

# 28. Stationing Committee Report

## 1 Review of the Stationing Matching Process for 2008

- 1.1 At the start of the matching process for September 2008, Circuits were seeking 34 more presbyters than there were presbyters moving to new stations. This compared with a shortfall of 42 in the 2007 stationing round. When the availability of probationers and ministers from overseas was taken into account (56 - of whom 6 were overseas ministers), there appeared to be a somewhat more favourable position at the start of the process than had been the case for September 2007. Nevertheless, District Chairs, Lay Stationing Representatives and District Policy Committees were again faced with the difficulty of deciding which circuit appointments were most critical, knowing that not all vacancies would be filled.
- 1.2 At the end of the matching process in January 2008, 6 superintendency appointments remained unfilled, together with a further 26 presbyteral appointments (46 at the same stage for 2007). Following a letter to presbyters on behalf of the Matching Group, 4 out of the 6 superintendency appointments were filled.
- 1.3 From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2008, the Stationing Action Group (SAG) took over responsibility for filling as many of the remaining vacancies as possible, together with those being declared after the matching process was completed, and for matching presbyters whose entry into the process was a late one. The number of matches made by the Stationing Action Group for September 2007 was 42. The equivalent figure for 2008 was not known at the time of writing.
- 1.4 Phase 1 of the process at the beginning of November 2007 matched 66 presbyters with vacant superintendency appointments (75 for 2007) and achieved a success rate of 74% (73% for 2007). One District chose to exercise the opportunity to substitute a very significant presbyteral appointment for a superintendency during the first matching phase. In phase 2 in late November, 17 superintendencies were matched (21 for 2007) with a successful result of 69% (83% for 2007). Of the presbyteral matches made, 79% were agreed (80% for 2007).

Phase 3 of the matching process in early January 2008 again proved to be very difficult, with only 2 of the remaining superintendency appointments matched. 54 presbyteral appointments remained vacant, but at this point 23 ministers only were available, of whom 17 were successfully matched (75%).

A fourth phase of the matching process (which was the subject of a letter from the Stationing Committee sent out during the Conference of 2007), was arranged for the end of March 2008 so that any presbyters from the Connexional Team who might need to seek a circuit appointment could be included in a full matching process. In the event, no team members needed to be matched. The meeting also proved to be a difficult one with only 9 presbyters available for 39 appointments.

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- 1.5 A total of 17 deacons were stationed through the diaconal direct stationing process, of whom 8 were probationers. The Methodist Diaconal Order has again received more applications for diaconal appointments than the number of deacons available. The Order is pleased to report that most of these requests related to appointments in which innovative outreach and mission were primary elements.
- 1.6 The presbyteral stationing process is a dynamic one which continues throughout the spring and early summer each year through the work of the Stationing Action Group, which deals with the needs of a significant number of presbyters and Circuits where new matches are needed at a late stage. The success of the Group each year owes a great deal to the willingness of Districts, Circuits, presbyters and deacons to be imaginative, flexible and responsive in the ways in which God's people are served through ordained and lay ministry.
- 1.7 Circuits are increasingly coming to recognise the value of lay ministry when a presbyteral match is not available and have begun to plan more effectively for such situations. The Committee recognises that it is a difficulty for Circuits that they are not permitted to make final arrangements for such alternative ministry until June each year, in case a presbyter is available at a very late stage in the process. Increasingly, Circuits also recognise the value of an 'interregnum' which offers time and space for new models of ministry to be developed.
- 1.8 It was felt by the Matching Group this year that geographical and family restraints (including proximity to vulnerable family members, schools, hospitals and the employment of household members) for presbyters were, if anything, greater than in the past and hence of great significance for the matching process. Very few presbyters indeed offered a willingness to consider appointments in any part of the Connexion.
- 1.9 The Committee would like to pay tribute to the important work of preparation carried out by presbyters, by Circuit Stewards, by District Chairs and Lay Stationing Representatives. Successful matching owes a great deal to the honesty and openness of profiles and to the very real knowledge which Chairs have of the qualities and skills of their presbyteral colleagues. The preparation of profiles and the analysis of them by presbyters and Circuit Stewards is demanding and time-consuming, but is vital to the success of the matching process.
- 1.10 Each year Lay Representatives who are members of the Stationing Committee are invited to observe the matching process and to report their observations to the Committee. Once again this year, reports spoke of the calm prayerfulness of the proceedings and the frankness, openness, honesty and graciousness with which Chairs approached their work.
- 1.11 At the close of the matching process, the Chair of the Stationing Committee paid tribute to the work of Dr Malcolm Stevenson as Chair of the Matching Group for the last three years. Following consultation with District Chairs, Dr Stevenson has been re-appointed for a further year. Dr Stevenson's

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appointment will provide for continuity during the working out of the recommendations of the Stationing Review Group.

- 1.12 The Committee would also like to pay tribute to the work of the Revd Stephen Poxon as Convenor of the Stationing Action Group. This is a particularly onerous role, involving countless telephone calls and email exchanges with Chairs, presbyters and Circuit Stewards in the period from February to June each year. Stephen Poxon has carried out these tasks with skill, patience and good humour and always with the needs of the Church and of presbyters in mind.
- 1.13 The Committee is grateful to the Revd Leo Osborn for his willingness to take on the role from March 2008 and for 2008-09, during Stephen Poxon's Presidential year.
- 1.14 Everyone involved in the stationing process rejoices with those involved in successful matching partnerships, but also acknowledges the pain which stationing sometimes causes for presbyters and their families and for Circuits. The Committee would like to assure the Conference that the matching process is carried out with great care, prayerfully, taking into account the *Priorities for the Methodist Church* and always seeking God's guidance in the task of balancing the needs of the Church with those of its ministers and their families.

### 2 **Initial Stationing**

- 2.1 A significant change to stationing arrangements this year has been the re-naming of the 'Probationer Stationing Sub-Committee' as the 'Initial Stationing Sub-Committee' so as to include within this part of the process ministers from overseas in addition to presbyteral probationers. The Stationing Committee considered this change at length, together with District Chairs, and believes that the initial process has been a successful one.
- 2.2 The change has been made so that ministers from overseas are initially stationed directly, though on the basis of a circuit profile which indicates a willingness (and we hope enthusiasm) to accept such a minister and to provide effective induction, mentoring and support, a somewhat lighter load of circuit work, time for study, membership of the 'District Under 5s Group' and the opportunity to participate in a Connexional Orientation Course.
- 2.3 Full details of these arrangements can be found in three papers adopted in 2006-07, **Good Practice Guidelines for Probationer Stationing in General**, which deals with the application process together with the discipline and responsibilities of direct stationing and **Guidelines for Special Probationer Appointments** which offers guidance where a probationer is part-time, non-stipendiary and without a manse. **A Guide to the Stationing of Ministers from Overseas** offers guidance about the stationing process, together with advice about the particular needs of such ministers and their families, including the financial arrangements which need to be made by Circuits. It should be noted that the very generous

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financial provision under the World Church in Britain scheme is no longer available. The papers mentioned above are available from Formation in Ministry.

- 2.4 The Committee believes that there are great benefits to God's mission through the Church, to Circuits and to the Methodist people from the insights and experience of ministers from overseas.
- 2.5 There is some hope that the arrangements whereby probationer ministers from the American Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church reside and work as probationer ministers in our Circuits under the British American Ministry Programme may be reinstated in 2009, following the changes to the immigration rules due to be introduced under the new Points Based System from 1 September 2008. The Committee is grateful to Revd Margaret Jones from Formation in Ministry for her continuing work with the Home Office, in conjunction with ecumenical partners.

### **3 Principles, Precedents and Protocols in the Matching Process**

- 3.1 The stationing process operates in accordance with the relevant Standing Orders and the Code of Practice for the Stationing of Presbyters to be found in CPD. Many of the detailed principles and protocols, together with agreed precedents from previous years have so far existed only in the collective memory of members of the Matching Group. The Matching Group has worked hard over the past twelve months, beginning immediately before the Conference of 2007, to codify and express these principles etc. in written form.
- 3.2 The resulting document (with the title shown above) is considered to be work in progress and is subject to constant review as the matching process continues to evolve. There will be a need for further changes in the light of the recommendations of the Stationing Review Group if these are approved by the Conference.

### **4 Changes to The Good Practice Guide**

- 4.1 The Good Practice Guide was issued in May in time for District briefings, with relatively few changes. The following additional sections have been included:
  - (a) a paragraph relating to the balance between the provision of adequate information and confidentiality within the stationing process.
  - (b) paragraphs relating to the provision of a reasoned statement from the Circuit Invitation Committee relating to any extension (whether recommended to the Circuit Meeting or not), and encouraging full and open discussion at the Circuit Meeting.
  - (c) other minor changes of wording and updating.
- 4.2 The timetable for 2009 stationing is:

May to July	Discernment conversations for deacons.
May to July	District preparation meetings for presbyters, deacons and their household members,

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	together with superintendent ministers, Circuit Stewards.
May to July	Circuit consultations concerning re-invitations and recommendations from Invitation Committees to September Circuit Meetings.
By 20 September 2008	Circuit Meetings at which re-invitations are decided by ballot.
24 September 2008	Probationer and overseas minister applications to be with the District Chair.
27 September 2008	Profiles for deacons and Circuits requesting a diaconal appointment to be with the Warden of the Diaconal Order.
27 September 2008	Applications for probationer appointments and overseas ministers to be with Formation in Ministry.
1 October 2008	Completed profiles of presbyters and Circuits to be with the District Chair.
6 October 2008	All profiles to be with Stationing Administration.
24-25 October 2008	Diaconal stationing information and conversation days
Late October 2008	Designation of accepted Initial appointments (probationers and overseas ministers).
Mid to late October 2008	Profile books published.
10-11 November 2008	First Stationing Matching Phase
1-3 December 2008	Second Stationing Matching Phase
15 December 2008	Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee
5 January 2009	Initial Stationing Sub-Committee
Early January 2009	Deacons and Circuits informed of diaconal stationing
7 January 2009	Third Stationing Matching Phase
February 2009	Stationing Action Group begins work

### 5 **Other Matters**

- 5.1 The Committee has, together with the Medical Committee, agreed a statement about the matching of presbyters and deacons with ill health. The statement clarifies the circumstances in which District Chairs or the Warden of the Diaconal Order seek advice from the Medical Committee on behalf of ministers whose health might be adversely affected by the stationing process.
- 5.2 A guide has been produced for senior church leaders of other denominations relating to the process for applying for Authorised or Associate Minister or Deacon Status. A letter from the General Secretary accompanies the guide.
- 5.3 A small working party has been considering the processes involved in the extension of a presbyter's invitation to a Circuit beyond 10 years. Further work needs to be done on this matter, but it is hoped that the change to the Good Practice Guide mentioned in paragraph 4.1(b) above will contribute to greater openness and sensitivity within Invitation Committees and Circuit Meetings.

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5.4 The Committee has expressed its thanks for the outstanding contribution to its work of the Revd Margaret Jones and Jane Bates.

### **6 The Availability and Deployment of Methodist Presbyters and Deacons**

6.1 Appendix 1 shows the current deployment of both presbyters and deacons.

6.2 Appendix 2 gives the current forecast of the number of active presbyters until 2012. The Committee retains the projected figure of 50 probationers entering appointments each year. Recent experience suggests that this continues to be a realistic figure, although the change from Foundation Training to portfolio-based candidating may cause fluctuations over the next 3-4 years. It should be noted that there is no financial cap on the figure, nor is there a cap determined by the availability of training places.

6.3 Recent work has been done to update the figures for normal retirements. These show a significant increase in the years 2010-11, 2011-12. The number of variable factors involved in the predictions is considerable and the impact of more flexible retirement for presbyters and deacons is as yet unknown.

6.4 If agreed by the Conference, the proposal from the Stationing Review Group that deployment figures (replacing establishment figures) for mission and ministry should become a district matter will mean that more effective planning of ministerial deployment will be possible.

6.5 At each of its meetings, the Committee receives reports from the Stationing Matching Group, the Stationing Advisory Committee, The Methodist Diaconal Order (on stationing matters), Formation in Ministry and when in session the Stationing Action Group.

### **7 Report of The Stationing Review Group**

7.1 The Stationing Committee as co-sponsor with The Methodist Council of the Stationing Review process has most carefully considered the Group's report and recommendations and warmly commends them to the Conference. The Committee would like to express its thanks to all the members of the Group for what it believes will be a very significant contribution to enabling the Methodist Church to station its ministers more strategically, more flexibly and more readily in appointments with a mission-based focus.

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

**28/1.** The Conference receives the Report.

### **Memorial 51 (2007)**

#### **M51 Amalgamation of Circuits**

The Portland (26/22) Circuit Meeting (Present: 16. Vote: unanimous) requests that Conference confirms whether the provisions within CPD for the amalgamation of circuits to make a new circuit include clear and adequate provision for:

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How staff should be appointed to that new circuit, including how re-invitations should be handled when extensions commence at the date of joining;  
 Which meetings hold responsibility for making decisions before any date of joining;  
 How binding those decisions are on the new Circuit meeting.

### Reply

The Conference is grateful to the Portland Circuit for raising these concerns. It refers the matter to the Stationing Committee, in consultation with the Stationing Review Group to consider and, if appropriate, to develop a section in the Stationing Good Practice guide about the issues concerned; and to report back to the Conference in 2008.

### Response from the Stationing Committee

The Stationing Committee thanks the Portland Circuit and others for raising issues surrounding the handling of re-invitations and the stationing of ministers when Circuits are reconfiguring. The issues are complex and the Committee believes that re-drafting of the relevant Standing Orders is needed to bring clarity to the processes and will consult with District Chairs, the Law and Polity Committee and members of the Connexional Team to achieve this. Advice based on the current Standing Orders has been included as an appendix to the Good Practice Guide for 2009.

## \*\*\*RESOLUTION

28/2. The Conference receives the response to Memorial 51.

## APPENDIX 1

### Utilisation of Presbyters and Deacons

### The Methodist Church

March 2008

	PRESBYTERS				DEACONS		
	Female	%age	Male	TOTAL	Female	Male	TOTAL
Separated Chairs of District	4	14%	25	29			
Circuit Superintendents	92	17%	462	554			
Other Circuit Appointments	417	41%	604	1021	68	32	100
Forces Chaplains	1	4%	23	24			
Other Chaplains	25	30%	59	84	2	0	2
In Connexional Team	4	18%	18	22	2	0	2
In Appointments not within the control of the church	15	17%	63	88	4	2	6
Appointed to Serve Abroad	6	55%	5	11			
Permitted to Reside Abroad	6	32%	13	19	2	0	2
Permitted to Serve Abroad	2	11%	16	18			
Permitted to Serve Another Church			1	1			
Allowed to be Without Appointment	24	62%	15	39	4	1	5
Permitted to Study	2	40%	3	5			
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>1307</b>	<b>1915</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>117</b>
Supernumeraries				1635			131
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>3550</b>			<b>248</b>

APPENDIX 2

THE METHODIST CHURCH

FORECAST OF ACTIVE METHODIST MINISTERS

		NUMBER OF ACTIVE METHODIST MINISTERS (PRESBYTERS)																								
		Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate	Actual	Estimate									
Connexional Year		2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2003/04	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06	2005/06	2005/06	2006/07	2006/07	2006/07	2007/08	2007/08	2008/09	2008/09	2009/10	2009/10	2010/11	2010/11	2011/12	2011/12
<b>Start of Year</b>		2092	2079	2034	2034	2034	2013	2013	2013	1987	1987	1987	1987	1958	1958	1958	1922	1922	1876	1876	1841	1841	1811	1811	1750	1750
Normal Retirements		73	85	62	70	66	66	66	66	59	59	71	71	71	71	71	81	81	70	70	65	65	96	96	110	110
Early Retirements		10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Resignations		5	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	5	5	3	3	5	5	9	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Other Losses		5	5	5	2	5	7	5	5	5	2	2	2	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>TOTAL LOSSES</b>		93	105	82	88	86	89	86	89	79	81	81	81	91	91	92	101	101	90	90	85	85	116	116	130	130
New Probationers		75	55	83	58	55	54	55	54	50	42	42	42	50	50	58	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Other Gains		5	5	5	9	5	4	5	4	5	10	10	10	5	5	9	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
<b>TOTAL GAINS</b>		80	60	60	67	60	58	60	58	55	52	52	52	55	55	67	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	
<b>END OF YEAR</b>		2079	2034	2040	2013	1987	1982	1963	1958	1963	1958	1958	1958	1922	1922	1933	1876	1876	1841	1841	1811	1811	1750	1750	1675	1675