

TABLE 2: INITIAL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (MINUS ADDITIONAL COLUMNS FOR PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS).

SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE: NON-NEGOTIABLE MATTERS DICTATED BY OUR CONSTITUTION

AREA	STATEMENT OR QUESTION	CONTEXT	COMMENT
Stationing	“Ministers need to stay for longer” (or conversely, “If minister X was to leave a year early, the merging of our circuits would be easier.	Circuit Steward in leadership team meeting, frustrated at the limitations of stationing, feeling that it disrupts strategic planning.	Ministers are invited to serve for an initial term for five years and then extend. However, most ministers will begin to reflect on whether they wish to request an extension in year four. Each time ministers request this, the agreement of the circuit meeting must be higher.
Safeguarding	“Why do I have to do safeguarding training?  “Why do I need a DBS clearance?”	Pastoral visitor, visiting mainly the elderly.  Volunteer serving teas and coffees in a youth project.	All members of church council and all workers with children and young people are required to attend safeguarding training. This is linked to how abusers often seek positions of trust and responsibility – and ensuring that the church is a safe environment.
Baptism	“I want to be baptised as an adult”	From someone already baptised as an infant. Individual witnessed the full-immersion baptism of her friend who was dedicated (when her family attended a Baptist congregation).  Adult who was baptized as a child, never engaged with the Church and came to faith aged 50.	Re-baptism is absolutely prohibited. This is both theologically driven (baptism is a once-and-for-all rite which welcomes people into the worldwide church) and ecclesiologically driven (rebaptism undermines the rites of other Christian Churches).  The Methodist Church has approved a liturgy for reaffirmation of baptismal vows using water at the 2012 Conference

TABLE 2: INITIAL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (MINUS ADDITIONAL COLUMNS FOR PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS).			
SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE: NON-NEGOTIABLE MATTERS DICTATED BY OUR CONSTITUTION			
AREA	STATEMENT OR QUESTION	CONTEXT	COMMENT
Communion	"Why do we need a minister to do communion?"	Medium sized local congregation requesting communion but ministers unable to preside because of pressures on the plan.  Some questioning about the suitability of ministers who were pastorally distanced from the congregation.	Faith and Order have challenged the idea that the person presiding need have an immediate pastoral link, stressing the connexional principle. There are authorisations for lay-presidency at communion in the case of deprivation or missional need. In 2012, the Methodist Conference made changes to the previous qualifiers.
Marriage	We are divorced. We want to marry each other. Can you marry us?	Conversation with couple seeking marriage, having heard that the Methodist Church permits the marriage of divorcees.	All Methodist presbyters serve as registrars within their own building, although candidates must apply to their local registrar to request permission in a legal sense. The Methodist Church is generally willing to marry people who have been divorced, while their previous spouse is still alive, as long as there are not major obvious reasons why it would be inappropriate to do so. If a presbyter feels unable to marry divorcees as a matter of principle, they must refer the couple to a minister who is willing. Presbyters should consult with their Chair of District.
Civil Partnership	Would you bless a same sex couple	Question from a member of a Methodist Church in light of media coverage.	Until the conference of 2013. Ministers are not permitted to bless same-sex partnerships or act in any way that would suggest that the church is condoning the relationship.
Preaching	"I want to preach – but only in my home church."	Prospective local preacher in strongly evangelical congregation with Wesleyan Reform Union background.	The connexional principle is reflected in the circuit structure of local preachers serving multiple churches. Whereas worship leaders serve in one church, local preachers serve across a circuit.

TABLE 2: INITIAL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (MINUS ADDITIONAL COLUMNS FOR PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS).			
SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE: NON-NEGOTIABLE MATTERS DICTATED BY OUR CONSTITUTION			
AREA	STATEMENT OR QUESTION	CONTEXT	COMMENT
Preaching	"Should this preacher continue 'on trial'?"	Local Preachers meeting.	'On note', to 'on trial' and 'accredited' are three stages in the formation of Methodist preacher, overseen by the superintendent, a local tutor and the local preachers meeting.
Worship Leading	"We would like at least two worship leaders in every Church."	Circuit Leadership Team, strategy meeting.	Worship leaders assist preachers in local churches but do not preach. They are appointed by the local Church council and are trained under the oversight of the superintendent and the local preachers meeting. Some worship leaders can serve across a number of Churches. Their role is evolving to include assisting local preachers to taking services, using recommended resources, where no preacher is free to take an appointment.
Circuit Governance	"Please can plan dates be in by the end of July?"	Superintendent requesting dates to prepare the plan of worship for the next quarter. Involves local preachers stating when they are free and blocking dates. Presbyters negotiate with superintendents about where they will be planned.	The first call on a presbyter's appointments is to preach and preside at communion services. This can be complicated by chapels who invite preachers independently for special occasions and circuit services where all of the local churches may come together.  Requests such as baptisms need to be incorporated ahead of the plan, in line with where presbyters are available. This can often result in local churches not being able to easily meet the date required.
Local Church governance	"I did not realize I was a trustee!"	Church Council meeting as part of discussions about whether the council should take out insurance should they face legal proceedings	In larger churches, members at the Annual General Meeting appoint the stewards and other members of the congregation through a majority vote. Further to this, the council can appoint additional members. In smaller churches, all members are entitled to serve on the church council but must agree to do so.

TABLE 2: INITIAL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (MINUS ADDITIONAL COLUMNS FOR PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS).			
SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE: NON-NEGOTIABLE MATTERS DICTATED BY OUR CONSTITUTION			
AREA	STATEMENT OR QUESTION	CONTEXT	COMMENT
Spiritual nurture & pastoral care	"Have you thought about meeting as a class?"	Stewards meeting	'Bands' and 'classes' were introduced in early Methodism to provide a place where leaders could support each other (in the case of the former) and newcomers could seek salvation (in the case of the latter). Class leaders are appointed at the AGM. Whilst local churches may incorporate small groups, few meet now as bands and classes.
Local donations	"Thanks but no thanks, we don't want a dishwasher!"	Church offered a dishwasher as a gift but the Church Council turned this down; folks in the Church enjoyed drying-up and chatting together.	The Church Council must first decide whether it wishes to accept a gift rather than accept it without discussion. Where finance is concerned, the local church can set-aside funds for particular projects, but the first call on any local church's finances is towards meeting the assessment.
Gambling	"Will you draw the raffle-ticket for us?"	Frequent at church fairs.	CPD dictates that raffles are only permitted with the prior agreement of the church council; the equivalent of the prize fund cannot exceed £50; ticket sales cannot take place door to door. Raffles can be an extremely sensitive issue for congregation, given Methodism's opposition to gambling.
Alcohol	"Can we serve wine at our Christmas lunch?"	Hall user group	Alcohol is prohibited on Church premises.
Gambling	"Can the Derby and Joan play Bingo?"	From leaders, aware that this might be a sensitive issue.	This opposition to gambling includes any game of luck or chance, including a simple game of bingo for prizes. Often presbyters need to make a judgment about whether the prize constitutes an inducement to play.

TABLE 2: INITIAL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (MINUS ADDITIONAL COLUMNS FOR PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS).			
SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE: NON-NEGOTIABLE MATTERS DICTATED BY OUR CONSTITUTION			
AREA	STATEMENT OR QUESTION	CONTEXT	COMMENT
Connexionalism	“Those people in London and Manchester have no idea what it is like here in the real world.”	Comment on the Property Division in Manchester by a member of the congregation frustrated about the time required to have planning applications passed.	In theory, the Methodist Church has ecclesiastical exemption from planning legislation but the process can prove time-consuming and therefore costly. The need to seek permission illustrates how local churches cannot act autonomously.
Ecumenical relations	“How do we know this is not going to be an Anglican takeover?”	Meeting with local Methodist congregation to discuss a joint project with the local Anglican church.	In this sense there was a feeling that because the Anglican Church was the larger church, their influence would dominate.

SECTION 2: LEADERSHIP: QUESTION OR STATEMENT RELATED TO DEVELOPING THE VISION WITHIN A CHURCH OR CIRCUIT			
AREA	QUESTION OR STATEMENT	CONTEXT	COMMENT
Stationing	“What are the chances of us finding another minister through stationing?”	Local Church Stewards Meeting  Circuit Leadership Team Meeting.  Circuit leadership teams are responsible for putting together a profile of the skills and gifts that they require in a minister. Ministers submit their own profile to describe the scope of their ministry and their leadership style. On average 1/7th of presbyters move each year	There is a period of waiting to see whether a minister can be matched to a church, facilitated by Chairs of District at a stationing meeting. Not all vacant posts are filled, meaning that circuits occasionally have to alter their strategy.
Stationing	Should we look to invite a deacon?	Leadership Team meeting.	Within Methodism, deacons are a separate order of prayer and service. They may be stationed in local projects and community work. Deacons are part of the circuit staff meetings but have their own convocation.
Preaching plan	“Why are you with them ‘X’ times but are only with us ‘Y’ times?”	Church leaders questioning why a minister is spending a disproportionate time in one place. Often preceded by the logic that since X is bigger than Y, X is more deserving.	Presbyters have the right to focus their energies according to local need. It may be that Y requires some form of preparation for mission or support through difficulty. However, presbyters should work collaboratively with superintendent and stewards and agree priorities.
Building connexionalism	“Why are we struggling to get people to circuit services?”	Circuit leadership team	Whilst not all circuits will be struggling, Methodism has cherished, historically the idea of local churches joining each other for shared worship. The circuit is the primary driver of mission in any given area, not the local Church.
Worship	“Why do we have to sing so many hymns -	Complimentary feedback following an all-age service with contemporary music led by a band.	Within services, the choice of the hymns rests with the local preacher or minister. However, options are often limited by the receptivity to the congregation to new material and the adaptability of an organist

SECTION 2: LEADERSHIP: QUESTION OR STATEMENT RELATED TO DEVELOPING THE VISION WITHIN A CHURCH OR CIRCUIT			
AREA	QUESTION OR STATEMENT	CONTEXT	COMMENT
	why can't we sing more choruses?" (and vice-versa)		(if a band is not available). There is huge diversity in the hymnbooks that local churches use.
Worship (fresh expressions)	When are we going to see them in Church?	Conversation about how work in a local fresh expression was proceeding.	In the strictest sense, fresh expressions are not intended as a stepping stone to Church; they are an expression of Church in their own right and therefore, those who attend should not need to go elsewhere.
Resourcing	"X Church is closing. Why can we not sell the building at low cost to this registered charity?"	Circuit Leadership Team exploring whether a church which was due to close could be sold to a community group.	Charity law states that the Methodist Church needs to sell its buildings to the highest bidder, unless it can be demonstrated clearly that a low cost sale fulfils local mission.
Resourcing	"Even though X Church is closing, can we not retain the building and use it for mission?"	Circuit Leadership Team meeting	This is possible if a nucleus of people remain as a class, and that class is supported independently by the circuit. However, responsibility for the running of X remains with the circuit.
Publicity	"I read in the Methodist Recorder that..."	From congregation members commenting on issues within the wider church as they leave by the door.	The Methodist Recorder is not the official newspaper of the Methodist Church, in the sense that it offers independent editorial insight. Letters to the editor do not necessarily represent accurately the views of the wider church.

SECTION 2: LEADERSHIP: QUESTION OR STATEMENT RELATED TO DEVELOPING THE VISION WITHIN A CHURCH OR CIRCUIT			
AREA	QUESTION OR STATEMENT	CONTEXT	COMMENT



SECTION 3: MANAGEMENT: QUESTION OR STATEMENT RELATED TO HOW PERSONNEL ARE DEPLOYED AND PERSONNEL UTILISED WITHIN A CHURCH OR CIRCUIT			
AREA	QUESTION OR STATEMENT	CONTEXT	MY COMMENT
Local church	"We need a new steward."	Local church stewards meeting.  Church Council meeting	Church Stewards have a clear leadership and management function within the life of the Church. Stewards work in partnership with presbyters to plan and deliver the church's mission.
Local Church users	"The toddler group are using up all of our space."	Vibrant evangelical congregation frustrated that an external church group is frustrating their storage space and ability to hold their own meetings.	Local churches often depend on lettings to meet their costs but may not engage effectively with such groups. In this instance, the presence of a toddler group was an opportunity for evangelism and community development, but the wider Church did not recognize this.
Local Church funding	We won't be able to afford our assessment	Local church council meeting.  Circuit Treasurer's Meeting.	The first call on any finance in the Church is on the assessment; the sum required by the circuit to support its ministers, administration and property. Churches raise the assessment through offerings and other income, such as lettings. Circuit Treasurers agree how the assessment is split between churches.
Worship	"Our service lasts from 6-7pm!"	In response to the question, 'What time does your service start' from a visiting preacher.	There is no stipulation about how long church services should last – this is the responsibility of the preacher. However, local custom often dictates when the congregation believes it should finish!
Preaching	"Why have you Y down to preach here? He was awful last time!"	Negative feedback about a local preacher who struggled to relate to children and whose last service focused more on local history than the gospel.	Feedback on local preacher services (apart from 'on note' and 'on trial' assessed services) is invariably second-hand. Local preachers are accredited for life and although further development is supposed to take place, there is no further assessment of services unless a complaint is made.

SECTION 3: MANAGEMENT: QUESTION OR STATEMENT RELATED TO HOW PERSONNEL ARE DEPLOYED AND PERSONNEL UTILISED WITHIN A CHURCH OR CIRCUIT

AREA	QUESTION OR STATEMENT	CONTEXT	MY COMMENT
Fees	“Should we charge members for funerals?”	Local churches, query passed on to local churches.	Local churches are entitled to charge fees for weddings and funerals. Those who serve as ministers, stewards and organists are also entitled to a fee. The decision about whether churches should charge for the use of the building and the level of any church is a matter for their own discretion. At a deeper level the issue is one of whether it is right to charge someone who has already been giving to the Church throughout their life.
Worship	“We can’t find a preacher for harvest festival.”	Local stewards meeting	In some cases, stewards can invite preachers whom they deem suitable to lead particular celebrations such as harvest or church anniversaries.
Pastoral	“Nelly is ill and needs a hospital visit.”	Pastoral visitor	Local churches have a pastoral secretary (who holds the details of all those who are associated with the life of the Church) and a team of pastoral visitors who meet people in their homes. However, this may be subject to considerable variation. Nonetheless, pastoral visitors have a key role in informing ministers when people are hospitalised.
Pastoral	“Our minister does not visit” (people in their homes)	Comment by visitors to a local church following a pastoral visitors’ recognition service.	The scope of pastoral work to be carried out by ministers needs to be agreed with the pastoral team. Often ministers respond to those cases where the surrounding team has less expertise, or to greater need such as those who are in hospital. Pastoral needs in any church are endless. As the membership that ministers support increases, the scope to visit people in their own homes can diminish. Also, our pastoral mission needs to extend to those outside of the fellowship of the Church.

SECTION 3: MANAGEMENT: QUESTION OR STATEMENT RELATED TO HOW PERSONNEL ARE DEPLOYED AND PERSONNEL UTILISED WITHIN A CHURCH OR CIRCUIT

AREA	QUESTION OR STATEMENT	CONTEXT	MY COMMENT
Strategic	"Can you put this in the notices?"	Notice of a cream tea happening in a neighbouring church.	Local churches distribute notices in different ways; via notices given by the steward on duty before the service or in written pew notes. What needs to be communicated and how is a major issue. There are times when one notice is more important than another; there is often a need to ensure that the focus remains on the priorities of the local church.