

Contact name and details	Pamela Lavender, Chair of the Stationing Committee pamelajlavender@gmail.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 in challenging circumstances in the face of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2. The Chair of the Stationing Matching Group, the Revd Stephen Poxon, has guided the stationing matching process prayerfully and with care as the Stationing Matching Group worked remotely this year. The Stationing Committee extends its thanks to Stephen for his commitment during his term of service and wishes him well for the future.
- 1.3. The circuit appointments submitted for Stationing Matching were, once again, scrutinised carefully in order better to meet the needs of the Connexion. Those places agreed to be of very great need are prioritised in the Stationing Matching meetings and every effort has been made to provide such places with a minister. The Stationing Committee continues to work with the Council and others in order to identify ways of supporting ministry in those Circuits in the most deprived parts of the Connexion.
- 1.4. The imbalance between the number of available circuit appointments and the number of presbyters available for stationing to circuit appointments remains. The Committee wishes to commend the work of Circuits that have reconfigured and formed teams of lay workers and ordained ministers in order together to facilitate effective mission and ministry in their communities. The continued collaboration between those involved in diaconal and presbyteral stationing is known to be beneficial and the inclusion of lay workers in teams is encouraging.
- 1.5. This year has seen a number of appointments in the matching process which need particular gifts, graces and skills. The Committee is grateful to the presbyters and deacons who offer to develop their skills and use them to further mission and ministry.
- 1.6. The Stationing Committee thanks those Districts and Circuits which continue to review the demands and benefits of both very large and very small Circuits. It is likely that more reviews will become necessary as the effects of the pandemic become apparent. The Committee notes with thanks those Circuits who offer

42. Stationing Committee

mutual support and care to neighbouring Circuits. Despite this, the well-being of ministers in some contexts remains a matter of some concern.

- 1.7. The Stationing Committee wishes to thank those Circuits offering profiles for Initial Stationing. There continues to be a need for a variety of places which allow both Probationer presbyters and more experienced presbyters from other Conferences or Churches to be stationed where time for study and support is provided as they begin their valuable ministry within our Connexion.
- 1.8. The Stationing Committee has worked with the Council and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee to ensure that the Code of Practice for stationing is clear and unambiguous. Any form of discrimination in stationing will not be tolerated. Circuit invitation committees are expected to be aware of the issues and to engage with the section on unconscious bias located on the EDI Toolkit. Regular training opportunities are provided by the Learning Network. New members of Circuit Invitation Committees are asked to undertake this training at the earliest opportunity and all members should reflect on their practice and refresh their understanding regularly.
- 1.9. Work is underway to allow all stationing profiles to be managed on-line. A trial of the on-line application including training opportunities for those involved will be undertaken for the stationing matching process 2021/2022 and it is likely that the full process will be introduced for the following year.

2. Report of the Stationing Matching Group

- 2.1. The process of Stationing Matching this year began, as always, months before the first meeting. Ministers and Circuits have often been talking and planning for the future, whilst others discover God's leading through the re-invitation processes or sudden curtailments. Decisions then have to be made about whether to create an appointment for a presbyter or deacon, for an ordained minister or probationer. An additional decision over the past two years has been whether to apply for an appointment to be deemed 'Critical'.
- 2.2. A small group of people, appointed by the Stationing Committee, meets at the beginning of October to look at the critical appointment applications against the criteria and this year 38 appointments were accepted as being critical to the life of the Connexion, compared to 42 the previous year.
- 2.3. It had been anticipated that the Stationing Matching Group (SMG), which includes all the District Chairs and some appointed officers plus a few lay stationing representatives who come to experience the process, would have been able to

meet physically together. However, with the rising numbers of COVID cases it was decided at the very last minute to hold stationing matching by zoom. It went so much better than we all feared and lessons were learned from this year which will continue to improve the SMG process into the future.

- 2.4. We began with 102 appointments, of which 38 were critical and with 87 presbyters available. During the first meeting of the Stationing Matching Group at the beginning of November, 75 matches were made with an 85% success rate and for the 'Criticals' this reached 91%. At the beginning of December, the second meeting of the Stationing Matching Group convened, with a few more presbyters and circuit appointments being added and there was an 83% success rate. The third Stationing Matching Group was held in the first few weeks of January and only five presbyters were still available and there were two critical appointments which we had not been able to fill.
- 2.5. Following the third meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG3), the Stationing Action Group has taken over the process, from February until the Conference, to seek to match the remaining presbyters and deacons and others who become available during the rest of the connexional year. This group meets by a telephone conference call once a month and made a successful match with one of the final critical appointments at the first meeting.
- 2.6. This has not been an easy year for all those involved in stationing. For ministers and their families and for circuit invitation committees everything has had to happen through electronic media. There have been some very creative ways of hosting Zoom conversations and virtual visits of churches and manse, but they are not the same as being able to meet face to face and visit a future home.

3. Report of the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee (ISSC)

- 3.1. The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee met on 6-7 January 2021

3.2. Probationer Appointments

16 presbyteral probationer profiles had been approved by the Initial Stationing Scrutiny group. The scrutiny group were able to work with all Circuits who submitted profiles which meant that all were accepted.

3.2.1. Probationers

Thirteen presbyteral probationers were matched with appointments.

42. Stationing Committee

The ISSC noted that five diaconal probationers were being considered by the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee between 8-10 January 2021. All five were subsequently matched with appointments.

The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee met for its second meeting on 16 February 2021

3.2.2. Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences (MOCCs)

Three Ministers of other Churches and Conferences were matched with appointments. Two of these are to become 'Recognised and Regarded'. One is to be an ordained probationer with a view to being received into Full Connexion after the conclusion of two years of probation. All of these ministers had been considered by ISSC2 in previous years.

One of these appointments was redeveloped from a presbyteral appointment which was in stationing matching. The other two appointments came into stationing after the conclusion of SMG3.

At the time of writing, one MOCC has not been matched and the profile remains under consideration by the Stationing Action Group until the Conference 2021.

3.3. Outstanding appointments

At the time of writing, three probationer appointments remained unfilled. One of these was subsequently matched with a presbyter at SMG3.

- 3.4. At the start of the 2020-2021 year, no appointments had been submitted for MOCCs. This was partly because it had been known that no new applications were being processed in this year due to COVID-19, but partly also a reaction to the uncertain environment all Circuits found themselves in. There will be a high number of new applicants coming to the transfer panels in November 2021 for stationing from September 2022. It is hoped that more Circuits will regard the appointment of a MOCC as a positive opportunity and submit a profile at the outset of the stationing matching process. Videos about the experience of MOCCs and their Circuits are now available on the website and further publicity information has been produced ready for Districts' stationing conversations in May 2021.

4. Report of the Stationing Action Group

- 4.1. The Stationing Action Group (convened by the Revd Graham Thompson) commenced its work on 8 February 2021 and will continue through to

the Conference. At the beginning of the process there were 20 available appointments (of which one had been identified as 'critical'), including five superintendencies. Seven 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 five presbyters (including one MOCC) and two appointments have been added. One presbyter has withdrawn to take up an appointment outside the control of the Church.
- 4.3. In February, four matches were made which led to invitations to serve being accepted by all four presbyters. No matches were made in March.
- 4.4. Following submission of a reasoned statement, 12 requests were made to withdraw circuit profiles, as at the end of March. Given the number of presbyters still seeking appointments, it was agreed that all but one of the profiles should remain within the stationing processes.
- 4.5. No matches were made when the Stationing Action Group convened right at the end of March. It has proved to be a tough period, perhaps caused by the success of the Stationing Matching Group, perhaps by the increasing requirements of both presbyters and Circuits.
- 4.6. The Stationing Action Group is pleased to support the work of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee and, so far, has assisted with three appointments.

5. Report on diaconal stationing

- 5.1. Diaconal stationing began with six ordained deacons and five diaconal probationers and initially seven circuit profiles leaving a shortfall of four circuit appointments.
- 5.2. At the September meeting of the Stationing Committee the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee (DSSC) was granted permission to move its matching meeting from December to January. The purpose was two-fold: depending on the restrictions to give every opportunity for at least some of the members to meet face to face with the Warden during the direct matching process (in the event this was not possible) and to give further time for the emergence of diaconal profiles.
- 5.3. Following the first and second meetings of the Stationing Matching Group, another ordained deacon entered the stationing process and six more diaconal profiles were offered. The additional profiles arose from either further discernment and reshaping by Circuits with unfilled presbyteral appointments or unexpected

42. Stationing Committee

vacancies which had occurred allowing a new assessment of ministry needs to be made. Another Circuit was approached and invited to consider a diaconal appointment and this profile was offered following the third meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG3).

- 5.4. In January the DSSC matched six ordained deacons and five diaconal probationers to 11 of the 13 circuit profiles. One ordained deacon was not matched. The matches were called at SMG3 and all were confirmed at the end of January.
- 5.5. Following SMG3, two additional circuit profiles were received one resulting from a curtailment and one from the Circuit indicated in paragraph 5.3 and two ordained deacons entered the stationing process, following curtailments related to pastoral needs. Prior to the February meeting of the Stationing Action Group the DSSC considered the three ordained deacons and four circuit profiles available for matching. Three matches were made at the Stationing Action Group and confirmed shortly afterwards. At the time of writing this leaves a circuit profile unmatched.
- 5.6. The DSSC is aware of and grateful for how its work has been enabled by the willingness of Circuits to discern diaconal appointments and the grace and commitment of deacons to live out the diaconal principles of itinerancy and direct stationing.

6. Code of Practice

- 6.1. Members of circuit Invitation Committees are directed to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Toolkit with particular reference to the module on 'Unconscious Bias'. Many other references to EDI are included within the document.
- 6.2. Greater clarity is included regarding the handling of sensitive data and the provisions of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 6.3. Three Flowcharts have been created to assist Circuit Stewards through the stationing process.
- 6.4. A proforma is included for Reasoned Statements for the designation of critical appointments.
- 6.5. Two further proformas are included for reporting the results of a stationing match, one for the presbyter and one for the Circuit.

6.6. A letter accompanying the Code of Practice highlighted the changes.

7. Projections

Number of Methodist presbyters and probationers in the active work

Connexional Year	Actual 2017/2018	Actual 2018/2019	Actual 2019/2020	Estimate 2020/2021	Estimate 2021/2022
Start of year	1448	1387	1340	1308	1251
Normal retirements	78	60	49	60	60
Early retirements	13	14	4	8	8
Resignations	3	2	6	12	5
Other losses	0	1	0	2	2
TOTAL LOSSES	94	77	59	82	75
New probationers	27	23	17	20	20
Other gains	6	7	10	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	33	30	27	25	25
END OF YEAR	1387	1340	1308	1251	1201

Number of Methodist deacons and probationers in the active work

Connexional Year	Actual 2017/2018	Actual 2018/2019	Actual 2019/2020	Estimate 2020/2021	Estimate 2021/2022
Start of year	134	135	134	135	134
Retirements	4	3	3	5	5
Resignations	0	1	0	0	0
Other losses	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	4	4	3	6	6
New probationers	5	3	4	5	5
Other gains	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	5	3	4	5	5
END OF YEAR	135	134	135	134	133

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

42. Stationing Committee

are needed, but where they are needed most while endeavouring to ensure their continuing well-being.

- 8.2. The Stationing Committee is engaging with the Ministries Committee and the Faith and Order Committee to work collaboratively to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church at this time regarding the use of its resources and the ministry of the whole people of God. Representatives of the Stationing Committee are therefore involved in the working party looking at Changing Patterns of Ministry that was established after the 2018 Conference. The Stationing Committee has designated a small group of members representing lay people, deacons and presbyters to ensure that any changes needed following decisions made by the Conference can be acted upon swiftly.
- 8.3. The environment in which the Stationing Committee does its work remains challenging but the developments that the Committee has overseen this year cause it to remain hopeful that we are finding appropriate ways to station our ministers in the service of Our Calling.

*****RESOLUTION**

42/1. The Conference adopts the Report.