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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As this new Connexional Year begins I want to thank you for your ministry and assure you that we in the Ministries Team continue to pray for you as we navigate these interesting times.

Within the busyness of ministry, may I remind you of [Signpost for Ministry](#) – a semi-hidden landing webpage that was created in response to ministers asking to be kept up to date with news pertaining to ministry. You can now sign up (at the top of the Signpost) to have updates sent directly to your inbox so no need to keep checking back!

### **Your Wellbeing**

Friends, I am aware of the irony of sending you a three-page missive about reducing the pressures of ministry. However, I hope in sharing these things, you can see we are listening and trying to do all we can.

There is no doubt that ministry is not, and has never been easy. The pressures of ministry can creep up on any of us, even for those of us who are flourishing.

As I hope you are aware the wellbeing of ministers has been high on the church's agenda for the past couple of years. Following a listening day at Methodist Church House, the Ministries Committee commissioned a full-scale piece of research to see what was enabling ministers to flourish, and crucially, what was negatively affecting ministers' wellbeing. The research led to over 30 recommendations being presented to the Ministries Committee.

The committee acknowledged that systemic changes were needed. I have set out below a little more of what the Connexional Team has been asked to do to enable ministerial flourishing. Some of the recommendations will potentially lead to changes in our candidating and stationing processes.

I have divided the recommendations into ministers, superintendents and Chairs of District. You are encouraged to discuss these recommendations in staff meetings, circuit leadership teams and district meetings. I was particularly tasked with sharing with you some of the recommendations that only we as individuals can make happen. The committee in no way wants to suggest that ministerial flourishing is only up to individuals. However, some things can only be done by change in our local contexts.

### **Recommendations to all ministers**

Over the years the Connexional Team has been tasked with providing support at different points in ministry. These currently include First Moves in Ministry, Re-charge (the mid-ministry retreat), Superintendents' induction, The Superintendents' Conference, and the Pre-retirement course. Ministers are encouraged to take up these opportunities designed to enable ministerial flourishing. Over the next year we will form a number of online communities of practice/support groups to enable ministers facing similar challenges (e.g. single ministers) these will gather online and will be known as the Voices of Identity.

Ministers are reminded that we are given a stipend in order that we might model a way of being. We are not "paid" to do a job, or worse still to *keep the show on the road*. As ministers we are



called by God to be a representative person, leading the people of God in mission and ministry. Therefore, you are invited to adopt a Methodist Way of Life as part of your discipleship, through an accountability group, or maybe as part of the staff meeting.

The committee spent a long time discussing the recommendations in CPD Book VII Part 3 relating to holidays and rest time. We do not speak of days off from ministry, because ministry is a way of life. However, CPD states ministers should have a minimum of 24 hours' rest in each seven-day period. The research revealed that many ministers felt their wellbeing was impaired by not having 48 hours' rest in a 7-day period. The committee reminds all ministers that the stationing committee works on the assumption that all full-time appointments involve 12 sessions a week (a session being a morning, afternoon or evening). This might equate to 6 days of 2 sessions a week or fewer days if the 3 sessions are deemed to have been used in the work of ministry. The committee encourages a dialogue between ministers and circuits to use the flexibility built into the system to enable the flourishing of the Church and those serving it.

Encouraging ministers to work 12 sessions a week may feel like increasing the pressure on the 'to do' list, particularly if we perceive the demands outweigh the time available to us. As a minister saying no is never easy, nor is it easy to hear as a member of the church. However, every minister and church member when agreeing to do something new is asked to consider what they might lay down to allow time for the new work to flourish.

If you think your ministerial flourishing and wellbeing is being diminished by the systems of the institution you are invited to take these to supervision. You may then ask your supervisor to refer any particular concerns on to the Supervision Reference Group ([supervision@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:supervision@methodistchurch.org.uk)). These will then be addressed by the group, which reports to the Ministries Committee.

You might also feel that you need to take some issues out of supervision and seek further support. You are reminded that the Ministerial Counselling service is available to all ministers and the committee commends the service.

You are encouraged to have a conversation with a minister in oversight about your "work/life" balance, at least annually. This will be included in the new guidance about MDR which will be issued next year. Additionally, you are encouraged to develop a support plan with a colleague or friend. This should identify who you will talk to when times are difficult and a plan of action that you might follow. The ministries committee recommend you share this with your minister in oversight. In due course, the ministries team will provide a template to help you think about this.

When your appointment ends, you will be offered a *moving on* conversation so that issues encountered in the station might be clearly articulated. Again, the Connexional Team will offer guidelines around this later in the year.

### **Recommendations to Superintendents**

Superintendents are asked to use and embed a *Methodist Way of Life* into staff meetings including regularly asking colleagues "how is your wellbeing/how are you flourishing?".

The ministries committee recognises that ministers can take on a whole range of things that prevent their ministry flourishing. You are asked to consider how you might enable ministers to make good decisions about the use of their time. Circuits are encouraged to consider employing lay people to appropriate roles that might free ministers to minister and engage in mission.

## Recommendations for Chairs of Districts

You are asked to emphasise at Welcome Services and other district events that ministry is a way of life not a job!

Within the research, the power of testimony was once again emphasised as a way of inspiring other ordained colleagues. You are encouraged to include ordained testimony in both ministerial and representative sessions of synod.

The research highlighted differing opinions as to how much support should be offered to a minister's partner, it was noted that every relationship is different with some ministers expecting support of their partner and others finding this intrusive. You are encouraged to explore the most appropriate way forward with ministers in your district. The ministries committee expresses its thanks to district chairs as you navigate your way around this complex area.

## The Connexional Team (Ministries)

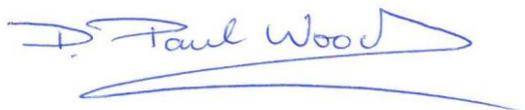
Among other things the team is charged with:

- drafting and publishing a Ministers' Handbook which will include the Ministerial Covenant.
- drafting materials to be made available to members of the Methodist Church to explain the Ministerial Covenant in everyday language.
- posting, on the website stories of creative lay employment.
- asking the Faith and Order Committee to draft a theological definition of ministerial wellbeing and flourishing.
- developing the Continuing Development in Ministry page on the website so that all ministers might know what development possibilities are available.
- drafting communications guidelines with recommendations about appropriate response times.
- drawing together the available resources to help circuits build good leadership teams.

In addition, Notice of Motion 112 has tasked the Methodist Council with establishing a framework to analyse the cumulative impact of all resolutions brought to the Conference with regard to resources, time and potential benefits.

We are committed to doing all we can to reduce pressures on ministerial wellbeing and encourage flourishing in mission and ministry.

I close with the assurance of my prayers as we once again look to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out our discipleship in worship and mission.



Paul Wood  
Interim Director of the Ministries Team