

# THE CONSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE AND DISCIPLINE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

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## Part 6 The Local Churches

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For the meaning of the expression 'Local Church' see cl. 1(xv) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) as applied by S.O. 003(vii). For exceptions see S.O. 605(2)–(5) and 942. As to a joint Local Church in Synod Cwmru and the Wales Synod, see S.O. 498.

### Section 60 Principles and General Provisions

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The provisions of S.O. 502 for the chairing and notice of all official meetings apply to Local Churches as well as to Circuits.

**600 The Nature of the Local Church.** (1) The Church exists to exercise the whole ministry of Christ. The Local Church, with its membership and larger church community, exercises this ministry where it is and shares in the wider ministry of the Church in the world. In this one ministry worship, fellowship, pastoral care, mission and service are essential elements. Administration and training enable their fulfilment. In the Methodist Church these various tasks are undertaken by the Local Church, through its Church Council and committees, in union with the ministry of the Circuit of which it is a constituent. It is represented in the Circuit Meeting and represents it locally. It engages in ecumenical work including, where appropriate, the support of ecumenical Housing Associations.

For the meaning of the expression 'Local Church' see cl. 1(xv) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) as applied by S.O. 003(vii). For exceptions see S.O. 605 (2)–(5) and 942. As to a joint Local Church in Synod Cwmru and the Wales Synod see S.O. 498.

As to the purposes of the Local Church see also S.O. 650(6). (2) [*revoked*]

**601 Its Size.** (1) If a church is too small, by itself, to fulfil its functions it is encouraged to seek association with its neighbours for the discharge together of the things that cannot be attempted by one church alone.

See S.O. 605, 612, 613(4).

(2) The minimum number of members for a self-governing church in the terms of Standing Order 605 is set at a very low figure to meet the need of sparsely populated areas; in general it is to be desired that much larger numbers be achieved.

**602 Its Government.** In the government of the Local Church the several responsibilities must be exercised without the loss of the unity of the one ministry. The Church Council is constituted to unite those who hold responsibility in the church in one working community. It has the authority to take decisions for the church and to manage its affairs to this same end. The General Church Meeting has a responsibility to consider the whole ministry of the church and every part of it and in making appointments to ensure the co-operation of the whole church in that ministry. This requires a proper representation of all the diversities present in the Local Church, including those who are newcomers to it.

**603 The Church Council.** The Church Council has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church, including the management of its property. Aims and methods, the determination and pursuit of policy and the deployment of available resources are its proper

responsibility. In many cases it will appoint committees which will have authority, in their own areas of responsibility, to initiate action, co-ordinate the work done in the church, advise the Church Council and report to it, being subject to its authority and oversight.

For the constitution and specific functions of the Church Council see Section 61.

**604 The Committees.** The appointment of committees or officers is dictated by the need to express the variety of function in the ministry of the Local Church. The whole church family of all ages, whether members of the Church or not, needs pastoral care, worship, fellowship, training and opportunities for service. The church has a responsibility for its neighbourhood, involving evangelism, service, participation in the life of the community and co-operation with statutory, private sector and voluntary agencies serving human needs; where possible it engages in these activities ecumenically. The church is committed to the whole world, in service and mission, in prayer and giving and the help of those in need, at home and overseas. In the proper care of its property the church has to ensure that its work is neither hindered by inadequate or unworthy buildings nor embarrassed by the support of unnecessary ones, while its proper stewardship of finance means the right raising of money and the right spending of it, so that the one is seen as an invitation to Christian commitment and the other as an opportunity for real choice in the life of the Church.

See Section 64.

**605 Formation and Cessation.** (1) No new Local Church shall be formed, nor former church reconstituted, having less than twelve persons who are locally resident and are either members of that church or actively committed to its life as ministers not in the active work.

(2) When the number of persons within clause (1) above falls below six, and so continues for four successive quarters, that church shall cease to be recognised as a Local Church.

See also S.O. 612.

(3) For the purpose of clause (1) a person is locally resident if resident in such a place that the Local Church in question is a natural centre for worship or fellowship.

(4) Where by reason of the operation of clause (2) above a Local Church ceases to be recognised as such, the members shall be constituted as a Class and placed under the care of a leader, who may be chosen from their number or from the wider membership of the Local Church to which the Class is attached. A number of such Classes in a neighbourhood may constitute a Local Church or such a Class may be attached to a larger church, either neighbouring or central, but so that in either case there shall be a Church Council and Pastoral Committee sufficient to undertake the oversight of the members and the training of new members envisaged in this Part and Section 05.

(5) The provision of opportunity for public worship for such Classes shall be kept under review by the Circuit Meeting which, in deciding whether or how often to sustain services in chapels where there is a Class but no Local Church, shall take into consideration the possibilities of growth in the area, the ecumenical situation, the sufficiency of numbers to form a worshipping congregation, facilities for travel and the stewardship of the resources of the Circuit and of the services of preachers.

**606 Eligibility for Appointment.** (1) The provisions as to eligibility for appointment to any office or membership of any official meeting, committee or other body (however described) in the Local Church shall be those set out in relation to the office or body in question, and may incorporate by reference one or more of the following categories of persons:

- (i) ministers, probationers and other persons (including those authorised to serve as presbyters or deacons under Standing Order 733) who are stationed in the Circuit in accordance with clauses (3) and (4) of Standing Order 785 and are active in the life and work of the Local Church, so far as not otherwise eligible;
- (ii) where there is a local ecumenical partnership approved by the Conference or (if so empowered) by the Synod, and subject to Standing Order 010, members of any communion participating in the partnership;
- (iii) subject to Standing Order 010, persons named on the community roll of the Local Church.

S.O. 010(1) prescribes the doctrinal qualification for office in the Methodist Church and the remainder of S.O. 010 deals with disqualification from appointment on the basis of convictions or cautions in relation to the criminal offences specified there.

(2) In a duly constituted local ecumenical partnership having a Church Council constituted in accordance with Standing Order 611(1) eligibility for office or for membership of official meetings, committees or other bodies connected with the partnership shall, subject to Standing Orders 611, 630(1) and 644, but notwithstanding any other provisions of Standing Orders, be governed by the constitution of the partnership, so far as it makes provision for such matters.

**607 Duration of Appointments.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 611A(6)(iii) and to clauses (2) and (5) below all appointments and elections connected with the Local Church shall unless otherwise prescribed by Standing Orders be for one year and take effect from the date specified in the resolution of appointment.

(2) Subject to Standing Order 632(3), if a casual vacancy occurs the meeting with authority to appoint shall fill the vacancy with immediate effect for the remainder of the term of the appointment vacated.

S.O. 632(3) concerns casual vacancies among the church stewards.

(3) Subject to clause (4) below no person shall hold the office of church steward, church treasurer or secretary of the Church Council or Pastoral Committee, or be elected to the Church Council under Standing Order 623, for more than six successive years.

(4) If the operation of clause (3) above would make it impossible adequately to fill an essential office in the Local Church the Church Council or General Church Meeting, as the case may be, may by a 75% majority of those present and voting on a ballot vote re-appoint annually beyond the sixth year.

(5) This Standing Order does not apply to the appointment of persons employed or engaged under a contract, nor to ex-officio membership.

**608 Annual Covenant Service.** An annual covenant service shall normally be held in every Local Church. At these services the sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated. In churches where it is not possible to arrange for the annual covenant service to be held on a Sunday early in the new year the service may be held on a weeknight or, failing this, a service may be held for the members of two or more churches at one conveniently situated chapel.

**609 Extended Communion.** (1) Presbyters, deacons stationed in the Circuit and persons authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper under Standing Order 011 may lead acts of worship in homes (including nursing and retirement homes), hospitals and hospices during which elements set aside at a previous celebration of the Lord's Supper are received. In addition a Church Council may annually appoint lay persons to lead such acts of worship.

(2) Persons so appointed by the Church Council shall, unless already instructed in the conduct of such services, be instructed by the Superintendent or by a presbyter appointed by him or her, the form of service for 'Extended Communion' authorised by the Conference being used as a basis of instruction.

## Section 61 The Church Council

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For the meaning of the expression 'Church Council' see cl. 1(iii) of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) as applied by S.O. 002(1)(ii).

Cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides that Church Councils shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons, and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as the Conference may provide.

As to chairing of the council see S.O. 502(1).

For guidelines for the business of the council see Book VII B, Part 6.

**610 Constitution.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 511, 611 and 611A, the Church Council shall consist of:

- (i) the ministers, probationers and workers listed in clause (4) below; (ii)-(v) *[deleted]*
  - (vi) the church stewards;
  - (vii) the church treasurer;
  - (viii) the secretary of the Pastoral Committee, where the committee is appointed;
  - (ix) the secretary of the council;
  - (x) not less than six representatives nor more than fifteen elected annually by the General Church Meeting, or, where the membership does not exceed 49 and the Church Council so resolves, all members of the Local Church who are willing to serve;
  - (xi) up to fifteen additional persons appointed by the council to ensure that all areas of the church's life are adequately represented and in particular that, wherever possible, young people are included in its membership;
  - (xii) one circuit steward appointed by the circuit stewards.

S.O. 511 concerns single-church Circuits.

For the church stewards see S.O. 632-634.

For the church treasurer see S.O. 635.

For the General Church Meeting see Section 62.

(2) Where all members of the Local Church who are willing to serve are to be members of the council under head (x) of clause (1) above the council shall annually enquire which of them are so willing and the result of that enquiry shall establish, for the ensuing year, the list of persons who, while they remain members of the Local Church, are members of the council under that head.

(2A) (a) The persons eligible for appointment under head (x) of clause (1) above are those who are members in the Local Church or are within category (i) of Standing Order 606(1).

(b) The persons eligible for appointment under heads (ix) and (xi) of clause (1) above and head (vii) of clause (4) below are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 606(1).

There is no lower age limit for membership of the council, but persons under the age of 18 (16 in Scotland) cannot legally become managing trustees of model trust property, and so are not eligible to vote on managing trustee business.

(3) [revoked]

- (4) The ministers, probationers and workers referred to in clause (1)(i) above shall be:
- (i) the Superintendent and any other presbyters and presbyteral probationers appointed to the Circuit or, if there are more than two such other presbyters and presbyteral probationers, two of them, selected by the Circuit Meeting, but so that the presbyter in pastoral charge shall always be a member;
  - (ii) any presbyter or presbyteral probationer not so appointed who has entered into an arrangement to have pastoral responsibility in the Local Church, including any supernumerary undertaking pastoral work under Standing Order 792(2);
  - (iii) any person residing in the Circuit for the purpose of the stations who is authorised to serve the Church as a presbyter under Standing Order 733 and who has been appointed to exercise pastoral charge in the Circuit or pastoral responsibility in that Local Church, and any person having the status of associate presbyter under Standing Order 733A whose functions include the exercise of pastoral responsibility in that Local Church;
  - (iv) if any deacons or diaconal probationers are appointed to the Circuit, and if the Circuit Meeting considers it appropriate for the council in question, up to two of them, selected by the Circuit Meeting;
  - (v) any deacon or diaconal probationer not so appointed who has entered into an arrangement to exercise leadership of the pastoral care, worship and mission in the Local Church, including any supernumerary undertaking pastoral work under Standing Order 792(2);
  - (vi) any person residing in the Circuit for the purpose of the stations who is authorised to serve the Church as a deacon under Standing Order 733 and who has pastoral responsibility in that Local Church, and any person having the status of associate deacon under Standing Order 733A whose functions include undertaking pastoral work in that Local Church; and
  - (vii) such persons, if any, as the Church Council judges it appropriate to appoint from among those employed under Standing Order 570 by the council, or by the Circuit Meeting in work in the Local Church.

The Superintendent is separately named because it is possible that he or she is not appointed to the Circuit; see S.O. 785(3)(b).

**611 Local Ecumenical Partnerships.** (1) In local ecumenical partnerships, if the Synod so directs when designating the partnership or later, the Church Council for the purposes of clauses 8 and 40 of the Deed of Union and of paragraph 2 of the Model Trusts and for any other purpose for which a Methodist Church Council may be required shall consist of the members of the ecumenical church council or other meeting (by whatever title) responsible for the general management of the partnership, together with (so far as not already members) a circuit steward and the ministers and probationers who would have been members of the council in accordance with clause (4)(i) to (vi) of Standing Order 610 had it been constituted under that Standing Order.

Cl. 8 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) concerns admission to membership and cl. 40 gives the general power to the Conference to constitute and regulate official meetings of the Church, including Church Councils. Para. 2 of the Model Trusts provides that Church Councils are the managing trustees of local property.

(2) During the currency of such a direction, which the Synod may at any time revoke, there shall be no other or separate Church Council constituted under Standing Order 610.

(3) The Synod may exercise its powers under this Standing Order whether or not it was the body which originally designated the local ecumenical partnership in question.

**611A Exceptional Cases.** (1) This Standing Order applies when in the judgment of the authorised body the Church Council constituted under Standing Order 610 or 611 has committed, is committing, or is threatening to commit, a serious breach of trust or of Methodist discipline, and if:

- (i) it is incapable of remedy; or
- (ii) it is capable of remedy, and the Church Council has been requested to remedy it but has refused or neglected to do so; or
- (iii) it has not yet been committed, and the Church Council has been requested to desist but has failed to undertake to do so; Provided that the requirement in (iii) of a request to desist need not be fulfilled in cases of emergency, as judged by the authorised body.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of clause (1) above, examples of breaches which are capable, if the authorised body so judges, of being within that clause are:

- (i) ones which have caused, or will if committed or continued cause, significant harm to model trust property or other church funds or to the work of the Church; and also
- (ii) any which involve:
  - (a) permitting any use contrary to paragraph 14 of the Model Trusts or Section 92 of Standing Orders;
  - (b) taking any step requiring consent under Standing Order 930(4) or 931(1) or Section 98 without that consent;
  - (c) non-compliance with Standing Order 650(4);
  - (d) non-compliance with a statutory notice;
  - (e) non-compliance with a requirement of charity law or of the Charity Commission; or
  - (f) spending funds outside their permitted purposes.

(3) For the purposes of this Standing Order the “authorised body” is the district Policy Committee of the District in which the Local Church concerned lies, the “old Church Council” is the council as constituted under Standing Order 610 or 611 and the “new Church Council” is the council as constituted under clause (4) below.

(4) When this Standing Order applies the authorised body may by a direction in writing replace the old Church Council by a new Church Council, consisting of seven or more members of the Methodist Church of full age appointed by the authorised body who may, if the authorised body thinks fit, include persons who were among the members of the old Church Council.

(5) Any such direction may specify the date on which it is to take effect, and if no other date is specified shall take immediate effect.

(6) As from the date on which such a direction takes effect, and while it continues in effect:

(i) subject to clauses (7) and (10) below the old Church Council shall be dissolved and the new Church Council shall succeed to all its powers and responsibilities, including its powers and responsibilities as managing trustees, but not so as to relieve the members of the old Church Council of any personal liability which they may have incurred while in office;

(II) Standing Orders 612, 613(2), 623 and 643(1) shall cease to apply to that Local Church and Standing Order 502, clauses (1), (5), (6), (8) and (9), shall cease to apply to local bodies in that Local Church except to the extent that the direction applies them, which it may do with or without amendment. The direction shall in any event make provision for the chairing of local bodies in that Local Church;

(iii) notwithstanding Standing Order 607(1) the new Church Council may forthwith terminate any appointment made by the old Church Council or General Church Meeting and make a fresh appointment in its place for the residue of the term of the appointment terminated;

(iv) notwithstanding Standing Order 632(1) appointments of church stewards shall be made by the new Church Council, which may appoint as a church steward any member of the Methodist Church.

(7) The old Church Council may appeal to the Methodist Council, or to a committee appointed by the Methodist Council for this purpose, against a direction of the authorised body under clause (4) above, but until the appeal is determined the direction shall remain in effect. Any such appeal shall be brought by notice in writing signed by the chair and at least two other members of the old Church Council with the authority of the members of that Church Council given at a meeting convened for the purpose. The old Church Council shall be treated as remaining in existence solely for the purpose of holding such a meeting and deciding whether or not to appeal. The membership of the old Church Council for this purpose shall consist of the persons who constituted the members of the Church Council immediately prior to the making of the direction.

(8) While such a direction is in effect the authorised body may at any time dismiss one or more of the members of the new Church Council or appoint additional qualified persons as members, ensuring that there are at all times (apart from any unavoidable gaps following death or resignation) not less than seven.

(9) The authorised body shall keep in review the question whether any such direction need remain in effect and if satisfied that it need no longer do so shall withdraw it in writing. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the authorised body shall in any event withdraw the direction no later than the end of the connexional year following the year in which the direction was made unless it resolves that the direction remains necessary, in which case it shall provide the members of the old Church Council, as far as reasonably possible, with a written copy of the resolution and an explanation of the reasons for it. The same procedure shall be followed in the next and each subsequent connexional year until the direction is withdrawn.

(10) The members of the old Church Council, or any three of them, may at any time apply to the authorised body to withdraw such a direction, except that:

(i) no such application shall be made within three months of a previous application;

(ii) no application by three members shall be entertained if it is made within three months after the old Church Council decided not to make such an application at a meeting held for the purpose of considering whether or not to do so.

The old Church Council shall be treated as remaining in existence solely for the purpose of holding such a meeting and deciding whether or not to apply to withdraw the direction. The membership of the old Church Council for this purpose shall consist of the persons who constituted the members of the Church Council immediately prior to the making of the direction.

(11) If a direction is withdrawn the old Church Council shall be treated as reconstituted with a membership consisting as far as possible of those persons who constituted the membership of the Church Council prior to the making of the direction and so that any persons who would have ceased to be members by effluxion of time shall be treated as remaining members until the end of the connexional year in which the direction is withdrawn.

(12) At all times while a direction is in effect, the members of the old Church Council are obliged to do everything which may reasonably be required by the new Church Council to enable it effectively to exercise all its powers and discharge all its responsibilities.

**612 Minimum Size.** (1) When it is impossible to make up the number of members of the Church Council to include seven persons other than those qualified under head

(i) of Standing Order 610(1) who are able and willing to act the Superintendent shall be informed. He or she shall nominate to the Circuit Meeting sufficient members of other churches in the Circuit, able and willing to act, to make up the number to seven. The Circuit Meeting shall then appoint that number of members to the Church Council for the ensuing year.

(2) When the procedure in clause (1) above has been followed for two successive years the Circuit Meeting may apply to that church the procedure set out in Standing

Order 605(4), so that the church will become a Class within another church. The Church Council of the church thus united will take on all the responsibilities of both Church Councils.

**613 Meetings.** (1) The Church Council shall meet at least twice in each year.

(2) Before each meeting the presbyter in pastoral charge or, if none, the Superintendent shall, with the secretary of the Church Council, make out a list, by name, of the persons who are in their opinion members of the council under Standing Order 511, 610, 611 or 612, as the case may be, distinguishing those, if any, who are not of full age. At the meeting, before any other business is transacted, that list shall be laid before the

council which shall, after making any correction which seems to the council necessary, adopt it, and the list as thus adopted shall be final and conclusive as to the persons of whom the council then consists.

As to chairing and notice of meetings see S.O. 502. See the note to S.O. 610(2A) as to persons who are not of full age.

(3) (a) In this clause “closed session” means a meeting of the Church Council, or part of a meeting, at which only persons who are members of the council for the business in hand are present, and “open session” means one open also to other members of the Local Church, to non-members active in its life and to any other person specifically invited by the council to attend a particular meeting or for particular business.

(b) Except as provided in sub-clause (d) below meetings of the Church Council are in open session.

(c) In open session persons who are not members of the council may speak but not vote nor propose or second any resolution. The Church Council shall in particular encourage young people to attend its open sessions.

(d) The Church Council may at any time resolve that a particular meeting or meetings be held, or particular business dealt with, in closed session, and shall do so whenever considering admission to membership or any other business on which it is required, or decides, to vote by ballot. It shall consider carefully whether to do so before embarking upon or continuing any business which may occasion statements which should be kept in confidence or which involve personal criticism.

(4) The Church Councils of more than one church may meet jointly from time to time without infringing the authority of each individual Church Council.

Such a joint meeting could not exercise the functions of the Church Council as managing trustees of property.

**614 Responsibilities.** The general oversight of the Local Church shall be undertaken by the Church Council, exercising leadership over the whole field of the church’s concern.

See also S.O. 602, 603.

For the council’s functions in relation to property see S.O. 940 and 941.

**615 Procedure.** (1) Voting shall be open, except that voting by ballot shall be used on the following occasions only:

- (i) when these Standing Orders so provide;
- (ii) if the Conference so directs;
- (iii) if the meeting by the votes of two thirds of those present so resolves.

S.O. 607(4) provides for a ballot vote when re-appointing to an essential office beyond the sixth year.

(2) Subject to clause (1) the meeting may regulate its own procedure, but unless it adopts other rules of debate the rules comprising clauses (5) to (7) and (10) to (25) of Standing Order 413 shall apply, with the necessary substitutions.

(3) Notwithstanding clause (1) above and any applicable rules of debate any member who maintains that a decision is or may be illegal or in contravention of the Deed of Union, the Model Trusts or Standing Orders or (in the case of managing trustees’ business) otherwise a breach of trust shall be entitled to have his or her dissenting vote recorded by name.

See, e.g., S.O. 985, in particular cls. (5) and (6).

**616 Irregularities.** (1) When the rules of debate in clauses (5) to (7) and (10) to (25) of Standing Order 413 apply in accordance with Standing Order 615(2) they shall take effect subject to the provisions of this Standing Order.

(2) No resolution or other act or proceeding of the council shall be rendered invalid, void or voidable by reason of any non-compliance with any of the provisions of clauses (6), (7), (10), (11), (16), (20), (21), (23), (24) or (25) of Standing Order 413.

As to the validation of proceedings see also cl. 41 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 126(2).

(3) If before any resolution or other vote or proceeding of the council has been acted upon, or the minute recording it approved and signed, it comes to the attention of the chair that there was any irregularity of a kind described in clause (5) below in or leading to the making of that decision, then unless satisfied that the irregularity could not have affected or influenced the decision the chair shall ensure that the decision is not irrevocably acted upon until the council has been reconvened to reconsider the question and come to a regular decision upon it.

(4) If any such irregularity does not come to the attention of the chair until after the decision has been acted upon, or the minute recording it approved and signed, or if the chair is satisfied that the irregularity could not have affected or influenced the decision, then the decision shall be as valid as if regularly made in all respects.

(5) The irregularities referred to in clauses (3) and (4) above are the following:

- (i) failure to achieve the majority required by clause (17) or (22) of Standing Order 413, where applicable;
- (ii) an incorrect ruling that a greater majority is required than is the case;
- (iii) miscounting of votes;

- (iv) failure to put to the council a resolution, amendment or procedural motion which the mover and seconder are entitled to have put;
- (v) failure to comply with clause (18) of Standing Order 413 by requiring unnecessarily an immediate decision on a motion that the question be not put.

## Section 62 The General Church Meeting

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Cl. 40 of the Deed of Union (Book II Part 1) provides that General Church Meetings shall be constituted in such manner, of such persons, and with and subject to such powers, duties and provisions as the Conference may provide.

For guidelines for the business of the meeting see Book VII B, Part 6. As to chairing and notice of the meeting see S.O. 502.

**620 Constitution.** (1) In addition to the ex-officio members under Standing Order 643(1), the voting members of the General Church Meeting are the members of the Local Church and persons within category (i) of Standing Order 606(1).

(2) The meeting is also open to all other persons on the community roll of the Local Church.

**621 Functions.** The meeting shall be held for fellowship, for mutual counsel respecting the condition of the Local Church, including its financial affairs, for the election of church stewards and representatives and for any other purpose which the Conference may direct. In churches with members who are pupils in a Methodist independent school particular care shall be taken to ensure their inclusion in appropriate ways in the life of the meeting.

As to the election of church stewards see S.O. 632.  
 As to the election of representatives see S.O. 623.  
 As to the last sentence see also S.O. 630(1A), 631(3) and 050(3).

**622 Meetings.** (1) Subject to clause (2) below the meeting shall be held at least once in each year for the purpose of electing church stewards and representatives and as often in addition as the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church, in conjunction with the Church Council, may think fit, and fourteen days' notice shall be given by such means as are calculated to ensure that the meeting is brought to the attention of the members of every meeting at which an election is to be held.

(2) If under Standing Order 511(2)(vii) or 610(1)(x) no representatives are to be elected by the meeting in any year and if the Church Council is satisfied that the functions of the meeting can be adequately discharged by the council and that there will be adequate opportunities for fellowship and consultation available to everyone on the community roll, the Church Council may decide that the General Church Meeting be not convened in that year, in which case its functions shall be discharged by the council.

**623 Election of Representatives.** (1) Nominations for the election or re-election of representatives to the Church Council may be made by anyone who is entitled to vote. Notice of such nominations should be given in writing, not less than seven days before the meeting at which the election is to be held, to the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church, who shall also have the right to nominate. If insufficient nominations have been received, further nominations may be made at the meeting. All nominations must have the previous consent of the persons nominated.

Such elections are not required in certain small churches; see S.O. 610(1)(x).

Under S.O. 610(2A)(a), representatives must be members in the Local Church or eligible under S.O. 606(1) (i). There is no lower age limit, but see the note to S.O. 610(2A).

For those entitled to vote see S.O. 620(1).

(2) Voting shall be open or by ballot, as the meeting determines. For the number to be elected see S.O. 610(1)(x).

(3) Casual vacancies occurring during the course of a year owing to death, resignation, removal or lapse of membership may be filled at a meeting specially convened for the purpose.

(4) *[revoked]*

(5) In nominating and electing representatives the members of the General Church Meeting shall consider the composition of the Church Council as a whole with regard to age, sex and ethnic origin and shall in particular seek to include, wherever possible, young people in its representation.

(6) Where the Circuit Meeting and the Church Council are constituted under Standing Order 511(2) the provisions of this Standing Order and of Standing Order 620(1) as to the election of representatives apply to both bodies and there shall be only one such election for both.

(7) This Standing Order is subject to the provisions of Standing Order 611A(6)(ii).

## Section 63 Principal Officers

### *Standing Order Page*

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As to the duration of appointments to the offices referred to in this Section see S.O. 607.

**630 Class Leaders – Appointment.** (1) The Church Council shall annually appoint class leaders and pastoral visitors to share in the pastoral care of all those whose names are on the community roll of the Local Church.

Cl. 9 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) provides that all members are to have their names entered on a class book and be placed under the pastoral care of a class leader or pastoral visitor.

(1A) A person appointed as a class leader or pastoral visitor shall be a member in the Local Church of 18 years of age or more or a minister or probationer who is stationed or residing in the Circuit or is the chaplain to a Methodist independent school with pupils who are members in the Local Church, and where there are such pupils the chaplain shall in all cases be so appointed.

See also S.O. 631(3) and 050(3).

(2) Newly appointed class leaders and pastoral visitors shall be publicly recognised and commissioned at a service arranged for that purpose.

**631 Class Leaders – Responsibilities.** (1) It is the duty of a class leader:

- (i) to exercise pastoral care over those committed to his or her charge;
- (ii) to meet the Class regularly;
- (iii) to visit those on his or her pastoral list regularly;
- (iv) to encourage members to fulfil their commitments as set out on the ticket of membership, and where appropriate to encourage others to consider the claims of membership;
- (v) to inform the minister or probationer having pastoral responsibility of any special need or change of address;
- (vi) to pray regularly for those on his or her pastoral list.

For the duty of the circuit ministers to visit the Classes see S.O. 526(1). As to meetings of class leaders see S.O. 644(7).

(2) A pastoral visitor undertakes the duty of a class leader, except that he or she will not be expected to meet a Class.

(3) The Pastoral Committee shall allocate pastoral responsibility among the class leaders and pastoral visitors. Members who are pupils in a Methodist independent school shall be allocated to the chaplain of the school.

See also S.O. 621 and 050(3).

(4) The Conference recognises that there may be variation in local procedure, but the spirit of the above clauses of this Standing Order is to be observed.

**632 Church Stewards – Appointment.** (1) Subject to Standing Order 611A(6)(iv) the General Church Meeting shall annually appoint as church stewards two or more persons who are members of the Local Church or supernumeraries stationed in the Circuit.

It should be noted that a church steward who is under the age of 18 is precluded by S.O. 644(5) from being a member of the Pastoral Committee (as to whose significant functions see S.O. 644 below).

As to re-appointments see S.O. 607(3).

(2) Any member of the meeting entitled to vote may make a nomination if notice of such nomination has been given in writing to the presbyter having pastoral charge of the Local Church not less than seven days before the meeting. The chair of the meeting may, however, nominate without previous notice.

For entitlement to vote see S.O. 620 (1).



(3) Should a casual vacancy occur during the course of the year owing to the death, resignation or removal of a church steward or his or her ceasing to be a member a successor may be appointed in accordance with the provisions of clause (2) above at any regular meeting of the Church Council or at a special Church Council summoned for the purpose, and fourteen days' notice shall be given of any such business.

**633 Church Stewards – General Responsibilities.** The church stewards are corporately responsible with the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church for giving leadership and help over the whole range of the church's life and activity. They are particularly charged to hold together in unity the variety of concerns that are contained within the one ministry of the Church. To this end it is their responsibility to uphold and act upon the decisions and policies of the Church Council. In the discharge of their responsibilities they are encouraged wherever possible to draw other members with appropriate gifts and skills into a leadership team to be appointed by the Church Council.

The church stewards are entitled to appoint one of their number to any official meeting connected with the Local Church (S.O. 643(2)).

**634 Church Stewards – Particular Duties.** (1) The church stewards shall be responsible for seeing that all services, meetings and other engagements appointed on the circuit plan in connection with the Local Church are duly held, for welcoming and being in attendance upon the preacher before and after the service and, whenever necessary, arranging hospitality for him or her and the payment of his or her expenses and, in the unforeseen emergency of a failure on the part of a preacher or other responsible person to keep the appointment, for seeing that a service or meeting suitable to the occasion is actually held.

For the circuit plan see S.O. 521.

(2) It shall be the duty of the church stewards before each service for public worship on Sunday to prepare for announcement by the preacher or some other person written notices of all services, meetings and other engagements appointed on the circuit plan or officially communicated and to see that no announcement is made save such as is in accord with the general usage of the Methodist Church.

As to political matters see S.O. 921.

(3) The church stewards shall give due notice of all public collections, arrange for the taking of the collections, enter the amounts in a book kept for the purpose and without delay remit them to the treasurer or other persons authorised to receive them.

All moneys collected for local church funds will be paid over to the church treasurer (S.O. 635(2)).

(4) The church stewards shall see that all necessary arrangements are made for the administration of the sacrament of baptism after due notice has been given to the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church, in the case of children by the parents or guardians, in other cases by the candidate for baptism.

As to baptism in relation to membership and to infants see cl. 6 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1). As to baptism generally see S.O. 010A.

**635 Treasurer.** (1) The Church Council shall annually appoint a church treasurer, who shall be a member in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or be within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 606(1).

As to re-appointment see S.O. 607(3).

(2) The church treasurer shall receive all collections, gifts, donations, subscriptions and other moneys raised for the general church fund, the benevolence fund or the model trust fund and any money arising for such other accounts as the Church Council may direct. He or she shall meet all financial obligations on behalf of the Church Council and present a statement of all such funds and accounts to the Church Council and to such committee or committees (if any) as the council may direct. While it is not necessary for the general, model trust and benevolence funds each to have its own separate bank account, the treasurer must ensure that these funds are accounted for separately, for example by means of a suitable system of column analysis in the cash book. On behalf of the Church Council he or she shall, eight working days before the beginning of each quarter, pay to the circuit stewards the sum required of the Local Church by the assessment of the Circuit Meeting.

See S.O. 012A for the duties of treasurers generally.

As to assessments on Local Churches by the Circuit Meeting see S.O. 515(3), 532(1)(i), 650(4). The assessment includes the local contribution to the Methodist Church Fund.

For the general church fund, benevolence fund and model trust fund see S.O. 650, 651 and 652 respectively.

For general provisions as to the administration of church accounts see S.O. 012.

**636 Auditor.** The Church Council shall appoint an auditor or independent examiner, as appropriate, annually for the general, model trust and benevolence funds and all other funds under its jurisdiction. The auditor or examiner for the general, model trust and benevolence funds shall be the same person unless those funds have separate bank accounts and are accounted for separately. The appointment shall comply with the provisions of Standing Order 012(3) and the auditor or examiner shall report annually to the Church Council in accordance with the provisions of that Standing Order.

**637 Communion Stewards.** (1) The Church Council may annually appoint persons to serve as communion stewards or may assign the duties set out in clauses (2) to (4) below in other ways, and in those clauses 'communion stewards' includes any persons assigned to carry out those duties.

(1A) The persons eligible for appointment are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i) or (ii) of Standing Order 606(1).

(2) It shall be the duty of the communion stewards to make provision for the proper celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and for the holding of love-feasts whenever appointed.

(3) The communion stewards shall attend at the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and shall be responsible for directing the approach of communicants to the Lord's Table in an orderly and expeditious manner.

(4) Where a separate collection is taken at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or a love-feast, additional to the general collection at the service, if any, of which such a celebration forms part, the communion stewards shall take and record it and hand it to the church treasurer. All such collections shall be for the local benevolence fund unless, under the direct or delegated authority of the Church Council, a collection is made for some other charitable purpose and the congregation have been informed of that purpose before contributing.

For the local benevolence fund see S.O. 651.

As to what are charitable purposes see the note to S.O. 650(5) and the text of S.O. 650(6).

## Section 64 Other Officers and Committees

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**640 Principles.** (1) The ministry of the Local Church, with the leadership of its Church Council, is to care for the worship of God, for the church family, for its neighbourhood and for world service and mission and to exercise responsible stewardship of its property and its finance. Whatever committees or other official bodies are constituted for the government of the Local Church, their constitution and agenda shall express those functions and tend to their fulfilment, at the same time ensuring their inter-relation.

See also S.O. 600 and 604.

(2) While the establishment of committees is largely at the discretion of the Church Council, larger churches are encouraged to make as much use of committees as possible in order that every area of the church's life and witness may receive examination and encouragement, and to enable as many people as possible to make a contribution to the leadership of the Local Church.

(3) In making appointments to local committees and other official bodies, or to offices which carry membership of them, appointing bodies shall consider engaging young people in such responsibilities.

**641 Obligatory Appointments.** The Church Council shall appoint class leaders and pastoral visitors, a church treasurer and, subject to Standing Order 644(4), a Pastoral Committee, together with any other officers or committees who may for the time being be required by Standing Orders, each with the responsibilities and powers prescribed by the Deed of Union or Standing Orders.

As to class leaders and pastoral visitors, the church treasurer and the Pastoral Committee see S.O. 630, 635 and 644 respectively.

There must also be church stewards, appointed by the General Church Meeting; see S.O. 632-634.

**642 Discretionary Appointments.** (1) The Church Council may appoint such other officers and committees, and with such responsibilities, as in its judgment are required for the furtherance of the work of the Local Church, and for effective communication with the Circuit, the District and the Conference in areas of special concern such as world mission and social responsibility.

As to chairing and notice of committee meetings see S.O. 502.

(2) The council may delegate to any of its committees any of its powers, except appointments under Standing Order 641, the approval of persons for membership of the Methodist Church and the accreditation of workers among children and young people under Standing Order 661.

(3) The above powers of delegation are subject, in the case of the council's functions as managing trustees, to the provisions of the Model Trusts and Standing Order 911.

As to the Model Trusts, see para. 16(k) (Book II, Part 2).

(4) The persons eligible for appointment under this clause are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (i), (ii) or (iii) of Standing Order 606(1).

**643 Ex-officio Membership.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 611A(6)(ii) and 644 the ministers, probationers and others who are members of the Church Council under head (i) of Standing Order 610(1) or heads (i) and (ii) of Standing Order 511(2) shall, ex officio, be members of every official meeting, committee or other body (however described) connected with the Local Church.

(2) The church stewards shall be entitled to appoint one of their number to any such meeting.

**644 Pastoral Committee.** (1) The Pastoral Committee shall, subject to clauses (4) and (5) below, consist of the following persons:

- (i) the Superintendent;
- (ii) the ministers and probationers appointed to the Circuit;
- (iii) the church stewards;
- (iv) the class leaders and pastoral visitors and, in a local ecumenical partnership, any members of other participating communions who have similar pastoral responsibilities.

(2) *[revoked]*

(3) *[revoked]*

(4) In churches with a membership of 49 or less, the Church Council may resolve not to appoint a committee, in which case the council itself shall discharge the committee's functions.

(5) No person may be a member of the committee while under 18 years of age.

(6) The secretary of the committee shall be appointed by the Church Council from among the members of the committee.

(7) The committee shall meet at least once in each year. It may meet at other times, as often as there is need, or the class leaders and pastoral visitors themselves may meet for the consideration of the responsibilities of their pastoral office and the increase of its effectiveness.

As to chairing and notice see S.O. 502.

(8) It shall be the responsibility of the committee:

- (i) to conduct an annual review of the membership and to prepare the annual returns of membership as at the 1st November;
- (ii) to take such part as the Church Council may require in arranging training for membership and to report thereon to the Church Council;
- (iii) to consider all other matters relating to church membership;
- (iv) *[deleted]*
- (v) *[deleted]*
- (vi) to prepare a report on membership for the Church Council, and to put forward suggestions and recommendations;
- (vii) to encourage the practice of fellowship through class meetings and other groups among all members of the church family;
- (viii) to take all possible steps to increase the effectiveness of the offices of class leaders and pastoral visitors, to perform its functions under Standing Order 631(3) and to ensure that Standing Order 630 (2) is carried into effect.

The review required by (1) is to be carried out name by name (S.O. 054(5)).

As to training for membership see S.O. 525(iv) and 050(1).

As to admission to membership see cl. 8 of the Deed of Union (Book II, Part 1) and S.O. 050(4).

As to the functions of the committee in relation to members who cease to meet see cl. 10 of the Deed of

Union.

S.O. 631(3) provides that the committee shall allocate pastoral responsibility among class leaders and

pastoral visitors.

S.O. 630(2) provides for a public service of recognition and commissioning of newly appointed class

leaders.

For guidelines for the business of the committee see Book VI B, Part 6.

(9)–(10) *[revoked]*

(11) For the purposes of the Deed of Union and Section 05 of Standing Orders the meeting or committee having the responsibilities of a Pastoral Committee is:

- (i) the local Pastoral Committee composed in accordance with clause (1) above, where constituted; or
- (ii) the Church Council, when entitled to exercise and exercising the functions of the Pastoral Committee under clause (4) above; or
- (iii) in a local ecumenical partnership with no such local Pastoral Committee, either
  - (a) in a partnership where the Synod has directed that an ecumenical meeting act as the Church Council for particular Methodist purposes under Standing Order 611, an ecumenical pastoral committee appointed by that meeting to discharge in relation to Methodist members the responsibilities of a Pastoral Committee under clause 10(a) of the Deed of Union and Section 05 of Standing Orders; or
  - (b) in a partnership with a Methodist membership of 49 or less the ecumenical body so directed; or
  - (c) failing any such committee or meeting the circuit Pastoral Committee.

Cl. 10 of the Deed and Section 05 of Standing Orders are concerned with training for and admission to membership, pastoral oversight and lapse from membership.

For the circuit Pastoral Committee see S.O. 553.

## Section 65 Funds

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**650 General Church Fund.** (1) The Church Council shall maintain a general church fund.

(2) Subject to Standing Order 637(4) all collections at public services and meetings for worship of the congregation of a chapel shall be for the general church fund unless, under the direct or delegated authority of the Church Council, a collection is made for some other charitable purpose and the congregation have been informed of the purpose before contributing.

As to what are 'charitable purposes' see the note to clause (5) below.

It is suggested that unless a collection is being made for some other purpose the normal form of announcement should be 'for the general church fund'. The traditional words 'for the Work of God in this Church and Circuit' might be understood to exclude the support of wider causes.

S.O. 637(4) concerns separate collections at the Lord's Supper.

(3) All other money received by or due to the Church Council and not belonging to any other fund shall belong to the general church fund.

(4) The first charge on the general church fund shall be the sums required of the Local Church by the assessment of the Circuit Meeting, which shall be paid into the circuit fund quarterly eight working days before the beginning of the quarter to which they relate.

For the assessment see S.O. 515(3), 532(1)(i), 635(2).

(5) Subject to clause (4) above the general church fund shall be applied under the direct or delegated authority of the Church Council for the charitable purposes of the Local Church.

'Charitable' purposes are not in law confined to the relief of poverty or distress; they include, e.g., the advancement of the Christian faith. However, Methodist money cannot be used for any purpose which is not charitable in the legal sense. Not all 'good causes' are charitable in this sense; nor is the advocacy of political change a charitable purpose (for further guidance as to political activity see the website of the Charity Commission for England and Wales or, in Scotland, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator).

As to what are the charitable purposes of the Local Church see cl. (6) below.

(6) The purposes of the Local Church include (without excluding or restricting any which would subsist apart from this clause):

- (i) those appearing from Standing Orders 600, 604 and 651 and Section 66;
- (iA) any purpose for which model trust money which is local property of the church may be applied under Standing Order 917(1) or (2);
- (ii) the support of any connexional, district, circuit or local fund of the Methodist Church;
- (iii) the support of any ecumenical work in which the Local Church is engaged;
- (iv) the support of the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust;
- (v) subject to (i), (ii) and (iii) above, the support from the general church fund of any other charitable fund or body, except in so far as such support would be contrary to any purpose of the Methodist Church or to Methodist discipline.

As to the meaning of 'charitable' see the note to cl. (5) above.

As to the purposes of the Local Church see also S.O. 600.

The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust was created in 2005 and is the successor body (meeting a

wider range of need) to the Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association.

**651 Benevolence Fund.** (1) The purposes of the Local Church include the relief of poverty and distress and to that end the Church Council shall maintain a local benevolence fund.

(2) The sources of the fund shall, subject to Standing Order 637(4), be the separate or additional collections, if any, made at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and at love- feasts and allocations, if required, made by the council from the general church fund.

(3) The fund shall be applied first for the relief of poverty and distress in the congregation and neighbourhood. The Church Council may adopt and implement a scheme of distribution, and payments may also be made, in any event, at the confidential discretion of the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church in consultation with *any deacon or diaconal probationer appointed to the Circuit who exercises ministry in the relevant Local Church, and with* the communion stewards, if appointed, or if not with the church stewards.

(4) At its first meeting in each year the council shall consider the state of the fund and decide whether any moneys are surplus to expected needs for the above purpose and, if so, what allocations shall be made out of the fund to the circuit benevolence fund, the district benevolence fund, the Methodist Relief and Development Fund and any other fund for the relief of poverty and distress, provided that no allocation shall be made which would be contrary to any purpose of the Methodist Church or to Methodist discipline.

For the circuit benevolence fund see S.O. 527 and for the Methodist Relief and Development Fund (now operating under the name *All We Can*) S.O. 245.

**652 Model Trust Moneys.** The Church Council shall maintain a fund or funds, consisting of all model trust moneys, whether capital or income, of which the council are the managing trustees, including any allocations or contributions for model trust purposes from the income of the general church fund.

**653 Other Funds.** (1) Subject to Standing Orders 012, 635(2), 650, 651 and 652 and to clause (2) below organisations within the Local Church may hold their own funds, appointing a treasurer for each fund so held.

S.O. 012 concerns banking and audit.

S.O. 635(2) concerns the responsibilities of the church treasurer. As to the duties of treasurers generally see S.O. 012A.

(2) The accounts of all organisations connected with the Local Church, as well as of its general, benevolence and model trust funds, shall be presented annually to the Church Council. The accounts shall clearly indicate the financial position of the funds as at the 31st August in each year, including all investments, and loans due to and from the fund.

(3) The treasurer and the Church Council shall ensure that the Local Church makes the contributions to connexional funds prescribed by Standing Orders.

The general church fund contributes to the Methodist Church Fund (S.O. 361) by way of the circuit assessment (see S.O. 515(3), 532(1)(i)).

## Section 66 Workers among Children and Young People

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**660 Candidates.** (1) Persons offering, or being invited, to serve as workers with children and young people shall be accepted as candidates by the Church Council.

(1A) The persons eligible for acceptance under clause (1) above are those who are members in the Local Church or elsewhere in the Connexion or in another Methodist church or are within category (ii) or (iii) of Standing Order 606(1).

(2) Normally they shall be at least 16 years of age for work with children and at least 18 years of age for work with young people.

(2A) They shall be required to complete an application form and to accept and sign a form containing their job description and committing them to protect children and young people from harm in accordance with the policy of the Church.

(3) The Church Council shall be satisfied of their commitment to Christ and His Church and of their appropriateness for this work.

See also S.O. 010 generally as to the circumstances in which persons are disqualified from appointment.

(4) They shall enter upon a probationary period, which shall normally be for twelve months, but which may be extended or reduced as required.

(5) They shall agree to undertake preparation for service applicable to the work they wish to do.

**661 Accreditation.** Reports on their probation and preparation for service shall be made to the Church Council. If satisfied, the Church Council shall grant accreditation within the area of work among children or young people and shall signify this by a certificate. The fact of this accreditation shall be noted when the person is transferring from one Local Church to another.

**662 Service of Recognition.** The Church Council shall make arrangements for the newly accredited workers to share in a service of recognition and commissioning.

## Section 68 Worship Leaders

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A Worship Leader is a person appointed under this Section to take a leading and significant role in the conduct of worship within the life of a Local Church. The exact nature of that role is determined by the procedures set out in S.O. 680(1)(iv), S.O. 682 and S.O. 685.

See also S.O. 010 generally as to the circumstances in which persons are disqualified from appointment.

**680 Initial procedures.** (1) Where the appointment of worship leaders is under consideration, the Church Council shall consult the Local Preachers' Meeting of the Circuit and follow Connexional Team guidelines as to the arrangements to be made by the council in relation to:

- (i) consideration of the suitability of would-be candidates;
- (ii) the training programme prescribed, or validated in advance, by the Methodist Council to be fulfilled by candidates;
- (iii) the responsibility of the Local Preachers' Meeting for the monitoring of candidates' progress in and completion of training and probation and the assessment of their suitability for appointment;
- (iv) the responsibilities of appointed worship leaders.

(2) Persons proposing the acceptance of others as candidates or offering themselves in that capacity shall ensure that the advice of the Local Preachers' Meeting as to their suitability as candidates is obtained for the Church Council.

**681 Responsibilities of Worship Leaders.** (1) Worship leaders are called of God, to be worthy in character and to assist in leading God's people in worship. This places responsibilities on worship leaders.

(2) As to worship, it is the responsibility of worship leaders:

- (i) to help lead worship with knowledge, conviction and competence;
- (ii) to help lead worship in accordance with our doctrines (the term 'our doctrines' refers to those truths of salvation which are set forth in the Methodist doctrinal standards);
- (iii) to be available to help lead worship at times and places agreed with the Superintendent in accordance with Standing Order 683(4).

(3) As to fellowship and training, it is the responsibility of worship leaders:

- (i) to continue to develop in knowledge, conviction and competence;
- (ii) to attend a class, housegroup or similar fellowship group if possible.

(4) As to membership of the Local Church, it is the responsibility of worship leaders regularly to attend public worship in their Local Church, normally a Methodist church or an approved local ecumenical partnership, and to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

**682 Candidates.** (1) Persons offering themselves, or being proposed, to the Church Council must be and remain members. They shall meet the Church's safeguarding requirements before acceptance as candidates.

(2) Before accepting a person as a candidate the council shall take the advice of the Local Preachers' Meeting as to the applicant's appropriateness for the work.

(3) Accepted candidates shall enter upon a probationary period, during which they shall follow a training programme approved in accordance with Standing Order 680(1). They shall be required to make a firm commitment to training and study.

**683 Appointment.** (1) Reports on the training and probation of candidates shall be made to the Local Preachers' Meeting which shall inform and advise the relevant Church Councils about candidates' progress using Connexional Team guidelines.

(2) Upon the satisfactory completion of training and probation of a candidate, the Local Preachers' Meeting shall inform the relevant Church Council. The Church Council involved may then appoint the successful candidate as a worship leader within the life of the Local Church for a three year period.

(3) The Church Councils involved shall make arrangements for newly appointed worship leaders to share in a service of commissioning.

(4) If it is appropriate for a worship leader to serve beyond his or her Local Church, then the appointment may be extended as agreed between the worship leader concerned and the Superintendent. If the extension involves service in another Local Church, the agreement of the Church Council of that church must be obtained. The Superintendent shall inform the Circuit Meeting and the Local Preachers' Meeting of agreements and any modifications to agreements.

(5) Appointment as a worship leader shall be subject to triennial review by the Local Preachers' Meeting which shall conduct the review by reference to the matters dealt with in Standing Order 681 and inform and advise any relevant Church Council. Upon receiving report of a satisfactory review, each such Church Council involved may then appoint the worship leader for a further three years.

**684 Accountability.** (1) Worship leaders shall be held accountable to the Church Council for their ministry, their character, their fidelity to doctrine and their fitness for the work by reference to the responsibilities set out in Standing Order 681.

(2) If a question or concern is raised about the conduct of a worship leader, or if a complaint within the meaning of Part 11 is made, the provisions of that Part apply.

(3) Subject to clause (2) above, if a question or concern is raised about the fidelity to doctrine of a worship leader or his or her fitness for the work (including his or her calling, commitment to fulfil his or her responsibilities or his or her competence as a worship leader) the Church Council shall refer the case to the Local Preachers' Meeting which shall follow the guidelines for such circumstances produced by the Connexional Team.

The guidelines shall include guidance on the circumstances in which Part 11 applies.

(4) Questions or concerns about the fidelity to doctrine of a person in training or on probation as a worship leader (including the matters specified in clause (3) above) shall be addressed by the Local Preachers' Meeting as part of the training process.

**685 Responsibility for an Act of Worship.** Worship leaders shall share in the leadership of worship in accordance with the arrangements made by the Church Council under Standing Order 680(1). At each service in which a worship leader shares the person appointed on the circuit plan of preaching appointments shall retain overall responsibility for the act of worship, but shall seek to work collaboratively with the worship leader appointed to share in that service by the Church Council.

## Section 69 Involvement in the Local Church where there is a Safeguarding Concern

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As to undertaking work with children and young persons, and as to appointment to any office, post or responsibility or engagement under a contract, see S.O. 010.

**690 Arrangements for Involvement.** (1) When a person:

1. (i) who has been convicted of or has received a simple or conditional caution in respect of [...] *an offence referred to in Standing Order 010(2)*  
(ii); or  
(ii) *in respect of whom the Safeguarding Committee has made a recommendation that clause (2) below should apply*

worships in a Local Church or seeks to become involved in its life, he or she may only do so in accordance with the provisions of that clause (2) below.

(2) (a) The Local Church in question, acting by the presbyter in pastoral charge, must establish a [...] *monitoring and support group in accordance with the applicable policies and practice guidance adopted by the Methodist Council from time to time for the purposes set out there and in this Standing Order.*

(b) The group so established must [...] *consider the recommendations made in any risk assessment undertaken pursuant to Standing Order 237 [...] and if no such risk assessment has been undertaken, will immediately refer the matter to a safeguarding officer as defined in Standing Order 236.*

(bA) *The group will seek [...] to minimise the risk to others presented by the person concerned and [...] for that purpose will determine on what terms he or she may attend for worship and become involved in the life of the Local Church.*

(c) The person concerned must agree to enter into a written contract setting out the terms determined in accordance with sub-clause (bA) above and the contract must be signed and dated by him or her and by the members of the group. *The contract must also include a provision that its terms will be reviewed and may be amended in accordance with Standing Order 690A.*

(3) *[deleted]*

(4) *[deleted]*

(5) A person to whom clause (1) above applies shall not be placed on the community roll maintained by the Local Church in accordance with Standing Order 054(7) before signing a contract in accordance with clause (2) above *and may, if such a contract has not been signed, be removed from the community roll if not a member or be made the subject of a complaint under Part 11 if a member.*

*(6) If the person concerned declines to sign a contract, the group may nevertheless monitor him or her within the life of the Church in order to minimise the risk posed to children, young people and vulnerable adults.*

**690A Review of a Contract.** (1) *When a written contract has been made with a person under the provisions of clause (2) of Standing Order 690, its terms will be reviewed at least annually by the group established under that clause.*

*(2) The group shall consider at least once every three years whether a new risk assessment is required to be undertaken to reassess the risk posed by the person concerned.*

*(3) The group may revoke or amend the terms of a contract following recommendations from the Safeguarding Committee under Standing Order 232(iiiE). (4) The group shall provide an annual report on the review of each contract to the*

*safeguarding officer as defined by Standing Order 232(1A)(ii), who shall maintain a record of all contracts, and to the District Safeguarding Officer of the District of which the Circuit of the relevant Local Church forms part.*

*(5) The District Safeguarding Officer or a person in relation to whom the officer exercises the power to delegate that responsibility shall attend meetings of the group with sufficient frequency to maintain a working knowledge of the situation and to provide appropriate support and shall be supplied with notes of other meetings for those purposes.*

**691 Changes in Church Representatives.** The members of any group established under Standing Order 690(2)(a) above shall be responsible collectively for ensuring that:

- (i) the presbyter in pastoral charge of the Local Church is aware of any circumstances making a change in the membership of the group necessary or appropriate; and
- (ii) information is passed on and pastoral support continues to be provided when there is a change of presbyter in pastoral charge of the Local Church or of other members of the group.

Changes in the membership of the group shall be made by the minister in pastoral charge and Standing Order 690(2)(a) shall apply so far as circumstances permit.

**692 Transfer.** (1) If a person to whom Standing Order 690 applies and whose name is on the community roll of a Local Church (whether or not as a member) removes from one Circuit to another, the presbyter in pastoral charge of that Local Church, in carrying out his or her responsibilities under Standing Order 055, shall ensure that the recipient presbyter or presbyteral probationer is aware of the existence and terms of the contract made in accordance with Standing Order 690.

(2) A presbyter or presbyteral probationer receiving notice that a person removing from one Circuit to another has made a contract with a Local Church in accordance with Standing Order 690 shall ensure that the provisions of that Standing Order are applied again if the person concerned wishes to attend worship or to become involved in the life of a Local Church in the new Circuit.

(3) If a person to whom Standing Order 690 applies and whose name is on the community roll of a Local Church (whether or not as a member) ceases to attend worship or to be involved in that Local Church but wishes to attend worship or be involved in another Local Church within the same Circuit, the presbyter in pastoral charge of the first Local Church shall ensure that the presbyter in pastoral charge of the second Local Church is aware of the existence and terms of the contract made in accordance with Standing Order 690 and the second presbyter shall ensure that the provisions of that Standing Order are applied again.