

Policy and Procedures relating to the Nomination, Appointment and Review of Local Preachers

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1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the procedure to be followed for the nomination, appointment and review of Local Preachers.

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-local-preachers> .

2. Responsibility

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

3. Nomination and appointment

- 3.1** When an individual believes that God is calling her/him to become a local preacher and wants to test this call he/she will first have a conversation with her/his local minister.
- 3.2** The local minister will then speak with the Superintendent minister, who will work together with the local minister, other ministers and local preachers on the circuit, as far as possible, to assist and support the individual in preparing for this important role in the Methodist Church in Ireland.
- 3.3** The Superintendent minister is responsible for presenting the local preacher applicants to the Local Preachers' Meeting or the Circuit Executive, persons who:
- a. are able to give an account of their journey of faith and call to preach;
 - b. can give account of genuine faithfulness;
 - c. have the ability to express themselves with sufficient readiness and clarity;
 - d. are committed to completing the training required by Conference in the time allocated.
- 3.4** The Local Preachers' Meeting or Circuit Executive will observe the applicant using the pro-forma questions – see <https://irishmethodist.org/ministries-local-preachers>. If satisfied that the applicant is suitable and is able to fulfil the MCI Expectations for applicants to become a Local Preacher in Training, it shall recommend that the applicant be received as such.

- 3.5** The Superintendent should inform the Connexional Local Preachers' Co-ordinator of the applicant's name and should also email the Ministries Team Office at ministries@irishmethodist.org for the link to the electronic application form. A reference copy of the Application Form, as well as details of the Methodist Local Preachers' Course is available on the MCI website
- <https://irishmethodist.org/ministries-local-preachers> .
- 3.6** Once the Circuit Executive has agreed to support the applicant in their training to be a Local Preacher, the applicant should complete the Application Form online and arrange to submit the supporting documentation detailed within the Application Form to the Ministries Team office. This application and documentation will then be shared with the Connexional Local Preachers' Co-ordinator.
- 3.7** The Connexional Local Preachers' Co-ordinator in consultation with the Ministries Team shall:
- a. examine the application form and confirm, or not, the recommendation of the Circuit Executive.
 - b. assess any application for accreditation of prior learning.
 - c. assess any application for experience in the leading of worship and preaching.
 - d. decide on the training pathway for individuals, considering b) and c).
- 3.8** Local Preachers in Training are required to undertake the Methodist Local Preachers' Course as agreed by the Governance Board and reported to the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland.
- 3.9** The period in training shall normally be not less than one year and not more than four years. During this time the Circuit Superintendent should ensure that there are opportunities for the Local Preacher in Training to gain practical experience and that their training pathway is being fulfilled. The Circuit Superintendent should also liaise with the Connexional Local Preachers' Co-ordinator, the District Local Preachers' Co-ordinator and the Ministries Team throughout this period of training.
- 3.10** When all elements of the training pathway are completed, the Connexional Local Preachers' Co-ordinator will inform the Circuit Superintendent. If the Circuit Superintendent has not previously heard the Local Preacher in Training lead worship and preach, s/he should arrange to do so on at least one occasion and should also ask the local minister to provide a report to the Local Preachers' Meeting or Circuit Executive. The Superintendent Minister will then arrange an interview for the Local Preacher in Training at the Local Preachers' Meeting and / or the Circuit Executive. The interview will be conducted by the Superintendent Minister, or under her/his direction, using the pro-forma set of questions relating to the following:

- a. Training journey
- b. Call to preach
- c. Willingness to serve God with the Methodist Church.
- d. Willingness to submit to the discipline of the Methodist Church.

3.11 The Local Preachers' Meeting or Circuit Executive will observe the applicant using the pro-forma questions. If satisfied, by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, that the applicant has completed their training satisfactorily and is able to fulfil the MCI Expectations for those becoming Fully Accredited Preachers, the Circuit Executive shall recommend to the Connexional Local Preachers' Committee that the candidate be received as a 'fully accredited' Local Preacher. The Superintendent Minister shall then forward to the Connexional Local Preachers' Co-ordinator the outcome of the Circuit Executive's vote.

3.12 The Connexional Local Preachers' Committee shall examine all the documentation and, if satisfied, shall issue a Certificate of Accreditation, to be presented at a service locally.

3.13 The names of 'fully accredited' Local Preachers accepted during that Connexional year shall be recorded in the ensuing Minutes of Conference.

3.14 If an applicant has not completed their training pathway by the end of the four-year period, he/she may apply through the Local Preacher's Meeting to the Circuit Executive to extend their training period. If there is no Local Preachers' meeting, the request should come to the Circuit Executive directly. The Local Preacher in Training should explain why the requirements of training have not been met. The extension will be on the recommendation of the Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting and / or approved by the Circuit Executive. Only in exceptional circumstances, and with the consent of the Connexional Local Preachers' Committee, shall the total period in training exceed 8 years. If after this extended period requirements are still not completed, he/she shall no longer be regarded as a Local Preacher in Training.

4. Yearly Review

4.1 The local ordained minister should hear individual local preachers conduct a service of worship on at least one occasion within the previous twelve months and be content with the outcomes. If necessary, this can be carried out by another ordained minister. The ordained minister and the local preacher should meet for a follow-up conversation at a suitable time.

5. Discipline relating to Local Preachers

The annual requirements and the disciplinary processes relating to Local Preachers are found in the Manual of Laws 6A.05 – 6A.11.

5. Policy Review

This Policy was first adopted in July 2021, revised in April 2022 and 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.