



THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

APPENDIX 17

THE POLICIES OF ORDAINED MINISTERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

Rules and Regulations authorised by the Methodist Church in Ireland Act 1915 (Section 25) as sanctioned by the Conference of 1976 and amended by the Conferences of 2015 and 2020

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1. Ordained Ministry Development and Further Study Grants Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose / Scope

This policy sets out the procedure for application for and the administration of Ministry Development and Further Study grants.

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

This policy is administered by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC).

3. Key Features

The Ministries Team provides grants to assist ordained Ministers with costs related to fees for studying higher degrees (Masters and Doctoral level). Circuit Lay employees and ordained ministers attending ministry development courses or conferences may also apply for support from the Ministries Team.

Applications for this funding are scrutinised by the MPPC. The committee reserves the right to award a grant at a level that it deems appropriate, but this shall not be more than 50% of the total course/conference fee.

Grant applications for university courses should normally be made by the end of the June preceding the commencement of the course. In the case of further study degree courses grants awarded shall not exceed 5 consecutive years.

Having availed of a study grant, a person must remain in a role with the Methodist Church in Ireland for at least 5 years on completion of their course. Otherwise, the grant is repayable.

Once a final payment of a ministry development/study grant has been awarded, normally 5 years must elapse before another application can be made.

Monies will be paid electronically when evidence of outlay is provided (i.e. receipt or invoice from institution or organisation). However, should a person apply for a grant and then not proceed with a course or attend the subsequent conference, any payment must be returned. Those receiving grants are responsible to declaring them in relation to their personal tax affairs.

If there are too many applicants in any given year, each application will be assessed according to the strength of the case.

4. Application Procedure

An Ordained Minister must consult with their District Superintendent if they are considering studying for a higher-level degree, and prior to any application for grant assistance.

The link for the electronic form is available from the Ministries Team Office at ministries@irishmethodist.org.

Once the application is submitted it will be reviewed by the MPPC officers who will make a recommendation to the committee. Applicants will be informed of the decision of the MPPC via email. Grants will only be paid on sight of receipt or invoice.

5. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in March 2020, reviewed in April 2022 and revised in March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

6. Related Policies

The following policies should also be considered:

- Ordained Ministers Continuing Ministry Development Policy
- Ordained Ministers Sabbatical Policy

2. Ordained Ministry Context-based Formation Protocols

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed for the context-based formation for those accepted as candidates for ordained ministry.

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below. All supplementary materials referenced are available on the MCI website - <https://irishmethodist.org/ministries-ordained-ministry>

2. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC) of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

3. The Model

Context-based Formation is the model of preparation for ordained ministry which has been adopted by the Methodist Church in Ireland. With the *Agreed Expectations for Ordinands* in the Methodist Church in Ireland as its core, the programme is designed to enable those offering for ordained ministry a unique opportunity to combine theology with practice, and with formation for the role to which God is calling them. They will learn 'on the job' in placement settings (a local church or mission context), as well as in study, tutorials or lectures within the formation community setting (college), thinking all the time about how to integrate their experiences.

The aim is that ordained ministers in training will develop in their character, knowledge and ministry practice in the context or setting of the formation community, placement and study. Although, there may be more emphasis on a particular "stream" at particular points in training, each of these three must be reflected in the three settings.

4. What elements are there in the Formation Process?

During Context-based Formation, the Ordained Minister in Training will normally:

- a) Be involved in the Formation Community Programme;
- b) Be engaged in Ministry Practice.

In Years 1 and 2 of Formation, the Ministry practice setting will normally take place in 2 Placement contexts:

- o Placement 1 – normally a church setting over two years
- o Placement 2 – normally a short-term (4-6 week) complementary placement undertaken in other environments to develop experience of ministry in a range of settings.

In Years 3 and 4 of Formation, the Ministry practice setting will normally be a Stationed context

- c) Undertake a Study Programme in one of the three possible Study Pathways;
- d) Undertake a compulsory two years Post-Ordination training programme (Years 5 and 6).
- e) Participate in other conferences and training events at different points throughout the year.

5. What do Years 1 and 2 look like?

During teaching blocks, those training on a full-time basis should normally expect to spend:

- two to three days a week in practical ministry
- two days a week in study, including the formation community programme as organised by the Ministries Team
- one to two days of private study, preparation and assignment-writing.

They will also:

- participate in residential formation and teaching blocks / weekends
- participate in other conferences and training events

The ministry practice component of formation varies according to the setting. However, it will normally involve participation in helping to lead Sunday worship, and a focussed role in the life of the church context, overseen by an experienced supervisor who will be supported in this role by the Ministries Team.

Each Ordained Minister in Training has their own study pathway which will consist of courses and opportunities for study appropriate to their own needs and prior learning.

All students will undertake a range of courses which will include developing understanding and practice in worship and preaching, theological reflection, ministry and leadership, teamwork and self-understanding, listening skills, Biblical interpretation, pastoral skills, mission and evangelism. Those new to theological study will work towards a validated qualification with an appropriate collaborative partner institution. Theology Graduates may study for a higher degree. Validation depends on the programme of study followed.

Normally, in the summer period between Year 1 and Year 2, there will also be at least one complementary placement in another environment to develop experience of a range of ministry settings (Placement 2).

During Year 2 the Ordained Minister in Training would normally be part of the stationing cycle. This assessment is made at the end of Year 1.

6. What do Years 3 and 4 look like?

This phase of the formation process takes place in a stationed setting as Probationary Ministers. Probationers work under the authority of their Circuit Superintendent, supported by the District Superintendent. The Circuit Superintendent, in consultation with the Director of the Ministries Team, is responsible for ensuring that they fulfil their formation and circuit responsibilities.

In addition to their circuit work those engaged in the full-time formation stream will need to:

- participate in formation days as required (this will not be more than 12 days per year).
- give at least one day per week of private study, preparation and assignment-writing.
- participate in other conferences and training events as required.

The stipend level set by conference reflects the fact that probationers are not giving all their time to circuit ministry.

The ministry practice component of formation will vary according to the stationed setting. However, it will normally involve a ministry leadership role, overseen by an experienced supervisor who will be supported by the Ministries Team.

Each Ordained Minister in Training will continue to undertake courses appropriate to their pathway. During Year 4 an assessment is made with a Diploma level student as to whether they should advance to Degree level.

Ordination will normally take place at the end of Year 4 of the Context-based Formation Process. In order to be ordained, an Ordained Minister in Training should normally have reached at least a Diploma level of Theological Education, (or equivalent). During each year of probation, the ordained ministers in training shall be formally assessed on their conduct of worship by the District Superintendent. On at least one occasion, this assessment should be conducted by at least five other ordained ministers or accredited local preachers.

Annual reports on the circuit work of a probationer and a report on the conduct of worship shall be submitted by the Circuit Superintendent to the District Superintendent for consideration by the District Advisory Committee. These reports shall be forwarded to the Director of the Ministries Team for consideration by the MPPC who will report to the Ministerial Session of Conference.

On the grounds of deprivation, a circuit may apply for a probationer to be given dispensation to preside at services of Holy Communion within their own circuit. Such an application should be fully

considered by the Circuit Executive in conjunction with the District Superintendent. The application is made in writing to the Stationing Committee via the District Superintendent. Circuit Superintendents should preside at services of Holy Communion assisted by the probationer at least twice in each Connexional year.

7. Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination

Normally during the fourth year of the formation process an ordained minister in training shall be prepared for reception into Full Connexion and Ordination:

a) as noted above, they shall be formally assessed on their conduct of worship by the District Superintendent. On at least one occasion, this assessment should be conducted by at least five other ordained ministers or accredited local preachers.

b) shall be interviewed by a group comprising of at least five members District Advisory Committee, including the District Superintendent. The interview shall explore the probationer's knowledge of Methodist theology (as reflected in Wesley's Sermons and Notes on the New Testament) and the practice of ordained ministry and application of Christian faith to the contemporary world. If the performance is deemed to be satisfactory the District Advisory Committee shall recommend the probationer for admission into Full Connexion. (No mark shall be recorded.)

c) shall attend an Ordinands' retreat organised by the Director of the Ministries Team

d) during the period of Conference, shall participate in a reflective conversation about the formation process and call to ordained ministry in the presence of the President of the Conference and a selected number of senior ministers.

e) shall be required to avow before the Ministerial and Representative Sessions of Conference her/his belief in Methodist doctrine and discipline.

f) if all reports are satisfactory, shall be received into Full Connexion during the Representative Session and, in the Ordination Service, be set apart to the work of the ordained ministry by the imposition of hands and by receiving a copy of the Holy Scriptures.

g) shall have her/his name entered in the Journal (and Minutes of Conference) and the date of the beginning of ministry recorded as determined by Conference.

8. Post-Ordination Years 5 and 6

For a period of two years after ordination, ministers shall be required to participate in a development programme as set out by the Ministries Team. The focus of this programme shall be on support for ministry, pastoral supervision, the development of further skills, and personal management.

9. Procedures relating to progress of students and probationers in the Formation Process

Oversight of Formation Progress

MPPC has formal responsibility to monitor the progress of each formation student and probationer with the following remit:

To receive reports on students and probationers and, where necessary, recommend a course of action.

To formally address, where necessary, serious disciplinary issues regarding students and probationers.

To recommend, based on the Church's agreed expectations, continuance or discontinuance in formation or probation.

A formal record of the progress of each student and probationer will be ratified by the MPPC and included in its recommendations to the Ministerial Session of Conference.

Leave from the Formation Process

a) An ordained minister in training who can satisfy the MPPC of her/his intention to complete their formation training and in due course enter full work, may, on compassionate or compelling domestic grounds, apply for exemption from or deferment or suspension of stationing for probation to the Conference, which may grant or refuse the application. An ordained minister in training shall not during any deferment or suspension of probation be at any cost to the Connexion except as provided in clause (b) below.

b) The names of probationers granted exemption, deferment or suspension shall, in the list of stations, be printed in the Circuit in which they reside as “without pastoral charge” and they shall be expected to give such help to the Circuit as they are able and in appropriate cases shall be entitled to remuneration by decision of the Circuit Executive.

c) Students who fail to complete their formation and ministerial probation shall withdraw from training for the ordained ministry. If subsequently they apply for reinstatement by the Conference, the formation received, and the years of probation travelled when they withdrew shall be taken into account. Any subsequent application to the Conference for reinstatement will be discerned and assessed by the MPPC.

10. Financial Arrangements for Context Based Formation

If undertaking the Context-based Formation Process full-time, the Ordained Minister in Training receives a taxable living allowance in Years 1 and 2. They will also receive reasonable expenses related to their placement as per the Placement Handbook.

When stationed as a probationary stipendiary minister in Years 3 and 4, the Ordained Minister in Training receives a Probationer Stipend and other ministerial allowances.

The rates of stipends and allowances are set down by the Stipends and Allowances Governance Board of the Methodist Church in Ireland and approved by Conference. University fees for accredited courses undertaken by those in the formation process will be covered by the funds of the Ministries Team.

11. What does a Part-Time Training Route look like?

If a candidate wishes to follow a part-time route for their Context-based Formation, this will be discussed as part of the Selection Process and agreed by the MPPC. Part-time Context-based Formation will be possible and will be facilitated. It is likely that this route will take longer than the usual full-time “four years to ordination” route.

If a candidate is already employed as a lay-worker in a local circuit and wishes to continue in that employment during Context-based Formation, a suitable pathway will be discussed with the MPPC. The minimum requirement for Stationing will normally be the completion of a Study Programme at Certificate level and appropriate engagement with the Ministry Formation Programme and Placement experience.

YEAR	Formation Community Setting	Ministry Practice Setting	Study Setting		
			Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Pathway 3
1	Formation Programme	Year-Round Placement	Certificate Programme	Master's level Programme	Bespoke Programme
2	Formation Programme	Year-Round Placement	Certificate Programme	Master's level Programme	Bespoke Programme
3	Formation Programme	Stationed Setting	Diploma Programme	Master's level Programme	Bespoke Programme
4	Formation Programme	Stationed Setting	Diploma Programme	Bespoke Programme	Bespoke Programme
5	Formation Programme	Stationed Setting	Bespoke Programme 1	Bespoke Programme	Bespoke Programme
6	Formation Programme	Stationed Setting	Bespoke Programme 1	Bespoke Programme	Bespoke Programme

12. Policy Review

Context-based Formation was first adopted by the Methodist Conference in 2019. This Policy was updated in April 2022, and revised in March 2023. It is intended to further review and update this Policy by July 2024. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

Related Policies

- OM Agreed Expectations for Ordinands within the Methodist Church in Ireland

- OM Policy and Procedures relating to Candidature for Ordained Ministry
- OM Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures for Formation Students within the Methodist Church in Ireland (in preparation)

3. Ordained Ministry Continuing Ministry Development Policy

Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy relates to the responsibility incumbent on all ministers to consider their own personal and ministerial development.

Among the duties of an ordained minister laid out in the Manual of Laws is the following:

5A.03 (f) to engage in further study, supervision and appraisal, training and professional development as directed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

2. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

3. Key Features

3.1 The matter of ministry development forms part of the ongoing conversation between the District Superintendent and each minister. Each minister is required to undertake 20 hours of continuing ministry development in each connexional year.

3.2 A sabbatical is available to a minister after 10 years' service and each subsequent 7 years. This is a significant opportunity to reflect on call, vocation and to engage in further ministerial formation. For further information see the separate Ordained Ministers Sabbatical Policy.

3.4 Should an issue arise in a circuit, where the minister needs further support or training a District Superintendent should have the authority to ask a minister to engage with such training and have the budget to enable it to happen. In such a scenario the District Superintendent should consult with the Director of the Ministries Team.

3.5 Financial support for ministry development and further study is available. For information see the Ministry Development and Further Study Grants Policy.

4. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021, reviewed in April 2022 and revised in March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

5. Related Policies

The following policies should also be considered:

- Ministry Development and Further Study Grants Policy
- Ordained Ministers Sabbaticals Policy

4. Ordained Ministers Obituary Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed in preparing an obituary following the death of a minister.

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

This policy shall be managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC).

3. Death of an Ordained Minister or Probationer

3.1 In the event of the death of an ordained minister or probationer, the Superintendent of the Circuit in which the deceased minister resided shall be responsible for ensuring the preparation of a suitable obituary. The Superintendent may appoint another minister to prepare this. The obituary is forwarded to the District Superintendent.

In the event of the death of a Circuit Superintendent, the District Superintendent shall appoint a minister to prepare the obituary. The obituary is forwarded to the District Superintendent.

3.2 Obituaries will be forwarded to the Editorial Secretary of Conference by the District Superintendent. The conference secretariat will prepare these obituaries, in consultation with others as necessary, for inclusion in the Conference Agenda.

3.3 The consideration of the ministry of the deceased ministers shall be regarded and observed as a strictly religious service, and whilst this solemn service is being held, no committees of the Conference shall meet. At this service the list of the names of deceased ministers shall be read by the Secretary of the Conference or by one of her/his colleagues.

4. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021, reviewed in April 2022 and revised in March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

5. Related Policies

The following policy should also be considered:

- Retired Benefits Scheme

5. Ordained Ministry Agreed Expectations

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This document outlines the Agreed Expectations for Ordained Ministry with the Methodist Church in Ireland. These were first adopted by the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland in 2007 and reviewed in 2017.

The key features are set out below. No.3 provides an introduction and overview of ordained ministry within the understanding of the Methodist Church in Ireland. No. 4 outlines the Agreed Expectations for anyone wishing to candidate. No.5 outlines the Agreed Expectations for those who are to be stationed as probationer ministers. No.6 outlines the Agreed Expectations for those who are to be ordained and received into full connexion by the Conference.

2. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

3. Overview - *Ordained Ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland*

a. Vocation and Calling

The Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) sees ordained ministry as a specific vocation within the life of the whole people of God.

The call of God is central to the beginning and continuance of ordained ministry. It is widely understood that there are two types of call:

- All followers of Jesus have a primary calling to discipleship.
- However, each has a secondary calling which concerns God's specific purpose for their lives.

'Ministry' is about the whole Church's calling to serve God in worship, in each other, and in the world. Particular ministries express this service in different ways, but the ordained minister is especially related to the total ministry of the body of Christ, as leader and enabler of others. The ordained minister acts as a sign of the Church, which is itself a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Since all candidates for the ordained ministry already have a sense of call to discipleship, the task of the candidating process is to explore and discern if their call and gifting is to ordained ministry. This requires both the candidate and the church to agree in that discernment.

b. What is ordained ministry?

It is important to set the context within both the faith of the church, and the church of faith. MCI has many different types of ministry, of which ordained ministry is but one. The ordained minister is called to enable the Church to be the Church – to fulfil its calling as a 'Royal priesthood'. The Office of an ordained minister is as a *Presbyter*¹ in the universal Church of God .

An ordained minister is set aside for the ministry of:

- Word
- Sacrament
- Pastoral Oversight
- Serving

¹ *Presbyter in the New Testament refers to a leader in local Christian congregations, with presbyter being from the Greek "presbyteros" and meaning elder/senior. Historically within the Methodist Church in Ireland presbyters have been referred to as "ministers".*

- c. The Role of the Ordained minister
 - Leader of worship, community life, discipleship and mission
 - Enabler and educator of people to know and use their gifts, both natural and spiritual, in the service of God
 - Spiritual guide – helping people to discern God’s presence and will through all the shifting scenes of life
 - Prophet – declaring the truth of God with clarity and relevance for this day and generation
 - Representative - a public ambassador for Christ, his church and MCI

- d. What are the necessary skills for an ordained minister?
 - Communication
 - Spiritual discernment
 - Listening
 - Leadership
 - Reflective theology and biblical interpretation
 - Learning

- e. What should the character of an ordained minister be like?
 - Role model for Christian discipleship, mission and holiness – exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit
 - Lover of people – inside and outside the church
 - Integrity
 - Self-aware
 - Wisdom
 - Discipline
 - Open to learning
 - Inhabits a scriptural worldview

4. Agreed Expectations for a Candidate

Evidence is sought regarding the character and skills of each candidate as listed above under the following categories:

- Vocation (call and commitment)
- Being in relationship with God, with self and with others
- The church’s ministry in God’s world
- Leadership
- Communication

Spiritual discernment is sought by the church regarding the will of God for each candidate at Circuit, Synod and Connexional level through the Ministries Policies and procedures Committee. Evidence of this comes from those who have a proven record of spiritual discernment and tasked by the church to make that assessment at the Ministerial Selection Panel.

5. Agreed Expectations for those ready to be received as Probationer Ministers

The Methodist Church in Ireland sets aside certain men and women to be presbyters in the world-wide Church of God. These are ordained by prayer and the laying on of hands after a period of discernment and training. Discernment is necessary in the process of selection for training, in the initial training for ministry and in the period of probation that leads to ordination. Each aspect of discernment needs to

be guided by criteria that are appropriate both to the nature of ordained ministry and to the stage in the process. In this paper we are concerned chiefly with criteria to be applied to those who, on completion of their initial training, are to be stationed as probationer ministers. Agreed expectations help the church in its work of discernment and help those in training by giving them a clear understanding of the desired outcomes of their programmes.

In asking questions about the proper expectations for those beginning public ministry we need to keep in mind:

The Nature of Ordained Ministry as it has been understood in the Christian tradition and particularly among the people called Methodists.

'What is a Presbyterian?' published by the British Methodist church in 2002, highlights three main aspects of the ordained minister's role:

- Ministry of the Word
- Ministry of the Sacraments
- Ministry of Pastoral Responsibility.

It reminds us that ordained ministers never cease to be disciples. The particular form of their vocation cannot therefore absolve them from participating in the worship and mission of the church as a disciple along with all the other disciples. At the same time the particular form of their vocation leads them into co-ordinating the other disciples in their worship and mission, and to equipping them for it.

Ordained ministers, then, are called to a ministry that focuses, expresses and enables the ministry and mission that Christ shares with all his Church. As such they have a representative role.

The ordination service spells out the common threads of this representative ministry.

In His name you are:

- to preach by word and deed the Gospel of God's grace;
- to declare God's forgiveness of sins to all who are penitent;
- to baptise, to confirm and preside at the celebration of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood;
- to lead God's people in worship, prayer and service;
- to minister Christ's love and compassion;
- to serve others, in whom you serve the Lord Himself.
- These things are your common duty and delight.
- In them you are to watch over one another in love.
- In all things, give counsel and encouragement to those whom Christ entrusts to your care.
- Pray without ceasing.
- Work with joy in the Lord's service.
- Let no one suffer hurt through your neglect.

The particular mission to which the Church is called in its time and place and in which presbyters have an important, but not exclusive, role.

Ordained ministry in the Methodist Church is in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. The mission priorities of the Methodist Church in Ireland at the present time are focused on enabling the whole church to engage in:

- Worship

- Witness
- Discipleship
- Service
- Reconciliation

These priorities are to be worked out in the context of a changing society and a changing world and will require a church actively committed to being changed. What characteristics of mind and spirit should we expect of those who are called to lead churches in this kind of process? What kind of skills and understanding will be important?

The agreed expectation for those to be stationed as probationers will take account of these traditional and contextual elements. They must also be seen in relation to the expectations for those who are accepted as candidates for training and to the expectations for those to be ordained.

During pre-ordination training a student minister is expected to acquire or develop further the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for which potential had been identified and tested by the Church in the selection processes. It is also a time when in controlled conditions the student can attempt to integrate the basic elements training and to rehearse performing as a minister.

There is a vital link between the outcomes expected of those preparing for ordained ministry, the courses of training devised to bring about these outcomes, and the forms of assessment used to assess the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved.

A student minister begins public ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland as a probationer under the general supervision of a superintendent minister.

Specifically, by the end of initial pre-ordination training and in order to show that they are ready for stationing (entry into public ministry) student ministers will be expected to show that they have gained the following capabilities:

I Vocation (call and commitment)

1. Some understanding, drawing on their own experience of past and present roles and in preparation for being stationed, of what it means to bear a public role and to be and function as a minister.
2. The ability to discern which of their previously acquired skills and experience can be incorporated into ordained ministry, which need to be modified, and which should be discarded;
3. A confidence in the Church, and a commitment to its discipline, together with the resources to resist the temptation to retreat into a personal or purely local ministry;
4. Some evidence of a desire and ability to enable others to identify their gifts and use them in the church and in the world.

II Being in relationship (with God; with self; with others)

5. A developing and maturing personal commitment to Christ, sustained by Scripture, spirituality and prayer life, both individual and corporate, within the context of commitment to the Church;
6. The ability to reflect critically on their practice of prayer and the varied experiences of their spiritual development;
7. A developing discipline of spirituality consonant with their changing role and growth in learning and the ability to show how that life of prayer and learning can be integrated into a sustainable life of public ministry;
8. Personal qualities necessary to be an example of faith and discipleship, and to be one who receives and gives guidance in the Christian life.

9. A developed self-awareness; an awareness of others, demonstrating respect; listening skills; and the ability to engage in pastoral care;
10. Personal skills, including those involved in maintaining close relationships, standard courtesies, public politeness, financial management etc;

III The Church's ministry in God's world

11. Understanding of the Christian gospel and of the mission in which the Church is called to participate in its present context, together with appropriate skills of interpretation.
The ability to witness in service and word, to relate faith and experience and to reflect theologically in context.
12. A Christian understanding of morality, together with an awareness of the complexity of moral issues. The ability to offer ethical guidance, support and direction within the framework of the Church's moral tradition.
13. A specific understanding and experience of Methodism in its breadth and diversity and in relation to other Churches, local and world-wide.
14. An awareness of the churches' role in the history of communal conflict in Ireland and of their responsibility for reconciliation and peacebuilding.
15. An understanding of issues of ethnic and religious pluralism.

IV Leadership and Collaboration

16. An understanding, experience and proven capacity to work with people of different gifts and abilities and with various responsibilities in the life of the Church and in society.
17. The ability to work with those with whom there is temperamental or theological difference.
18. An understanding of the nature of leadership and an ability to enable others to exercise their own gifts as well as to offer appropriate leadership themselves.

V Learning and Understanding

19. A firm and thorough grounding in the basic theological, biblical, historical, liturgical, missiological and social and pastoral studies.
20. An understanding of theological, biblical and historical studies in the context of the life of faith.
21. An enquiring mind and a proven ability to reflect upon the relevant bodies of knowledge in responding to particular situations.
22. The ability to take responsibility for further learning and enhancement of skills of themselves and others.

VI Communication

23. An understanding of worship and of liturgical principles, and the ability to lead worship as required in a variety of styles.
24. A basic understanding of techniques of communication, hermeneutical principles and preaching, and an ability to preach and teach in a variety of contexts and to make positive use of feedback and assessment.
25. An ability to enable others to learn and acquire skills for discipleship and service.
26. The ability to articulate Christian faith in everyday situations, to help groups to communicate effectively, and competence in helping communities and congregations in the use of information.

Note:

The above list of expectations has been prepared with the help of Mission and Ministry, an ecumenical document on ministerial training produced by the British Methodist Church, the Church of England and the United Reformed Church.

6. Agreed Expectations for Those Ready for Ordination and Reception into Full Connexion

Vocation (Call and commitment)

- A firm and on-going sense of call to ordained ministry along with a realistic awareness of its challenges
- The capacity to bear the public roles and responsibilities of an ordained person and to live credibly and maturely as a presbyter both in the Methodist Church and in the wider community
- An understanding of the nature of ordained ministry and a commitment to working that ministry out on a personal, local and world level.
- A readiness to exercise leadership in ordained ministry, together with a demonstrated proficiency in a broad range of skills necessary to exercise public ministry and leadership
- A confidence in the Church and a commitment to its discipline

Being in relationship (with God; with self; with others)

- A developing and maturing personal commitment to Christ
- Ability to give and account of how personal commitment to Christ is being shaped within the roles and expectations of leadership and oversight of others
- Ability to sustain a life of prayer within the expectations and pressures of public ministry
- A character and personality worthy of example

- An ability to exercise appropriate self-care, to maintain balance in work and accountability to others, and to access support when needed
- The ability to ask important questions and to be self-critical, together with an ability to articulate their own strengths and weaknesses in ministry
- An ability to show insight, openness, maturity and stability in the face of pressure and in the process of enabling change

- The ability to form and sustain relationships across a wide range of people, especially in situations of conflict and disagreement, marked by empathy, respect and insight.
- Good practice in a wide range of pastoral and professional relationships
- An acceptance of their ministry by the community to which they are assigned

The Church's ministry in God's world

- Demonstrate skills as reflective and effective practitioners and show proven capacity to relate theology and context in a variety of settings.
- Demonstrate understanding of both the Christian gospel and the nature of contemporary society as well as skills in articulating and engaging in appropriate forms of mission in response to them

- Demonstrate engagement in mission and evangelism in a range of contexts
- Demonstrate an understanding of Methodism in its breadth and diversity

- Deepening understanding of and engagement with the history of communal conflict in Ireland along with engagement with the ease in which that history affects the life of the Church and its witness, and a commitment to reconciliation and peace-building.
- Demonstrate a personal engagement with and willingness to exercise leadership in issues of ethnic and religious pluralism and willingness to exercise leadership

Leadership and Collaboration

- Demonstrate an ability to take initiatives and work collegially with other ministries and with the community of the whole Church
- A proven capacity to exercise effective collaborative leadership, working effectively as a member of a team and as a leader
- Proven ability to work with those with whom there is temperamental or theological difference.
- Demonstrate appropriate use of authority in ways which enable and empower others in their mission and ministry
- Demonstrate some ability to support and supervise others

Learning and Understanding

- Have developed a working knowledge and understanding of the Manual of Laws and some experience of applying it in practice
- Proven ability to form and sustain a life of disciplined study and reflection that sustains in leadership and public ministry

Communication

- An ability to lead public worship and preach in a way that shows good understanding of liturgical principles and sensitivity to context.
- An ability to enable others to learn and acquire skills for discipleship and service.
- Proven ability to articulate Christian faith in everyday situations.

7. Policy Review

The Agreed Expectations were adopted by the Methodist Conference in 2007 and revised in 2017. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2023. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

Related Policies

- OM Policy and Procedures relating to Candidature for Ordained Ministry
- OM Policy and Procedures relating to Context-based Formation for Ordained Ministry

6. Applications to serve with or transfer to Ordained Ministry in MCI

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

The Methodist Church in Ireland is open to receiving applications from ordained ministers of other Methodist Churches and other Christian denominations to serve with or transfer into the ordained ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI).

This policy replaces the legislation set out in 5D.15-17 in the Manual of Laws of the Methodist Church in Ireland (2019).

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC).

3. Key Features of this Policy

3.1 Applications are received from ministers from other churches in one of two categories:

- i. To 'serve with' – this means that the applicant serves with the Methodist Church in Ireland for up to 5 years.
- ii. To 'transfer' – this means that the applicant formally leaves their current church or denomination to be in full connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland.

3.2 Applicants who are accepted by the Conference under either of these categories will be recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland. This means that they share fully in the privileges and responsibilities of ordained ministry, and they are subject to the disciplines of the Methodist Church in Ireland as set out by Conference.

3.3. To 'serve with'

3.3.1 Ordained Ministers of other churches may be granted temporary recognition to serve with the Methodist Church in Ireland. This recognition is reviewed on an annual basis and is for a maximum of five years. During the fourth year of service, there should be further discernment as to whether an application to transfer would be made. Such applications can only be granted when an applicant has been granted permanent residency by the appropriate authorities in either the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland.

3.3.2 Ordained Ministers of the Methodist Church in Britain are automatically recognised and regarded as being in Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland and so there is no restriction on their length of service. However, they still need to follow the application and discernment procedure as set out below.

3.4 To 'transfer'

3.4.1 Ordained ministers of other churches seeking to permanently transfer to the Methodist Church in Ireland shall normally first apply for permission to serve with MCI under of 3.3 above and following the process of application detailed below. If, for stated reasons, the applicant is seeking immediate transfer to MCI the following additional regulation shall apply:

3.4.2 If an ordained minister seeking permanent transfer to MCI has not previously been recognised to 'serve with', they shall be regarded as being on probation for a period of two years prior to being received into Full Connexion. A minister must remain on probation until they have permanent residence.

3.5 At conference each year those being received into Full Connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland will publicly declare their commitment to serve Christ through the Methodist Church in Ireland, and the Conference members will pray for them.

3.6 The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee has the flexibility to amend this procedure when considering individual applications. The reasons for deviating from the normal process must form

part of the report on an application that is brought to Conference.

4. Application and Discernment Procedure

Ordained ministers of other churches seeking to apply to 'serve with' or to 'transfer' to the Methodist Church in Ireland shall make their application to the Conference through the Chair of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee. The Chair shall refer the application to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee shall consider an application on its individual merits and shall normally deploy the following procedure:

- An applicant shall notify the chair of the MPPC or the General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland and have an initial conversation about their intention to serve with or transfer to the ordained ministry of the MCI.
- The Chair/ Vice-Chair of the MPPC will set up a small group of 3 people, normally involving Chair/ Vice-Chair of the MPPC, a member of the MPPC and a District Superintendent in order to meet with the applicant and assess the suitability of the application.
- If the panel discerns that the person should not proceed, then the application ends at this point. If the panel discerns that their application could continue, the applicant will complete the appropriate application form.
- An applicant must notify the appropriate authority or official(s) of her/his church of her/his intention and action and shall produce acceptable evidence that this has been done.
- The General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland shall make enquiries from the appropriate authority or official(s) in the church concerning the ordination and good standing of the applicant. Further enquiries shall include the work, witness, qualifications, suitability, and any other issues as may be considered appropriate.
- The applicant shall attend a Ministerial Selection Panel (MSP) meeting, in person, where they shall participate in:
 - an interview conducted by the Ministerial Psychological Assessor.
 - an interview conducted by two members of the MSP focussing on call, spirituality and theological understanding.
 - an interview conducted by two members of the MSP focussing on gifts, graces and suitability for ordained ministry in MCI.
 - an interview before the entire MSP.

The outcome and recommendation of the Ministerial Selection Panel shall be reported to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee shall report on the recommendation to Conference. If accepted, the applicant is normally eligible for stationing in the following Connexional year.

5. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2020, then reviewed and updated in December 2022. It is intended to review and update the Policy as necessary by July 2024. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

6. Related Policies

- OM Guidelines and Funding Arrangements for Ministers of other Conferences and Churches coming to work in Ireland

7. Policy and Procedures relating to Candidature for Ordained Ministry

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed by those intending to candidate for Ordained Ministry with the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out in Part A and Part B below. Part A provides an introduction for anyone wishing to candidate. Part B outline the candidating procedure, including the timeline and stages.

2. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Part A - Introduction

1. Vocation and Calling

The Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) sees ordained ministry as a specific vocation within the life of the whole people of God.

The call of God is central to the beginning and continuance of ordained ministry. The writer Os Guinness identifies two types of call through the Holy Spirit;

- All followers of Jesus have a primary calling to discipleship.
- However, each has a secondary calling which concerns God's specific purpose for their lives.

'Ministry' is about the whole Church's calling to serve God in worship, in each other, and in the world. Particular ministries express this service in different ways, but the ordained minister is especially related to the total ministry of the body of Christ, as leader and enabler of others. The ordained minister acts as a sign of the Church, which is itself a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Since all candidates for the ordained ministry already have a sense of call to discipleship, the task of the candidating process is to explore and discern if their call is to ordained ministry. This requires both the candidate and the church to agree in that discernment.

2. What is ordained ministry?

It is important to set the context within both the faith of the church, and the church of faith. MCI has many different types of ministry, of which ordained ministry is but one. The ordained minister is called to enable the Church to be the Church – to fulfil its calling as a 'Royal priesthood'.

The Office of an Ordained Minister is as a Presbyter in the universal Church of God. A Presbyter in the New Testament refers to a leader in local Christian congregations, with presbyter being from the Greek "presbyteros" and meaning elder/senior. A synonym for presbyter is 'minister'.

An ordained minister is set aside for the ministry of:

- Word
- Sacrament
- Pastoral Oversight
- Serving

3. The Role of the Ordained minister

- Leader of worship, community life, discipleship and mission
- Enabler and educator of people to know and use their gifts, both natural and spiritual, in the service of God
- Spiritual guide – helping people to discern God's presence and will through all the

shifting scenes of life

- Prophet – declaring the truth of God with clarity and relevance for this day and generation
- Representative - a public ambassador for Christ, his church and MCI

4. What are the necessary skills for an ordained minister?

- Communication
- Spiritual discernment
- Listening
- Leadership
- Reflective theology and biblical interpretation
- Learning

5. What should the character of an ordained minister be like?

- Role model for Christian discipleship, mission and holiness – exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit
- Lover of people – inside and outside the church
- Integrity
- Self-aware
- Wisdom
- Discipline
- Open to learning
- Inhabits a scriptural worldview

6. Agreed Expectations for a candidate

Evidence is sought regarding the character and skills of each candidate as listed above under the following categories:

- Vocation (call and commitment)
- Being in relationship with God, with self and with others
- The church's ministry in God's world
- Leadership
- Communication

Spiritual discernment is sought by the church regarding the will of God for each candidate at Circuit, Synod and Connexional level through the Ordained Ministry Committee. Evidence of this comes from those who have a proven record of spiritual discernment and tasked by the church to make that assessment as members of the Ministerial Selection Panel.

Part B – The Candidating Procedure

1. Introduction

The procedure for candidating is overseen by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee and normally shall last over a Connexional year: 1 July – 30 June.

Who can candidate?

A person intending to offer as a candidate for the ordained ministry shall:

- a) be a member of the Methodist Church in Ireland;
- b) be a fully qualified local preacher by the time of the Circuit Executive stage of the process, and provide a portfolio outlining worship and preaching experience;
- c) satisfy their local Circuit Superintendent that they assent to the doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church in Ireland and indicate that they are willing, on reception into Full Connexion, to uphold the discipline of the Church and to accept the obligations to be at the disposal of the Conference for stationing;
- d) be prepared to accept the form and length of training prescribed by the Conference, and, at the commencement of the candidating process, commit to offer a minimum of five years stationed ministry following ordination.

2. Procedure and timeline

The Application

A candidate shall have informal conversations with their minister and with either the Chair of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee or the Director of the Ministries Team before the start of the process to consider their suitability for candidating. The candidate shall then contact the Director of the Ministries Team who will provide the link to the online application form (form C1), and the protocols for candidating.

The application must be completed in full, accompanied by all required documentation, and returned by the 31 July. (Form C1 should be copied to the candidate's Circuit Superintendent and District Superintendent).

As part of the application a report addressing the candidate's general state of health and fitness shall be obtained by the candidate from their General Practitioner. Should the General Practitioner's Report highlight significant medical issues, they may be referred to the Medical Adviser of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

A. The Circuit Stage

1. Before the September Circuit Executive, and using the candidate's application form, a conversation shall take place between the candidate, the Circuit Superintendent of the circuit from which they are candidating, their own society minister (or if their own minister is the circuit superintendent another ordained minister), the society steward and a circuit steward, with the purpose of exploring the candidate's call to ordained ministry and proposed candidature and of determining whether the candidate satisfies the qualifying conditions as set out in section 1 above.

Should any of the participants be unable to be present, the Circuit Superintendent may appoint a suitable replacement.

2. Based on the above conversation and other knowledge of the candidate, the Circuit Superintendent shall provide an agreed report to the September Circuit Executive (Form C2). If the candidate has not been resident on the circuit for at least the preceding two years, a written report on supplemental form C2(a) shall be obtained from the candidate's previous Circuit Superintendent. If the Circuit Superintendent has not been superintendent of the circuit for at

least the preceding two years, a written report shall be obtained on supplemental form C2(a) from their predecessor. (all Circuit Superintendents' forms are copied to the candidate and must be presented to the Circuit Executive)

3. A meeting of the Circuit Executive shall be held in September at which the candidate shall give an account of their conversion and call to ordained ministry and answer any questions raised. The members of the Circuit Executive will receive a copy of the application form C1 and Superintendent's report(s) (C2 / C2a) prior to this meeting. (all hard copies of which to be destroyed and electronic copies deleted after the meeting is finished).
 - a) A vote by secret ballot shall be taken on the superintendent's nomination and a record of the voting showing the numbers entitled to vote and the numbers voting for and against shall be recorded in the minutes. Only those members present throughout the presentation of reports and information, interviews, questioning and discussion shall be entitled to vote on the nomination.
 - b) A candidate who secures approval by a vote of at least two-thirds of those present and voting shall proceed to the next stage of the process with the approval of the Circuit Executive.
 - c) A candidate who does not secure approval by a vote of at least two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote shall not proceed further.
 - d) An agreed report on form C3 shall be provided by the Circuit Executive and sent with form C2 and, if necessary, C2a, to the Director of the Ministries Team by the end of September. Form C3 should include comments from the Circuit Executive under the headings relating to the criteria from Agreed Expectations for Candidates.

B. The District Stage

For information and prayer, the Director of the Ministries Team shall circulate to all Ordained Ministers and Probationers a list of names of candidates and home circuits of those who have completed the Circuit Stage and are continuing to the District Stage.

1. Between October and December, the candidate is required to undertake a six-week placement as arranged by the Director of the Ministries Team.

The purpose of the placement is:

- a. To lead worship and preach on three occasions. One of those services should be a District service with a listening group normally of least four ordained ministers and accredited local preachers present including the placement supervisor and the District Superintendent. The listening group should prepare a report on this service which shall be included in the C4 supervisor's report.
 - b. To examine issues of faith and doctrine with a supervisor.
 - c. To be given experience of society and circuit meetings.
 - d. To have opportunity to experience pastoral care.
 - e. To enable the candidate to prepare a portfolio, to be assessed by the Supervisor, focusing on themes relating to ministry, mission, leadership and theology.
 - f. The supervisor shall report on form C4 and forward this, along with the candidate's portfolio to the District Superintendent and the Director of the Ministries Team.
2. In November, the District Superintendent shall meet with the candidate for a conversation regarding his/her candidature. The District Superintendent shall prepare a report using form C5. The candidate will have sight of and sign this form. Once completed C5 will be forwarded to the Director of the Ministries Team.

3. Once forms C4 and C5 have been submitted the District Superintendent shall report on candidate's progress to the District Advisory Committee.

C. The Connexional Stage

1. In January the Director of the Ministries Team shall arrange for the candidate to undergo psychological assessment by a Chartered Psychologist appointed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee. The Chartered Psychologist appointed shall report on any findings they consider to be relevant to the Ministerial Psychological Assessor. The Ministerial Psychological Assessor shall, based on the testing, report relevant issues concerning ordained ministry to the Director of the Ministries Team and Chair of the Ministerial Selection Panel on form C6.
2. In January the candidate shall undergo a training interview with the Director of the Ministries Team for the purposes of planning an appropriate formation pathway for the candidate. A report to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee on form C7 shall be prepared outlining a possible pathway for the candidate and if there are any concerns about future training.
3. The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee shall appoint a Ministerial Selection Panel (MSP) made up of the chair of the MSP along with five suitably qualified persons. In addition, the Ministerial Psychological Assessor shall attend the MSP as a non-voting member.
4. In February/March the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee shall convene a Residential Selection Conference to be attended by all candidates. The Residential Selection Conference shall comprise the following:
 - a. an interview conducted by the Ministerial Psychological Assessor.
 - b. an interview conducted by two members of the MSP focussing on call, spirituality and theological understanding. This shall be reported to the MSP on form C8.
 - c. an interview conducted by two members of the MSP focussing on gifts, graces and suitability for ordained ministry. This shall be reported to the MSP on form C9.
 - d. an interview before all members of the MSP.
 - e. After due consideration of all written reports and further information presented, the members of the MSP shall vote on whether they recommend a candidate for initial context-based formation for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland.
 - f. A candidate who receives two-thirds approval in terms of votes cast shall proceed to the next stage of the candidating process and the MSP shall recommend the candidate to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee on form C10 and shall notify the candidate and the District Superintendent and Circuit Superintendent in writing of its decision.
 - g. A candidate who does not receive the approval of the MSP by a vote of at least two-thirds of votes cast shall not be recommended to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee and the MSP shall notify the candidate and their District Superintendent, and Circuit Superintendent in writing of its decision.
 - h. A candidate who does not receive the approval of the MSP by a vote of at least two-thirds of votes cast may within 10 days of being notified of the decision, apply in writing for a review of that decision. An application for review must be on one or more of the following grounds:
 - i. that the procedural provisions as set out in these protocols have not been correctly followed;
 - ii. that there are facts which were not available to the MSP and which are such as to make its recommendation inappropriate;
 - iii. that the decision of the MSP, as conveyed to the candidate in the official

correspondence informing the candidate that their offer has been declined, is questioned in writing by both the candidate's Superintendent and District Superintendent.

- i. An application for review shall be heard and considered by the President's Advisory Committee who shall appoint a review panel to consider the matter. The Chair of the MSP and the Director of the Ministries Team shall be in attendance.
 - i. Members of the Review Panel must not be members of or have attended meetings of the MSP.
 - ii. The Review Panel shall be supplied with copies of all reports considered by the MSP and the Chair of the MSP shall address the Review Panel on the reasons for its recommendation.
 - iii. The candidate shall have the right to attend before the Review Panel, to be present when representations are made by the Chair of the MSP and to reply. The candidate may be accompanied by an ordained minister of their choice.
 - iv. The candidate may be questioned about the grounds of the application for review but there shall be no general rehearing of the case or repetition of the assessment procedures undertaken.
 - v. Subject to the above the Review Panel shall regulate its own procedure.
 - vi. Upon hearing the submissions of the candidate and the MSP and giving due consideration to all documentation supplied, the members of the Review Panel shall vote on whether they consider that the decision of the MSP should be re-considered. If a majority of members consider that the decision should be re-considered it shall within 10 days notify the candidate, their District Superintendent, Circuit Superintendent, and the MSP in writing of its determination setting out the reason or reasons on which that determination is based.
 - vii. If the Review Panel determines that the application should be reconsidered the MSP shall reconvene and shall reconsider the matter. The MSP shall reconsider all the original reports and the further information presented to and by the Review Panel. Having considered all the information and reports the MSP shall vote on whether it recommends a candidate for initial training for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland.
 - viii. A candidate who receives the approval of the MSP by a vote of at least two-thirds of votes cast shall proceed to the next stage of the candidating process and the Panel shall recommend the candidate to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee. It shall notify the candidate, their District Superintendent and Circuit Superintendent in writing of its decision.
 - i. A candidate who does not receive the approval of the MSP by a vote of at least two-thirds of votes cast shall not be recommended to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee and the MSP shall notify the candidate, their District Superintendent and Circuit Superintendent in writing of its decision.
- j. Prior to the spring meeting of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee its members shall be provided with all forms apart from the psychological report. (These reports, hard and soft copies must be destroyed after the meeting).
- k. At the spring meeting the chair of the MSP shall present the report prepared in relation to each candidate and shall propose that the group approve the recommendation.
 - i. A candidate who receives the approval of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee by a vote of at least two-thirds of votes cast shall be recommended to the Ministerial Session of Conference as a candidate for ordained ministry in the

- Methodist Church in Ireland.
- ii. Only those members of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee who have read and considered all reports furnished in relation to a candidate and have been present during the formal presentation of those reports shall be entitled to vote in relation to that candidate. The numbers entitled to vote, voting for and voting against shall be recorded.
 - iii. The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee shall report to Conference on the recommendation in respect of each candidate it has approved of on form C11.
- l. The report C11 shall be included in the Conference Agenda under the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee business for the Ministerial Session of Conference.
 - m. The Chair of the MSP or another appointed ordained minister shall present the reports on form C11 and shall propose that Conference endorses the recommendation in respect of each candidate by a vote.
 - i. A candidate who receives the approval of Conference by the votes of at least two-thirds of those present at Conference and entitled to vote in relation to that candidate shall be accepted for initial context-based formation for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Circuit Superintendent shall notify the candidate of the decision of Conference.

A candidate who is declined at any stage in this process is not precluded from presenting as a candidate on a future occasion. Where a person has offered as a candidate and has been unsuccessful, he/she may not offer again as a candidate until twelve months have elapsed from the date of the Conference at which their original application would have been recommended, had that application been successful.

3. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2007, reviewed in July__ and updated in April 2022. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2024. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

Related Policies

- OM Agreed Expectations for Ordinands within the Methodist Church in Ireland
- OM Policy and Procedures relating to Context-based Formation for Ordained Ministry

8. Ordained Ministers Disciplinary Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy replaces the legislation set out in 5K in the Manual of Laws of the Methodist Church in Ireland (2020).

What kind of discipline are Ordained Ministers subject to?

1. They are accountable to God for their words and actions.
2. They are accountable to the Ministerial Conference with whom they have a Covenantal relationship.
3. Historically, the practical outworking of the Covenantal relationship in day-to-day ministry has been exercised through Superintendents and District Synods. (5A.03 & 5K).
4. Historically, the legislation formerly in the Manual of Laws made it clear that ministers work under the authority of Circuit Superintendents (5A.03 (a)) and District Superintendents (10.08-10.10).
5. Part of an Ordained ministers' discipline is to work collaboratively with Circuit Stewards, Society Stewards, Circuit Executives and Church Councils.

The Connexion has a two-way duty of care:

1. To ensure that ministers fulfil their responsibilities as set out in 5A and 'do no harm' to individuals.
2. To ensure ministers are protected from trivial, unfounded, unfair, vexatious, or malicious accusations.

The current 'legislation' in the Manual of Laws relating to disciplinary proceedings (5K) was a product of its time and was likely to have been deployed in only extreme circumstances with trivial matters settled at circuit and district level in a 'pastoral' manner. None the less it supports some important principles such as:

1. For an issue to be 'measured' pastorally prior to it being escalated to a disciplinary matter.
2. The principle of fairness to all involved.
3. The right for both parties in a dispute to be able to give 'their side of the story.'
4. The right for a 'case' to be heard by an impartial panel. (Though one significant challenge to the process is potentially a changed understanding of the notion of 'impartial.'

The new connexional structure and the creation of the separated DS appointments has not changed the substance of accountability responsibilities, but it has created the scenario where the DS now is more focused on supporting and is required to support colleagues. This has increased the level of accountability. In addition, the increased profile and accessibility to the DS for Circuit and Society Stewards has also led to more issues being brought to the attention of the DS. This scenario was always expected in the original work done by a General Committee subgroup that explored ministerial accountability several years ago.

The current size of the connexion and contemporary practice and expectations regarding issues such as timeframes and privacy etc make the current legislation look unwieldy and outdated. In line with how other ministry personnel matters have changed in recent years, e.g., the candidating process - this legislation requires substantive revision.

2. Responsibility

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee is responsible for reviewing this policy.

3. The Procedure

3.1 Discipline in the Church is an exercise of that spiritual authority which the Lord Jesus has appointed in His Church. The ends contemplated by discipline are the maintenance of the purity of the Church, the spiritual benefit of the members and the honour of our Lord. All members and ministers of the Church are subject to its government and discipline and are under the care of its Courts, which, for

disciplinary purposes, are:

- (a) in the case of members - the Church Council (see Chapter 2).
- (b) in the case of Local Preachers – the Circuit Executive, the District Disciplinary Committee, the District Synod, and the Conference (see Chapter 6).
- (c) in the case of ordained ministers – the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee, the President's Advisory Committee, and the Conference, as described below.

3.2 The question of ministerial character and ability shall be considered at the District Ministerial Synod, or as otherwise arranged by the District Superintendent. Inquiry shall be made respecting every minister and probationer as follows:

- (a) Is there any objection to her/his moral and religious character?
- (b) Does he/she believe and preach our doctrines?
- (c) Is he/she in debt?
- (d) Has he/she fulfilled the duties of ministerial office?
- (e) Has he/she competent ministerial qualifications and health for our work?

If any minister intends to make a complaint against another minister member in respect of any of the above-mentioned matters, he/she shall, in the first instance make the complaint known to the District Superintendent (or where the complaint relates to the District Superintendent, to the President of the Conference) and to the person the subject of the complaint. The complaint shall in the first instance be dealt with in accordance with paragraph 3.3.

3.3 When a District Superintendent receives a complaint regarding the character, actions or ability of an ordained minister or probationer to exercise their duties they shall as a first stage:

- Endeavour to ensure that the issue raised is not a trivial, unfounded, unfair, vexatious, or malicious accusation. (see 10.09)
- Within the bounds of their authority take any measures necessary to resolve the matter at a local level.
- Make a written record of the incident including actions taken and this should be agreed by all parties involved and retained by the District Superintendent as a record.
- If as an outcome, the matter is resolved, the process is complete.

If because of their inquiries the District Superintendent deems the matter to be sufficiently serious, as a second stage, they should refer the matter to the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

3.4 The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee

- (a) On a case-by-case basis the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee shall appoint a panel to hear the complaint in a timely manner and carry out an investigation. The panel can be drawn from committee members and other suitably qualified persons from outside of the committee. No one previously involved with the complaint should be a member of this panel. The panel should comprise of lay and ordained members and should be chaired by a lay person. The panel has the right to seek appropriate professional advice from other sources.
- (b) The respondent to any complaint shall be made fully aware in writing of the nature of the complaint made against them.
- (c) In the course of the investigation the panel should have sight of all relevant evidence in relation to the matter and should hear the testimony of both the complainant and the respondent. The complainant and respondent have the right to bring a third party to such a hearing as support. Such a third party does not have the right to speak to the matter under investigation. The panel also have the right to call others to give testimony, as necessary.
- (d) Having considered the matter carefully the chair of the panel should inform those involved of the outcome in writing.
- (e) The Panel shall have power if it sees fit:
 - To admonish or rebuke a minister.
 - Require a minister to work under the direction of the District Superintendent.
 - To require a minister to engage in further training relating to a clearly defined issue.

- To recommend to Conference that a probationer be deprived of credit for any year or years he/she may have travelled.
- To recommend to Conference that an ordained minister be expelled.

3.5 Appeal

The respondent may appeal the decision of the panel appointed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee. An appeal must be lodged, in writing, clearly stating the grounds for the appeal, with the President's Advisory Committee within seven days of the decision of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee being communicated. The President's Advisory Committee shall appoint an independent panel to consider the appeal in a timely manner. No one previously involved with the complaint should be a member of this panel. The panel should comprise of lay and ordained members and should be chaired by a lay person. The panel has the right to seek appropriate professional advice from other sources. The panel shall determine if there are grounds for an appeal. If the panel decides there are grounds for an appeal, they shall hear the appeal as per 3.4 (b)-(e). The decision of this panel is final.

3.6 Conference

(a) The outcomes of all disciplinary processes dealt with by the Policies and Procedures Committee shall be reported to the Ministerial Session of Conference.

(b) If an ordained minister be expelled the entry in the printed Minutes of Conference shall be "The names of those who have ceased to be recognised as ministers amongst us are recorded in the Journal of the Conference."

(c) If a probationer be discontinued her/his name shall be omitted from the Minutes.

(d) An ordained minister or probationer who has been expelled from the ministry, or who resigns her/his connexion with the Conference in consequence of a charge or charges which affect her/his moral character, shall not at any subsequent period be allowed to hold any office in the Church without the consent of the Connexional Team.

3.7 Discipline of District Superintendents

(a) In the case of a complaint made against the Superintendent of a District affecting either her/his personal or official conduct, the person making the complaint shall apprise such Superintendent of her/his intention and of the nature of the complaint and shall lodge the complaint in writing with the President of the Conference.

(b) The President of the Conference shall thereupon proceed to have the charge dealt with, according to the foregoing regulations, by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

(c) If, in the opinion of the appointed panel, the complaint or charge be sustained, it shall have power, if it shall think it desirable to do so, to suspend the accused from office as District Superintendent until the ensuing meeting of the Conference, and, in case of such suspension, the President, on the advice of the Connexional Team, shall appoint an ordained minister of the District to serve as Temporary District Superintendent on a part-time basis.

3.8 Disciplinary proceedings involving the President

Where the President of the Conference is either the accuser or the accused party the complaint shall be lodged with the ex-President who shall act and proceed in the matter as if he/she were the President of the Conference.

4. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021 and reviewed in April 2022. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2023. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

9. Ministers of other Conferences and Churches coming to work in Ireland-guidelines and funding arrangements

1. Introduction

These guidelines relate to funding and associated issues for those ministers from other Conferences and Churches who are recommended to serve in the Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI).

The term 'transferring ministers' in the booklet is used to describe those ministers from other Conferences and Churches entering their first appointment with the Methodist Church in Ireland, having either been transferred into Full Connexion, been recognised as being in Full Connexion, or received as a probationer.

This guidance seeks to bring together information to enable ministers, circuits and the Connexional Boards and Committees to understand their responsibilities in this process.

The document draws on legislation included in the Manual of Laws of the Methodist Church, Ministries Policies and Procedures and recommendations for good practice. The guidance needs revision from time to time to ensure that the information relating to church, and Government legislation is accurate. Please make sure you have the most up-to-date version.

2. Responsibility

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee is responsible for reviewing these guidelines.

3. Stationing Procedure.

Each year, the Conference of the MCI stations ministers to appointments. A Stationing Committee appointed by the Conference meets in October and as often as required thereafter to consider the appointments for the ensuing Connexional year, beginning 1 July. Your representative on the Committee will be the General Secretary who will be informed and knowledgeable about your wishes and needs together with the needs of your family. The Committee makes every effort to assess the requirements of circuits and the aptitudes, skills and needs of the minister. By a process of consultation and conversation, in your case with the General Secretary, the Committee, by the end of February each year, circulates a list of the appointments to be proposed to the Conference for ratification. The Conference stations ministers to circuits on an annual basis.

Very occasionally an unexpected situation or emergency arises after the end of February which may require reconsideration and alteration of the proposed list of appointments. The Committee meets as required to deal with such an emergency.

It is normally expected that ministers will be in their new appointments by the third Sunday in July. A later start date can be negotiated up to the 1st of September.

4. Visa Applications.

As the Methodist Church in Ireland operates in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland there are different rules in relation to visas for ministers of religion and their dependents in each jurisdiction. The latest information can be found on the following websites:

For Northern Ireland (UK): <https://www.gov.uk/minister-of-religion-visa>

For the Republic of Ireland: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/minister-of-religion-permission>

In both jurisdictions applicants will require a letter/certificate of sponsorship from the Methodist Church in Ireland. This can be issued once an appointment has been confirmed by the Church. The cost of the visa application will be borne by the Methodist Church Fund. The costs will be restricted to the period of an initial appointment to serve the MCI and will cover the costs of the application for the minister and up to 3 additional dependents i.e. 4 persons altogether.

Prior to the end of the initial visa period a ministry review will be carried out by the church with regards to ongoing suitability to serve with MCI.

5. Transportation and Travel.

The removal costs of ministers from outside the United Kingdom will be funded between the port of entry into the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland and the appointment approved by the Conference. These costs include the travel costs for the minister and his/her family from the port of entry.

The removal expenses of ministers in Full Connexion with the British Conference or ministers of other denominations resident within England, Scotland or Wales who have been approved for service in Ireland will be paid.

The removal costs of ministers of other denominations who reside in Ireland and are transferring to serve in the Methodist Church in Ireland will be reimbursed on the same basis as the current arrangements which cover the removal of ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland when moving to a new appointment within Ireland.

When ministers from the British Conference or from Conferences outside the United Kingdom are granted permission to return to their own Conference having served in an appointment approved by the MCI, the removal costs will be paid and in the case of those returning to places outside Britain and Ireland to the port of departure. These regulations also apply to ministers who are moving to a home on retirement from the ministry. Ministers from other denominations who return to their own denomination following their appointment will be responsible for their own removal costs.

All the above expenses are paid by the General Purposes Fund.

Any enquiries regarding these should be addressed to the Secretary of Conference or the Chair of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

6. Stipends and Allowances.

The scale of minister's stipends and allowances are reviewed on an annual basis. Details are available from the latest Minutes of Conference document published on the Irish Methodist website.

Stipends are paid directly into a minister's bank account by BACS transfer on the twenty-fifth day of each month.

Having a current driving license is a prerequisite for all ministers applying to serve with the Methodist Church in Ireland.

After arriving the minister will need to obtain a Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland driving licence within a year of their arrival. If not, they will be required to apply for a provisional licence and drive under restricted conditions until they have passed their test. We strongly advise anyone driving in a new country to undertake some driving lessons. If the minister's visa is revoked for any reason, this may mean their British or Irish driving licence will also no longer be valid.

The purchase of a vehicle is the responsibility of the minister. Circuits should not purchase cars for ministers as this has many consequences related to taxation, which only are apparent in the subsequent tax year. Moreover, the taxation issues continue for at least one year following the departure of the minister. However, the loan of a car for the first month or two can be both helpful and relatively uncomplicated.

It has proved difficult in the past for ministers not already resident in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland to open a bank account, and so circuits are encouraged to assist ministers with this, for example by ensuring that the minister receives a named utility bill at the earliest possible opportunity.

Incoming ministers must obtain a National Insurance Number and pass it to the Connexional Operations Manager as soon as they are issued with it.

Income tax, National Insurance and pension contributions are deducted from the stipend before it is paid into the minister's bank account. Ministers must keep a record of other payments for such things as weddings and funerals which will be required in their annual tax return.

Ministers serving in the MCI will be automatically enrolled in the Methodist Church in Ireland

Retirement Benefits Scheme. The benefits they accrue may be able to be transferred once they return to their home church but this depends on whether this is permitted by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in the UK. If the transfer is not permitted the benefits can remain in the UK and be paid out at retirement in the form of a pension and lump sum. The pension can be paid to an overseas bank account.

7. Manses and Furniture.

MCI provides suitable and comfortable manse accommodation the maintenance of which is the responsibility of the Circuit Executive together with the minister whose home it is during the period of the appointment.

The following basic requirements will be available in each manse: Floor coverings and curtains in all rooms together with light fittings, shades and power sockets; kitchen: electric/gas/oil/solid fuel cooker, washing machine/tumble dryer, fridge/freezer, dish washer, vacuum cleaner, built in cupboards and worktops; lounge: three piece suite or five armchairs; dining room: table and chairs or suite; bedrooms: adequate storage space; study: desk with drawers, filing cabinet, shelving and chairs. Central heating including good water heating facilities together with double glazing is regarded as standard. A lawnmower and garden tools will be provided.

The minister will provide other furniture. The Church pays a small relocation allowance to each minister moving to a new appointment, this amount being determined by Conference each year on the recommendation of the Home Mission Department which has overall responsibility for manses.

The maintenance of manse furniture and equipment in good condition is primarily the responsibility of the minister. The incoming minister should expect the house to have been thoroughly cleaned and inspected and it is her/his responsibility to ensure that the accommodation is left in a similar condition when leaving.

The care of manses is at all times a partnership between the Circuit Steward and/or Manse Steward and the minister.

Further information and guidance can be found in the Manual of Laws Chapter 13 and Appendix 12 and can be found on the MCI website.

8. Manse Running Costs.

Levels of ministerial expenses and allowances are published annually in the Minutes of Conference. Manses must not be left unheated with the water supply on during the winter months. There is a risk that the water will freeze and burst the pipes. The result on thawing is that the property may be flooded.

The circuit will insure the manse and contents that belong to the circuit. The minister must insure her or his own belongings.

9. Other Expenses.

All expenses incurred wholly in the fulfilment of the duties of minister are reimbursed in full on provision of receipts. All office administration expenses will be met including paper, envelopes, stamps, printer inks etc.

10. Children's Maintenance Allowances and Education.

The MCI pays maintenance allowances for eligible children. Levels are published annually in the Minutes of Conference.

11. The Office and Duty of an Ordained Minister

The Manual of Laws states in paragraphs 5A.02 and 5A.03 that the office and duty of an ordained minister is to:

- win and watch over souls as one who must give account,

- feed and guide the congregation by regular and faithful preaching, teaching and pastoral care,
- recognise that the quality of her/his life and witness will determine her/his effectiveness under God,
- exercise such self-discipline that no offence or occasion to stumble is given to anyone,
- act with particular responsibility in matters where her/his actions may be the cause of physical or moral harm to others.

In addition, the duties of a Methodist ordained minister shall include:

- obedience to the ordained ministers placed in authority over her/him and not to act against her/his Superintendent or encourage anyone who opposes her/him in the discharge of official duties,
- dealing with all matters relating to Methodist discipline
- meeting and conferring with the Church Council regarding pastoral care and the work of God in each Society,
- remembering that Methodism, as a Church, does not exist for the purpose of party and that Methodists are bound by original principles to be 'friends of all and enemies of none',
- regarding ministerial colleagues as co-workers in the Gospel and when necessary defend each other's character and try to prefer the other before oneself,
- engaging in further study, supervision and appraisal, training and professional development as directed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee.

(Further information regarding rules and regulations for ministers and probationers can be found in the Manual of Laws chapter 5).

Attention is also drawn to the Code of Pastoral Practice (approved by the Conference in 1998 and revised in 2020)

12. Holidays and Sabbaticals

The Conference recommends each minister to cultivate healthy patterns of family life, recreation, exercise and outside interests from the outset.

It is expected that a minister be allowed four Sundays each year as annual holiday leave and the Conference strongly recommends that an additional Sunday each quarter be provided in the Circuit preaching plan free from preaching and other responsibilities.

Ordained ministers in Conference appointments are entitled to sabbatical leave at certain intervals intended to be a period of release from the duties of the appointment to undertake an approved programme of study, research, work or experience. The sabbatical is for a period of three months and is in addition to normal holidays.

Normally a sabbatical is taken and approved after the tenth year of travel and each seventh year of travel thereafter. For good reason sabbaticals may be taken one year earlier or one year later but shall not be taken in the first year of a new appointment.

13. Financial Considerations for Transferring Ministers – illustration purposes only

The information below has been provided for illustrative purposes only to provide clarity of the responsibility of various costs, and to give an indication of the costs that a minister will be expected to cover. Please note that these costs are based on family of four, are subject to change, and will vary regionally.

				Responsibility
Electric	£40-£50	Monthly	Based on 3-4 bed household	Minister
Gas	£40-£60	Monthly	Based on 3-4 bed household	Minister
Travel Costs	£185	Monthly		Minister (travel expenses for church and circuit work are claimed back from circuit)
Furniture	Various	Monthly		Minister
Buildings Insurance	£230	Annually	Average UK Prices 2015	Circuit
Contents Insurance	£109	Annually	Average UK Prices 2015	Minister – for own belongings
Higher Education	£16,130-£22,380	Monthly	Based on UCL fees for overseas full-time student	Minister
Vehicle	£225	Monthly	Based on a £6,000 care and using loan scheme	Minister
Mobile Phone	£20-£25	Monthly	Based on average contract	Minister
Food	£400	Monthly	Based on a middle range supermarket	Minister
TV Licence	£145	Annually	Frozen amount	Minister
Rates	£1,000 - £1,500	Annually	Estimate	Circuit
Line Rental/Internet/TV	£25-£40	Monthly	UK average package cost	Minister

14. Review

These guidelines were adopted in July 2021. It is intended to review and update by July 2023. Revised versions shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

10. Ordained Ministers-Ministry by Married Couples Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedures relating to the stationing of married couples both of whom are ordained ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The key features of the policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC) is responsible for reviewing this policy.

3. Key Aspects of the Policy

3.1 The Methodist Church in Ireland recognises that God can call a married couple into ordained ministry either serving together in a single appointment or in different appointments.

3.2 A married couple, both of whom are ordained, shall be subject to normal stationing, except that they may express the desire to serve together in a joint ministry. Where this arrangement is granted, each minister will continue to have her/his own individual relationship with the Conference. Conference cannot give any undertaking that such an arrangement will be continued and may at any time station a couple in separate appointments.

3.3 If a couple, who has so requested to be in joint ministry, cannot be stationed together, one of them may be designated as 'not in a stationed appointment' in the circuit in which he/she resides. All ordained ministers are in a covenantal relationship with the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Connexion provides pastoral care to the minister and their family through the Superintendent of the circuit in which they reside. In consultation with the Circuit Superintendent, the ordained minister without a stationed appointment should expect to be involved in the life of a local circuit, serve on the Circuit preaching plan and be called upon for other responsibilities as appropriate. In appropriate cases they will be entitled to receive remuneration by decision of the Circuit Executive.

3.4 A married couple in a joint appointment shall arrange with the Circuit Steward how the duties are to be discharged and how the stipend is to be paid.

3.5 Ministers designated 'not in a stationed appointment' shall be liable and eligible to be stationed, whenever suitable arrangements can be made to station them with their spouse. In exceptional circumstances, such a minister may be appointed separately to a Circuit by the President, in consultation with the District Superintendent.

3.6 The Conference, may approve applications by ministers married to each other, in consultation with the stationing committee, and submitted through the District Superintendent, for permission to enter into arrangements with a Circuit under which one or both of them serve part-time and stipends are adjusted accordingly.

4. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021 and revised in March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

11. Ordained Ministers Parental Leave Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed when an Ordained Minister in full connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland wishes to request family leave.

The key features and procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Operations Manager in conjunction with the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC).

3. Key Elements of the Policies

The Methodist Church in Ireland values family life, we believe that children are a gift from God.

Through these guidelines we are putting in place appropriate rules for ministry family leave. If you become pregnant, your spouse is pregnant or you are in the process of adopting, you should inform your Circuit Superintendent, Circuit Steward, District Superintendent, and the Operations Manager in a timely manner. This enables suitable arrangements for cover and with regards to finance to be put in place

In the guidelines set below the assumption is made that you shall first relate to your Circuit Superintendent who shall keep the District Superintendent up to date. If you are the Circuit Superintendent, you shall relate to the District Superintendent.

3a. Pregnancy and Maternity Leave

- Health and Safety

If you consider that there are any matters relating to the exercise of your ministry that could cause a risk to you or your unborn child, you should notify your Superintendent immediately. This matter will be treated in the strictest confidence. If necessary, a risk assessment will be carried out and actions taken to mitigate identified risks.

We may also carry out a risk assessment if you return to your stationed appointment within six months of giving birth or are still breastfeeding. If you remain at risk, these arrangements may continue for six months after the birth of your child.

- Antenatal Care

You are entitled to reasonable leave time to receive antenatal care. Antenatal care includes appointments with your GP, hospital clinics and antenatal classes. You should keep your Superintendent informed of appointments.

- Maternity leave

You are entitled to take up to 39 weeks' maternity leave. The medical practitioner responsible for your maternity care will provide you with a form MATB1 as proof of your pregnancy after your 20th week of pregnancy, This should be passed to the Operations Manager.

- Starting Maternity Leave

You can choose to start your maternity leave at any time after the start of the 11th week before the week in which your child is due, up until the birth of your child. If you are absent from work wholly or partly because of your pregnancy at any time after the start of the fourth week before your child is due, we reserve the right to require you to start your maternity leave on the first day after your absence commences.

If you lose your baby after 24 or more weeks of pregnancy, or if the baby is stillborn, you are still entitled to maternity leave. You should inform your Superintendent as soon as possible after the baby is lost that you are starting maternity leave.

- Notification requirement

No later than the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) you must give notice in writing to your Superintendent and the Operations Manager that you are pregnant and confirming the week in which your child is due. Your written notice should also confirm whether you intend to take ordinary maternity leave and/or additional maternity leave and when you want your maternity leave to start.

If you give birth before your period of leave was due to start, your leave period will begin on the day that follows childbirth.

- Maternity pay

Full stipend is payable for a maximum of 26 weeks followed by 13 weeks paid at 50% of stipend as follows:

13 weeks full stipend plus allowances paid by the circuit

13 weeks full stipend plus allowances paid from the Absence Fund

13 weeks paid at 50% of stipend plus 50% of Allowances from the Absence Fund

Your maternity payment will be paid into your bank account on the same date that you would have received your stipend and will be subject to the usual deductions for tax, National Insurance, and pension contributions. Pension contributions will continue to be made during any period when you are receiving paid leave (pro rata for the final 13 weeks).

- Staying Connected with Duties

There may be exceptional circumstances where a minister on maternity leave needs to engage with circuit duties. Such circumstances can only be agreed in writing with your Superintendent.

During leave it may be helpful for ministers to engage with occasional catch-up sessions with their Superintendent.

- End of Maternity Leave

If you do not give any notice to the contrary, it will be assumed that your maternity leave will last 39 weeks. You should discuss your return arrangements with your Superintendent.

3b. Paternity Leave

- Starting Paternity Leave

You can choose to take either one complete week or two consecutive weeks' paternity leave. Your leave can start from the date of the child's birth, or on a chosen day after the date of the child's birth. The leave must be completed by the time the baby is 56 days old. Only one period of leave will be available to you even if more than one child is born as the result of the same pregnancy.

During your paternity leave your circuit will pay 100% of your stipend.

You are required to inform your Superintendent and the Operations Manager of your intention to take paternity leave on or before the 15th week before the expected due date unless this is not reasonably practicable. You must inform us in writing of the week the baby is expected, whether you wish to take one or two weeks' leave and when you want the leave to start. You must inform us as soon as is reasonably practicable after the child's birth of the date on which the child was born.

If you have given notice of your intention to take paternity leave and wish to change the date that your paternity leave begins, you must give written notice as soon as is practicably possible.

- Time off to accompany a pregnant woman to an antenatal or adoption appointment.

Ministers who will be eligible to take paternity leave are entitled to leave to attend ante-natal appointments with their spouse.

3c. Adoption Leave

- Eligibility

To be eligible for adoption leave, you must be newly matched with a child for adoption by an approved adoption agency.

- Length of leave

You are entitled to up to 39 weeks of adoption leave. Only one period of leave is available even if you are adopting more than one child.

Adoption leave can start from the date of the child's placement (whether this is earlier or later than expected) or from a date which can be up to 14 days before the expected date of placement.

- Notification requirement

You are required to inform us in writing of your intention to take adoption leave within seven days of being notified that you have been matched with a child for adoption unless this is not reasonably practicable. You will also have to provide us with a 'matching certificate' from the adoption agency.

- Adoption Pay
- Full stipend is payable for a maximum of 26 weeks followed by 13 weeks paid at 50% of stipend as follows:
- 13 weeks full stipend plus allowances paid by the circuit
- 13 weeks full stipend plus allowances paid from the Absence Fund
- 13 weeks paid at 50% of stipend plus 50% of Allowances from the Absence Fund

Your adoption payment will be paid into your bank account on the same date that you would have received your stipend and will be subject to the usual deductions for tax, National Insurance, and pension contributions.

Pension contributions will continue to be made during any period when you are receiving paid leave, (pro rata for the final 13 weeks).

- Staying Connected with Duties

There may be exceptional circumstances where a minister on leave needs to engage with circuit duties. Such circumstances can only be agreed in writing with your Superintendent.

During leave it may be helpful for ministers to engage with occasional catch-up sessions with their Superintendent.

- End of Adoption Leave

If you do not give any notice to the contrary, it will be assumed that your adoption leave will last 39 weeks. You should discuss your return arrangements with your Superintendent.

4. Note for Circuits Financial Arrangements

Where a Circuit anticipates substantial additional expense in providing ministerial cover during the period of maternity or adoption leave the Circuit Steward shall consult with the Circuit and District Superintendent.

5. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021, reviewed in April 2022, and revised in March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

12. Ordained Ministers Retirement Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed when a minister is giving notice of their intention to retire. The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC).

3. Retirement and Continued Service in Retirement

3.1 Ordained ministers seeking permission to retire at the ensuing Conference shall submit their application in writing to the District Superintendent of the District and to the Secretary of the Irish Methodist Ministers Retirement Fund before 30th September. If, in the interval between this date and the Conference, an ordained minister is compelled to seek permission to retire, he/she shall convey her/his request immediately, in writing, to the District Superintendent.

3.2 The minimum age for retirement shall normally be as determined by the terms of the church's pension scheme. The Conference may permit an ordained minister below the retirement age for special reasons. An ordained minister shall not normally be stationed after the age of seventy.

3.3 A resolution for each minister retiring will be prepared and printed in the Conference Agenda and, after approval, inserted in the Minutes of Conference.

3.4 Retired ministers with their consent, and by arrangement with the Circuit Executives of the Circuits concerned, may take charge of stations where the work is suitable. They shall act under the direction of the Circuit Superintendent. All such arrangements shall be subject to the control of the Conference.

3.5 When ordained ministers retire and undertake work on dependent Circuits, the Officers of the Home Mission Department, with the sanction of the General Committee, may make a grant towards the removal expenses from the Circuits in which they were last stationed to those in which they have undertaken work. Retired ministers not so employed shall be at liberty to choose their own places of residence.

3.6 When retired ministers are requested to conduct services, they shall be remunerated according to the directions of the Conference as determined from time to time.

3.7 Retired ministers continue to be subject to the discipline of the Conference and shall report annually to their District Superintendent concerning their belief in our doctrines, and satisfactorily answer the usual questions regarding character.

3.8 Retired ministers connected with the Irish Conference, residing in Great Britain, shall report to the Synods of the Districts in which they reside. The British Conference has arranged that retired ministers connected with that Conference, residing in Ireland, shall report to the Superintendent of the District in which they reside.

3.9 Retired ministers residing outside the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland are required to furnish annually to the Superintendents of Districts under which their names are printed in the Minutes of Conference, the usual statements respecting solvency, and belief in Methodist doctrines, also a certificate of good standing, from the ministers of the circuits with which they are connected.

4. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021. The policy was reviewed in April 2022 and March 2023. It is intended to update and review further this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

5. Related Policies

Retired Benefits Scheme

13. Ordained Ministers Policy and Procedures for Sabbaticals

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the intention associated with sabbaticals for ordained ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland and the procedure to be followed when a minister wishes to take sabbatical leave. The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

1. Responsibility

This policy is managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC) of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

2. Key Features of this Policy

The Methodist Church in Ireland is committed to the ongoing development of its ordained ministers. One mechanism for ongoing development is the provision of sabbaticals for ordained ministers, whether Full-time Stipendiary, Part-time Stipendiary or Non-Stipendiary.

The key outcomes of a sabbatical could be:

- The renewal or clarification of sense of call.
- The development of an aspect of ministry.
- An opportunity to visit and learn from another church context.
- An opportunity to carry out a piece of research.

In addition, sabbaticals are opportunities for ordained ministers to focus on their wellbeing and invest time in hobbies, travel, family time and family visits.

The length of the sabbatical shall be three months, which may normally be first taken on completion of the tenth year of travelling and on a seven-yearly basis thereafter.

For good reason MPPC may approve the taking of a sabbaticals one year earlier or one year later. Sabbaticals may not be taken in the first year of a new appointment and special permission shall be required for any greater departure from the normal dates.

It is the responsibility of the ordained minister making an application for a sabbatical to ensure the correct procedure is followed and that all necessary arrangements are in place.

During a sabbatical the ordained minister remains stationed in their appointment and continues to receive their stipend and taxable allowances.

No travel / mileage claims relating to the sabbatical shall be made.

Ministers can claim expenses relating to sabbaticals through the Ministry Development and Further Study Grant, up to the amount of £500. A circuit where a minister is on sabbatical can claim up to £500 towards pulpit and pastoral cover. Further information and claim forms are available from ministries@irishmethodist.org.

A grant of up to £500 is available from the World Mission Partnership for ministers planning to spend time on sabbatical with a partner church. For more details WMP should be contacted directly.

When an ordained minister is planning a sabbatical, their circuit shall set up a support group who shall:

- ensure arrangements are in place to cover the work of the circuit;
- to provide support in the preparation and execution of the sabbatical plans; and

It shall include representatives of the circuit (or other body responsible for the payment of stipend), and where relevant, the participant's partner. The participant shall be a member but shall not chair it.

The participant's Circuit Executive shall appoint the chairperson and convener. In the case of separated appointments, the chairperson and convener shall be appointed by the relevant Church Department. The Sabbatical Support Group will report to the relevant Circuit Executive or appropriate Church

Department.

Ministries Team staff are also available to discuss sabbatical plans with ordained ministers.

3. Application Procedure

Prior to applying for sabbatical leave the ordained minister should consult with their District Superintendent and Circuit Executive.

An application should normally be made one year in advance of proposed dates. The link for the electronic application form is available from the Ministries Team Office at ministries@irishmethodist.org.

The application form will require the following information:

- a. the dates when the sabbatical would start and finish
- b. the plans for the sabbatical
- c. arrangements for covering the absence agreed with the District Superintendent and Circuit Executive.
- d. arrangements for the pastoral support of the participant's partner and dependants.

On approval of the application, the Ministries office will advise the applicant, the District Superintendent and the Circuit steward that the sabbatical can proceed.

If for any reason arrangements for the sabbatical should change the applicant is responsible for informing MPPC, the District Superintendent and Circuit Executive of the proposed changes.

4. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2020, updated in April 2022, and revised in March 2023. It is intended to further review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

5. Related Policies

- Ministry Development and Further Study Grants Policy

14. Ordained Ministers Separated Appointments Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed to allocate a minister to a separated appointment under the control of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

This policy is to be followed by the relevant department or body involved in making the appointment. The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC) is responsible for review of the policy.

3. Appointment Procedure

3.1 Notice of the need for appointment of ordained ministers for the position of:

- General Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland,
- District Superintendent,
- General Secretary of the Home Mission Department (when a full-time separated appointment),
- General Secretary of the Irish Methodist Youth and Children's Department (when a full-time separated appointment),
- The full-time ministerial staff of the Ministries Team,
- Full time ordained Chaplains to Universities and Chaplains to Colleges,

shall normally be brought to Conference two years in advance of appointment. At that time, the Conference will approve the Job Specification, agree the criteria for appointment and appoint a Selection Panel, except for District Superintendents where Section 4 below applies.

3.3 The Selection Panel shall be responsible for carrying out the selection process. All eligible ministers shall be considered. It may be appropriate on occasions to advertise a particular position and such an advertisement should be brought to the attention of all ministers.

3.4 The Selection Panel shall report to the following Conference and bring a name or names to the Conference, together with a statement of the reasons why the person or persons being nominated are suitable for the appointment. The Conference shall designate for appointment one year later.

3.5 When the Selection Panel presents one name to Conference, it shall keep a record of the names of other suitable ministers in order of preference. In the event of an emergency, the President and his/her Advisory Committee shall consult the Selection Panel and take appropriate action.

4. Nomination of a District Superintendent

4.1 For the appointment of District Superintendents, the District Superintendent Selection Panel (DSSP) shall consist of 8 members - the President, Lay Leader and the General Secretary, one District Superintendent, and four District representatives (one ministerial and three lay representatives) of the relevant district selected by the District Advisory Committee. The General Secretary shall consult with the District Advisory Committee as to the membership and act as the Convener.

4.2 The DSSP shall be responsible for carrying out the discernment process with regards to the nomination of a District Superintendent. In consultation with the relevant District Advisory Committee (DAC) they should draw up a description of the role based on the Connexional template and the Manual of Laws (see Appendix A).

4.3 The General Secretary shall send an email with the description of the role and other relevant information around the Connexion looking for expressions of interest. The DSSP are permitted to approach individuals to invite them to let their names go forward for interview.

4.4 Prior to interview, the DSSP may ask those to be interviewed to submit a written reflection appropriate to the role description. The DSSP shall have the authority to make a shortlist, based on material they have asked for and their knowledge of the individual. General Secretary shall contact in writing all those who have expressed an interest, to confirm whether they will be interviewed.

4.5 The DSSP will make arrangements for interviews to take place, giving at least one month's notice of the date on which they are to be held.

4.6 After the interviews are concluded and the DSSP has made a recommendation, the General Secretary shall inform each individual who has been interviewed in writing of the outcome pertaining to them.

4.7 The recommendation of the DSSP shall be brought to the next Connexional Team, who will then bring a formal recommendation to Conference for ratification.

4.8 If, for any reason, the preferred candidate is unable to take up the role, the DSSP has the option of recommending their second preference candidate or beginning the process again.

4.9 The appointment of a District Superintendent shall be for a period of seven years. During the sixth year, the District Superintendent Selection Panel shall review the appointment and, in appropriate circumstances, recommend to the Conference that the appointment be extended for a further three years. After leaving the office of District Superintendent, a minister may not be reappointed to that office for a further five years.

5. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021, reviewed in April 2022 and revised in March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy will be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

15. Ordained Ministers Serving as Mission Partners Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

Historically the Methodist Church in Ireland has worked with the Global Relations Team of the Methodist Church in Britain when Ordained Ministers or Probationers have applied to serve as Mission Partners overseas.

This policy replaces the legislation set out in 5G.07-5G.15 in the Manual of Laws of the Methodist Church in Ireland (2020).

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

1. Responsibility

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee is responsible for reviewing this policy in consultation with the Officers of World Mission Partnership.

2. Key Aspects of the Policy

2.1 Ordained ministers, probationers, and accepted candidates for the ordained ministry desiring to offer for service as Mission Partners, shall do so through the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee. The Group will consult with the Officers of World Mission Partnership in relation to such applications. The permission of the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee will be required before an application is submitted to the Overseas Service Panel of the Methodist Church in Britain.

2.2 As provided by Section 43 (d) of the Deed of Union of the Methodist Church in Britain, ordained ministers of the Irish Conference shall be subject to the rules and discipline of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain while serving as Mission Partners with the Methodist Church.

2.3 Probationers of the Methodist Church in Ireland serving overseas in connection with the World Church Relationships Team of the Methodist Church in Britain shall be subject to the rules and discipline of the Methodist Church in Britain. In addition, however, a report from the Conference in which a probationer is stationed shall be presented annually to the Irish Conference.

2.4 Probationers of the Irish Conference who are serving as Mission Partners shall, in the concluding year of their probation, be examined by the Conference or Church in which they are stationed, and a report concerning their character and work shall be submitted to the Irish Conference by the Global Relationships Team of the Methodist Church in Britain. Their reception into Full Connexion shall be by the vote of the Irish Conference.

2.5 Arrangements for the return to work in Ireland of ordained ministers and probationers who have been serving overseas shall be determined by consultation between the Global Relationships Team of the Methodist Church in Britain and the Stationing Committee of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

2.6 Financial arrangements concerning Irish ordained ministers and probationers serving as Mission Partners in connection with the Global Relationships Team of the Methodist Church in Britain shall be agreed from time to time by the British and Irish Conferences.

2.7 Detailed regulations relating to ordained ministers, probationers and lay workers serving as Mission Partners in connection with the Global Relationships Team of the Methodist Church in Britain are set out in the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church in Britain.

3. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021 and reviewed in April 2022. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2023. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

16. Ordained Ministers Special Applications Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed when an Ordained Minister in full connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland wishes to serve in an alternative ministry or to seek permission to be without a stationed appointment.

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

This policy shall be managed by the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC).

3. Key Features

Ordained ministers of the Methodist Church in Ireland are normally appointed to stations under the authority of Conference. For a variety of reasons an ordained minister may seek permission to not be stationed under the authority of Conference or to serve in an alternative ministry. Examples of such permissions would include:

- to serve as a Forces chaplain;
- to serve as a mission partner;
- to serve with an external organisation;
- to serve with another Methodist Conference;
- to take leave of absence to engage in further study;
- to take leave of absence on compassionate or compelling domestic grounds.

Ministers who are without a stationed appointment continue to be in full connexion with the Methodist Church in Ireland. Through the Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee, MCI commits to journeying with individual applicants to discern the best of course of action for the individual and the church. This process of journeying will be open and equitable recognising the covenantal nature of the relationship between ordained ministers and the church.

Ordained ministers who are granted such permissions to serve or to be without a stationed appointment shall continue to be subject to the discipline of the Conference and shall report to their District Superintendent.

All ordained ministers are in a covenantal relationship with the Methodist Church in Ireland. The Connexion provides pastoral care to the minister and their family through the Superintendent of the circuit in which they reside. In consultation with the Circuit Superintendent, the ordained minister without a stationed appointment should expect to be involved in the life of a local circuit, serve on the Circuit preaching plan and be called upon for other responsibilities as appropriate.

The ordained minister without a stationed appointment has a responsibility to keep the District Superintendent informed of any change in their circumstances. This includes discussion with the District Superintendent and obtaining the permission of the MPPC prior to entering into any negotiations in relation to forms of employment or serving with other denominations / organisations.

Permission must be sought in relation to the following:

- Application to serve with / transfer to another branch of the Methodist Church,
- Applications to take up employment, aside from, or in addition to, their stationed appointment.

4. Discernment and Application Procedure

Any Minister wishing to make such an application should do so in writing to their District

Superintendent by the end of July in any Connexional year, with due regard to the implications for the stationing process. Any applications after July will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The District Superintendent will inform MPPC who will appoint a suitably qualified panel to meet with the applicant and any personal representative they may nominate, and journey with them in their discernment. The panel, having considered all the factors, and if necessary, having sought advice from others, will make a recommendation to MPPC as to whether permission should be granted. MPPC will consider this and inform the Stationing Committee of the outcome by mid-September. Recommendations will be reported to the Ministerial Session of Conference for ratification.

5. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2020 and reviewed in April 2022 and March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

6. Related Policies

The following policy should also be considered:

- OM Withdrawal from and Reinstatement to Ministry Policy

17. Ordained Ministry Time Wisdom

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

The Methodist Church in Ireland requires each minister to cultivate healthy patterns of family life, recreation, exercise and outside interests from the outset. This policy sets out the key issues that require consideration.

2. Responsibility

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC) is responsible for reviewing this policy.

3. Key Issues

3.1 The relationship between an ordained minister and the Methodist Church in Ireland is covenantal rather than contractual. Ordained ministers are regarded as office holders as opposed to employees. The church's understanding of the role of the ordained minister is set out in Chapter 5 of the Manual of Laws.

3.2 It is an ordained minister's personal responsibility to establish healthy rhythms in relation to active ministry, rest, personal, and family time. This requires wisdom and personal organisation recognising that there will always be the emergencies which inevitably alter pre-prepared timetables.

3.3 As noted in the Code of Pastoral Practice much of a Minister's work is unstructured. Therefore, it is imperative that Ministers take care to be fully organised so that essential tasks are addressed, and priorities given the necessary allocation of time. These tasks include:

- (a) the Minister's own spiritual and devotional life
- (b) reading and study
- (c) understanding their local context and leading the mission of the congregations in their care
- (d) preparation for worship (baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals and Circuit responsibilities, etc.)
- (e) oversight and offering of pastoral care
- (f) community and connexional responsibilities
- (g) family and leisure time

3.4 Time is not unlimited, so it is essential to apportion it according to priorities that are agreed with the Circuit Executive and the District Superintendent.

3.5 Establishing a firm weekly pattern of a day 'off' active ministry is necessary, recognising that an emergency may interrupt such plans and will necessitate reorganisation of diaries in the weeks ahead. In addition, it is expected that a minister be allowed four Sundays off each year as annual holiday leave and that an additional Sunday each quarter be provided in the Circuit preaching plan free from preaching and other responsibilities.

3.6 A superintendent minister shall endeavour to ensure that lay workers develop healthy patterns of work and rest.

4. Special circumstances

4.1 Time off to care for dependents.

Like everyone else there will be times when ministers must deal with emergencies relating to family members who depend upon them. The dependant may be a child, spouse, parent, or anyone else who relies on you for help in an emergency.

4.2 Compassionate Leave

Ministers will also face difficult personal circumstances from time to time and the church is committed to providing pastoral care and assistance during such times.

5. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021, reviewed in April 2022 and revised in March 2023. It is intended to review and update this policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy will be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.

18. Ordained Ministers Withdrawal from and Reinstatement to Ministry Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the procedure for dealing with cases where an ordained minister seeks to withdraw from the ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland. In addition, it outlines the process to be followed if an ordained minister makes an application to be reinstated.

It should be noted that when an ordained minister seeks to withdraw from ordained ministry they are not resigning from employment, rather, they are seeking permission from the Church to lay down an Office.

The key features of this policy and the procedures involved are set out below.

2. Responsibility

The Ministries Policies and Procedures Committee (MPPC) is responsible for reviewing this policy.

3. Key Features of this Policy

If an Ordained Minister seeks to withdraw from their office with the Methodist Church in Ireland, they shall do so in writing to the General Secretary and to their District Superintendent.

The Conference disapproves of the practice of giving unofficial testimonials and declares that it will not be responsible for any that may be so given. Formal credentials shall be withheld from ordained ministers who have not met their financial obligations to the Funds of the Church.

The following regulations also apply in relation to Local Preacher status:

- (a) When an ordained minister seeks to withdraw from ministry because he/she is unable to subscribe to Methodist doctrine or discipline he/she shall also lose her/his status as a Local Preacher. If he/she seeks to be reinstated as a Local Preacher such application shall not be made to MPPC until two years have elapsed from the date of resignation.
- (b) When an ordained minister seeks to withdraw from ministry or has been asked to withdraw from ministry and does so due to behaviour thought to be inappropriate for anyone ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament, and if he/she seeks to be reinstated as a Local Preacher such application shall not be made to MPPC until five years have elapsed from the date of resignation.
- (c) When an ordained minister seeks to withdraw from ministry for reasons other than those covered by sub-paragraphs (a) and (b), MPPC shall reserve the right to determine status as a local preacher.

In all cases of resignation, MPPC also reserves the right to advise concerning status as a member of the Methodist Church.

4. Withdrawal from Ministry Procedure

On receipt of a letter in which an ordained minister indicates their wish to withdraw from their office with the Methodist Church in Ireland, the General Secretary shall inform MPPC.

The MPPC shall appoint a small panel to meet with the minister which should normally include a District Superintendent. The purpose of this meeting is to explore the reasons for withdrawal and to ensure the minister is receiving appropriate pastoral care. A note of this meeting shall be prepared, agreed by all parties, and retained as a confidential record. The letter of withdrawal should also be retained with the confidential record.

The entry in the printed Minutes of Conference concerning ordained ministers who have withdrawn shall be as follows: "Their names are recorded in the Journal." If a probationer withdraws, her/his name shall simply be omitted from the printed Minutes.

If the Ordained Minister in good standing is seeking to withdraw from ministry within the Methodist Church in Ireland, to take up an appointment with another denomination, they can request for a formal reference to be issued by the General Secretary.

5. Reinstatement Procedure

A minister seeking reinstatement shall do in writing to the Chair of MPPC . Such applications will be dealt with in a timely and sensitive manner on a case-by-case basis. The Chair of the MPPC will consult with the District Superintendent of the District in which the applicant is resident and with the General Secretary.

The MPPC will appoint a suitably qualified group to meet with the applicant and any personal representative they may nominate, and journey with them in their discernment. This group should include the District Superintendent of the District in which the applicant is resident.

The group should normally ask to attend for interviews at a Ministerial Selection Panel. The panel, having considered all the factors, and if necessary having sought advice from others, will make report to the MPPC as to whether the application should be granted. MPPC will consider this and make a recommendation to the Ministerial Session of Conference.

6. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2020 and reviewed in April 2022 and March 2023. It is intended to review and update this Policy by July 2025. Revised versions of the Policy shall be agreed by the Governance Board, reported to Conference, and published on the MCI Teams Application.