

Part 3 Criteria for Authorising Persons other than Presbyters to Preside at the Lord's Supper

The Conference of 1997 adopted these criteria and directed that they be published here. Paragraph 5 was slightly amended in 1998 in the light of the report upon the Diaconate. The Conference of 2012 added the Missional Criteria for Assessment of Deprivation (Para 3). From 2012 the criteria reflect the Conference's adoption of the usage of the term 'presbyter' in substitution for 'minister'.

1. Deprivation of reasonably frequent and regular celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the ground on which a person other than a presbyter may be authorised to preside at that sacrament. The regulations governing the applications for and the granting of such authorisations are contained in Standing Order O11, and these criteria should be read in conjunction with and subject to the provisions of that Standing Order.

2. To assess such deprivation use is made of:

- (a) the average number of communion services requested in the Circuit each quarter (including public celebrations of the sacrament on a Sunday and mid-week and those in residential homes). The statement of the number of services requested should be based on what the Circuit would like, not what it can currently have. [N.B. It should be possible for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated at least once per calendar month in each church at the best attended service.]
- (b) the number of full-time-equivalent presbyters available to the Circuit, excluding the person or persons for whom the authorisation is being sought (calculating the contribution of part time presbyters, presbyters in appointments not within the control of the Church, supernumeraries and ordained presbyters of other denominations, on the assumption that a full-time presbyter is able to conduct 26 Sunday services per quarter, half of which will be communion services).

When the number in (a) is divided by the number in (b), if the answer is 13 or greater then deprivation is deemed to exist. When the number is smaller, then other factors may be taken into account such as

- the distance and difficulty of travel between the churches
- the numbers and times of services in each church

3. Missional Criteria for Assessment of Deprivation.

- (a) The situation should have recognisable missionary potential and have the support of the Circuit Meeting and District Policy Committee. Missionary potential is evidenced in the presence of:
 - a new congregation or Christian community developed by an initiative or project which falls under the category of Fresh Expressions, VentureFX or similar
 - a congregation which would otherwise experience cultural isolation, e.g., in terms of language usage.
- (b) There should be compelling logistical, economic, cultural or other reasons for authorising a person other than a presbyter to preside at the Lord's Supper in such situations.

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(c) The lay person to whom authorisation is granted should be able to identify with the situation, preferably as a pioneer minister or some other community leader.

4. When deprivation is judged to exist, authorisation may be sought for a suitable person other than a presbyter to preside at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in that Circuit under the direction of the Superintendent.

4A. Authorisations are granted for someone to assist across a Circuit, except in the case of the missional criteria outlined above. They are not related to the relationship of pastoral care which any individual has with particular congregations. While it is possible for an application to be made for someone who carries pastoral responsibilities for congregations within a Circuit, such relationship is not part of the criteria and does not strengthen an application in any way. In circumstances where the committee judges that such an arrangement might lead to a blurring of the distinctions between particular callings and ministries, the Authorisations Committee may decline to recommend an authorisation for a given named individual even when the other criteria are met.

5. To assess the suitability of the person proposed, evidence shall be presented to the district Policy Committee of his or her

- (a) general competence, gifts and graces in leading worship, and
- (b) understanding of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The written consent of the person proposed is also required.

6. Authorisations may be granted to probationers and other lay persons, and to deacons. They will be granted to deacons and diaconal probationers, however, only in exceptional circumstances (because of the understanding of the nature of diaconal ministry which is developing within the Methodist Church) and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order will be consulted in each case. Persons authorised must be members in the relevant Circuit or deacons or probationers appointed to it. [SO 011(2)]