

Training as a Local Preacher in the Armed Forces

These notes set out the route to discern the call of a Local Preacher (LP) for a member of the Armed Forces (AF), including civilians working for the Ministry of Defence where they are not able to follow the usual Methodist process¹ due to the nature of their service.

This route is based on the standard Methodist process and whilst broadly equivalent, there are subtle differences in nearly every step. There are two assumed options at each Stage:

- 1) the individual is worshipping and training to preach in a local circuit, or
- 2) they are worshipping in a military or naval chapel.²

Why it differs

The nature of a Service career means that the individual is likely to move regularly and often at short notice and will be in both of the above situations at different times. The other characteristic of worship that impacts on this is that within the AF Methodism is categorised with other denominations in a Chaplaincy Group.³ Therefore the Chaplain with oversight of the LP at many stages may not be a Methodist and in many military and naval environments there is just a single Chaplain and all worship is interdenominational.

It is these differences in how the individual is employed that means the mentor is likely to routinely change during this process, hence establishing an Armed Forces Local Preacher Tutor⁴ to provide continuity for the candidates through their time. It is equally quite possible to move from the conventional pathway to this Armed Forces pathway and vice versa at any stage (and almost any step) and the process is designed to be flexible.

Training as a Worship Leader

Worship Leaders are appointed by individual churches, but the relatively ecumenical setup in the Forces may mean some individuals wish to complete the Worship Leader course to enable them to support their Chaplain or to explore future church leadership roles. If the Chaplain believes they are suitable and decides that the Methodist Worship Leader Course is appropriate they should discuss the candidate with the AF LP Tutor who will register them and support them through Modules 1-4 of Worship Leading and Preaching, keeping the Minister informed of their progress and record their status in the relevant area of the East Solent & Downs (ES&D)⁵ plan until they move onto a circuit plan. Where a potential Worship Leader is in a standard Methodist Circuit it is expected that they will follow the normal circuit processes.

¹ As laid down "Training Requirements for Local Preachers" dated April 2019. The Standing Orders containing definitive requirements are available on the Methodist Church website.

² This includes garrison and establishment chapels around the world, but also could include temporary places of worship on operations or in a ship at sea.

³ In the RN and RAF this is as part of the Free Churches group i.e. not Church of England or Roman Catholic and in the Army there is a different structure in place where all denominations sit alongside each other.

⁴ In line with the usual Methodist process the tutor does not need to be a local preacher, or resident in the ES&D circuit, although currently they are.

⁵ This Circuit has agreed to act as the enabler for all of these candidates and is within the Southampton District, which is the District with leadership responsibilities for the Armed Forces. The Tutor is currently a member of this Circuit.

The AF LP Tutor will also keep the Methodist Forces Board updated with any candidates that are using this process.

Further Information

For any clarification please contact the LP Office via localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk or on 020 7467 3774 or the AF LP Tutor – Cdr Mark Barton RN on markbartonrn@gmail.com who will support the process through the East Solent and Downs (ES&D) Circuit.

Nothing in this process means that an individual wishing to become a LP cannot train by the standard LP route if they are worshipping and preaching in a Methodist Circuit and that Circuit is willing to take them through the process.