

THE WELCOME OF A DISTRICT CHAIR

INTRODUCTION

Chairs of Districts are appointed and stationed by the Methodist Conference. For this reason, this service is regarded as a service of welcome, rather than one of induction.

The President or Secretary of the Conference or their deputies have a principal and directing part in this service to reflect the Connexional nature of the Chair of District's new ministry.

The presiding minister, who shall normally be the President or the Secretary or their deputies, may invite officers of the District Synod and representatives of ecumenical partners, to read readings, preach the sermon and lead the prayers of intercession.

HISTORICAL NOTE

In the months following John Wesley's death, the Methodist Conference of 1791 resolved that the circuits of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be divided into Districts. A year later the itinerant preachers of each District who had been present at the Annual Conference chose one of the ministers of their District to be the District Chairman and in the following year Chairs of Districts were named and listed in the *Minutes of Conference* for the first time. After the 1795 *Plan of Pacification* the pastoral and disciplinary duties of a Chair of District were also outlined in the *Minutes of Conference*.

In the two decades following the Methodist Union of 1932 it was resolved that in most instances Chairs of Districts should be freed from circuit responsibilities to exercise a ministry of leadership in the Church, to speak for the Districts and the Circuits at Connexional level and to speak to the District and Circuits on behalf of the church as a whole.

Chairs of Districts were committed to encouraging evangelism in every circuit and to the exercise of a pastoral ministry among the ministers of their Districts.

At the point of the presentation of the Chair reference is made only to the responsibility of oversight of the character and fidelity of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District because it is the duty of the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order and its Convocation to oversee the character and fidelity of deacons and diaconal probationers.

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1 Grace and peace to you from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

2 Hymn

3 Let us pray.

God of truth,
you are worthy of higher praise than we can offer,
and of purer worship than we can imagine.

By your Holy Spirit,
assist us in our prayers
and draw us to yourself,
so that what is lacking
and in our words and music,
may be supplied by your overflowing love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Silence

4 Gracious God,
when we do not listen for your word in the words of others,
forgive and renew us.

When we do not use the gifts you have bestowed on us,
forgive and renew us.

When we do not love one another as sisters and brothers in Christ,
forgive and renew us.

When we do not serve our neighbours in their need,
forgive and renew us.

When we do not share the Good News with those around us,
forgive and renew us.

Silence

God calls us to serve,
forgives us in Christ,
and renews us by the Spirit.
Amen. Thanks be to God.

5 God of all grace,
you call your Church to be a holy people
to the praise of your name.
In the power of your Spirit,
fill our hearts with your love
and our lives with your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

6 Hymn

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

7 The Old Testament reading for the day, or Isaiah 61:1-3, or one of the following:

Isaiah 42:1-9
Isaiah 52:7-10

8 A Psalm or portion of a Psalm may be said or sung.

9 The Epistle for the day, or Ephesians 4:1-16, or one of the following:

Acts 2:42-47
Romans 12:1-13
2 Corinthians 4:1-6
Philippians 2:1-11

10 Hymn

A reading from the Gospel according to . . .

Hear the Gospel of Christ.
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

11 The Gospel of the day is read, or John 13:12-20, or one of the following:

Matthew 10:24-42
Luke 4:16-21
John 21:15-19

This is the Gospel of Christ.
Praise to Christ our Lord.

12 Sermon

THE PRESENTATION, PROMISES AND WELCOME

13 All stand.

The Secretary of the Conference says to the people:

Sisters and brothers, I present to you *NN*, whom the Conference has appointed to serve as Chair of the District of the Methodist Church.

The prime duty of a Chair of District is to further the work of God in the District. To this end he or she will use all the gifts and graces they have received, being especially diligent to be a pastor to the ministers and probationers and to lead the people of the District in the work of preaching and worship, evangelism, pastoral care, teaching and administration.

With the members of the District Synod, a District Chair is to uphold Methodist order and discipline within the District and to oversee the character

and fidelity of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District.

14 The Secretary of the Conference says to the newly-appointed Chair of District:

N, the Conference, the Synod and the District trust that you have weighed and pondered these responsibilities and that you are fully determined to devote yourself to this ministry to which God has called you.

Will you hold before us
the image of the Christ, Good Shepherd
and be a faithful pastor to the ministers and probationers
within the District?

Answer: I will.
I ask God to help me
and I invite you all to join with me
in care for the flock of Christ.

We will watch over one another in love.

Will you be among us
as one who preaches the word of God,
teaches the faith of the Scriptures,
leads the District in worship
and encourages the call to evangelism?

Answer: I will.
I ask God to help me
and I invite you all to join with me
in celebrating the Good News of the gospel.

We will proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.

Will you promote peace and reconciliation
in the Church and in the world,
speak out in the face of injustice
and work towards the visible unity of Christ's Church?

Answer: I will.
I ask God to help me
and I invite you all to join with me
in being signs of peace and reconciliation.

We will be instruments of God's peace.

N, to you is committed the good administration of the District.
With members of the Synod
you are to uphold Methodist order and discipline
and on behalf of the Conference
you are to oversee the character and fidelity

of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District.
Will you be faithful in this ministry?

Answer: I will.
I ask God to help me.

15 The Secretary of the Synod says to the people:

Sisters and brothers,
will you welcome *N*
and will you offer *her/him*
your friendship, support and prayers
as we join together in the work
to which God has called us

With God's help, we will.

All seated

16 Welcomes may then be given by District and ecumenical representatives, civic leaders, and other appropriate persons.

The newly-appointed Chair of District may reply briefly in *her/his* own words and/or as follows:

I thank you for your welcome.
I will work with you and pray for you.

17 Hymn

18 These or other prayers of intercession:

Let us pray.

In faith we pray to God,
who is more ready to hear than we are to ask.

Let us pray for the whole Church of God,
that, rejoicing in our richness and variety,
we may seek peace and unity
and be constantly renewed for mission and service.

Silence

The Lord hears our prayer.
Thanks be to God.

Let us pray for *N*, *her/his* family and friends,
for the circuits and churches of our District
and for other churches in this area,

that, rejoicing together in the Body of Christ,,
we may strengthen each other and be built up in love.

Silence

The Lord hears our prayer.
Thanks be to God.

Let us pray for the life of the world,
that, rejoicing in our common humanity,
we may reject the ways of war and conflict
and work together for justice and peace.

Silence

The Lord hears our prayer.
Thanks be to God.

Let us rejoice in the communion of saints,
that, strengthened by their faithful example,
we may follow the way of Christ
and live to God's praise and glory.

Silence

The Lord hears our prayer.
Thanks be to God.

Give us wisdom, Lord, to know your will,
and courage to do it.
May our words declare your love
and may our compassion give substance to our words;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

19 The Lord's Prayer

EITHER

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;**

**but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

OR

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

20 The Peace

All stand.

We are the Body of Christ.

**In the one Spirit
we were all baptized into one body.
Let us therefore keep the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The people may greet one another in the name of Christ.

Any When the Lord's Supper follows, the service continues from the Preparation of the Gifts. appropriate order may be used, but that for *The Day of Pentecost and Times of Renewal in the Life of the Church* is especially suitable.

If the Lord's Supper is not celebrated, the service concludes as follows:

21 Offering and prayer of dedication

22 This or some other prayer of thanksgiving:

Let us pray.

Gracious God,
we thank you that in every generation
you reveal your love for the world,
and set before your people
your word of life and hope.

We thank you for Jesus Christ your Son,
in whom you have made known
your way of perfect love,
and in whose dying and rising
we see your final purpose.

We thank you for your Holy Spirit,
who leads your people into all truth;
for the service and witness of your Church;
and for the preaching of the word
and the celebration of the sacraments,
through which you renew and strengthen us.

**All honour and glory be yours,
in the Church and in the world,
in time and in eternity;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

23 Hymn

24 The presiding minister says:

May the God of love
stir up in us the gifts of his grace
and sustain each of us
in our discipleship and service;
and the blessing of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
remain with *you/us* for ever. **Amen.**