

Called to Lead Worship?

All true worship is God-centred. As we acknowledge the mystery and glory of the eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are moved to offer our praise and to confess our sins, confident of God's mercy and forgiveness. God's acts of grace and love in creation and salvation are recounted and celebrated, and we respond with thanksgiving, intercession and the offering of our lives.

Worship is a gracious encounter between God and the Church. God speaks to us, especially through Scripture read and proclaimed and through symbols and sacraments. We respond, chiefly through hymns and prayers and acts of dedication. Worship is the work of the whole people of God: a congregation is not an audience or a group of spectators. Those who lead worship are called to encourage and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to enable the whole Body of Christ to participate fully.

The Methodist Worship Book, p. vii

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The Church is called to offer worship to the glory and praise of God

Christians are called, you among them, to witness to God's grace and justice in every part of society. The Methodist Church has always encouraged members to explore a wide range of callings: some are called to ordained ministry as deacons or presbyters, while others are called to a wide variety of forms of lay ministry, such as children and youth workers, stewards, treasurers, local preachers and worship leaders. Christians in many walks of life see their work as a vocation and seek to do it in Christ-like ways that honour God.

This booklet is designed to help you explore what it might mean to be called to lead worship in the Methodist Church. As you read through this booklet, take time to pray and to reflect, and when you are ready, talk it through with someone who knows you well and who is able to be honest with you – possibly a friend or family member, or your minister.



There is an old Christian tradition that God sends each person into this world with a special message to deliver, with a song to sing for others, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can speak my message, or sing my song, or offer my act of love. These are only entrusted to me.

Francis Dewar, *Called or Collared*
(London, SPCK, 1991). Used by permission.



What is worship?

Those who lead worship seek to enable people to praise God, celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. They help others to recognise God's presence, through music, prayer, poetry, drama, and in a range of other ways. You may find a desire to lead worship in your local church growing out of your desire to glorify God.

To worship is joyfully to proclaim, in the power of the Spirit, the wonderful acts of God and to celebrate God's glorious nature. We worship God, not only in formal or informal acts of worship, but also with our lives, by serving God in serving other people.

A Catechism for the Use of People called Methodists, no 46

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Reflect

- Read the extract from *The Methodist Worship Book* on page 2 of this booklet.
- What does worship mean to you?

Eileen's call

"I found myself worship leading long before it was a recognised ministry. We held fellowship meetings and shared in those services where we explored different ways to worship. So it was a natural progression for me to do the Worship Leaders' Training Course and be officially accepted as a leader. I was challenged to become a local preacher, but after sending for *Faith & Worship*, and much prayer from friends and personally, I was totally convinced that local preaching was not for me but worship leading was."



What do worship leaders do?

Worship leaders are members of the Methodist Church who have been trained and commissioned to share in preparing and leading worship alongside the minister or local preacher appointed to lead an act of worship. Their role may include choosing and leading music and prayers, reading Bible passages or other readings, facilitating dance or drama and any other aspect of the act of worship other than the sermon. This will depend on the context and the gifts and skills of the worship leader and those around them. Their knowledge and understanding of the local context also enables them to shape worship that is appropriate for the congregation.

The minister or local preacher retains overall responsibility for the act of worship, but works collaboratively with others to prepare and lead it.



How are worship leaders different from ministers or local preachers?

The Methodist Church needs worship leaders in order to help others engage in worship that is rooted in the context of the local community. Presbyters and local preachers are responsible for public acts of worship, and work collaboratively with others to lead these acts.



Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16-17 (NRSV)



Ben's call

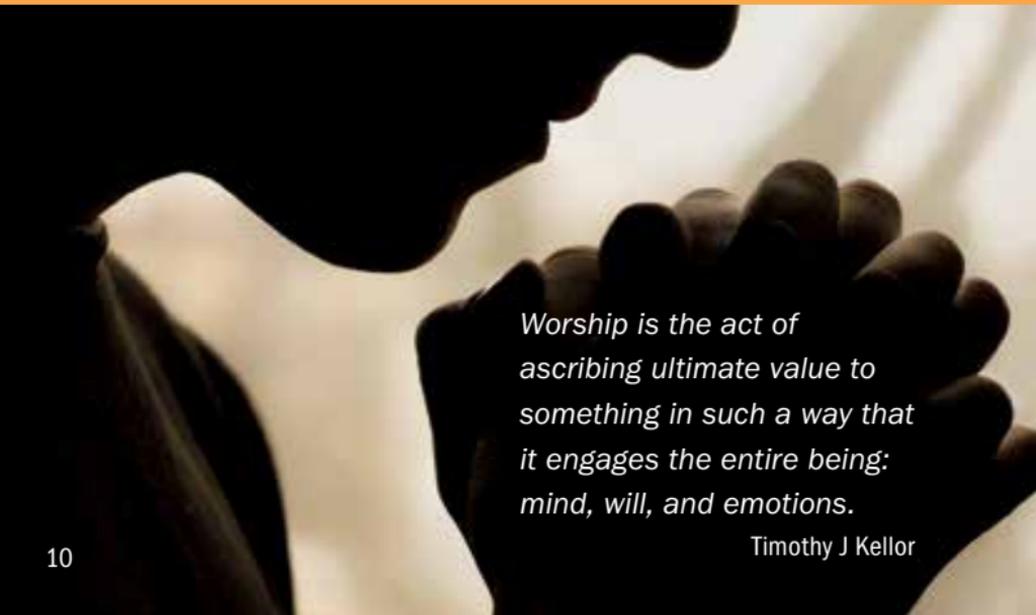
"I'm 16 years old and a worship leader at Easton Methodist Church on Portland, Dorset. Since I have been at the church it has really opened my eyes to the power of God. I have a strong connection with other churches in the area: understanding how others worship really helps my faith grow. Worship leading has been an amazing way to express my faith and evangelise the message to members of my local community. I have been leading worship at my church regularly at a mid-week evening service and really enjoy the response and being able to get involved with something I feel passionately about."



Is leading worship your calling?

Members of the congregation may contribute to Methodist worship in various ways, such as reading the Scripture passages or offering prayers. Nevertheless, you may feel called to take a step further and train as a worship leader, to be commissioned by the Church Council. This commissioning is a sign that your church has placed its confidence in you, and that you have been trained in the skills and knowledge needed to enhance your understanding and lead an act of worship. You will act as a catalyst for others, drawing out the gifts and skills of others in your community.

Worship leaders need to be able to work collaboratively, to be confident public speakers, to be able to recognise and encourage the gifts of others and to lead acts of worship with conviction.

A silhouette of a person in profile, facing right, with their hands clasped in prayer. The background is a bright, hazy light, creating a high-contrast, spiritual atmosphere.

Worship is the act of ascribing ultimate value to something in such a way that it engages the entire being: mind, will, and emotions.

Timothy J Kellor

*Jesus, open my eyes to your presence,
open my ears to your call,
open my heart to your love.
Grant me grace to follow you,
wisdom to discern the way
and strength in times of challenge.
Help me to trust you
and give myself to you,
so that I may follow in your ways
and be your true disciple. Amen.*



Worship leader training

It may feel daunting to consider a calling to lead God's people in worship, but the decision to become a worship leader is not taken alone. The Methodist Church provides a learning pathway designed to equip worship leaders to explore and fulfil their calling. Members of the church and circuit will accompany you in the process of discernment.

The worship leader pathway combines study with practical experience. Elements of the training may be shared with those training as local preachers. Many aspects of leading worship are explored through the training, reflecting the countless ways in which we encounter God. In particular, ways of praying, exploring the Bible, and using different forms of creativity are considered. The training is also an opportunity to grow in personal faith and spirituality, and to reflect on your own experience of church and worship.

Others in the church and circuit will provide support and feedback to those in training. At stages during the training there will be opportunities for a more formal review of your call. While for many people the call will be affirmed, not everyone will go on to become a worship leader. This can be uncomfortable and disappointing, but the decision is never taken lightly, and in time it may be possible to recognise God's redirection in that outcome. There are many

different ways to serve, and your gifts may be for other valuable ministries.

Once someone's call to lead worship has been tested and confirmed, and training is completed, they are commissioned as a worship leader. At the service of commissioning, the worship leader commits themselves, with God's help, to continued development both as a worship leader and as a follower of Christ, and all the people promise to support them.

Further information about training pathways for worship leaders can be found at www.methodist.org.uk/WL.

*Worship is our response
to what we value most.*

Louie Giglio



*Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.*

Brian Doerksen, *Singing the Faith* 24. © 1998 Vineyard Songs
(adm. by Song Solutions www.songsolutions.org)



What to do next?

If after prayerful thought, you feel you want to find out more:

- Talk it over with someone who knows you well and who is able to be honest with you.
- Share your sense of call with your minister.
- Further information can be found on the Methodist Church website (www.methodist.org.uk/WL).



*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”
And I said, “Here am I; send me!”*

Isaiah 6:8 (NRSV)

*We thank you, gracious God,
for those whom you have called
to lead your people in worship.
Guide and inspire them by your Holy Spirit
that they may fulfil this ministry
to the honour and glory of your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

from the Commissioning of Worship Leaders,
The Methodist Worship Book, p. 352

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