

# Criteria and Competencies

## Competencies for District Chairs

### 1. Vocation (Call and Commitment)

According to the 2006 Conference report *What is a District Chair?*, 'First and foremost, District Chairs are presbyters'. Like all presbyters, Chairs live out a lifelong vocation to a ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Responsibility, by accepting the call to serve the Church in a particular way and in a particular place. This is demonstrated by:

1. Fidelity in living out a call to presbyteral ministry and the ability to do so in a wider context than the local circuit.
2. A call to leadership that is found to be a realistic appraisal of their own gifts.
3. Proven experience of leadership within and on behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain and in other contexts.
4. A willingness to listen to the voice of others in their call to leadership.
5. The ability to witness joyfully to the experience of public representative ministry in a senior leadership position.

### 2. Vocation (Ministry in the MCB)

*What is a District Chair?* glosses its opening statement, describing Chairs as presbyters 'who in exercising their ministry undertake particular responsibilities on behalf of the Conference'. Those appointed as Chairs are called to a particular office that has its place in and affirms the forms of ministry practiced in the MCB, and which involves the exercise of oversight over the life of a district and the ministry of colleagues. Those identifying presbyters who would be suitable to serve as Chairs look for:

1. A recognition of the needs of the church and a willingness to respond appropriately to them in service.
2. A realistic understanding of the role of a Chair in the life of the Methodist Church.
3. An understanding of the oversight of the Conference and their representative role.
4. An understanding of the nature of oversight as it is exercised and experienced in the Methodist Church in Britain and the capacity to exercise such oversight.
5. Ability to receive and offer to others the benefits of supervision.

### 3. Relationship with God

If District Chairs are first and foremost presbyters, presbyters are first and foremost people of prayer, who will need a disciplined and robust spirituality to hold before God that for which the Church has made them responsible and to sustain them in the exercise of those responsibilities. Those identifying presbyters who would be suitable to serve as Chairs look for:

1. A well-developed life of prayer that enables the individual to hold responsibility before God.
2. A devotional life that integrates the practices of prayer with the practices of ministry.
3. The ability to sustain a devotional life in a comparatively isolated position of leadership.
4. A commitment to seek in all things to bring glory to God.

#### 4. **Personality and Character**

No-one who has been a District Chair is likely to claim that it is an easy calling to follow. The MCB asks its Chairs to bear significant responsibility for the life of a district, to deal with situations of conflict, to carry sensitive and confidential information, to administer discipline and to manage difficult processes, as well as to share the public joys and sorrows of ministers, lay people, and circuits. This is a role that demands a great deal of availability, the willingness to travel significant distances, and to move from one task to another that is completely different with equanimity. Those identifying presbyters who would be suitable to serve as Chairs look for:

1. Realistic understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses.
2. A willingness to seek help in times of need.
3. Appropriate patterns of self-care that model good practice for others.
4. A desire to improve in their practice and discipleship.
5. Appropriate self-reliance and self-motivation and the ability to effectively draw on resources from others and from the Church.
6. A developed understanding of confidentiality and its appropriate limits.

#### 5. **Being in Relationship with Others**

The ministry of a district chair is collaborative and can only be maintained through good personal relationships. The ability to work with others is therefore vital as Chairs need to create and to maintain good relationships with (among others) their colleague chairs and Connexional officers, the superintendents and lay leaders in the district and the ordained over whose character and fidelity s/he has oversight. The ability to create a positive atmosphere within the Superintendents' meeting or to engage with those attending a circuit celebration, for example, is critical in the ministry of a Chair. Often, the Chair will find her/ himself engaged in attempting to ameliorate the effects of poor interpersonal relationships and needs to model exemplary practice in this regard. Those identifying presbyters who would be suitable to serve as Chairs look for:

1. Highly developed self-awareness and the ability to be aware of one's impact on others.
2. A good understanding of difference.
3. A proven willingness to speak the truth in love even (and especially) when that is difficult.
4. A highly developed ability to manage conflict.
5. Excellent pastoral skills.
6. The ability to deploy a range of strategies in difficult interpersonal relationships.
7. Proven ability both to offer and to receive effective supervision.
8. An informed awareness of their own power and vulnerabilities.
9. The ability to use authority appropriately.
10. The ability to demonstrate and counsel others on the appropriate use of boundaries.

#### 6. **The Church's Ministry in God's World**

'The primary purpose for which the District is constituted is to advance the mission of the Church in a region' (SO 400A). Districts look to their Chairs to provide leadership in fulfilling this calling by helping them to identify what the Spirit is saying to the region and how they (as ministers, as circuits and as individual disciples) might work together to share in the Spirit's work. Those identifying presbyters who would be suitable to serve as Chairs therefore look for:

1. The ability to hear and to articulate the call of God to mission.
2. An ability to identify the requirements of the work of God in their locality with an awareness of the ecumenical content and the local society.
3. The ability to see how the Church's personnel and resources in an area might be effectively deployed.
4. A secure Methodist identity and the ability to inspire others in that.
5. A well-developed knowledge and understanding of the governance structures of the district.
6. Clear understanding of Methodist polity and how it is effectively administered.
7. The awareness of the role as a representative leader in Methodism and in ecumenical context.

## 7. Leadership and Collaboration

District Chairs exercise a leadership role in the life of the Church. Just as all oversight in the Methodist Church in Britain, however much it seems to be invested in an individual, has a shared nature, so leadership in the MCB always involves ways of working collaboratively and collegially. Those identifying presbyters who would be suitable to serve as Chairs therefore look for:

1. The ability to recognise the different mission opportunities apparent in a district.
2. The capacity to judge the availability and potential of resources to serve the *missio Dei*.
3. Developed administrative skills.
4. Developed skill in the chairing of public meetings.
5. Clear understanding of the authority and influence inherent in role of District Chair.
6. Developed skills of change management.
7. An understanding of a range of leadership styles and the ability to deploy them.
8. The ability to stimulate theological reflection.
9. The ability to recognise and encourage the gifts in others and to learn from their failures and successes.
10. A capacity to inspire others with a vision of what God is doing in a district.
11. A developed understanding of risk and the ability to act independently and take responsibility for own actions.
12. Developed and proven skills in collaborative working.
13. The ability to listen to the voices of those representing different parts of the district and to weigh the value of differing contributions to any discussion.
14. The ability to challenge inappropriate behaviour.
15. The ability to use supervision effectively as a tool for oversight.
16. An ability to work with ecumenical partners as representative leaders of the church.

## 8. Learning and Understanding

All presbyters continue to be students of theology throughout their ministry; *What is a District Chair?* suggests that there is a number of differing expectations that Chairs might encounter as a leader of worship, as one who offers a ministry of teaching around the district, or as 'a defender of the faith'. Those identifying presbyters who would be suitable to serve as Chairs therefore look for:

1. Demonstrable skills of and the ability to lead others in theological reflection.
2. The ability to model and encourage practices of study.
3. The ability to recognise the learning needs of those in ordained ministry, to draw effectively on the resources of the church, and to encourage others to develop their skills in particular areas of ministry.
4. The proven capacity to address her/his own learning needs by, for example, attending appropriate conferences and training.

## 9. **Communication**

The communication of the Good News of Christ is central to the ministry of all presbyters. The need to be able to articulate good news is particularly sharp for District Chairs who find themselves asked to make statements on behalf of the District and the Connexion. The Chair is also an important focus of the Connexional ties that bind districts to the MCB as a whole and needs to be able to ensure that the district receives, can disseminate, and can respond to communications from connexional bodies.

Those identifying presbyters suitable to be Chairs therefore look for:

1. Advanced communication skills including the ability to deal with broadcast media.
2. The ability to speak with informed authority on behalf of a district and the Connexion.
3. The ability to exercise effective oversight over a district's own communications systems and publications.
4. The ability to enable good communication within and on behalf of a district.
5. The ability to articulate clearly and understandably theological truths and the priorities of the church.
6. The capacity to communicate effectively with and to enable effective communication between different offices and officers in the Church.