

17. Stationing Committee

Contact name and details	Andrew Owen, Chair of the Stationing Committee andrew.r.owen@icloud.com
---------------------------------	--

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Stationing Committee wishes to express its grateful thanks to all those who have given many hours of work to this important task.
- 1.2 This year has seen the appointment of a new Chair of the Stationing Matching Group, the Revd Stephen Poxon, who has guided the stationing matching process as the Stationing Matching Group has faced the challenges outlined below in Section 2.
- 1.3 The imbalance between the number of available circuit appointments and the number of presbyters available for stationing to circuit appointments continues to be a major concern.
- 1.4 The work of the Committee this year has been enhanced by the contributions of new members, including the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. In accordance with Standing Order 114(1E), the Secretary of the Conference has delegated the responsibility (under Standing Order 322(1)(ii)) for convening the Stationing Committee to the Assistant Secretary of the Conference with effect from 1 March 2016. This delegation will be in place for the next connexional year.
- 1.5 In addition to the imbalance between the number of available circuit appointments and the number of presbyters available for stationing to circuit appointments, this year has seen a particularly high number of superintendency appointments in the matching process, which has presented a significant challenge. The Committee wishes to commend the work of Circuits and Districts that have reconfigured in order to facilitate effective mission and ministry and the sharing of resources across the Connexion and would encourage others to continue to engage in these conversations.
- 1.6 The Stationing Committee encourages Districts and Circuits to continue to review the wisdom and efficacy of very small Circuits, and the demands as well as benefits of very large circuit structures.
- 1.7 The continued collaboration between those involved in diaconal and presbyteral stationing has been welcomed and is known to be beneficial. There is a continued intention to develop such collaborative practice further for coherent use of the resources of both orders of ministry.

2. Report of the Stationing Matching Group

- 2.1 The Stationing Matching Group (SMG) meets three times each year to enable the matching of Circuits with presbyters seeking to fulfil God's purpose and mission within the life of the Methodist Church.
- 2.2 The first meeting of the SMG met with 104 presbyteral profiles and 141 circuit appointments to be filled. Ninety-three matches were made with 76% agreed, and an equal number of matches declined by both presbyters and Circuits. By the second meeting of the SMG, there were 60 circuit appointments to be filled with 33 presbyters available for matching. Twenty-seven matches were made and this time 67% of them were agreed. In January, at the third meeting of the SMG, only 17 presbyters were available for matching with 45 circuit

appointments. Thirteen matches were made and nine agreed. Since then the matching of presbyters and Circuits has been coordinated by the Stationing Action Group meeting by telephone conference each month.

3. Report of the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee

- 3.1 The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee met on 5-6 January 2016 to match 38 presbyteral probationers, one ordained probationer (from another Church) and six prospective 'recognised and regarded' presbyters to appointments. All appointments had been previously agreed by a scrutiny panel as suitable for those in their first station in the Methodist Church in Britain.
- 3.2 There was disappointment that a number of appointments that had been accepted as suitable were left unfilled, as the number of accepted profiles exceeded the number of probationers and ministers available. The Stationing Committee keeps these processes under review and will endeavour to ensure that these cases are as few as possible, whilst also seeking to provide the best possible range of potential matches for those in the early years of ministry in the Methodist Church in Britain.

4. Report of the Stationing Action Group

- 4.1 The Stationing Action Group commenced its work on 8 February 2016 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process there were 38 available appointments (including 9 superintendencies) and 13 presbyters were available for matching.
- 4.2 This year, each District had been asked to consider whether any of its presbyters would consider moving a year early to help fill the vacant appointments. We are grateful to those who responded to this request with grace, and some appointments have been filled in this way. We are conscious that such actions need careful consideration – as moving a presbyter early can be disruptive to the mission and ministry of their current context.
- 4.3 The Stationing Action Group also assists the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order in matching remaining deacons to Circuits. One such match was made at the March meeting of the Stationing Action Group.
- 4.4 Since the Stationing Action Group commenced its work on 8 February 2016, 22 matches have been agreed (21 presbyteral and 1 diaconal). The Stationing Action Group is grateful to a number of presbyters who agreed to move early to help fill vacant appointments.

5. Report on diaconal stationing

- 5.1 It was anticipated that after the re-invitation process had been completed, 19 deacons would be available for stationing for September 2016, including five probationer deacons going into circuit appointments for the first time and three deacons married to presbyters (only two of whom were in the stationing process themselves). During the process, one deacon who previously had permission from the Stationing Advisory Committee to be without appointment was asked to return to circuit ministry, one deacon curtailed their appointment and one deacon withdrew their profile which meant there were 20 deacons available for matching.
- 5.2 The Methodist Diaconal Order was pleased to receive 21 diaconal profiles from Circuits.
- 5.3 All deacons available for stationing have been matched with appointments and one appointment remains unfilled.

5.4 The Warden was pleased to inform the Stationing Committee that the stationing process for deacons went very smoothly this year and was helped enormously by the inclusion of a representative from the training institution on the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee, along with the Ministerial Coordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries.

5.5 The Methodist Diaconal Order has this year produced a booklet for distribution to Circuits to aid the process of creating and sustaining diaconal appointments (available from the Methodist Diaconal Order).

6. Code of Practice

6.1 No major revisions have been made to the Code this year (as it was felt that it would be helpful to allow the Code to be used with only minor alterations for three years before carrying out a more significant review). However, following feedback from those engaged in the process, further detail has been added with regard to a) engaging properly with visits, and b) confidentiality and the appropriate sharing of information about the matching process via electronic communication.

6.2 Work is currently being undertaken (by the Stationing Committee and other bodies) in three areas that affect stationing and the Code of Practice, ie superintendency; the ministry of supernumeraries; and guidance on the reduction of the number of ministers in a Circuit and the reinvitation process.

7. Changes to the constitution of the Stationing Committee

7.1 In light of changes to the formation of the Connexional Team and in particular responsibilities for aspects of stationing and oversight, it is proposed that changes are made to the composition of the Committee in order to reflect current practice as well as to address one anomaly.

7.2 SO 322(1) makes provision for the following to be members of the Committee:
(iv) one Team member responsible for presbyteral and diaconal selection and training;
(v) one Team member responsible for the stationing of probationers;
(vi) one Team member responsible for overseas personnel;

7.3 It is now the case that oversight of presbyteral and diaconal selection, along with the stationing of probationers, is undertaken by the same postholder located in the Conference Office. For some years there has been no appointment made to the Committee of a Team member with responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal training. The representation envisaged in (iv) reflected a different configuration of the Team when responsibility for selection and training was located in one place. This is no longer the case and the flow of information into the initial stationing process is such that the Committee can hear reports on the number in training via the person with responsibility for ministerial oversight (who also has responsibility for selection). Rather than be too prescriptive at this point it seems wise to build in some flexibility within the Standing Order, so that changes are not required each time changes are made to the structure of the Team.

7.4 It is therefore proposed to make the following amendments:
(iv) ~~one~~ **no more than two** Team members **with** responsibility for presbyteral and diaconal selection and training **and for the stationing of probationers**;
(v) ~~one~~ Team member responsible for the stationing of probationers;

- 7.5 Over a number of years there has been a reduction in both the number of overseas personnel and also the number of overseas appointments about which the Committee could, in theory, make proposals. As this category of membership has not been fulfilled for some years, it would make sense to remove it and ensure that when such cases are being discussed an appropriate Team member with particular responsibilities for overseas personnel is present.
- 7.6 It is therefore proposed to make the following amendment:
(vi) ~~one Team member responsible for overseas personnel;~~
- 7.7 There is a slight anomaly in that SO 322(1) does not include within the membership of the Committee the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. However, the Assistant Secretary is clearly intended to attend the Committee by virtue of SO 322(3). It would be logical to list the Assistant Secretary as a member under SO 322(1).
- 7.8 It is therefore proposed to make the following amendment:
(ii) the Secretary of the Conference who shall act as convener, **and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference;**
- 7.9 In light of changes to SO 754, the following change is proposed to SO 322(1)(viii):
(viii) the Warden **or deputy Warden** of the Methodist Diaconal Order;
- 7.10 Further to the reconfiguration of roles within the Senior Leadership Group of the Connexional Team, it is further proposed that the Connexional Secretary is no longer required as a member of the Committee. The following change is therefore proposed to SO 322(1):
(xii) ~~a Connexional Secretary~~

8. Projections

Number of active Methodist presbyters in Full Connexion

Connexional Year	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Start of Year	1685	1675	1636	1583	1545	1504	1468
Normal Retirements	64	77	74	63	54	54	54
Early Retirements	9	5	7	8	8	8	8
Resignations	12	7	7	7	7	7	7
Other Losses	0	2	5	2	2	2	2
TOTAL LOSSES	85	91	93	80	71	71	71
New Probationers	51	43	34	37	25	30	30
Other Gains	7	9	6	5	5	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	58	52	40	42	30	35	35
END OF YEAR	1658	1636	1583	1545	1504	1468	1432

Number of active Methodist deacons in Full Connexion

Connexional Year	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Start of Year	132	137	143	138	136	138
Retirements	6	6	5	7	5	5
Resignations	1	1	2	0	0	0
Other Losses	1	2	2	0	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	8	9	9	7	6	6
New Probationers	13	6	4	5	8	8
Other Gains	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	13	6	4	5	8	8
END OF YEAR	137	134	138	136	138	140

Key

Standard estimate

(Based on normal State Pension age)

9. Moving forward

- 9.1 The Committee wishes to express grateful thanks to all who will finish their term on the Committee this year for their years of prayerful service. The Committee wishes to express particular gratitude to Deacon Sue Culver for her service on the Committee and careful work in the field of diaconal stationing. It also wishes to thank the Revd David Emison (who has attended meetings of the Committee this year as a participant observer) for chairing the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee with wisdom and grace.
- 9.2 In the light of the challenges and opportunities described in this report, the Stationing Committee looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Ministries Committee to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church at this time regarding the use of its resources. Immediately, that means that the Committee is called carefully to help shape and then implement policies which enable the deployment of our ordained ministers in ways that best serve the mission of the Church. More broadly, the Committee recognises that it is called with others to examine the nature of presbyteral and diaconal ministry in a changing Church and a changing world. Such an examination should include a consideration of how we best foster vocations and nurture leadership potential in a diverse range of people so that those whom the Spirit is calling to ordained ministry might hear the call of God at each stage of their pilgrimage and be enabled to respond by using their gifts effectively in God's service.

***RESOLUTIONS

17/1. The Conference adopted the Report.

17/2. The Conference amended Standing Order 322 as set out in the Report.