

40. Deliverance Ministry

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Resolutions	<p>40/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>40/2. The Conference adopts the contents of Section 2 as guidance for deliverance ministry, directs that it be published in Book VII of CPD to replace the interim guidance currently published there, and invites feedback to be sent to guidancefeedback@methodistchurch.org.uk by 31 January 2024.</p> <p>40/3. The Conference directs the Ministries and Faith and Order Committees to bring further revised guidance for deliverance ministry to the 2024 Conference.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aims	Revised guidance for deliverance ministry.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theological comment • Pastoral response • Changes to the guidance • Section 2 contains the revised guidance for deliverance ministry
Background documents	<i>Deliverance Ministry Guidelines, 2021</i>
Consultations	Feedback was invited by the 2021 Conference. The Church of England

Section 1: Report

- 1 The 2021 Conference adopted interim guidance for deliverance ministry and invited feedback. It directed that revised guidance be brought to the 2022 Conference. This report brings the revised guidance for deliverance ministry together with some theological comment, and suggests that there is a further period of feedback and revision.
- 2 Although some feedback was received following the debate at the 2021 Conference, there has been limited feedback received during the year. This is not surprising as the training, supervision and process for authorisation of practitioners are still being put in place. It is, therefore, recommended that there be a period during which further feedback be invited to

allow time for reflection on how the guidance is experienced in practice. The Faith and Order Committee has also continued to reflect theologically on deliverance ministry and, although some initial theological comments are offered below, it would be helpful for there to be opportunity for the theological thinking to develop alongside the guidance.

- 3 The Methodist Council has agreed Terms of Reference for the Connexional Panel for Deliverance Ministry and it is hoped that the 2022 Conference will appoint its members. As the Connexional Panel for Deliverance Ministry will report to the Ministries Committee, it is recommended that the Ministries and Faith and Order Committees oversee the further revision of the guidance in the light of feedback received and developing theological thinking. A resolution is brought to this effect.

Theological Comment

- 4 In every act of worship, the Church celebrates the grace of God who desires wholeness of body, mind and spirit for all people. Through and in Jesus, God offers us transforming love, forgiveness, acceptance and new life. Christians are called by God to trust and follow Jesus Christ, to share in his mission and to continue his ministry by serving in the Church and the world.
- 5 Christians believe that God wants human beings to flourish and grow in loving relationship with one another and with God. John's Gospel uses the image of abundant life for this: "I am come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). In the ministry of Jesus, healing in different forms is part of this. It is a sign of God's kingdom, bringing renewal and wholeness of life to those who turned to God in their need, and it has continued to be part of the ministry of the Church. In services of healing and reconciliation, for example, Methodists understand that:

"We bring to God our own frailty and brokenness – felt not just in physical illness, but in guilt, anxiety, and all the burdens which weigh us down. We also bring our concerns for others and for the world. Above all, we come to the God who knows our needs before we ask, and whose love revealed in Jesus Christ is stronger than suffering and death."¹
- 6 One aspect of healing is deliverance from evil. Whilst the reality of evil is not to be doubted, there are different ways in which it is understood and different interpretations of what may be happening when the term 'evil' is used. How Christians respond is shaped by what they understand evil to be and how they understand it to operate. Such response is often expressed through the Church's pastoral, preaching, prophetic and sacramental ministries.
- 7 Evil has the potential to influence and affect both the individual and society. It is experienced by individuals who feel personally afflicted in various ways, and it is manifested in such things as violence, poverty, and different forms of discrimination and oppression. The relationship of a Christian to evil is referenced repeatedly in the Church's public worship. It is referred to in baptism, for example, and within the Lord's Prayer ("deliver us from evil"). All Christians may encounter evil at various points in their lives and these encounters have the potential to be repeated, but Christians also can have confidence that Christ has decisively defeated the powers of evil by his death and resurrection. In the New Testament Jesus' own wrestling with evil is linked to his healing of those who are sick and establishing the kingdom of God.

¹ *Methodist Worship Book*, 1999, Preface to 'An Order of Service for Healing and Wholeness', p.407

- 8 One way in which the Church has responded to evil is through the ministry of deliverance. This is a particularly focused instance of evil being confronted by Christ, through his ministers, with the aim of bringing wholeness to people. Deliverance ministry focusses on an individual, a small group, or a place, in which the presence of evil appears to be particularly centred. Within the Church there is a wide variety of opinion as to how this is understood and addressed. Many contemporary narratives around deliverance have been informed as much by folklore and popular culture as Christian thought and experience, and there can, therefore, be a range of beliefs about what might be happening. Sometimes those requesting deliverance ministry describe and understand their experience as paranormal activity (ghosts, poltergeists, a 'presence' or inexplicable physically happening, for example). Deliverance ministry can be open to unhelpful speculation and, potentially, abuse. It, therefore, requires caution, clear structures of accountability, particular expertise and prayer. The Conference has established that deliverance ministry requires discernment, and that there should be a multidisciplinary approach. It has, therefore, established guidelines and structures of authorisation and accountability for those offering this ministry.
- 9 There are different approaches to deliverance ministry, and different biblical, theological, historical, cultural, medical, psychological and sociological perspectives. Biblical language (for example that of 'demons' and 'evil spirits') is also variously interpreted. The question of where evil influences come from remains an important theological issue. Deliverance ministry is usually requested by those who believe that there are spiritual influences that are at work for evil as well as for good. For those who believe that all evil is subjective and can be explained as being brought about by behaviour on the part of an individual or by society, or that evil is the result of behaviour resulting from psychiatric illness or disorders of the personality, then deliverance ministry is less likely to be sought or felt appropriate. Amongst those making requests for deliverance ministry, those who support them, and the deliverance ministry practitioners, there may be several different interpretations of what is taking place. All views pay full regard to Christ's ministry of healing.
- 10 For example, some might understand deliverance ministry to involve the casting out of an objective power of evil or a paranormal phenomenon which has gained possession of a person or occupies a particular space. Among those who take this approach, some might believe in the ontological reality of evil spirits or paranormal phenomena, whilst others prefer to speak of people as being overpowered by a personal force of evil or understand that a form of psychic activity is manifesting from the person. Some people might understand that deliverance ministry is a necessary, or at least an effective, psychological means of reassuring those who believe themselves to be possessed ie the deliverance ministry practitioner themselves might not accept the ontological reality of the spirits which are removed, but they do accept their psychological reality for those believing themselves possessed. Others still might not believe that demons exist and may think that any such belief is sociologically and psychologically explicable. Some who broadly hold this view might think that deliverance ministry is still appropriate because it is a response to the belief of the person requesting it, whilst others might feel that to pretend to accept a situation which they think is false is not helpful and instead stress that pastoral care and the ministry of word and sacrament is the most appropriate response. Fears and anxieties can be dealt with by the assurance of the presence and love of Christ, and the wholeness which God wills for all people can be discovered through these means.
- 11 Sometimes people ask for deliverance ministry with respect to a place or object, understanding it to contain some kind of negative or disturbing energy, or finding that it

triggers sensations of evil or disturbance. Again, there are different ways of understanding what may be taking place. The key focus continues to be the healing and wholeness of the person making the request for deliverance ministry.

- 12 These examples of the ways in which deliverance ministry might be approached are not comprehensive, nor mutually exclusive, but they illustrate some of the different theological understandings which exist. No matter what approach someone may take to deliverance ministry, its fundamental aim is to help bring wholeness to people.

Pastoral Response

- 13 This all means that there may be differences in what deliverance ministry practitioners understand to be happening in any particular situation in which deliverance ministry is requested. Someone asking for deliverance ministry may have a different cultural worldview and belief from the person they are asking to administer it. It is, therefore, important that deliverance ministry practitioners work with the recipient's understanding of what they are experiencing and how they attribute it to evil. It is not appropriate for others, whether the practitioner, family, friends or local minister, to make the attribution. Whilst the practitioner will respond to the recipient's attribution as a starting point, however, there will then be a period of discernment during which it is determined whether any particular form of prayers or act of deliverance is appropriate.
- 14 A period of discernment is important so that there is time to learn about the situation and the recipient's perception of what is happening, for appropriate consultation to take place, and so that all involved can prepare for the act of deliverance, not least in prayer. The guidelines for deliverance ministry must be followed. This does not, and should not, prevent pastoral and healing ministry being undertaken where prayers for peace, healing, wholeness and for general "deliverance from evil" may be offered. If a request for deliverance is made in the middle of a healing service, for example, then a general prayer for healing is an appropriate response and the request for deliverance ministry can subsequently be explored further.

Changes to the Guidance

- 15 All changes to the guidance are shown in bold italics as is customary. Many of the changes have been to bring further clarity in the light of developing theological thinking or as the processes of training and authorisation are beginning to be established.
- 16 An appropriate liturgy is referred to in paragraph 2 iii. This has already been produced by the Faith and Order Committee and will be made available to all who undertake deliverance ministry training, District Chairs and the Connexional Panel for Deliverance Ministry.
- 17 The amendment in 3 vi has already been agreed by the Council in October 2021.
- 18 In 4.3 there is an attempt to distinguish the additional supervision for deliverance ministry practitioners from the Methodist Church's general supervision structure and process. The additional supervision is somewhat equivalent to clinical supervision in other disciplines but the term 'deliverance ministry supervision' was felt to be appropriate.

Section 2: The Revised Guidance for Deliverance Ministry

~~**The Provisional Guidelines for Deliverance Ministry Including Exorcism**~~
DELIVERANCE MINISTRY INCLUDING EXORCISM

Interim Guidelines for Good Practice in the Methodist Church in Britain

1. Introduction

1.1. The nature of deliverance ministry

It is an important and cherished part of the Methodist tradition continually to hold in prayer any who may be ~~going through~~ **experiencing** times of suffering or anxiety. This may take place in gatherings for public worship, as well as in **pastoral** situations of individual ~~pastoral care~~.

Some people, ~~though~~, may seek specific help when they become aware of what seem to be continuing experiences of evil within them or around them. For these people, it may be appropriate to offer ~~help through~~ the Church's deliverance ministry.

The Church regularly prays for deliverance from evil in the words of the Lord's Prayer; deliverance ministry ~~may be seen as part~~ **is an expression** of this intention.

Persons seeking deliverance ministry are very vulnerable. ~~It should be given with due caution~~ **Deliverance ministry should only be offered according to the provisions of the Methodist Church as contained in these guidelines**, and in a context of continuing pastoral care.

The following guidelines should therefore be followed.

1.2. Theological basis

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with ~~the report on the~~ **theological reflection in the Deliverance Ministry report** ~~theology of deliverance ministry which the Faith and Order Committee will bring to the 2022 Conference.~~

1.3. Definitions

- i. Healing – The Church's healing ministry is a ministry which may include elements such as appropriate Christian prayer, sacrament or rituals/~~procedures~~ **practices** with the intention of relieving suffering: mental, physical, **spiritual** or emotional.
- ii. Deliverance – The Church's deliverance ministry is a ministry which may include elements such as appropriate Christian prayer, sacrament or rituals/~~procedures~~ **practices** with the intention of freeing individuals from what they understand to be the influence of evil within them or around them.
- iii. Exorcism – exorcism is ~~an aspect~~ **a form** of deliverance ministry, but is more specifically concerned with freeing individuals or places from what they understand to be ~~demonic possession~~ **by an evil spirit**.
NB Guidance offered in this document applies to both deliverance and exorcism ministries.

- iv. Terminology – For the purposes of this ~~report~~ **guidance**

the word **recipient** denotes someone who is seeking, requesting and receiving deliverance ministry;

the word **practitioner** denotes ~~an approved person authorised to administer it~~ **a person who is authorised to administer it**;

the word **supporter** denotes a person who assists a practitioner.

2. Context

Deliverance ministry is an extension of the prayer life of the whole Church; recipients should therefore be able to have confidence that words, rites and intentions offered express the faith of the whole Church.

It is recommended therefore that:

- i. Deliverance ministry should only be offered when authorised, in each and every instance, by the Chair of the District in which it is to be given, or their appointed representative(s).
- ii. It is never undertaken by one person alone. Each practitioner should be assisted by up to two suitable **appropriate** supporters, at least one of whom is involved in the ongoing pastoral care of the recipient.

They should set aside time for spiritual preparation before offering deliverance ministry, and Their ministry should also be simultaneously supported by a prayer team in a separate location.

- iii. ~~An~~ ***The*** approved liturgy is used. ***This will be made available as part of the training.*** The service may also include Holy Communion or anointing with oil. ~~A liturgical framework will be made available~~
- iv. ~~It is not appropriate for~~ Deliverance ministry to ***should not*** take place online.
- v. Deliverance ministry must not be ***exercised with the intention of*** ~~used to attempting~~ to change a recipient's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- vi. Deliverance ministry must not be offered to recipients who are under 18.

3. Safeguarding

Deliverance ministry is an integral part of ***the Church's ministry of healing*** life and the Guidelines for Good Practice in the Methodist Church in Britain should be read alongside ~~these safeguarding considerations~~ ***followed in conjunction with the safeguarding policy and practices of the Methodist Church.*** Good safeguarding practice must be adhered to at all times and includes addressing the following areas:

- i. Deliverance ministry may only be ~~conducted~~ ***undertaken*** by qualified ~~authorised~~ practitioners as set out in these Guidelines and must ensure the safeguarding of recipients, practitioners and supporters
- ii. Practitioners must have undertaken up to date Methodist Advanced Module safeguarding training and their supporters must have undertaken up to date Methodist Foundation Module safeguarding training.
- iii. Informed consent (including the limits to confidentiality) must be obtained from the recipient of deliverance ministry and any sacramental acts and rituals/~~procedures~~ ***practices*** that may be used must be explained to the recipient in advance.
- iv. Information shared by a recipient should not be passed to others unless they give consent in advance for specific information to be shared, or the information indicates that they or another may be at risk of harm, or the recipient indicates that they are

involved in or likely to become involved in a ~~significant~~ criminal offence, or the practitioner believes that another party is involved or likely to become involved in a criminal offence.

- v. Practitioners' language and body language should always be considerate and courteous, and touch and the anointing with oil may only be used with prior consent.
- vi. Practitioners must have regard to the mental capacity and mental health of an adult recipient and seek advice from a mental health professional if their capacity and/or judgement is in doubt. The District Safeguarding Officer must be informed ~~where the recipient is an adult who may be vulnerable~~ **in all cases of deliverance ministry**.
- vii. Practitioners must consider whether there are safeguarding concerns and inform the District Safeguarding Officer of any identified.
- viii. Deliverance must be conducted with the minimum of publicity, in a safe space and by more than one person.
- ix. Practitioners must make a written record of deliverance ministry and issue privacy notices to the recipient and supporters.

4. Personnel

4.1. Authorisation and accountability

- i. Deliverance ministry may be ~~given~~ **undertaken** by ordained or lay persons. However, anyone considering offering it, including both practitioners and supporters, must make themselves known to the Chair of the District in which the ministry is to take place.
- ii. Anyone wishing to be authorised as a practitioner must undergo the Connexional Training Course, after recommendation by their Chair of District or the Chair's appointed representative.
- iii. Authorisation to practice will be granted by the Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry after receiving feedback from those operating the Training Course and the recommendation from the relevant District Chair (or their appointed representative).

The Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry will ~~comprise~~ **include** people with comprehensive experience and knowledge of deliverance ministry.

- iv. ~~The District Chair or their appointed representative must ensure that the authorised practitioner's ministry is monitored by appropriate supervision.~~

4.2. Training

4.2.1. The Connexional Training course in deliverance ministry will:

- i. be open to all (lay and ordained) who feel called by God to carry out this ministry;
- ii. take place over **at least the equivalent of** one day.
- iii. Components to include:
 - a) The Church's understanding of deliverance ministry;
 - b) Key skills, including intentional listening, allowing people to express themselves subjectively and objectively;

- c) Different perspectives in terms of theological understanding, use of the Bible, and personal awareness;
- d) Mental health awareness;
- e) When and how to ask for help;
- f) Liturgy, prayer and ritual.

4.2.2. After initial training has taken place

- i. Practitioners must be offered ongoing training and support including active membership of a peer support group.
- ii. Practitioners will be invited to attend and contribute to subsequent training days.

4.3. **Deliverance Ministry** Supervision

- i. The Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry will appoint a **deliverance ministry** supervisor for each authorised practitioner.
- ii. Formal supervision will include an account and discussion on any deliverance ministry that has taken place. A report on the case should be sent to the District Chair.
- iii. Formal supervision is required in addition to peer/group support.
- iv. **Deliverance Ministry** Supervisors will be invited to attend and contribute to training days.

4.4. Multidisciplinary team

Practitioners should always work alongside others to ensure the best possible response to the needs of the recipient. These may include the District Safeguarding Officer, psychiatric healthcare professionals, hospital/mental health chaplains, counsellors and the local pastoral team.

5. Continuing care

Every effort should be made to continue contact with the recipients of deliverance ministry, to ensure that they continue to be offered the support, prayer and care of the Church

***RESOLUTIONS

40/1. The Conference received the Report.

40/2. The Conference adopted the contents of Section 2 as guidance for deliverance ministry, directed that it be published in Book VII of CPD to replace the interim guidance currently published there, and invited feedback to be sent to guidancefeedback@methodistchurch.org.uk by 31 January 2024.

40/3. The Conference directed the Ministries and Faith and Order Committees to bring further revised guidance for deliverance ministry to the 2024 Conference.

LP/3. The Conference amended Standing Orders as follows:

32A4 Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry (1) The Conference shall appoint

annually a panel of persons, to be known as the connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry, upon the nomination of the Ministries Committee made in accordance with the terms of reference for the panel adopted from time to time by the Methodist Council.

(2) The panel shall have the responsibilities set out in such terms of reference, which shall include the arrangements, terms and conditions for the grant of authorisation of persons as practitioners in the field of deliverance ministry.