

## LISTENING FOR GOD – an outline for your next Local Preachers' Meeting

### The Community of Preachers

The past two years have brought unprecedented challenges for churches and circuits, and great disruption to many, including local preachers and worship leaders. We need each other's fellowship and encouragement so we can rediscover our calling in a changing world.

The start of a new year brings an opportunity to press "Reset" on the fellowship of Local Preachers (and Worship Leaders) and to start afresh. There is surprisingly little that **must** be done in the Local Preachers' Meeting<sup>1</sup> other than worship, fellowship, theological reflection and the oversight of training. There is a lot that can be done to rebuild faith and confidence.

A Guidance Note<sup>2</sup> called **Meeting Well** provides further ideas for how to transform the meeting from just another business meeting into a learning community that people want to be part of. In order to find out how you can encourage non-attenders to come back you may wish to conduct a survey of your local preachers (in person or by phone if possible). Suggested survey questions are also available at [www.methodist.org.uk/clpd](http://www.methodist.org.uk/clpd) together with other ideas and resources for you to use. A warning though, if you ask what people want you need to be prepared to do what they ask for!

### Pre-Meeting Planning

Send a specific invitation to all who are entitled/obliged to be there, remembering that all local preachers are obliged to attend (SO563). Include Worship Leaders if that is your practice. Do invite those who don't normally attend, and don't assume everyone knows about the meeting from reading the previous minutes. Perhaps use or adapt the following wording:

*Our next Local Preachers' Meeting will be on <date> at <time> at <venue>. All Local Preachers are obliged to be present at our quarterly meetings, which provide an opportunity to worship, share and encourage each other in our shared mission in the circuit. For our first meeting of 2022, we are using some ideas from the Ministries Team – our theme is **Listening for God**. Please join in as we start the new year listening together for what God is doing in our lives and our circuit, and how we can play our part.*

### Preparation checklist:

- Invitations: sent out in good time to all, including those not normally present?
- Have you asked someone to take part in the "Reviewing our Ministry" item? It's important to ask in advance - asking for volunteers on the spot doesn't often work.
- Venue: is the venue accessible to all? Are practical arrangements made: access, heating, sound reinforcement, provision for playing music?
- Does the room have flexible seating to allow work in groups?
- Are refreshments organised? Hospitality is important: fresh coffee and tea is appreciated, and a box of cakes, doughnuts or pastries generally goes down well.
- Do you have the resources you need for the meeting: Any handouts? A flipchart for collecting ideas? Minutes from last meeting? Publicity flyers or resources?
- If there are those who need help with transport, has this been offered?

---

<sup>1</sup> Or Worship Leaders' and Preachers' Meeting – circuits use various names.

<sup>2</sup> Meeting Well is available for download at [www.methodist.org.uk/clpd](http://www.methodist.org.uk/clpd).

## LISTENING FOR GOD – an outline for your next Local Preachers’ Meeting

### Meeting Outline

0:00	<b>GATHERING</b> 5 mins
	<p>Greet and welcome people as they arrive, preferably in an informal space.</p> <p>Offer refreshments, encourage conversation. Don’t assume everyone knows each other, especially in a larger circuit.</p> <p>Perhaps try <b>Conversation Bingo</b>: encourage people to ask each other questions like these (stick them on the wall so that people can see them easily):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When did you last preach and how did it feel?</li> <li>- What’s the thing you most appreciate about worship together?</li> <li>- What’s your favourite worship song at the moment?</li> </ul>
0:05	<b>LISTENING AND WORSHIPPING</b> 45 mins
	<p><b>Introductions</b></p> <p><i>Once seated, welcome everyone.</i></p> <p><i>Explain that the meeting will follow an outline suggested by the Ministries Team, to encourage people to think afresh about our meetings at the start of a New Year.</i></p> <p><b>Prayer</b></p> <p>A suitable prayer for New Year, or today’s prayer from the Methodist Prayer Handbook. You could use appropriate extracts from the Covenant Service (MSB p.281).</p>
	<p><b>Perceiving God</b></p> <p>One of our functions as a meeting is to consider the work of God in our circuit. In these challenging times, it’s even more important to consider this.</p> <p>We’re going to start by considering this question:</p> <p><b><i>Where have you been aware of God or seen evidence of God at work in this last year?</i></b></p> <p>Let’s hear the voice of God in each other...</p> <p><b><i>Allow two minutes of personal reflection.</i></b></p>
	<p>Now turn to someone next to you and share your response to the question.</p> <p>Feel free to share as much or as little as you like, but don’t feel under pressure to share anything you don’t want to. Everything said is confidential and stays in this room.</p> <p><i>Do ensure everyone has opportunity to share something.</i></p> <p><i>Allow five minutes for conversation, then, if appropriate, provide opportunity for a few people to express their specific observations to the group, recording key thoughts on a flipchart or otherwise.</i></p>
	<b>Song (recorded)</b>

## LISTENING FOR GOD – an outline for your next Local Preachers’ Meeting

	<p>Play the following song, whilst inviting people to reflect on what they have heard.</p> <p><b>Leslie Odom Jr - Listen<sup>3</sup></b></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvnPEMW1jj8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvnPEMW1jj8</a></p>
	<p><b>Prayer</b></p> <p>In same pairs as previously, consider the following question:</p> <p><b><i>What are you hoping for in this next year in the life of our circuit?</i></b></p> <p><i>Allow five minutes for each pair to agree on a shared hope for the future.</i></p> <p><i>Then pray together, allowing each pair to voice their prayer, with the using the following response between each item:</i></p> <p><b>God of past, present and future, be at the centre of our hopes and dreams.</b></p> <p>Conclude with Psalm 62: 5-6 (NRSV shown):</p> <p><b>For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.</b></p>
0:50	<b>LEARNING AND REFLECTING (30 mins)</b>
	<p><b>Reviewing our Ministry</b></p> <p>Every local preacher is required to review their ministry, including sharing with the Local Preachers’ Meeting at least once every three years from their continuing learning and reflection.</p> <p><i>Ask the person who previously agreed to participate for their contribution, prompted by these three questions<sup>4</sup>:</i></p> <p><b>1. What has inspired you in your continuing development, worship and preaching over the previous period?</b></p> <p><i>This is an opportunity for the person to reflect on a particular piece of learning on theology, worship and preaching.</i></p> <p><i>If time permits, develop this into a conversation in the meeting, either in groups or altogether.</i></p> <p><b>2. What insights have you gained from your experience of peer review?</b></p> <p><i>There is no requirement to share the details of the conversations from your peer review, but an opportunity to share general reflections on the joys and challenges of preaching.</i></p> <p><b>3. What is your particular focus for continuing development over the next period?</b></p>

<sup>3</sup> Or alternative music to suit.

<sup>4</sup> These are taken from the Guidance Note “Reviewing our Ministry”, downloadable from the LP Secretaries’ page at [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk).

## LISTENING FOR GOD – an outline for your next Local Preachers’ Meeting

	<i>This provides an opportunity to share some specific goals for continuing development, skills you want to develop or topics you wish to explore</i>
1:20	<b>OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS</b> (15 mins) <sup>5</sup>
	<p>Some time to cover other essential items, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pastoral news</li> <li>- Quarterly service reports for those On Note / On Trial (we recommend holding the detail conversation outside the meeting)</li> <li>- Local Preacher training, including any interviews, and reports from tutors (we recommend that detailed arrangements for assessed services, trial services etc. are made outside the meeting)</li> <li>- Worship Leader training and progress reports</li> <li>- Date and topic of next meeting.</li> <li>- Enlist a volunteer for “Reviewing my Ministry” next time.</li> </ul>
1:35	<b>CLOSING WORSHIP</b> (15 mins)
	<p><b>Listen</b></p> <p>Play or sing together the song <b><i>Hear the call of the kingdom</i></b> by Keith &amp; Krystin Getty (Singing the Faith 407), or appropriate alternative.</p> <p>A version with lyrics can be found at: <a href="https://youtu.be/gDfuGb89x_8">https://youtu.be/gDfuGb89x_8</a></p> <p><b>Read</b></p> <p>Then read this passage thoughtfully (display on screen also if possible):</p> <p><b><i>18 ... Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’</i></b></p> <p>(Matt 28:18-20, NRSV)</p> <p>Spend 2 minutes reflecting quietly on each of the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would Jesus’ words have sounded to his hearers?</li> <li>- How did the early church respond to these words?</li> <li>- What is my response to these words now?</li> </ul> <p><b>Pray</b></p> <p>Invite people to contribute short sentences beginning with: <b><i>Help us God to...</i></b></p> <p>Response: <b><i>Thank you God that you are with us to the end of the age.</i></b></p> <p>Conclude by sharing the <b>Lord’s Prayer</b> (making it clear which version will be used, or that people can use their preferred one).</p>
1:50	<b>MEETING CLOSES</b>

<sup>5</sup> Unless you have training interviews to conduct, in which case reschedule other items accordingly.