

## **DISPENSATIONS TO ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (1960)**

Under God, all authority within the Methodist Church belongs to the Conference, as representative of the whole Church. In the exercise of this authority the Conference gives Dispensations (that is, authorisations to depart from the normal practice) to some who are not ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, to administer Holy Communion in specific areas for a specific length of time.

The practice, which obtained till recently, of granting such Dispensations to practically all Probationers without an examination of the special needs which gave rise to the request for them, has created the impression that there is no distinction between ordained ministers and Probationers, and contradicts Methodist teaching on the subject of ordination. The need for a Dispensation exists only where many members of the Methodist Church would otherwise be denied the Holy Communion for long periods. Dispensations are to be granted either to Probationers or to laymen only when, after very careful investigation, the Conference is satisfied that the need exists. The Conference of 1958 'directed . . . the Ministerial Session of each District Synod through the Ministerial members of its District General Purposes Committee to forward with relevant evidence such applications as they recommend to the Committee appointed by the Conference to consider these applications' (Daily Record, 1958, No. 8, p. 58; Minutes 1958, p. 51). The employment of this procedure will remove a serious abuse. In the Overseas Districts, where for the most part changes of Station take place mid-way between one Conference and the next, it is necessary for the President, acting on behalf of Conference, to deal with applications from Synods for Dispensation to be granted to Probationers.

The procedure for the granting of Dispensations to laymen is laid down in CPD, pp. 123f. Applications from Quarterly Meetings are considered by the District General Purposes Committee and the Synod and, if endorsed, are forwarded to Conference with a statement of the need. Dispensations are granted for three years in each instance, and are cancelled by cessation of membership, removal from the Circuit, resignation or resolution of the Conference. It is further laid down that persons so authorized shall receive instruction in the administration of the Sacraments from the Chairman of the District or a Minister appointed by him, the forms of service in the *Book of Offices* being used as a basis of instruction.

*(Agenda 1960, p. 311)*

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This appeared as Appendix A to *Ordination in the Methodist Church*, 1960. The matter is now dealt with in S.O. 011 (2000).