

## MEETING WELL

# Guidelines for Local Preachers' Meetings

### What is the Local Preachers' Meeting?

We don't serve alone but in community. A call to be a Local Preacher is not to a solitary ministry, even though sometimes as the late-night candle burns low on a Saturday night, it might seem to be.

We are a community of people who share a common calling and a passion for the mission and ministry of God's people. We share our ministry across a circuit, hence our meeting is a sub-group of the Circuit Meeting, to whom we are accountable.

### What do we need to do?

The functions of the Local Preachers' Meeting are set out in our Standing Orders, clause 561. The full text can be downloaded [here](#)<sup>1</sup>, but in summary they are:

- (i) to enable members to worship together and share fellowship;
- (ii) to "consider the state of the work of God in the Circuit";
- (iii) to hold local preachers accountable for their ministry;
- (iv) to oversee and support the training and formation of local preachers and worship leaders;
- (v) to provide opportunities for continuing development
- (vi) to deal with business that crops up.

Most of these fit under three headings:

**Learning Together** – we are a learning community, nurturing each newly-discerned calling and growing together in the knowledge of God and the skills for our ministry;

**Being Together** – we gather to encourage each other in our calling, and to be accountable to one another in our shared ministry;

**Serving Together** – we gather to celebrate what God is doing amongst us and to explore what our developing role in God's mission should be;

Notice that the routine (but essential) business that occupies us for much of our time in local preachers' meetings is only mentioned in item (vi).

This Guidance Note is an invitation to reimagine our Local Preachers' Meetings, so that they can become the places we go for inspiration, insight and fresh energy in our mission and ministry.

### Learning Together

Continuing development is a responsibility of all local preachers. We must continually be learning, reflecting and reassessing the message we communicate. We must remain true to the Word and relevant in the world, whilst retaining our prophetic edge. This is why the *Worship: Leading & Preaching* course strongly emphasises theological reflection and its place in our lifelong service as faithful disciples.

Consider asking someone from the circuit to contribute an item on a topic (relevant to worship and preaching) they are passionate about. Or ask someone to facilitate a discussion about a topical issue or theological topic, or ask everyone to bring a book they have read recently and say something about how it has influenced their preaching. Parts of the *Worship: Leading & Preaching* course are particularly applicable for use; you could use some of the ideas in the "Explore" parts as discussion

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<sup>1</sup> Or downloaded from the Local Preachers' Secretaries page on the Methodist Church website at [www.methodist.org.uk/lp](http://www.methodist.org.uk/lp).

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starters. Or use the *Bible Month* materials and videos to prepare yourselves for the next featured book.

The possibilities are endless, and we hope to put a library of ideas and resources together to help you choose suitable topics. People will make the effort to attend meetings that are interesting and relevant, and this could help to encourage people to come. The key is to plan ahead and let everyone know what is planned, so that the dates find their way into diaries, and some anticipation can be generated.

Also, be consistent – those who venture back to the Local Preachers' Meeting can be easily put off again if an advertised topic is cancelled and the meeting reverts to being a business meeting.

### Being Together

Fellowship is crucial, so that we can support and encourage each other in our shared mission. Communion is the natural starting point for fellowship, and the service *Remembering our Call* (which all local preachers are obliged to attend each year) provides an ideal setting for this, either in a Local Preachers' Meeting or at a circuit service, preferably at the start of the connexional year.

We are called to be accountable to each other, which follows from true Christian fellowship. We are also responsible for continuing to review our ministry, which we do in the context of this fellowship. Peer review is part of this, as we encourage and support each other in the challenges of our call. Each meeting should allow space for supportive conversation, and opportunity for local preachers to contribute to the meeting from their own learning and development for the benefit of all.

Many local preachers' meetings are incomplete because members stay away. It is worth asking those who do not attend "why not?". There may be legitimate practical reasons, in which case could arrangements be made to enable them to attend, such as providing transport or altering the time or venue of the meeting to be more convenient? It may simply be that the meetings are perceived as boring, dominated by administrative detail. Ask those who don't attend for their suggestions about topics to discuss too – they may have some good ideas. Remember that busy people will always prioritise the events in which they see most value.

### Serving Together

Each meeting should contain honest, prayerful conversation about God's work in the circuit. As local theologians in close touch with our communities, local preachers often have a depth of insight into opportunities and challenges amongst the churches. Make time for such conversation, perhaps taking particular topics as the theme for a whole meeting. For example, if there are challenges around "all-age" worship, consider inviting a specialist in the topic to provide a short training session, then facilitate a conversation in the meeting where you can discuss your local challenges and opportunities.

All local preachers should be involved in helping new local preachers and worship leaders discern their call and complete their training. Some take specific and highly rewarding roles as circuit tutors or mentors, and all can be involved in listening to and reviewing services led by local preachers on trial.

Whilst the detailed conversations surrounding training and feedback from services are best handled in a separate training sub-group, all have a responsibility to provide encouragement and time should be allowed in the local preachers' meeting to review training and enable appreciative conversation. Remember that the meeting is responsible for discerning the call of new local preachers, and of

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worship leaders if called on by church councils to do so. We owe it to those at the start of their journey to provide the best possible support and honest, prayerful feedback that we can.

Local Preachers' meetings are encouraged to include worship leaders in their activities. Meeting together to learn and share ideas is a great way of building confidence in shared ministry.

#### Putting it Together

In Part 6 of "Constitutional Practice and Discipline..." (CPD), vol. 2, there is a sample agenda for a Local Preachers' Meeting<sup>2</sup>. It is provided as a suggestion, and is not mandatory, which may come as a relief to those who didn't know it existed!

There will be business to attend to at each meeting, but this need not dominate the agenda, and can often be handled quickly if adequate preparation has been made. Refer to "Connexional Team Guidelines for the Circuit Local Preachers Meeting"<sup>3</sup> for details on issues that may crop up in business parts of the meeting.

In summary:

- Worship is the best place to start and can be led by anyone. Sharing responsibility for this spreads the work and increases variety. Don't forget "Remembering our Call".
- An interesting item on a relevant topic should be central, and will provide a necessary component of continuing development.
- Initial training is a key role of the meeting, but the detail can be handled better elsewhere, especially if the circuit has multiple people in training.
- Fellowship is what holds the meeting together, and includes opportunities for encouragement and accountability as we review our ministry together.
- Business items and the sharing of information are important, but should be handled in an efficient manner to avoid these dominating our time together.

If you have innovative and interesting ideas for local preachers' meetings that we could share with others around the connexion, please let us know at [localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk).

#### Other Guidance Notes

This Guidance Note is available at [www.methodist.org.uk/lp](http://www.methodist.org.uk/lp), where you will find other information to support the ministry of local preachers.

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<sup>2</sup> You can find a download of the whole of CPD [here](#)<sup>2</sup>, or go to the CPD page of the Methodist website, which is listed on the "Ministers and Office Holders" menu.

<sup>3</sup> Available on the Local Preachers' Secretaries' page at [www.methodist.org.uk/lp](http://www.methodist.org.uk/lp).