

## 25. Stationing Committee

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Stationing Committee expresses its grateful thanks to all those who have given many hours of work to this important task.
- 1.2 The Chair of the Stationing Matching Group, the Revd Stephen Poxon, has guided the stationing matching process as the Stationing Matching Group has faced the most challenging situation in recent years, which is outlined below in Section 2. He has done so prayerfully, with wisdom and pastoral sensitivity.
- 1.3 The imbalance between the number of available circuit appointments and the number of presbyters available for stationing to circuit appointments is a major concern that arises largely due to factors outside the control of the Stationing Committee.
- 1.4 In addition to the imbalance between the number of available circuit appointments and the number of presbyters available for stationing to circuit appointments, the Committee has become increasingly aware of the variety of expectations in the size of the appointments described in the profiles.
- 1.5 The Stationing Committee encourages Districts and Circuits to review the efficacy of very small Circuits and their demands in order to restore a balanced approach that is consistent and sustainable and to ensure that ministers are sent to where they are most needed as opposed to where they can be afforded.
- 1.6 The continued collaboration between those involved in diaconal and presbyteral stationing has been welcomed and has been beneficial. The Chair-designate of the Committee, Pamela Lavender, has worked alongside the current chair this year and has been proactive in her contribution. We look forward to her contribution to the development of the work of the Committee.

### 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 This has been a very difficult year with the gap between circuit profiles and presbyters available growing to over 50 and this hides many others where Circuits, knowing the situation, have not submitted a profile. The first meeting of SMG met with 154 circuit appointments to be filled with only 96 presbyters available at that time in the process and of the matches made 79% were agreed. SMG 2 met between the 28-29 November. There were 25 presbyters available for matching with 81 circuit appointments and 80% were agreed. SMG 3 met for a longer time than in the past on 10 January where 61 circuit appointments were still unfilled and only 14 presbyters were available. Thirteen matches were made and eleven were agreed. Since then the matching of presbyters and appointments 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 (ISSC) met on 4-5 January 2017 to match 20 presbyteral probationers (including one transferring from another Church), one ordained probationer (from another Conference) and seven prospective 'recognised and regarded' presbyters to appointments.
- 3.2 All appointments had been previously agreed by a scrutiny panel as suitable for those in their first station in the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB). This year the scrutiny panel asked Circuits to submit separate profiles of appointments suitable for ministers from other Conferences and Churches. The initial response was disappointing, but a number of profiles were converted after SMG 1. This reflects the Committee's general determination to ensure that we only match ministers from other Conferences and Churches with Circuits that are prepared for the additional challenges of welcoming someone whose initial training and/or previous experience has not been in the MCB.
- 3.3 There was disappointment that a number of appointments that had been accepted as suitable for probationers were left unfilled, as the number of accepted profiles exceeded the number of probationers and ministers available. This was due to the oversight committees deciding that a number of those in what had been deemed their final year of initial training were not ready to be stationed. 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.
- 3.4 One of the probationers matched with an appointment at ISSC has subsequently been given an additional year of initial training by MCPOC.

### **4. Report of the Stationing Action Group**

- 4.1 The Stationing Action Group (convened by the Revd Anne Brown) commenced its work on 7 February 2017 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process there were 52 available appointments including 12 superintendencies and 10 presbyters (not all of whom have been available to be matched for a variety of reasons).
- 4.2 In February, six matches were made, of which three were agreed and three declined. This included the match of a probationer who was unable to be matched at Initial Stationing in January. In March, ten matches were made and at the time of writing we await the outcomes of these visits, but even if all these matches are confirmed there remain 40 circuit appointments unfilled, of which 9 are for superintendents and 3 are part-time appointments.
- 4.3 By submitting a reasoned statement, Circuits are able to request that unfilled appointments may be withdrawn from the stationing matching process at the end of March. This is usually to put in place alternative cover for the following year and we expect a number of requests for appointments to be withdrawn.
- 4.4 District Chairs have been working hard to find ways of covering vacancies sometimes by inviting ministers within the District to move appointment. A small number of presbyters have submitted profiles in recent weeks after seeking permission from the Stationing Advisory Committee to return to circuit work.
- 4.5 The situation remains that we are likely to have a large number of unfilled appointments at the end of the year, some of which were unfilled last year.

## **5. Report on diaconal stationing**

- 5.1 It was anticipated that after the re-invitation process had been completed, 20 deacons would be available for stationing for September 2018. This included five probationer deacons going into circuit appointments for the first time, one of which was transferring from another Conference and four deacons married to presbyters (only three of whom were in the stationing process themselves). There were two curtailments prior to SMG1, this meant there were 22 deacons available for stationing.
- 5.2 The Methodist Diaconal Order was pleased to receive 22 diaconal profiles from Circuits, with several Circuits self-identifying as appropriate for probationer deacons.
- 5.3 All deacons available for stationing have been matched with appointments.
- 5.4 Three deacons were stationed during the course of the year by the President. Two deacons were stationed early into their new Circuits either to be without appointment or into a half time appointment until they take up their full time appointment in September 2017. One deacon serving in a half time appointment was stationed into a full time appointment following an unexpected circuit vacancy.

## **6. Code of Practice**

- 6.1 In line with previous policy, there are no major changes to the Code of Practice other than the implementation of the Conference decision of 2016 concerning any opposition or amendment to the recommendation of the circuit Invitation Committee concerning an extension. Written notice is now required one week beforehand with the substance of the grounds for opposing or intention to move an amendment. Such a written submission must be circulated to members of the Circuit Meeting at least 24 hours before the meeting.
- 6.2 In the opening paragraphs for the process for presbyteral and diaconal appointments, a reminder is given about the itinerant nature of ministry in the Methodist Church and suggesting that long periods without change have a negative impact on both Circuits and ministers. Periods in excess of ten years should be the exception rather than the norm and should be very closely examined by both parties.
- 6.3 Following the increasing gap between the number of ministers and the number of Circuits seeking ministers, a small group has been looking at a variety of suggestions which may have an impact on the Code of Practice for 2019.

## **7. Projections**

The Committee has found it helpful to attempt to estimate the number of ministers who will be available to serve on the stations in the future. During 2017/2018, the Committee intends to review the basis of these calculations and may present the figures in a different form to the 2018 Conference.

## NUMBER OF METHODIST PRESBYTERS AND PROBATIONERS IN THE ACTIVE WORK

Connexional Year	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Start of Year	1675	1636	1583	1546	1505	1458	1422
Normal Retirements	77	74	60	54	54	54	54
Early Retirements	5	7	10	8	8	8	8
Resignations	7	7	5	7	7	7	7
Other Losses	2	5	2	2	2	2	2
TOTAL LOSSES	91	93	77	71	71	71	71
New Probationers	43	34	37	25	19	30	23
Other Gains	9	6	3	5	5	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	52	40	40	30	24	35	28
END OF YEAR	1636	1583	1546	1505	1458	1422	1379

## NUMBER OF METHODIST DEACONS AND PROBATIONERS IN THE ACTIVE WORK

Connexional Year	Actual	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Start of Year	132	137	143	138	136	138	136
Retirements	6	6	5	7	5	5	5
Resignations	1	1	2	0	0	0	0
Other Losses	1	2	2	0	1	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	8	9	9	7	6	6	6
New Probationers	13	6	4	5	8	4	4
Other Gains	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	13	6	4	5	8	4	4
END OF YEAR	137	134	138	136	138	136	134

### Key

Standard estimate

(Based on normal State Pension age)

## 8. Moving forward

8.1 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 Revds Stephen Burgess, Anne Brown and Peter Hancock and Mr Michael Prince. The Committee has appointed the Revd Graham Thompson as convener and coordinator of SAG.

8.2 In the light of the challenges and opportunities described in this report, the Stationing Committee has appointed a working group to be convened by Pamela Lavender (Chair designate of Stationing Committee) and chaired by Ken Jackson (a former chair of Stationing Committee) to review the stationing process and to bring suggestions of any changes considered desirable for agreement by the Stationing Committee ready for incorporation into the process for the 2018/2019 connexional year. The remainder of the group proposed by the Stationing Matching Group and agreed by the Stationing Committee is the Chair of Stationing

Matching Group, the Assistant Secretary of the Conference (or their nominee from the Conference Office), a chair nominated by the Chairs' Meeting, and a lay stationing representative. They should review all the reflections received and those to be submitted by the Regional Stationing Meetings by the end of April 2017.

- 8.3 The Committee has been working on the possibility of moving the profile forms for stationing matching online. The project is as yet in its early stage of development but we hope will make it easier for information to be recorded and circulated without unnecessary repetition. The Committee has agreed to a fuller working through of the proposals during 2017/2018.
- 8.4 It should be noted from the section of the report which predicts future resource that whilst there appears to be a levelling out of those who will be eligible to retire, there is still a large gap between 'TOTAL LOSSES' and 'TOTAL GAINS' giving a deficit of around 30 each year in the presbyteral section. The diaconate looks to be much more balanced giving some confidence that they can meet expectations. These predictions could of course change and the Committee was pleased to hear of the work being undertaken by the Connexional Team to encourage vocational exploration, which is a challenge for the whole Church.
- 8.5 The 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.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

#### **25/1. The Conference adopted the Report.**