

Legislation for Lay Workers

A report by the General Committee to the Methodist Conference 2004

The Conference in 2003 received as a Notice of Motion to the Conference of 2004 the following amendments to the Manual of Laws.

Resolution

C 11. The Conference amends the Manual of Laws as follows:

Delete paragraphs 199-203D and replace with the following:

Lay Employees

199. (1) Any circuit (except a City Mission) or part of a circuit (such as a society or project) considering the establishment of a new position which is to be filled by a lay employee shall consult the Lay Employment Advisory Group. This committee shall have discretion to require additional consultation concerning the appointment or re-appointment of specific personnel. Where the advice of the Lay Employment Advisory Group is not sought or not followed, the employment shall be deemed for all purposes to be the personal responsibility of the members of the board or meeting concerned and not that of the Methodist Church in Ireland or its constituents.
- (2) All such positions, together with applicable Terms and Conditions of Employment, shall be subject to Circuit Quarterly Meeting ratification.
- (3) Superintendents shall ensure that all persons employed in such positions are properly vetted, shall sign all contracts of employment on behalf of the Circuit, and shall report annually to Synod on all persons so employed who have a significant vocational element in their employment (including, but not limited to, lay pastors, lay pastoral assistants, youth pastors, youth workers, church community workers, and circuit evangelists).
200. (1) All lay workers with a significant vocational element in their employment who are employed by circuits or their constituents, City Missions or departments of the church, or as part of cooperative ventures with other statutory or voluntary agencies or Churches, shall, as a minimum, be remunerated in accordance with scales of stipends determined by the Conference, which shall provide for higher tiers for those who have completed certificate, diploma, or degree courses in their specific area of work approved by the Lay Employment Advisory Group.
- (2) All such lay workers (except those employed as part of co-operative ventures) who do not already possess a recognised certificate, diploma, or degree qualification in their specific area of work shall, as a condition of continued employment, participate in a programme of individualised training, under arrangements determined by the Conference.
201. All lay workers with regular preaching responsibilities, who are not

already fully accredited local preachers, shall, as a condition of continued employment, make regular progress in a Conference-approved training course for local preachers.

Lay Employment Advisory Group

202. (1) The Lay Employment Advisory Group exists for the following purposes:
- (a) To facilitate and encourage a study of the ministry needs and available financial resources of an employing body prior to any new position being established;
 - (b) To make expertise in employment legislation and regulation available throughout the Connexion;
 - (c) To promote the effective use of resources for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom throughout the Connexion;
 - (d) To minimise divergence of practice to the detriment of employees or employers; and
 - (e) To promulgate necessary regulations through the General Committee to Conference.
- (2) The membership of the Advisory Group shall be as follows:
- (a) The Secretary of Conference;
 - (b) The General Secretary of the Home Mission Department, or a nominee of the General Secretary;
 - (c) The General Secretary of the Department of Youth and Children's Work, or a nominee of the General Secretary;
 - (d) The Administrator of Edgehill Christian Education Centre, or a nominee of the Administrator;
 - (e) A representative of the City Missions, nominated by the General Committee;
 - (f) A secretary convener, appointed by the General Committee.
 - (g) Up to three additional members co-opted by the Advisory Group.
- (3) The Advisory Group shall establish its own procedures for the expeditious dispatch of business and shall meet as necessary.

Clarification of Guidelines to Circuits Employing Lay Workers

The Conference in 2003 received a resolution from the North East District and directed that it be referred to the General Committee for consideration and report.

The resolution was as follows:

With reference to the guidelines to Circuits employing lay workers, the District Synod requests the Home Mission Department or General Committee to:

- (i) Clarify the meaning of a 'Vocational Post'.
- (ii) Amend the current guidelines to state that "in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability 'vocational posts' should be advertised within the Connexion".
- (iii) To update any 'information pack' on the employment of Lay Workers for distribution to all Superintendent Ministers and Circuit Stewards, for their

guidance on these issues.

The General Committee draws attention to the report on legislation for lay workers. A two stage process was envisaged when this legislation was introduced. The first step was for Conference to amend the Manual of Laws to set out the broad framework relating to Lay Employment, including the establishment of an Advisory Group.

In the second stage the Lay Employment Advisory Group shall “promulgate necessary regulations through the General Committee to Conference”.

The Committee is of the opinion that these regulations will provide the requested clarification.

Resolution

C 12. The Conference receives the report.