clarifying the status of an accepted candidate in the life of the Church. This new statement will be issued to candidates for 2017, and a letter summarising its contents will be sent to each accepted candidate with the request for information about their training allocations.

6. God's Worthship and our Worship

In response to a resolution of the 2011 Conference, the Committee has considered issues relating to worship. This work is being taken forward by the Liturgical Sub-Committee of the Faith and Order Committee, and will be reported on by the Faith and Order Committee.

7. Fresh Expressions

7.1 Since the Methodist Church became one of the founding partners in Fresh Expressions, there has been an annual report of its activities to the Methodist Conference; initially via the Fresh Ways Working Group and more recently as part of the Ministries Committee report to the Methodist Council.

7.2 In the light of the positive impact of fresh expressions of church on the denomination, Methodism has sustained its commitment and increased its financial commitment to Fresh Expressions at the end of each quinquennium.

Five areas of Focus

7.3 The five areas were introduced in last year's report and give a clear focus to the work and future direction of Fresh Expressions:

7.4 Inspiring Vision - the key development in this area is the identification of Local Pioneer Centres; Fresh Expressions which are models of good practice from which others can learn. This is already happening, but in a disjointed way. By creating a larger network of local pioneer centres, it is hoped that the workload caused by frequent visitors will be spread over a much larger group of fresh expressions. A number of fresh expressions have already agreed to become Local Pioneer Centres (including several Methodist projects). When a large enough number has been agreed, they will be advertised on the Fresh Expressions website.

7.5 Networking strategically - this began as a process of networking practitioners. This is happening in a number of ways; in the Methodist Church most notably via the Venture FX Extra days. These have proved invaluable in offering informal networking around a theme for all those who are engaging in pioneering ministry. In the Church of England, this concept has been extended to create strategic hubs of both Bishops and Archdeacons who wish to network together in order to learn from one another about how to deal well with issues around 'Mixed Economy Church'. It is hoped that the possibility of hubs for Chairs and Superintendents will be explored in the next twelve months.

7.6 Connecting Geographically - up to now this work has largely been done by FEASTs (Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams). The implementation of these has been patchy, both in the amount of take-up and in their strategic effectiveness. Some are predominantly gatherings of practitioners and trainers with little strategic influence whilst others are very effective mixes of key leaders from across the breadth of the church whose influence goes far beyond the Fresh Expressions world. There will now be a period of evolution as the best of these continue and at the same time new structures are put in place which are much more relational in nature. It is hoped that a number of 'champions' will emerge in each region who will regard it as their duty to keep the Fresh Expressions and 'Mixed Economy' vision in front of the church at every level until it becomes a normal way of working. It is also noticeable that different

denominations are taking a regional strategy on board, Methodism's 'Fresh Ways Hubs' and the Salvation Army's regional strategy being good examples of this.

- 7.7 Supporting Practitioners - perhaps the most important development for supporting practitioners is an increased emphasis on training and deploying coaches. Recent Church of England research has shown that Fresh Expressions are most likely to continue growing if there is some outside consultancy. Fresh Expressions plans to introduce a multi-layered approach to coaching: regional champions (spread across the denominations) who are trained to a high standard (International Coach Federation Associate Certified Coach or equivalent) and will act as trainers/ supporters of a large cohort of coaches in their region. Training is in place for the 'champions' for next year and there will be a subsequent roll-out of training at an introductory level for locally based coaches. Many of the coaches will be used to support those who are training on MSM courses (traditional or flexi). In this regard the Methodist Church is taking a strong lead. The commitment to providing coaches for all those joining the 'Pioneer Pathway' has resulted in two training events for coaches sharing resources between the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network and Fresh Expressions. On both occasions the trainers were Methodist coaches and we now have almost 50 Methodists trained in basic coaching skills. Fresh Expressions has also entered into partnership with 'Mentor Connect' a multi-denominational online resource for matching mentors to clients. Fresh Expressions is seeking to catalyse a culture change within the churches, where it is too often the case that seeking outside help is seen as an admission of failure rather than developing high-fliers.
- 7.8 Resourcing Learning - Fresh Expressions is rightly proud of the quality and range of training resources that it has produced. These continue to evolve: Vision Events have been scrutinised and reshaped in the light of feedback as has the role of Fresh Expressions Associate Missioners in delivering them. New materials will be rolled out in the forthcoming year. Mission Shaped Intro (a six session introduction to thinking missionally) continues to grow in its impact – it is the newest of the resources provided by Fresh Expressions and the least well known, but it is an extremely helpful resource for churches or house groups to use to challenge and inform their thinking about how to engage in mission in the 21st Century. Mission Shaped Ministry continues to evolve, this year has seen the introduction of online MSM and flexible MSM (where the content is taken by an experienced coach and is delivered in a coaching setting rather than a more traditional training setting) - this enables the material to be configured in a much more appropriate way for the participants. This year has also seen the publication of a series of '3 minute guides' to different aspects of fresh expressions.

Fresh Expressions in the Methodist Church

- 7.9 We are now well into the third quinquennium for Fresh Expressions. The Methodist Church has been a partner from the beginning. As each partner denomination works hard at embedding Fresh Expressions into its life, careful thought must be given to the future support for the fresh expressions agenda. This will entail a careful consideration of the benefits and costs of doing this ecumenically rather than internally within the Methodist Church. Fresh Expressions will soon be faced with decisions about whether to continue beyond current agreements or to wind up as an ecumenical mission agency and hand over its legacy to the partner denominations. One of the strengths of Fresh Expressions has been its demonstration of a very practical ecumenical way of engaging with the wider world for the sake of the Kingdom of God.
- 7.10 The number of fresh expressions in the Methodist Church continues to grow. The statistics for mission returns have been expanded this year to record the number of circuit projects which are or have the intention to become fresh expressions of church. In previous years it was relatively straightforward to record a fresh expression as an initiative of an individual church, but not one which was a circuit project. At the time of writing this report, the data was not available to know how many had been reported in 2015.

- 7.11 The question is often asked how reliable our Methodist statistics on fresh expressions are.
- 7.12 The Fresh Expressions organisation has defined a fresh expression as:
A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.
- *It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples;*
 - *It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.*
- 7.13 Those who are not convinced that all the projects self-identifying as fresh expressions in the statistics are genuinely fresh expressions offer three principal objections: fresh expressions are not reaching those who are not yet members of any church, rather they are providing new worship opportunities for existing Christians; second, they are traditional activities rebranded as fresh expressions; third they have no intention of becoming ‘mature expressions of church’ (also known as intentional ecclesial communities), they are engaged evangelism - a stepping out into communities beyond the normal reach of Church in order to bring people back to the church from which they have come (many Messy Churches start with this intention and falter because the gulf between messy church and Sunday morning is too wide to cross). It is very difficult to ascertain the validity or not of these objections. The statistics for mission are self-reported and so it is difficult to assess the qualitative difference that the fresh expressions movement has made to the Methodist Church without doing a piece of quantitative research examining these self-reported statistics against more rigorous evaluative criteria. The Church Army’s Sheffield Centre has been engaged for some time in detailed research on the fruitfulness of fresh expressions in the Church of England, they published a report on 10 dioceses last year and are expanding their work to cover the remaining dioceses at the moment. They have developed much more rigorous criteria for evaluation, which would translate well into a Methodist setting. The Committee has therefore agreed to set up a pilot research project involving a number of Districts. The research will, as far as possible, use the same criteria as the Church of England which will enable future comparisons, and will be carried out within the existing research budget.
- 7.14 In addition to the evaluation of projects self-identifying as ‘fresh expressions projects’ any research project evaluating them should consider whether further research is necessary to evaluate projects that fail to meet more rigorous fresh expressions criteria. They may not be fresh expressions, but that does not mean they are not fruitful activities. Given the rate of decline in Methodist membership any project that meets the spiritual needs of people who might otherwise have left the church may still be helpful. Rebranding sometimes breathes new life and energy into projects. Fresh expressions of worship, service or discipleship that do not lead to intentional ecclesial communities may nevertheless prove to be evangelistically effective.

Embedding fresh expressions

- 7.15 After ten years of formal engagement with the Fresh Expressions initiative, there are now a number of ‘projects’ that are maturing into ecclesial communities. One of the learning points is that a fresh expression that genuinely reaches out to this with little or no contact with traditional forms of church takes a long time to form a community - more than five years is not unusual. However these ecclesial communities do not always fit well into Methodism’s existing oversight structures or ecclesiology. The Faith and Order and Law and Polity Committees are beginning a piece of work to investigate how some of these issues can be explored and addressed. The Connexional Fresh Expressions Missioner is drawing together a small number of circuits who are wrestling with these issues to create a learning

circle with the intention of producing a 'good practice guide'. This work may also identify areas where adjustments to policy should be considered.

- 7.16 Embedding is not simply about how fresh expressions of church can be made to fit into Methodism's existing governance structures and ecclesiology, it is also about how those structures and ecclesiology are being challenged and transformed by the new things that God is doing among us.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 40/1. The Council receives the report.**
- 40/2. The Council recommends to the Conference that the maximum length of deferral of training should not normally exceed 7 years between acceptance as a candidate and reception into full connexion.**
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