

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 times of suffering or anxiety. This may take place in gatherings for public worship, as well as in 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 of this intention.

Persons seeking deliverance ministry are very vulnerable. It should be given with due caution, 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 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 with the intention of relieving suffering: mental, physical 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 with the intention of freeing individuals from the apparent influence of evil within them or around them.
- iii. Exorcism – exorcism is an aspect of deliverance ministry, but is more specifically concerned with freeing individuals or places from apparent demonic possession.

NB Guidance offered in this document applies to both deliverance and exorcism ministries.

- iv. Terminology – For the purposes of this report

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

the word **practitioner** denotes an approved person 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 supporters, at least one of whom is involved in the ongoing pastoral care of the recipient.

Their ministry should also be simultaneously supported by a prayer team in a separate location.
- iii. An approved liturgy is used. 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 take place online.
- v. Deliverance ministry must not be used to attempt to change a recipient's sexual orientation or gender identity

3. Safeguarding

Deliverance ministry is an integral part of Church life and the Guidelines for Good Practice in the Methodist Church in Britain should be read alongside these safeguarding considerations. Good safeguarding practice must be adhered to at all times and includes addressing the following areas:

- i. Deliverance ministry may only be conducted by qualified practitioners as set out in the Guidelines for Good Practice in the Methodist Church in Britain [Hyperlink to be added when available] 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 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.⁶
- 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 or is under the age of 18 years.
- 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 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 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 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;⁷

- 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. Supervision

- i. The Connexional Panel on Deliverance Ministry will appoint a 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. 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.