

12. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

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1. The total membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) is 286. This marks a slight decrease on last year's figure of 290, however the number of active and probationer deacons has risen. This figure can be broken down thus:
143 actives including 37 probationers;
125 supernumeraries;
18 students.
2. As a result of continuing rises in the number of active deacons, identifying sufficient appointments remains a challenge. It is anticipated that up to 34 deacons, including 8 probationers will be available for stationing in 2015. It is hoped that Circuits will consider the possibility of opening up new diaconal appointments. The Warden would be very happy to support Circuits exploring the possibility of diaconal ministry and is particularly happy to visit circuit leadership teams or circuit meetings to discuss new appointments. Significant changes are being made to diaconal and presbyteral stationing matching processes in order to have one single process. This is covered elsewhere in the Agenda in the report of the Stationing Committee. It is anticipated that the changes will enable greater participation in the diaconal stationing process by Chairs of District and learning institutions (for probationer deacons) although the principles of direct stationing by the Conference and itinerancy will still apply.
3. Following the recent decision of the Methodist Council to relocate the Methodist Diaconal Order office to Methodist Church House (MCH), work is underway to identify an appropriate space within MCH in which to locate the MDO office. The MDO would like formally to record its appreciation of the sensitivity shown by the Strategy and Resources Committee, the Methodist Council and the Connexional Team as this decision was taken and looks forward to making a distinctive contribution to the life of Methodist Church House. The move will release the MDO from the financial burden of maintaining and running the MDO Centre in Birmingham, thus protecting its historic legacies, bequests and benevolent funds. The proceeds from the disposal of the property will be designated to provide funding for the MDO.
4. The MDO continues to work with the Ministries Committee with a view to merging parallel connexional diaconal and presbyteral processes. This work is well underway and the new Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee, responsible for both presbyteral and diaconal candidates will begin its work in the next connexional year. Work continues to merge the diaconal and presbyteral probationers and candidates oversight committees.
5. Following on from the recommendations of the *Role of the Warden* working party, it is anticipated that the Leadership Group outlined in the report will begin its work in the new connexional year. In the meantime, a shadow leadership group has met to support the Warden and the Pastoral Secretary. The shadow leadership group has begun to identify the areas of policy and work that the Leadership Group will need to consider including new role descriptions for the Warden and Deputy Warden.
6. The Faith and Order Committee, which is considering the theology of the diaconate, has consulted members of the MDO. It is anticipated that this work will continue throughout the new connexional year and a report will be brought to the 2015 Conference.

7. The internal life of the Order has been a priority this year and will remain so for the next two years at least. This includes regular consultations with local Area Group Secretaries, a commitment to succession planning and supporting Districts as they take on the responsibility for the oversight of diaconal probationers.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

12/1. The Conference adopted the Report.

12/2. The Conference resolved that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall meet at the Hayes Conference Centre from Tuesday 5 May until Friday 8 May 2015.