

# Called to Preach?



The **Methodist** Church 

*“The Church of Christ exists to glorify God the Father, who has revealed the way of salvation in the life, ministry and victory of Christ, and has given the Holy Spirit to inspire Christian proclamation and preaching.*

*From the early days of Methodism, God has called lay people to lead worship and prayer, and to preach the gospel. In every generation since, women and men have responded to this call and have been admitted as local preachers.*

*Local preachers are called to be worthy in character, to lead God’s people in prayer and praise, and to share in the Church’s mission in the whole world.*

*[This] is a responsibility rooted in the word of God. You will bring the message of salvation to all, in season and out of season. As you lead worship, and offer good news to others, your own life will be shaped and transformed.”*

from the Admission of Local Preachers, *The Methodist Worship Book*, p. 332  
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*There is an old Christian tradition that God sends each person into this world with a special message to deliver, with a song to sing for others, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can speak my message, or sing my song, or offer my act of love. These are only entrusted to me.*

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

Christians are called, you among them, to witness to God’s grace and justice in every part of society. The Methodist Church has always encouraged members to explore a wide range of callings: some are called to ordained ministry as deacons or presbyters, while others are called to a wide variety of forms of lay ministry, such as children and youth workers, stewards, treasurers, local preachers and worship leaders. Christians in many walks of life see their work as a vocation and seek to do it in Christ-like ways that honour God.

This booklet is designed to help you explore what it might mean to be called to preach in the Methodist Church. As you read through this booklet, take time to pray and to reflect, and when you are ready, talk it through with someone who knows you well and who is able to be honest with you – possibly a friend or family member, or your minister.



As you lead worship, and offer good news to others, your own life will be shaped and transformed.

## What is preaching?

Preaching is the proclamation of the good news of a loving God who, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, offers salvation to humanity. Preaching is proclaiming the kingdom of God, and relating it to daily life. Preachers bring together their understanding of the world and their knowledge of Scripture. Preachers depend on the Holy Spirit in their preparation and preaching.



*My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord,  
into thy blessèd hands receive;  
and let me live to preach thy word,  
and let me to thy glory live;  
my every sacred moment spend  
in publishing the sinners' friend.*

Charles Wesley, *Singing the Faith* (StF) 661, v. 3

## Susan's call



I feel God has been moving me slowly towards preaching, building me up as I go.

For many years I had been leading children's work in my church, and when that ended I felt that was it. But God had other ideas and I was asked to help in other churches.

A year later I was working for a charity going into schools leading assemblies and RE lessons. I was also asked to lead all age worship in various churches. I had led services as a worship leader and many times I had been told I should train to be a preacher, but I thought I knew best!

Then I felt God speaking to me saying that it was time to give back to the circuit that had supported me.

Whilst training, I've been surprised at the welcome and support from churches I've not known; their warmth and encouragement has made the hard work seem all the more worthwhile.

I know my calling is God-led - to reach out to unchurched children and families with the good news and help make church appropriate for them. It is a privilege to share the Bible with others in order to glorify God.

## What is a local preacher?



Overall it is reckoned that two-thirds of Methodist acts of worship on Sundays are conducted by local preachers.

Local preachers play a vital role in the life of the Methodist Church. They are members of the Methodist Church who have been called to lead worship and preach. After training and testing of that call, local preachers serve alongside ordained ministers (presbyters and deacons), worship leaders (see the booklet *Called to lead worship?*) and other people involved in many different ways in the life of the Methodist Church.

As well as preaching, local preachers lead God's people in worship – enabling people to praise God, celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In doing so they are also encouraged to work and act collaboratively with others in the preparation and leading of worship.

## Chris' call



A call to preach is something that many will just brush aside saying “It’s not for me!” or “I have not got the confidence”. But, as Jesus’ disciples, we are all called to share the good news. Has anyone said that you would make a good preacher or that you have really made sense when discussing your faith or leading a Bible study? Could this be your call?

If you ask any preacher about their call, they would all be different.

From the age of 17 I felt called to go into a traditional service and shake people up, challenging them to meet with the living God – a God who has in no way finished with them but wants to use them now, more than ever before.



I was once told of a simple way to know if you are called: listen to your body. Does your heartbeat increase when you think and talk about preaching? Do you feel passionately about the gospel of Jesus Christ or that you can make that difference by allowing people to meet with Jesus? Are you called to preach?

## Is preaching your calling?

If you ask any local preacher about their calling, you will probably hear something different each time. It may be that they saw a need, or heard the gospel message being explored in a new way, or a hymn or prayer felt as if it was speaking directly to them. It might have been that someone saw in them the potential gifts and graces of a preacher. It could even have been borne out of frustration in worship and a sense that they could do better.

Some of these may strike a chord in you, or God may be calling you in a completely different way. But whatever way God's call comes, the compelling result is the same!

You are not alone as you prayerfully consider a call to preach. The Holy Spirit leads us all in our discipleship, and the Church and other local preachers are with you in discerning whether your call involves becoming a local preacher in the Methodist Church.

*"But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"*

Romans 10:14-15 (NRSV)



## Sanya's call

You know when you're sitting in church and you think to yourself, "If it was me leading worship, I'd do it this way". Well that was my call.

My Sunday School teachers were always encouraging me to take part in the services my way and so I would dance, sing and read. When I was eight I wrote a prayer which was used in a service. Afterwards my minister said, "Have you ever thought about being a minister?" My reply? "Dude! I'm eight years old!" This continued throughout my school and college years until finally at University I'd enough of the voice and the questions. So I asked my old Sunday School teachers, how do I become a local preacher?

Now fully accredited, preaching has been tough, joyous and oh so rewarding! It's best to study with someone else, you encourage and bounce ideas off each other. The studies are not possible without the support of your local preachers meetings and circuit. The greatest struggle for me was being so young and preaching to people my nan's age. "What have I got to say to them?" "How do I get them to do the 'kingdom skank'?" (Google it). The only way was to remember that I was called as I am and for who I am. God calls us as we are, uniquely made in God's image with the gifts, skills and talents we have been blessed with ... for a reason!

Be warned – the voice never goes away. We have no choice but to listen. To trust and obey.



*But Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Then the Lord said to him, "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak."*

Exodus 4:10-12 (NRSV)



## Local preacher training

Some people feel sure of their 'call to preach' at an early stage, but for others the first steps are very tentative, and it is not unusual to feel ill-equipped. But those exploring this call are not alone – it is a process of discernment that is shared by the Church. Tutor(s) and mentor(s) are appointed to share the journey, and many more people may offer informal support and encouragement.

Anyone wishing to become a local preacher will follow a learning pathway set up by the Methodist Church. This is a significant commitment, and will probably require some adjustments to priorities, but most people complete the training in their 'spare' time.

The pathway combines theological and biblical study with practical experience of leading worship and preaching, helping preachers to grow in faith, spirituality, knowledge, understanding and skills. This is the starting point for a lifetime of theological and spiritual learning as a preacher, and may raise as many questions as it answers! But hopefully you will emerge with greater confidence in God and a clearer understanding of your call.

At points during training your call to preach is more formally reviewed. For many this is an occasion to affirm and celebrate that call. However, not everyone who sets out to explore will ultimately become a local preacher. This can be uncomfortable and

disappointing, but the decision is never taken lightly, and in time it may be possible to recognise God's redirection in that outcome. While not everyone is called to preach, all do have God-given gifts to use.

Once someone's call to preach has been tested and confirmed, and training is completed, they are admitted as a local preacher – normally a lifetime office. At the admission service the new preacher commits themselves, with God's help, to continued development both as a preacher and as a follower of Christ, and all the people promise to support them.

For further information about training pathways for local preachers, go to [www.methodist.org.uk/LP](http://www.methodist.org.uk/LP).





## Reflect

- Read the Admission of Local Preachers service in *The Methodist Worship Book*, beginning on p. 332.
- How do you respond to what this service is saying about preaching in the life of the Church? Jot down some notes of your thoughts and feelings.

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

Isaiah 6:8 (NRSV)

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



## What to do next?

If, after prayerful thought, you feel you want to find out more:

- Talk it over with someone who knows you well and who is able to be honest with you.
- Share your sense of call with your minister.
- Further information can be found on the Methodist Church website ([www.methodist.org.uk/LP](http://www.methodist.org.uk/LP)).



*Lord, you call us to your service,  
each in our own way.  
Some to caring, loving, healing;  
some to preach, or pray;  
some to work with quiet learning,  
truth discerning,  
day by day.*

*Lord, we set out human limits  
on the work we do.  
Send us your directing Spirit,  
pour your power through,  
that we may be free in living  
and in giving  
all for you.*

Marjorie Dobson, StF 664, vv 1, 4.  
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