

23. Diaconal Order General Report

The membership of the Order is currently 116 ordained deacons in the active work, 14 probationers, 8 students, 5 ordinands, and 107 supernumeraries. Thirteen candidates have been accepted for diaconal pre-ordination training this year.

The MDO Centre in Birmingham was re-opened by the President of the Conference last September following major refurbishment. Since then it has been used for diaconal training and retreats, and by other Methodist and Ecumenical groups for day and residential events. It has also offered hospitality to many individuals from around the Connexion and overseas in need of welcome and accommodation.

At the request of the Joint Implementation Commission, two day consultations were held at the MDO Centre involving members of the MDO, Methodist Faith and Order Committee and the Church of England's Faith and Order Advisory Group (FOAG). The purpose of these meetings was to explore common ground and to note differences in the policy and practice of our two Churches, with regard to the diaconate, and to see what each Church could learn from the other. It is proposed that during the coming year the conversation should be widened to include more practitioners of diaconal ministry from both Churches, together with members of the Faith and Order Committee and FOAG. Such discussions will help inform and strengthen mission and outreach by deacons.

The Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee has commenced a review of diaconal training and formation, in consultation with training agencies and the Training Strategy and Resources Executive. It is hoped that together we can share in a process of testing out and developing a reshaped framework for formation and training to ensure deacons are appropriately equipped for seizing mission opportunities in contemporary society.

Deacon Sue Culver has been nominated to become the new Warden of the MDO for a period of 6 years commencing September 2008.

***RESOLUTIONS

23/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

23/2. The Conference resolves that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall meet at The Hayes Conference Centre from Monday 9 to Wednesday 11 March 2009.