

GUIDANCE

GUIDE TO DISCERNING ORDAINED VOCATION

PART ONE

G.1.1

Welcome to the candidating process in the British Methodist Church. This is called DOV which stands for 'Discerning Ordained Vocation'. In DOV1 the church provides resources so that you can discern deeply and **discover** how God is calling you.

DOV2 is the **offering** phase in which you offer yourself to the church as a candidate for ministry. Document G.1.2 provides guidance for DOV2.

You may be feeling both excited and daunted as you set out on this journey, but please remember that you are accompanied throughout.

1. PREPARING

Journal

You are strongly advised to start a journal specifically for this journey of discernment. It remains your own private record that you can choose to share as you wish. It is best to start this as soon as you begin to consider ordination.

Find a notebook that you can easily carry with you and note down your reflections on your past and present experiences. If someone says something that has made you think about your call to ministry, note it down. If you hear a line of a hymn or a prayer that has particular resonance, note it down. If something you read has significance for you, note it down in your journal. Try to write down an account of the way God has called, and is calling, you. Your journal will be enormously helpful if you offer as a candidate, because it will form the basis for your portfolio.

Ordained Friends

It is always advisable to discuss your calling with an ordained person who you know well. This might be your local minister, fellowship group leader, chaplain or superintendent minister. You can do this at any point, but particularly from January to March before you start the formal discerning processes.

Information Days

Exploring Ordained Ministry Days are held two or three times per year on zoom. This is a space to find out more and to ask questions. Details can be found here [Ordination Exploration Days \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/ordination-exploration-days)

Reading

Reading a variety of books on different aspects of faith, theology, ministry, mission, church history, Christianity in the modern world, and other areas, can help you to develop your own views. This will also help you to develop skills in theological reflection.

A booklist giving some suggestions of helpful books is provided in document C.8

It is good idea to develop a habit of reading throughout your discernment journey and beyond.

The **Methodist Church**

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission

www.methodist.org.uk

Register charity no 1132208

Shadowing and Placements

If you have limited experience of what the life of ordained ministry is like, ask a minister if you can shadow them at some of their activities. It is best to do this as early as possible.

The Methodist Diaconal Order will gladly put you in touch with a deacon if you have no other way of making contact with a deacon. You can contact them by emailing:

mdosupport@methodistchurch.org.uk

Family and Friends

Share the journey with the people who are closest to you. If you do apply for ordained ministry and go on to be formed as a minister, it will make changes that will impact everyone around you. Your family and friends will be the people you depend on for support and prayer. You will need to be able to download and complete forms and submit these in required formats. If you apply for DOV2, you will also need to be able to upload your portfolio to sharepoint. Therefore if these things would be a challenge for you, you are advised to seek out someone who has these skills to show you how to do these things.

Order of Ministry

If you are unsure about whether you might be called to Presbyteral or to Diaconal ministry, read documents G.3, G.4 and G.5, and speak to ministers around you.

- G.3 'What is a presbyter' Conference report
- G.4 'The Methodist Diaconal Order' Conference report
- G.5 'Changing patterns of ministry' Conference report.

These can be found at: [Candidating process \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)

During your early discussions with your accompanist and through the DOV1 retreat, you need to be clarifying which order of ministry you are feeling called to. It is important to note that the Diaconal Order is a religious order as well as an order of ministry.

Context

All people who candidate for diaconal or presbyteral ministry are offering to be itinerant and at the discipline of the church annually for their stationing.

Those candidating for Presbyteral ministry can apply to express this in a local and/or specific context.

The contexts are described in the guidance document G.5, and you can find out more in the 'local and specific contexts application form', C.2 which can also be found on the website. If you have any thoughts that you might want to apply for a local or specific context for ministry, it is essential that you have a conversation with your Superintendent minister and your District Chair as early as possible (even before you apply). This is because the circuit and district will need to discern if your application can work with their mission and resources. This is really important and you need to take responsibility for setting up these conversations.

2. REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY FOR DOV1

Baptism

You must be baptised. You will need to submit either your baptism certificate or a book plate from a book you were given at the time, or a copy of the church's baptism records. Your local minister might be able to help you to contact the church where you were baptised if you do not have these records yourself.

Membership

You must be an active member of the British Methodist for at least the last year. You will need to submit your membership card from the last year or, if you do not have that, a letter from the minister of the church declaring that you are a member of the church and have been for at least one year. If your church membership is in a Local Ecumenical Partnership, that is fine as long as the Methodist Church is one of the partners. The year is counted as the 12 months up to 1 September in the year in which you candidate.

Disclosure and Barring Service

You must submit a valid DBS certificate.

DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) indicates safeguarding concerns. If you do not already have one, please ask your local minister to arrange for you to have one carried out.

If there are concerns arising from the DBS or any other safeguarding concerns, these will be investigated. That process may operate at the same time as you go through the DOV1 and DOV2 process, but it may result in a need to pause the discernment process until the assessment is completed.

3. CRITERIA

All ministers and many lay office holders are accountable to a list of nine criteria (also called competencies). Sub criteria outline what is required at each stage of ministry. These criteria provide a helpful framework as you discern your own gifts, character and experience.

The details of these for candidates for ordained ministry can be found in document G.6 which you can find here [Candidating process \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk). They will be used in the discernment processes of candidating.

4. SUPPORT

Accompanist

If you undertook 'Explore' you will already have been matched with an accompanist who will have discussed many things with you already. If you did not undertake 'Explore', then as soon as you apply, you will be matched with an accompanist and you can start meeting with them.

This person is there to walk alongside you as you discern God's calling. They do not assess you or make decisions for you.

You are asked some questions on your application form concerning the sort of qualities in an accompanist you would find most helpful. Matches are made by the Connexional Team, and attempts are made to match as many factors as possible, though it is rare for all areas to match exactly. We cannot always match accompanists who are geographically close to applicants but making the use of video conferencing can assist your meetings, and it might be possible to agree to meet half way. If the relationship does not work well, support will be provided.

Information about the covenant agreement with accompanists can be found in form D.5 here: [Candidating process \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)

Local Church and Circuit

Throughout the processes your local church community will be an important source of prayer and pastoral support for you. This is your story to tell so the circuit and your local church will not announce that you are considering ordained vocation unless you give them that permission. In

general it is advisable not to make any announcements unless and until you have applied for DOV2.

Learning Network Support

The Learning Network will support you to make the most of your portfolio. This session is two hours, online, and you will come away with a clear sense of the 'what is expected in the portfolio', and 'how to create the content'. You can attend either the session in June 2024 or the same session repeated in September 2024. For details and to book your place please visit the following Eventbrite linked: [Candidates' Portfolio Support | Eventbrite](#)

Financial Support

Your accompanist will discuss with you the gifts you are given during candidating, training and future ministry as well as the costs involved.

Most of the costs you will incur for DOV1 and DOV2 are for travel though some meetings will be held by video conferencing.

The Methodist Church in Britain wishes to encourage all who feel called to do so to be able to apply to DOV1 and DOV2 and therefore will endeavour to ensure that no-one is discouraged by a lack of funds. Applicants for DOV1 and candidates in DOV2 who are struggling to meet the costs are asked to contact their Superintendent minister to see if the Circuit has any funds which could assist them. If that is not possible, then please contact the candidates' office: candidates@methodistchurch.org.uk to discuss what help might be available.

You will also need to consider the costs involved with training and formation. The details of this are different depending on the pathway. Details are explained in document G.8 which can be found on the website. This document is updated during each year so please make sure you check for the latest version.

Connexional Candidates' Office

The office runs all of the aspects of the candidating processes. If you have any questions that you have not been able to answer locally, please contact the office at: candidates@methodistchurch.org.uk

5. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The Methodist Church is determined that all people who are discerning a call to ordained ministry have equal access to the processes of discernment. This may mean making reasonable adjustments to help you during the processes due to any disability or need that you may have.

On the DOV1 application form: D1 we ask you to inform the candidates' office of any specific support needs you have. It is your responsibility to do this so that necessary elements are put in place for you particularly for 'in person' meetings such as the DOV1 retreat and the DOV2 Connexional Committee interviews

6. PROCESS

Application form D1

The first element of the process is to complete the application form D1 which is available to be downloaded from 1 January to 31 March from: [Candidating process \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://methodist.org.uk)

You are advised to submit your application form as early as possible so that you can start conversations with your accompanist.

When you submit the form, you need to attach a letter from a church leader to support your application, evidence of your baptism and membership, your DBS certificate and the D2 from (see below).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring form D.2

The data gained from this form will be used to assist the Methodist Church to identify and address any trends or patterns which may have the potential to lead to disadvantage or discrimination. This data will also be used to establish and share best practise and to celebrate the rich diversity of Methodist people. All of the questions in the form are optional. Please return the form with your application form. You will not be asked for this information again if you candidate.

How we process and use your data is outlined in our [Privacy notice \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://methodist.org.uk/privacy-notice)

Review

Once you have applied and have been matched with your accompanist, you will together arrange to have at least three meetings in person or on zoom. We ask that both you and the accompanist cover your own travel costs.

- Meeting 1 – introductions and completing the covenant form D3. Discussion about your discernment so far.
- Meetings 2 and 3 – a structured conversation about the impact of candidating, training and ministry and to discuss your discernment of the order of ministry and the context.

Together you will produce the agreed record D4 which becomes an element in your portfolio if you decide to offer as a candidate. Your accompanist is asked to send the completed form D4 to the candidates' office before the retreat. The office will send it on to your superintendent minister.

Retreat

Everyone who starts DOV1 is given the gift of this three day retreat and will automatically be booked into it. It is led by a diverse group of experienced retreat leaders. They regard it as a real privilege and an expression of their own vocation to walk with you through this time of deep discernment of your vocation.

The retreat costs are borne by the Connexion. You are asked to make your own arrangements to travel to the retreat. Your accompanist does not attend.

The date and venue can be found on document G.9 Dates and Deadlines.

You will be sent further information nearer the time.

Reflect

You will meet and your **accompanist** immediately after the retreat to discuss your spiritual discernment and where you feel that has taken you.

The retreat may have led you to discern that ordained vocation is not for you. If that is the case, it is perfectly acceptable for you to withdraw at this point. Please write to the candidates' office to let us know.

If your discernment has strengthened your sense of a calling to ordained ministry, this is the time to work with your accompanist in preparing for your conversation with members of the DOV1 Advisory group.

You and (if possible) your accompanist, will meet **three members of the DOV1 Advisory Group** for an online conversation of up to one hour regarding your discernment so far. They will give you the opportunity to explain your experiences that have led you to this point, and they will ask further questions.

The dates for these conversations are listed in G.9. Confirmation of the actual date and time of your conversation will be sent to you nearer the time. If any of the dates are impossible for you, please let the candidates' office know as soon as possible, but please be as flexible as you can.

After the conversation, the DOV1 Advisory group will write a guidance letter (D.5). It will contain one of these suggestions:

- Continue into candidating.
- Undertake a shadowing experience or do some other defined form of preparation between June and September and then continue into candidating.
- Explore further before returning to candidate (either through attending 'Explore' or through another route).
- Explore a different form of vocation

The letter will also highlight any gaps identified, questions to consider or concerns to address. The letter is sent to you from the candidates' office and copied to your local minister, superintendent minister and to your Chair of the District. It becomes part of your portfolio if you candidate. This letter is not sent to your accompanist so you are encouraged to contact your accompanist after you have received it in order to discuss the advice you have been given.

It is important to remember that the DOV1 Advisory Group are providing considered advice and suggestions but the decision about your next step remains entirely your decision. If you choose to offer as a candidate through DOV2, you will have opportunity through your portfolio and at the DOV2 Connexional Committee to explain your response to their advice.

After the DOV1 Advisory Group conversation, your accompanist will help you to consider the advice given and to take any subsequent actions. If a shadowing experience has been suggested, it is your responsibility to speak to your superintendent minister so that they can help you to set that up.

If you decide to offer as a candidate for ordained ministry, please see the guidance document G.1.2.