

## Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Studies Board

<b>Contact Name and Details</b>	The Revd Dr Mark H Wakelin ( <a href="mailto:revmarkwakelin@gmail.com">revmarkwakelin@gmail.com</a> ) Chair of the LPWL Studies Board
<b>Action Required</b>	None
<b>Resolutions</b>	62/1. The Council receives the report  62/2. The Council directs the Ministries Committee to take into consideration the learning outlined in this report, when establishing other such projects.

### Introduction

1. The Council established the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Studies Board (the Board) in January 2016 as a quality assurance and enhancement body. It is the duty of the Board to offer rigorous and robust oversight of Local Preacher and Worship Leader training. Full details of the Board's terms of reference can be found at MC/15/88.
2. The appointed members of the Board are: Jill Baker, Revd Chris Batten, Elaine Davenport, the Revd Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, the Revd Dr Jonathan Dean, Michael King, Joyce Popoola, the Revd Dr Mark Wakelin (Chair), the Revd Dr Martin Wellings. The work of the Board is supported by members of the Ministry Development Team: Bob Bartindale, the Revd Dr Philip Richter and the Revd Paul Wood (Coordinator).

### Reporting on the foundations

3. The Board has met on six occasions and reviewed all eight modules of *Worship: Leading and Preaching* and will meet a further four times in the coming year.
4. In reviewing the materials the Board applied several criteria, including:
  - Does the course equip Worship Leaders and Local Preachers for the roles they are expected to inhabit both now and in the future?
  - Does it develop a theological understanding that is distinctively Methodist, whilst recognising the learning from ecumenical partnerships?
  - Are the materials accessible?

We are mindful of our responsibilities in relation to the Faith and Order of the church and are mindful of the suggestions from the Faith and Order Committee representatives.
5. The Board is content that the course provides a good training ground for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders in the Methodist Church and is committed to building and developing on this sound foundation.
6. The Board has reviewed and will continue to review the feedback of students, tutors and mentors, provided in various forms including through formal feedback via the Methodist Learning Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and emails received). This feedback is vital in the development of the course and will continue to inform the thinking of the Board and the development of the course. The Board is keen to increase the ways it can receive feedback.
7. One of the greatest challenges for students and tutors alike is the use of the VLE, hosted on software known as Moodle, and branded 'Methodist Learning'. This has introduced a very

different way of accessing course material in line with contemporary practice in education and training, but has generated some critical comment, and requests for return to a paper-based course. This would be difficult to achieve whilst retaining the online nature of the course as access would still be required to access the essential multi-media content in the course. It would also be very expensive.

8. To enable a smoother transition to online learning, the Board has instructed the Ministry Development Team to create a new pre-study module which will help students to prepare better for the experience of online learning, as well as providing a basic introduction to the main elements of worship and its preparation as they commence their practice as Worship Leaders and Preachers.
9. The board are acutely aware of the higher demands made on Worship Leaders in this course than the previous course and are working with members of the Ministries Committee to reflect on the role of Worship Leaders and their particular training needs.
10. At the heart of the training is worship, both personal and corporate, reflective practice, encouragement to think theologically and robust assessment based in a variety of local contexts. The Board is committed to the continuing improvement of the training and development of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, making full use of the flexibility of the VLE in adapting the course to meet new needs and contexts, and incorporating new material as required. One particular enhancement will be the review and improvement of the devotional material embedded in the course and more comprehensive suggestions for its use.
11. One major advantage of using the VLE is that we have been able to respond positively to a request from the Methodist Church in Ireland to begin a pilot of the materials in their context. A copy of the course has been created which can be amended to reflect the polity of the Methodist Church in Ireland and we are looking forward to collaboration in the areas of marking and moderation.
12. Work continues on translating the materials into Welsh, with hopes for coming years to provide the course in other mother tongues.

### **Building on the foundations**

13. We are aware that signing off modules 1-8 does not mean “job done”. Regular review of the material is planned with consequent improvements. The Board has heard the report of the Continuing Local Preacher Development (CLPD) working group who, working with the Ministry Development Team, will design and curate materials and methods for continuing development. The Board will be responsible for reviewing material recommended for CLPD.

### **Learning from the setting up of the pathway**

14. Working with members of the former Editorial Group the Board has reflected on the learning of the team in setting up this new pathway and commends this learning to the Council and Ministries Committee:
15. A robust framework needs to be established before a pathway is populated. In hindsight the deadlines for *Worship: Leading and Preaching* were unrealistic. The Ministry Development Team were constantly under pressure to create the framework at the same time as commissioning content. This has meant a good deal of review and “back filling” of the materials during the process. A further year of framework development would have been a better way of working.

16. Sufficient funding and staffing from within the team needs to be focused on such projects. There is a risk that we try and do these things “on the cheap” or use temporary workers which risks the quality of the product.
17. A period of slippage time needs to be built into any pilot as it always takes longer than anticipated for people to use and evaluate the materials.
18. It is important that the right people (with sufficient training) are in place to put programmes into practice within the contexts in which they will be used. That is, it is not enough to focus solely on the materials and the course itself - there is a need to provide the proper guidance and support across the Connexion, recognising that a new way of doing things affects the whole Church not just the students on a particular pathway. Therefore when the church plans to use local tutors, mentors or any other role, sufficient resources need to be available for their recruitment and training.
19. The establishment of an oversight body (such as the Studies Board) enables the Connexion to have confidence in the work and offers the Connexional Team officers a good point of reference.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

- 62/1. The Council receives the report**
- 62/2. The Council directs the Ministries Committee to take into consideration the learning outlined in this report, when establishing other such projects.**