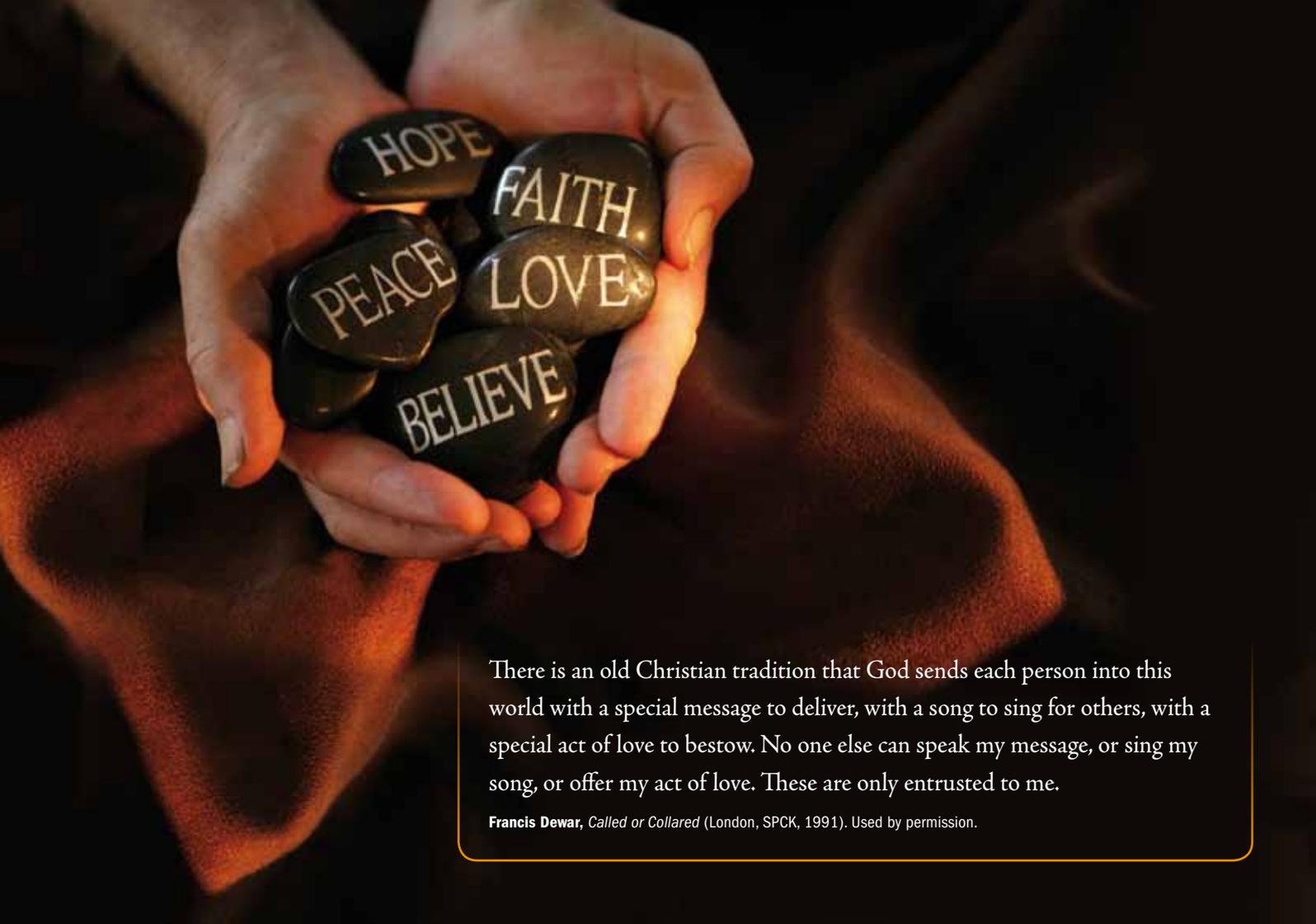


Is God
calling you?

The **Methodist** Church 



There is an old Christian tradition that God sends each person into this world with a special message to deliver, with a song to sing for others, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can speak my message, or sing my song, or offer my act of love. These are only entrusted to me.

Francis Dewar, *Called or Collared* (London, SPCK, 1991). Used by permission.

Is God calling you to
ordained ministry in
the Methodist Church?



Is God calling you?

Without doubt God is! People are being called, you among them, to witness to God's grace and justice in every part of society. The Methodist Church has always encouraged members to share the love of God with others, to care for those in need and to struggle for justice. Some are called to authorised lay ministry such as local preachers or lay workers. Others are called to ordained ministry as deacons or presbyters and this booklet explains briefly what is involved.

This is a very exciting time to be considering ordained ministry in Methodism because the Church has deliberately set its focus on creative and innovative mission and ministry. If you desire to embark on a journey of exploration of your call and future – read on!

2

As soon as you can I urge you to contact your minister and close friends and talk it through with them. I am sure that people will be glad to pray with you and for you, as you seek to discern God's will for your life.

May all God's blessing be with you on your journey,

Howard Mellor

Rev'd Dr Howard Mellor, Vocation and Discipleship Development



PRAYER

Jesus, open my eyes to your presence,
open my ears to your call,
open my heart to your love.
Grant me grace to follow you,
wisdom to discern the way
and strength in times of challenge.
Help me to trust you
and give myself to you,
so that I may follow in your ways
and be your true disciple. Amen.

For criteria required of those candidating go to
www.methodistchurch.org.uk/candidates

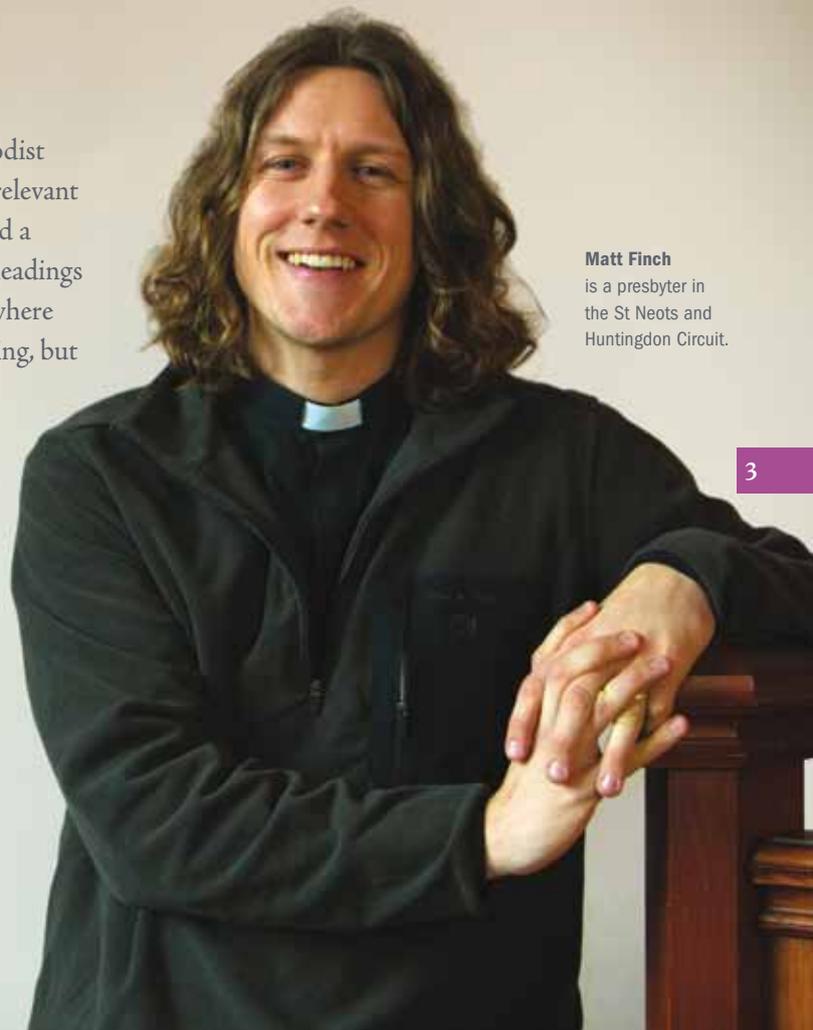
Candidating

As a student I felt candidating for ministry within the Methodist Church was not for me. I switched between seeing it as irrelevant or perhaps something that would come later in life once I had had a proper job. But through prayer, reflection and God's undeniable leadings my views changed. Candidating was an opportunity to test just where God was calling me. In hindsight it was not about passing or failing, but enriching, affirming and enabling for someone wanting to serve God regardless of its eventual outcome.

From the beginning to its end I found it to be an experience which helped me to see how God was shaping me. At times it was immensely difficult and painful but in all these times there were people of experience and wisdom who travelled with me.

The Church did not leave me to work out my call alone but resourced and equipped me to thrive in the gifts which God had given me.

I wondered why I had so many hoops to jump through, so many interviews and so many forms. Now I stand confident in my calling, recognised not simply by me but by the Methodist Church that supports and enables that ministry to be fulfilled.



Matt Finch
is a presbyter in
the St Neots and
Huntingdon Circuit.

Christians in many walks of life see their work as a vocation. We tend to honour those in the 'caring professions', such as nursing, medicine, teaching, social work, community development and youth work. However Christians in manufacturing, politics, law, the service and finance sectors and many other professions see their work as serving others and seek to do it in Christ like ways that honour God.

4

All God's people are called to servant ministry; service to God in service to the Church and the world. The ministries of presbyters and deacons are representative: each distinctively focusing, expressing and enabling the servant ministry of the whole people of God.

Those who are ordained are called to represent God-in-Christ and the Church community in the world, and hold the world and the Church community in Christ before God.

Is ordained ministry the only kind of vocation?



We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

(Romans 12:6-8) (NRSV)

REFLECT

- What is your present work?
- Is this, or could this, be your vocation? What might need to change to make it so?
- Or is there something which is prompting you to think again about the future? What?

What kind of Church would I be part of?

The Methodist Church came into being as the direct result of an awakening of religious faith in Britain in which both John and Charles Wesley were key leaders.

A founding document of Methodism states:

“The Methodist Church claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ. It rejoices in the inheritance of the apostolic faith and loyally accepts the fundamental principles of the historic creeds and of the Protestant Reformation. It ever remembers that in the providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith and declares its unfaltering resolve to be true to its divinely appointed mission.”

Deed of Union, section 4

In recent years Methodism has embraced a challenging and visionary programme to guide its mission and ministry in the future. Two major documents that guide this are overleaf.

God has created me
to do him some definite service:
he has committed some work to me
which he has not committed to another.
I have my mission –
I may not be told it in this life
but I shall be told it in the next.
Somehow I am necessary for his purposes:
as necessary in my place
as an archangel in his.
I have a part in this great work:
I am a link in a chain,
a bond of connection between persons.
He has not created me for nothing.
I shall do good, I shall do his work;
I shall be an angel of peace,
a preacher of truth in my own place.
Deign to fulfil your high purposes in me.
I am here to serve you, to be yours,
to be your instrument.

Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

My calling

My calling is a response to God. It is a call that has been affirmed by the Methodist Church. It requires of me a lifelong commitment to serve God through the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Methodist Church. It challenges me to discern the meaning of belonging to a religious order serving God wherever the Order sends me.

Diaconal ministry is for me the enabler that embraces each element of *Our Calling* – Worship; Learning and Caring; Service; Evangelism.

My calling can be summarised as:

- ✦ Prayer
- ✦ Presence
- ✦ Pioneering
- ✦ Prophecy
- ✦ Passion

Jan Sutton is a deacon in the Loughborough Circuit.



Ghislaine Howard, *The Washing of the Feet* (2004)

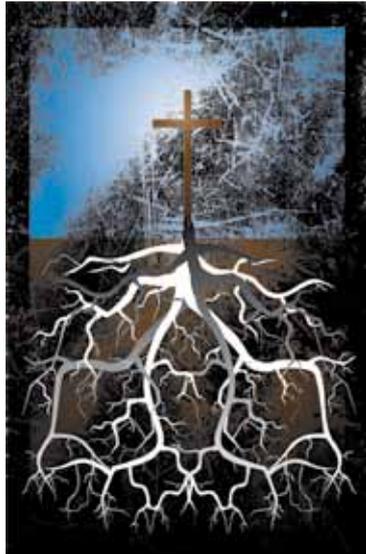
Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

The Church exists to:

- ♦ increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love
(WORSHIP)
- ♦ help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care
(LEARNING AND CARING)
- ♦ be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice
(SERVICE)
- ♦ make more followers of Jesus Christ
(EVANGELISM).

(Methodist Conference, 2000)



Priorities for the Methodist Church

In partnership with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority:

To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church.

As ways towards realising this priority, the Methodist Church will give particular attention to the following:

- ♦ Underpinning everything we do with God-centred worship and prayer;
- ♦ Supporting community development and action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor - in Britain and worldwide;
- ♦ Developing confidence in evangelism and in the capacity to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved;
- ♦ Encouraging fresh ways of being Church;
- ♦ Nurturing a culture in the Church which is people-centred and flexible.

(Methodist Conference, 2004)

REFLECT

- ♦ Look again at the Priorities.
- ♦ Which of them jump out at you in terms of what you believe God is calling you to do and to be?
- ♦ How might you live out this calling as a lay person, or as someone called to ordained ministry?



What kind of Church will there be?



10

If we follow the lead given by recent presidents of Conference and others, then we shall see in the future a Methodism that:

- ♦ is more confident in God
- ♦ has a greater awareness of its heritage
- ♦ is a welcoming Church which cares for all
- ♦ calls people to follow Jesus in deepening discipleship
- ♦ gives attention to worship which nourishes people spiritually enabling them to serve in the community and stand for justice
- ♦ is a praying church
- ♦ in its decision-making seeks to discern the will of God.

It will be a Church with fewer circuits and be more nimble and creative in responding to the needs of people and the changes in the needs and opportunities in our communities.

If we
pay attention to God,
we won't stay inside the church
... It will take us to that place where we
become passionate for justice, passionate
to be peacemakers, passionate to make sure
that other people hear how much they are loved,
how much they are cared for and how it is that
somehow God wraps inside God's love for us
the truth that sets us free.

The Revd Alison Tomlin,
president in 2010/2011

"I believe that Methodism is at heart an evangelical missionary movement. It wants to share Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, humbly and clearly, in both word and deed. It aspires to follow the leading of the Spirit, and live out an attractive and challenging personal and social holiness for today. It has a dirty fingernail spirituality and deep in its bones desires to be used by God to change the world for good."

The Revd Dr Martyn Atkins, president in 2007/2008 and general secretary of the Methodist Church

"The call of God upon the lives of the people called Methodist is as strong as ever. A renewed interest in new forms of monasticism combined with a deepening desire to serve God lead people into 'being' community in ways that bring the heart of the gospel message into contemporary society."

Deacon Sue Culver, warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order

"As our life in God deepens, we shall rediscover a proper confidence in ourselves. Or rather, we shall rediscover a confidence in the gospel, and in the Church. Such a confidence will be based, not on the Church as it is, still less on our good ideas for the Church, but on the God who belongs at the heart of the Church's life."

The Revd Dr Neil Richardson, president in 2003/2004

"[The] emerging spirituality which is coming out of the brokenness of the world, out of an awareness that we need to reconnect with those who are suffering, dying, lost, is speaking to us. Here the heart of the gospel message finds focus in the suffering and brokenness of Christ."

The Revd Stephen Poxon,
president in 2008/2009

What is distinctive about ordained ministry?

Those called to be presbyter or deacon are to be persons in public, ordained ministry in the Methodist Church.

- ♦ 'Public' implies a person who is recognised as representing the Methodist Church in the wider community and who has a self-awareness of being a representative person to the Church also.
- ♦ 'Ordained' implies a person belonging to an ordered group of people with a common discipline.

Those who are ordained enter into a covenant relationship with the Methodist Conference, defined as "being in Full Connexion". They are accountable to Conference for their ministry and the Conference is responsible for their support and direction. Deacons in the Methodist Church express this explicitly by being members of a religious order, living by a Rule of Life.

As far as the Church is concerned the boundaries of this description for public ordained ministry are those given by the words of the ordination services.

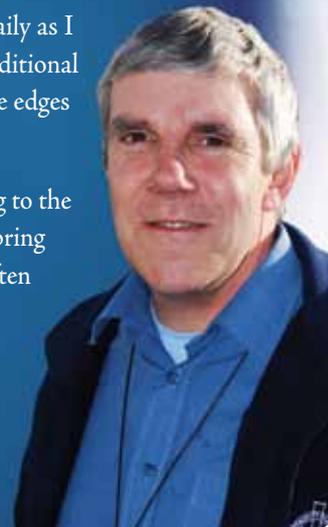
Expressing God's unconditional love

For me, the calling to be a deacon is about journeying towards a way of life which has always been a part of me but never was as clearly defined as it is now.

This calling is worked out daily as I seek to express God's unconditional love especially to those at the edges of the church and society.

A Rule of Life and belonging to the Methodist Diaconal Order bring shape to a ministry which often seems to demand new rules depending on how I am called to serve.

Richard Beckett is a deacon in the Milton Keynes Circuit.





In God's name you are

- to assist God's people in worship and prayer;
- to hold before them the needs and concerns of the world;
- to minister Christ's love and compassion;
- to visit and support the sick and the suffering;
- to seek out the lost and the lonely;
- and to help those you serve to offer their lives to God.

You are to share fully in the life of your Order and to keep its discipline.

(from the Ordination of Deacons, *The Methodist Worship Book*, pp. 317, 323
© Trustees for Methodist Church Purchases (TMCP))

In God's 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 baptize, to confirm and to 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.

(from the Ordination of Presbyters, *The Methodist Worship Book*, p. 302
© Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP))

REFLECT

- ♦ Read the ordination services in *The Methodist Worship Book*, beginning on page 297.
- ♦ As you read this, where do you 'see' yourself? If possible, jot down some notes of your thoughts and feelings.
- ♦ Talk these through with others.

What is the difference between a presbyter and a deacon?

The differences are not rigid divisions, since both orders of ministry are representative of the whole ministry of the people of God. They have, rather, distinctive emphases.

The ministry of a deacon:

- ♦ Service - including pastoral care, acts of mercy and acts of justice, and being or acting as a prophetic sign.
- ♦ Witness - including the formal and informal sharing of faith and human experience, teaching, proclamation in words and action, and theological and prophetic interpretation; and leading worship, which for some includes preaching.

Deacons are also members of a religious order living by a Rule of Life.

The ministry of a presbyter:

- ♦ Word - including preaching, evangelism, theological and prophetic interpretation, teaching and the formal and informal sharing of faith and human experience.
- ♦ Sacrament - including presiding at acts of celebration and devotion, especially Baptism and Holy Communion.
- ♦ Pastoral Responsibility - including oversight, direction, discipline, order and pastoral care.

REFLECT

- ♦ List things that you identify as your gifts or graces. It could be a 'talent' or a personal quality (eg encouragement, leadership, patience, listening, singing, cooking). The list can be as varied and as endless as you make it.
- ♦ Reflect on this list in relation to the two different orders of ministry. (You may find it helpful to look back at the extracts from the ordination services on page 13.)
- ♦ Through the gifts that God has given you, what might God be saying something about type of ministry you are called to exercise?

(Try repeating this with a trusted friend who can identify other qualities or talents in you.)

The gift that must be given

Ministry for me is about going to the edges of the Church and beyond, seeking to serve others and God in the places in which I find myself.

Through loving service I have come alongside those who are otherwise absent from our churches, built meaningful relationships and, through words and actions, acted as a signpost to God in the hustle and bustle of the marketplace.

Ministry is about listening to God, to our story and to our prevailing culture and responding to people in ways that are relevant and authentic. It is in those encounters that Christ can be discovered and shared, and using art, literature, music, film and anything else at one's disposal to point to God in our midst.

It is in serving God and one another that one feels that one has been entrusted with a gift that must be given.

Crispian Acher is a presbyter in the Conwy and Prestatyn Circuit. Prior to that he had responsibility for the Nexus Art Cafe in the Manchester Circuit.



My Ordination

My ordination was a very special, meaningful and moving event for me.

I felt a profound sense of being set apart and affirmed by God and the Church as I approached the end of my journey of formation and began to perform the various responsibilities that the office of a presbyter in the Methodist Church bestows on me in a formidable way.

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Ordination for me was the moment when I finally understood that I am valued, recognised and have been confirmed by the Church as someone called by God to ministry. I acknowledge that the Church has journeyed with me through discernment and training related to my call and so authorises my ministry through my ordination.

Patrick Kandeh is a presbyter in the Bromley Circuit.

Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Mark 1:17 (NRSV)



So what is the Church looking for?

In this journey of exploration known as candidating, what is it that the Methodist Church is looking for in people who feel a call to ordained ministry?

We are looking for people in whom God has placed not only a sense of call but also in whom are centred some important gifts and graces. These are described below and they become the areas which are explored with candidates at the district and connexional committees.

Think of these areas as gifts and graces which are both BEING and BECOMING. They are gifts of God - aptitudes and values which are enabled in our lives by the work of God's Holy Spirit.

They describe the way we centre our lives (being), but we realise this is always a continuing process (becoming) as we seek ever more closely to follow the call of God in ordained ministry.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.

Ephesians 1:17-18 (NRSV)



Are there minimum standards that all candidates have to achieve?

Yes there are.

All candidates must have been baptised and be a member of the Methodist Church in good standing for at least three years.

Those candidating to be presbyters should be a local preacher. Candidates for the Methodist Diaconal Order must either be a local preacher or have completed an approved worship leaders' programme.

These requirements should be true by the time you conclude your candidature. For Presbyters this is prior to the Ministerial Session of the Conference and for Diaconal candidates it is the Diaconal Candidates Selection Committee.

There are seven elements which make up the characteristics which the Church is looking for as it meets and interviews candidates. These are set out on the following pages.





Rooted in faith

It all starts with the grace of God made known in Jesus by his coming, life, death and resurrection – “All this for you, before you could ever know it”. Discipleship is the response to the overflowing transforming grace of God and it is out of this relationship with God that the sense of call grows.

So when we think of candidating we are looking for people who are sufficiently mature in faith and self-awareness to demonstrate:

- ♦ commitment to a disciplined spiritual life of individual and corporate prayer and worship
- ♦ a spiritual life influenced by everyday experiences which sustains and encourages Christian witness
- ♦ regular engagement with the means of grace (sacraments, prayer and meditation on life in the context of God’s word) revealing an impact in daily life
- ♦ stability and well-being which are able to sustain the demands of being a representative person in ministry.

REFLECT

- ♦ To people who don’t know you well – how would you describe your call to ordained ministry?
- ♦ Try writing down your Christian journey and the key moments that bring you to this place. You could do this as piece of text, or if you prefer a rough sketch or a timeline.
 - What stands out for you?
 - What have you discovered along the journey?
- ♦ If you had a prophetic word for the Church and/or the world what would you say?





Called by God



A call to ordained ministry grows out of being centred in Christian faith and discipleship, creating a desire to lead the people of God as they share in worship and mission. Such a call will be focused in God and be obedient, realistic and informed.

As a candidate you are offering yourself to God and the Church, and the Church seeks to test that call.

It will:

- ♦ include an understanding that it is a representative role
- ♦ embrace a public function in a plural, culturally diverse society
- ♦ seek to represent God-in-Christ and the community of the Church in the world
- ♦ present to the Church the demands of the gospel which is for all humankind
- ♦ embody the quest for holiness
- ♦ encourage the Christian community to engage in ministry and service.

Challenging expectations

Challenging expectations is great fun. I don't fit in many boxes and being a member of the Diaconal Order allows me to be me and find appointments that suit the gifts I can offer. The opportunity to be involved in pioneering work is so exciting as you never know what is going to happen. You've got to keep listening closely to God, meaning you are in the honoured position of getting to know God better and better.

Ellie Griffin is a deacon in the Loughborough Circuit.

Relating to others

We are looking for people whose relationships are characterised by integrity and authenticity, whose actions demonstrate a valuing of self and others, and are grounded in God's loving acceptance.

These will be people who:

- ♦ have the capacity to develop open and healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships. This capacity for developing relationships will show both in public behaviour and in private relationships.
- ♦ are able to relate naturally and easily alongside a wide variety of people, from different backgrounds and with varying mental, emotional and spiritual characteristics.
- ♦ have the capacity to relate to the same people in a number of different roles (eg friend, counsellor, mentor, leader) without confusion.
- ♦ show the ability to respect others, being aware of levels of closeness and distance in their relationships, can be the stranger or visitor in the community of faith, and are at home in the wider world.
- ♦ respect the understanding of the Church on matters of morality.

REFLECT

- ♦ How do others see you? Imagine if one of the people who know you best were to describe you to a panel – what would they say?
- ♦ What sustains your devotional and spiritual life?
- ♦ The work of an ordained minister has both a private and a public role. What are the boundaries that you would need to ensure your well-being?





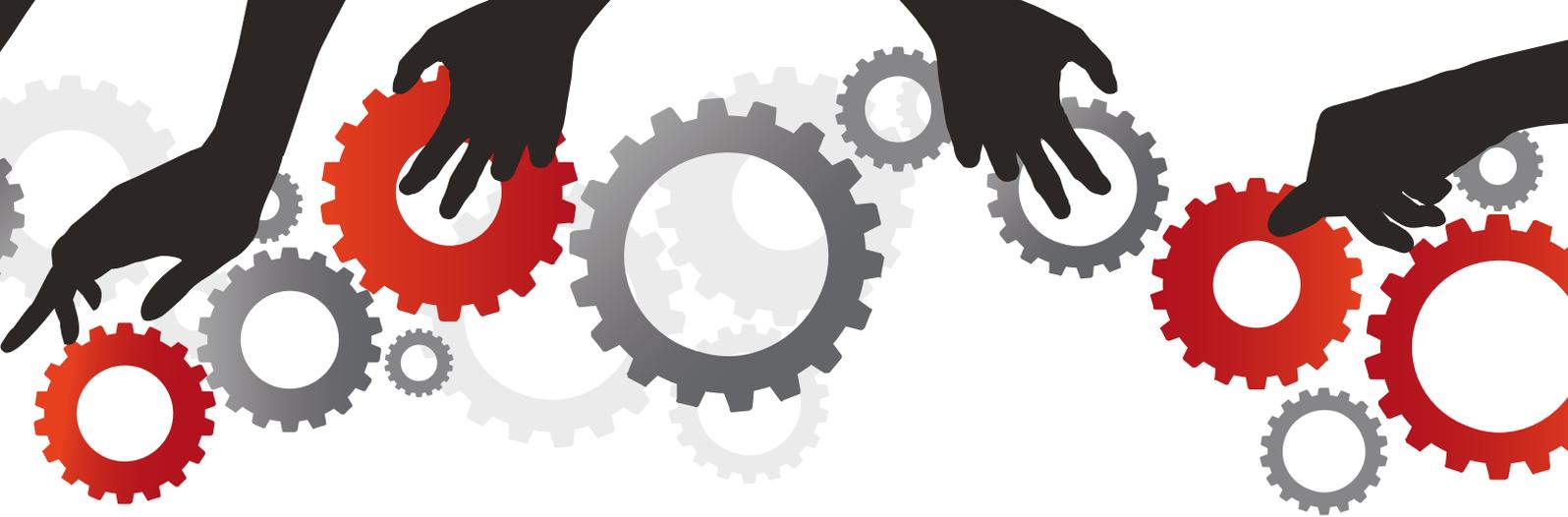
Engaged in God's world

24

We are looking for people who are seeking to follow God's mission in the world, doing justice and preaching grace so that more people will come to a living faith and become disciples of Jesus Christ.

People who are able to:

- ♦ make connections between the world of work and the Christian faith
- ♦ challenge the world with the gift of the gospel, supporting the Church in its calling to make followers of Jesus
- ♦ act in personal and prophetic, creative and vulnerable ways of witness, enabling the Church to respond to the needs of the world
- ♦ oppose discrimination and injustice in issues such as those of race, religion, gender, poverty, disability, and sexual orientation
- ♦ work with other Christian traditions, and have a capacity to relate to those of other faiths or none
- ♦ acknowledge that Methodism is part of a plural and multicultural society and be prepared to work beyond and across boundaries.



REFLECT

- Think about your present role(s). How are the attitudes and values (above) worked out now, in the work you do and leisure pursuits you have?
- What would need to change for them to be seen in you now?
- As you explore your vocation, what do you think you need to learn to become sufficiently centred as a candidate for ordained ministry?

As you are going, *disciple* all the people groups, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you all of the days to the close of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20
(as translated by Cracknell and Mellor)



Reaching further than the Church

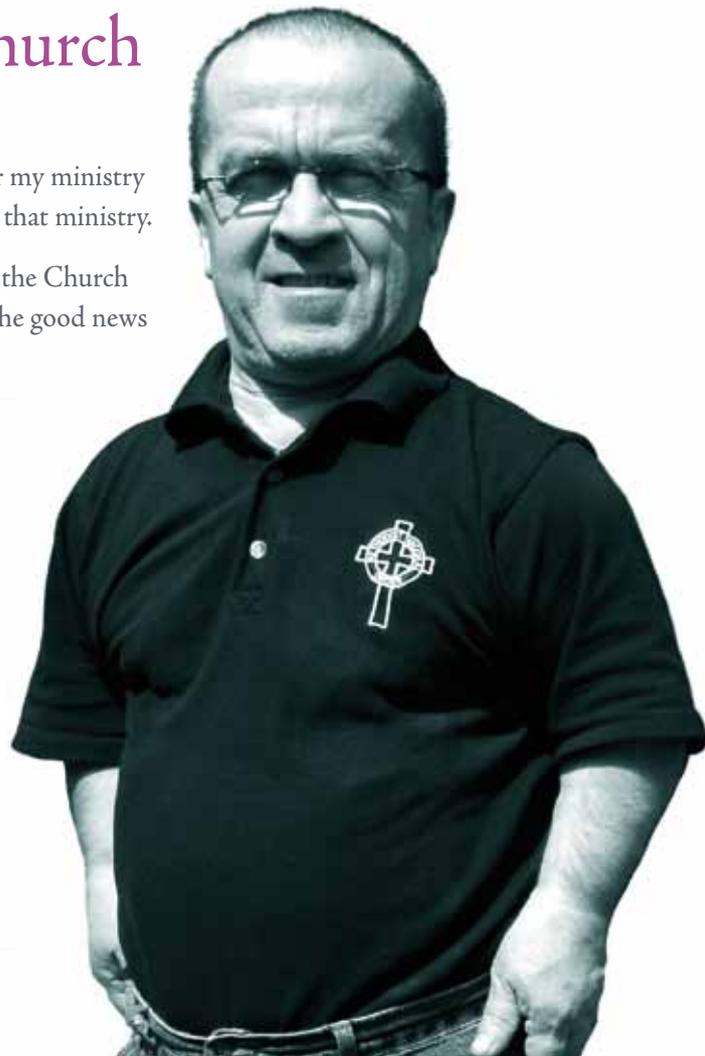
I felt that I was called to diaconal ministry after I reflected how far my ministry should stretch and what I would like to be the main purpose of that ministry.

It is very important for me that my ministry can reach further than the Church and that it can easily reach people who are in need to hear and see the good news for themselves.

Flip den Uil is a probationer deacon in the Liverpool (North Central) circuit.

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands.
Do with me whatever you will.
Whatever you may do I thank you.
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me and all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul.
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart.
For I love you Lord and so need to give myself,
surrender myself into your hands without reserve
and with boundless confidence
for you are my Father. Amen.

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916)



Show leadership potential

Christian leadership is courageous, prophetic and offered with a servant heart. It is focused on working collaboratively with others for the good of all.

Candidates should show an example of faith and discipleship and the capacity to be a representative leader of the Church in worship, mission and service.

This ability includes the capacity to:

- ♦ guide the life of the Church community as it shares in God's mission to the world
- ♦ offer leadership in the wider community
- ♦ demonstrate a willingness and ability to work cooperatively as a member of a team, inspiring, enabling and empowering others
- ♦ work under direction and with supervision and to develop necessary management and administrative skills
- ♦ accept responsibility and exercise appropriate authority
- ♦ face, in a flexible and balanced way, the change, conflict, pressures, ambiguity and, sometimes, loneliness which are entailed in being set apart by ordination.

REFLECT

- ♦ What is your experience and observation of different types of leadership?
- ♦ Think of a team you are part of. What are the roles that you and others play? Is anything missing and how could the team benefit from change?
- ♦ What is the best example, that you have seen, for the exercise of authority?

Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" [God] said, "I will be with you."

Exodus 3:11-12 (NRSV)

Eager to learn

Awareness of, and interest in, knowledge should extend beyond formal, narrowly religious fields.

Therefore all candidates should:

- ♦ have the necessary quality of mind and intellectual capacity to undertake satisfactorily a course of preparation for ministry, including theological, biblical and mission studies, and to be able to cope with the demands of ministry.
- ♦ appreciate the significance of theology to the Church.
- ♦ demonstrate a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development, having intellectual curiosity and being open to new ideas.
- ♦ be aware of a variety of approaches to theology, mission, ministry and practice within the Methodist Church and expect to work with these different traditions and approaches.

Samuel's response to God calling his name:
"Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

1 Samuel 3:10 (NRSV)



REFLECT

- ♦ Think of a film or book that you have read/seen recently. What themes struck you?
- ♦ What courses, seminars, reading suggested by your minister or district candidates secretary can prepare you as you candidate? Ask around and try and make opportunity of them.
- ♦ If you have been part of an EDEV programme (or Foundation Training), what have you learnt about yourself, the Church, the world?

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up thy gift in me.
Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Anna Bishop
student minister

Able to communicate

All candidates should demonstrate the ability to express faith naturally and effectively in ways that are appropriate, accessible and sensitive to the situation.

This means:

- ♦ showing evidence of being able to use biblical and theological understanding in discussion of people's questions about the world
- ♦ being able to articulate Christian faith in everyday situations and to help others to communicate effectively
- ♦ being aware of the variety of approaches to mission and evangelism
- ♦ showing evidence of the ability to select the most appropriate media and approach for a broad range of teaching/nurturing situations and for specific groups
- ♦ using language in oral and written communication and in worship that is sensitive and non-discriminatory
- ♦ understanding symbols and gestures and how to make proper use of space.

REFLECT

- ♦ How easy do you find it to talk of your faith?
- ♦ Try to explain your faith in a paragraph without using 'religious' language. Test it out on a friend.

Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.
(1 Peter 3:15) (NRSV)

Debra Chidakwa
and Jason Vinyard
student ministers



Who else is affected by a call to ordained ministry?



Such a call is likely to have some impact on members of your immediate and wider family. Pursuing a Christian vocation may mean making some sacrifices with regard to income, where you will live and your free time. It also means that other people will have expectations of you and your availability. Meeting these expectations can clash with those of your family.

If you become an accepted candidate you will be required to undertake training and this will undoubtedly mean significant changes in lifestyle, travel and, often, location.

The covenant relationship with those in ministry means that the Church will place you in a circuit and whilst the Church makes every effort to support ministers and their families, no-one should think that the relocation to a new circuit and home is an easy formality without challenge.

REFLECT

- Explore with your close family how much they feel called to these choices.
- How do your wider family view your sense of vocation to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church?
- To what extent are you ready for an itinerant ministry?

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel; Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

(Isaiah 43:1) (NRSV)

Growing into ministry

When I first tried on my clerical blouse and cassock at college, I laughed. How was anyone going to take me seriously when I looked so young? What was I thinking of? I felt like a young girl playing with dressing up clothes.

It is very different now I am in circuit ministry.

It is a deep joy to place bread into open hands at Holy Communion and realise the truth of those simple words spoken to each communicant, “The body of Christ given *for you*.”

I continue to be amazed that I have the privilege of celebrating this sacrament with God’s people, and standing alongside them at the best and the hardest times of their lives.

Wearing my clerical robes no longer feels like dressing up; I have ‘grown’ into these clothes as I grow into my calling. I do not laugh at myself, but delight in God’s call with wonder and thanks.

Kate Cambridge a presbyter in the Winchester Circuit.

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.”

But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.”

Jeremiah 1:4-9 (NRSV)



What next?

Exploring various avenues is a good thing and many people are unsure at first. Hopefully this booklet has helped you clarify things, but your questions, hopes and concerns do need to be shared with respected friends and, of course, your minister.

We ask that you complete an enquiry form online by **30 September** and it is important to meet that deadline.

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Registering in this way does not make an irreversible commitment to proceed. However the enquiry form does allow circuits and districts to prepare to deal with your application thoroughly and carefully.

The formal part of the process does not take long. Starting in mid December it moves through three stages at circuit, district and connexional level with the decision being known in April. The final decision is made each year at the Methodist Conference to which the recommendations are brought.



At each of the stages the people you meet will want to encourage you to find your vocation and also to explore with you and test whether that vocation is to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church. The whole process is undertaken prayerfully, with careful listening, detailed reading of your submissions and the references of others, making decisions openly and objectively.

All the details of this process are set out in *Steps in Candidating* which you can download, along with all the other more detailed information from the Methodist Church website (www.methodist.org.uk/candidates).

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"
And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Isaiah 6:8 (NRSV)



Some useful resources

The full text of the criteria required of those candidating for ordained ministry in the Methodist Church is available at www.methodistchurch.org.uk/candidates.

HOW TO FIND YOUR VOCATION

John Adair (Canterbury Press, 2002)

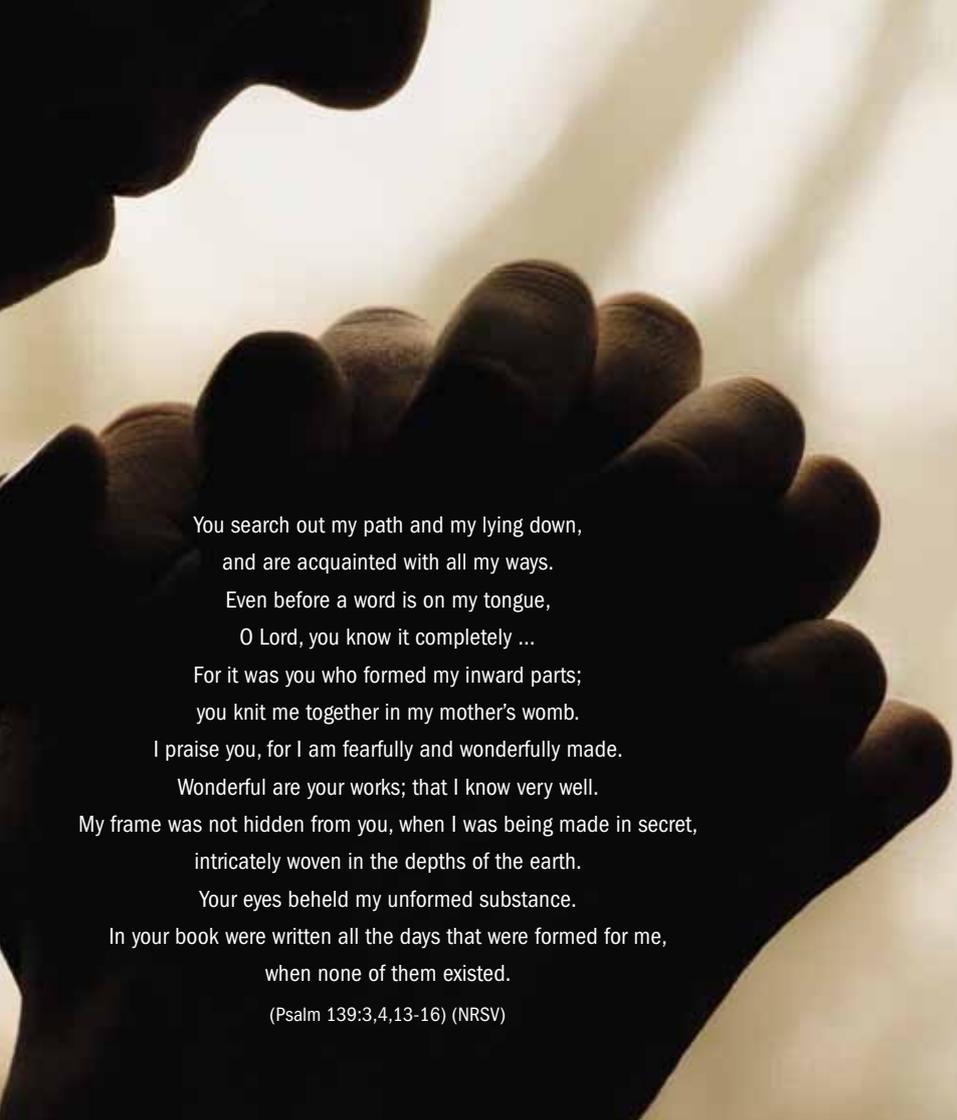
This book examines key characteristics of vocational people, how one might live vocationally in all walks of life and discerning where your 'inner-compass' may be leading you. Adair explores vocation as something wider than an exclusively artistic or religious pursuit, but one which is open to all – individuals and organisations alike.

FIT FOR THE PURPOSE

Ian Aveyard & David Muir (St Johns Extension Studies, 1997)

This workbook will enable you to understand the kind of life that God calls people to live, explore the place the Church has in working out kingdom purposes and discover where you and your gifts fit into all that (which may or may not include ordination). *Fit for Purpose* can be ordered from St John's Nottingham (www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk).





You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely ...

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them existed.

(Psalm 139:3,4,13-16) (NRSV)

The Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.

Put me to what you will,

rank me with whom you will;

put me to doing,

put me to suffering;

let me be employed for you,

or laid aside for you,

exalted for you,

or brought low for you;

let me be full,

let me be empty,

let me have all things,

let me have nothing:

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.

The Methodist Worship Book, p. 290

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