

## 62: Reception into Full Connexion

<b>Contact name and details</b>	The Revd Ruth M Gee Assistant Secretary of the Conference
<b>Subject and aims</b>	To clarify the status of those received into Full Connexion but not yet ordained.

The context in which the Conference meets this year has brought into focus questions about our understanding of the relationship between two ceremonies which normally take place on the same day; reception into Full Connexion and ordination.

The requirement for social distancing and other measures necessitated by the current pandemic have affected many of those who were looking forward to life-changing events, among them those who were expecting to be received into Full Connexion and ordained today. This has been a difficult and painful time for them, made more difficult by the need to work to a very tight timescale to bring the resolutions attached to this report to the Conference.

When we first entered lockdown at the end of March we could not be sure what the situation would be at the end of June. It was clear that we would not be meeting in Telford as we had planned but it was not certain how long the requirement for social distancing and the prohibition on any gathering would last. By mid April it was clear that ordination services would not be possible at the end of June. Reception into Full Connexion could and would take place for those already ordained and we needed to decide whether to proceed with this for those not yet ordained.

Reception into Full Connexion and ordination for those not already ordained are agreed upon by a single resolution of the Conference. This meant that the choice was either to defer both ceremonies until the Conference of 2021 or to receive the probationer presbyters and deacons into Full Connexion today, with the ordination services to take place at times and places to be arranged. The completion of probation is a significant moment for those who have responded to a call to minister as presbyters and deacons, it seemed appropriate to celebrate this through their reception and move to ordain them as soon as possible. Ordinands were given the option to defer their reception into Full Connexion until the Conference of 2021 and one presbyteral ordinand has chosen to do so.

Though it is normal for reception into Full Connexion and ordination to take place on the same day, it is not without precedent for the two to be separated by significant periods of time. However, such a separation for so many brought into sharp focus the need for clarity about the status of those who will no longer be probationers but ordinands in Full Connexion.

Members of the Law and Polity and Faith and Order committees have undertaken a considerable amount of work in order that the following resolutions might be brought to the Conference. In doing so it is recognised that there is more work to be done in order to further clarify our understanding of these distinct ceremonies which are described in the Conference Report on Ordination 1974 (paragraph 21) as “so closely associated that neither is complete without the other”. In the same Conference report we read, “If one ceremony is separated from the other in time, it would seem to be right that the person concerned should refrain from acting in the way proper to the ceremony that has not yet taken place” (paragraph 22). The following resolutions enable the Conference to affirm that those being received have entered into a new relationship with the Conference, whilst recognising that they are yet to be ordained to a ministry which in essence belongs to the Church as a whole. The status of ordinands in Full Connexion is that they have entered into a new relationship with the Conference but have not yet been ordained “to the presbyterate and diaconate in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church” [*Methodist Worship Book 298*].

If the Conference adopts these resolutions and the subsequent resolution to receive these persons into Full Connexion, then they will enter into a covenant relationship between themselves and the Conference, and the diaconal ordinands will become full members of the Methodist Diaconal Order. This evening as the Conference affirms their ministry, though we cannot be together physically, in every District across the Connexion, and in countries around the globe people will stand together in a joyous solemnity that is no less real because unseen.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**62/0. The Conference received the Report.**

**62/1. In approaching the resolutions later in today's business to receive into Full Connexion those persons who have been recommended by the Presbyteral Session and the Conference Diaconal Committee respectively for reception into Full Connexion and ordination, the Conference:**

- (a) shares our ordinands' deep sadness that, in the current emergency, we are not able to proceed today to their ordination;**
- (b) affirms and gladly celebrates that their reception into Full Connexion marks the significant moment when  
they have duly completed all their initial training and probation;  
they have entered into the covenant relationship between themselves and the Conference;  
the diaconal ordinands become full members of the Methodist Diaconal Order;**
- (c) eagerly looks forward to the time when their ordination can take place and assures them of our prayers for them and for those who are continuing to support them in their ministry in this time of waiting;**
- (d) recognises that meanwhile directions are needed as to the application of Standing Orders which would otherwise make no provision for their position.**

**62/2. The Conference accordingly (i) suspended Standing Orders 728(6)(a) and 728A(5)(a) until the opening of the Conference of 2021 and in their place directs that those who have been accepted into Full Connexion with the Conference as presbyters or deacons shall, unless already ordained, be ordained in services to be held at times and places to be arranged, at each of which the President or a deputy being a presbyter shall preside and (ii) further directs as follows:**

- (1) These directions concern the position pending ordination of persons, not already ordained, who will today have been received into Full Connexion by this Conference as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 728(5)(b) or 728A(4)(b) but cannot be ordained today.**
- (2) Directions concerning references in Standing Orders to presbyters or deacons apply whether the provisions in question refer directly to presbyters or deacons or by way of the word 'minister' or 'ministers'.**
- (3) All provisions in Standing Orders or in Book VI of The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church applying both to presbyters and presbyteral probationers shall also apply to those received into Full Connexion as presbyters and all such provisions applying both to deacons and diaconal probationers shall also apply to those received into Full Connexion as deacons.**

**(4) As to those received into Full Connexion as presbyters:**

- (i) all provisions in Standing Orders relating to invitations, curtailment and extension of invitations, sabbaticals, continuing development, resignation, reinstatement, base of ministry, permission to serve elsewhere or study, supernumeraries, seniority, school, prison and workplace chaplaincies, and complaints and discipline, which apply to presbyters shall also apply to them;**
- (ii) all provisions in the following Standing Orders which apply to presbyters shall also apply to them, namely Standing Orders 052(2), 057(3), 210(1)(iv), 212(4), 323, 364(2), 417B, 425(1), 438(1A), 451, 484(1), 502(1)(b) and (g)(i), 540, 566(4)(i), 715(4), 718(10), 740(1), 782, 785 and, in 488; items (16) and (17);**
- (iii) Section 04 of Standing Orders shall apply and Section 03 shall not;**
- (iv) any provisions in Standing Orders relating to presidency at the Lord's Supper, the conduct of services of confirmation, the exercise of pastoral charge, membership of the Conference, the position of district Chairs or superintendency which apply to presbyters shall not apply to them;**
- (v) any provisions in the following Standing Orders which apply to presbyters shall not apply to them, namely Standing Orders 052(4), 056(4), 414(3), 426, 480, 520, 609, 729(1)(i) and, in 488, item (12);**
- (vi) any provisions in Standing Orders which apply to presbyters and are not dealt with in (i) to (v) above shall apply or not apply to them as may be directed by the President should the question arise.**

**(5) As to those received into Full Connexion as deacons:**

- (i) all provisions in Standing Orders relating to invitations, curtailment and extension of invitations, sabbaticals, continuing development, resignation, reinstatement, base of ministry, permission to serve elsewhere or study, supernumeraries, seniority, school, prison and workplace chaplaincies, and complaints and discipline, which apply to deacons shall also apply to them;**
- (ii) all provisions in the following Standing Orders which apply to deacons shall also apply to them, namely Standing Orders 212(4), 323, 364(2), 417B, 438(1A), 451, 484(1), 502(1)(b), 540, 715(4), 718(9), Section 75, 783, 785;**
- (iii) Section 04 of Standing Orders shall apply and Section 03 shall not;**
- (iv) any provisions in Standing Order 609(1) or in Standing Orders relating to membership of the Conference which, in either case, apply to deacons shall not apply to them;**
- (v) any provisions in Standing Orders which apply to deacons and are not dealt with in (i) to (iv) above shall apply or not apply to them as may be directed by the President should the question arise.**

**(6) Notwithstanding Standing Order 011(5)(b), any such person who has until reception into Full Connexion been authorised under Standing Order 011 to preside at the Lord's Supper shall continue to be so authorised.**

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