

26. Stationing Committee

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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 The Chair of the Stationing Matching Group, the Revd Stephen Poxon, has guided the stationing matching process prayerfully and with wisdom and good humour as the Stationing Matching Group has faced increasingly challenging circumstances as 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 and is likely to remain as a concern in the future.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 As a result of reconfigurations this year has seen a high number of appointments in the matching process which needed to be filled with some urgency, which has presented a significant challenge.
- 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 development in such collaborative practice to promote coherent use of the resources of both orders of ministry.

2. Report of the Stationing Matching Group

- 2.1 Following the review of the Stationing Matching process last year the Stationing Committee gave approval to there being three categories of circuit appointments this year. The Regional Stationing Groups were asked to meet together prior to the first meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG 1) and identify which of their appointments were 'Must Fill', 'Need to Fill' or 'Hope to Fill' against the paper sent out outlining the criteria under each of the categories.
- 2.2 At the beginning of SMG 1 in early November, the following were agreed by the meeting:
 - Must Fill 45
 - Need to Fill 75
 - Hope to Fill 21

The gap between the number of circuit profiles and presbyteral profiles has continued to widen this year and we began SMG 1 with 141 circuit profiles and 96 from presbyters.

However, 11 presbyters were either not available or had withdrawn by the time the process of matching began.

- 2.3 SMG 1 began by matching the Must Fill appointments and although every effort was made to make a match a few remained unfilled at the close of the process. 83 matches were made and 79% were agreed by Circuits and presbyters.
- 2.4 We met for SMG 2 at the beginning of December and began by seeking to match the remaining 14 Must Fill appointments. At this point in the process a few more presbyters become available but also a few additional profiles from Circuits appeared. We managed to make 22 matches 77% of which were successful.
- 2.5 At the beginning of SMG 3, which is a full morning meeting in MCH, it looked as if it would not be a long meeting as we only had 8 ministers available for matching but the needs of some of these and the needs of the circuits meant that it took all the allotted time. There were 7 Must Fill appointments still to fill but we were not able to make any matches for them. Of the 6 matches made, one was declined.
- 2.6 As the Stationing Action Group took over the process there were 55 appointments available, of which 7 were Must Fill, 2 of them new ones added after SMG 1.
- 2.7 The initial reflection of the Chairs was that having the categories (of Must Fill, Need to Fill, Hope to Fill) helped to focus on the deeper needs across the Connexion but the categorisation needs to be tightened up, perhaps with only two categories. It became evident that different regions had approached the task of identifying Need to Fill appointments in diverse ways and so the criteria will also need to be revisited. This is work that needs to continue to bring some further proposals to the Stationing Committee later in this year.

3. Report of the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee

- 3.1 The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee met on 3-4 January 2018 to match 26 presbyteral probationers and four 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 small 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 All appointments that had been accepted as suitable for probationers were filled, as the number of accepted profiles matched the number of probationers and ministers available. This included those with very limited deployability. Three of the four prospective 'recognised and regarded' presbyters were also matched to appointments.

4. Report of the Stationing Action Group

- 4.1 The Stationing Action Group (convened by the Revd Graham Thompson) commenced its work on 5 February 2018 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process there were 55 available appointments (of which 7 had been identified as Must Fill), including 12 superintendencies. 10 presbyters (not all of whom have been available to be matched for a variety of reasons) had still to agree an appointment.

- 4.2 Since then 10 presbyters, a transferring presbyter and one appointment have been added into the mix. Two appointments have been removed from the list and two presbyters offering part-time ministry have withdrawn.
- 4.3 In February six matches were made of which four were agreed. In March five matches were made and these included two matches following further decisions about initial stationing. All were agreed. In April seven matches were made and we await the outcomes of these visits.
- 4.4 Following submission of a reasoned statement, requests to withdraw 14 circuit profiles were agreed, as at the end of March.
- 4.5 If all the matches made in April are confirmed there will still be 24 appointments remaining, of which 6 are for Superintendents and 4 have been identified as Must Fill. Once again, we are likely to have a number of unfilled appointments at the end of the year.
- 4.6 The Must Fill appointments continue to be the focus of activity as we seek to fulfil the commitment made by the Stationing Committee to fill those stations which have been identified and agreed as being of significance to the future mission and ministry of the Connexion.

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; two deacons (including a probationer) married to presbyters; one deacon married to a stationed deacon and therefore with limited deployability, and one deacon who had curtailed their appointment on pastoral grounds.
- 5.2 At the beginning of the stationing process 16 circuit profiles had been received with a further 4 profiles received prior to the main matching meeting of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee (DSSC).
- 5.3 At the time of writing 18 of the 20 deacons available for stationing have been matched with appointments and 18 of the circuit appointments have been filled.
- 5.4 During the course of the year three deacons were stationed by the action of the President. Two of these were stationed part time to assist with an ongoing full-time appointment following a curtailment and the third was to enable and assist a Circuit seeking to support their local community following a major tragedy and living with pain and loss.

6. Code of Practice

- 6.1 The prime change to this year's Code of Practice is the additional Appendix concerning giving and receiving feedback within the stationing process.
- 6.2 A date has been inserted (by 14 October) for Regional Stationing Groups to identify critical appointments for submission to a scrutiny panel of the Stationing Committee prior to the first Stationing Matching Group meeting.
- 6.3 The suggested questions used in the consultation process have been reworded.
- 6.4 There is greater clarity concerning the withdrawal of profiles during the stationing process.

- 6.5 The fact is more clearly stated that diaconal appointments are confirmed by the Warden of the Diaconal Order only after all visits of both ordained and probationer deacons have taken place.

7. Projections

NUMBER OF METHODIST PRESBYTERS AND PROBATIONERS IN THE ACTIVE WORK

Connexional Year	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Start of Year	1490	1448	1403	1359
Normal Retirements	61	65	60	60
Early Retirements	5	8	8	8
Resignations	5	2	5	5
Other Losses	2	2	2	2
TOTAL LOSSES	73	77	75	75
New Probationers	21	27	26	12
Other Gains	10	5	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	31	32	31	17
END OF YEAR	1448	1403	1359	1301

NUMBER OF METHODIST DEACONS AND PROBATIONERS IN THE ACTIVE WORK

Connexional Year	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Start of Year	135	134	134	130
Retirements	6	4	5	5
Resignations	0	0	0	0
Other Losses	0	1	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	6	5	6	6
New Probationers	5	5	2	5
Other Gains	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	5	5	2	5
END OF YEAR	134	134	130	129

8. Moving forward

- 8.1 In the light of the challenges and opportunities described in this report, the Stationing Committee continues to review the stationing process in order to help in the stationing of presbyters and deacons not just to those places where they are needed but where they are needed most.
- 8.2 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; and with the Faith and Order Committee to ensure that processes and protocols are embedded within the theology of the Church. 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**

26/1. The Conference adopted the Report.