

A. Stationing: Reinvitations

1. The Stationing Committee, in reflecting on some recent cases and in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee, has come to the conclusion that the reinvitation process can in some circumstances operate contrary to natural justice.
2. It can be the case that no objections are raised to a minister's reinvitation during the consultations carried out by the circuit Invitation Committee, or even in the discussion at the Circuit Meeting itself. But votes may then be cast against the reinvitation. Such votes may be due to the fact that some people believe that the consultation process has been, for whatever reason, less than satisfactorily carried out, or may be unexplained. In any event, they are unforeseen.
3. As a reinvitation requires a majority of 60%, or 75% for an extension beyond ten years, in a small Circuit Meeting a very few members acting in this way can alter the outcome.
4. The Stationing Committee has sought to find ways forward that are sensitive to the needs and feelings of the ministers concerned, members in the Circuit and circuit stewards, and that are just and fair to all concerned. There is no suggestion that the result of a vote on the extension of an invitation should be a foregone conclusion, or that the members of the Circuit Meeting do not have the right to vote in any way that they wish. The Stationing Committee does argue, however, that this line of action (ie unforeseen votes against the extension of an invitation when the consultations and the discussion at the meeting itself had suggested that there was no opposition to an extension) is not the way in which a Christian community should conduct its affairs. The Committee concluded that the only way to prevent this happening would be if in cases where the views expressed in the consultation process are overwhelmingly favourable, and lead to the Circuit Invitation Committee recommending that an extension be granted, with no objections expressed at the meeting itself, the Circuit Meeting endorsed that recommendation without a vote.
5. Two main arguments led the Committee to this conclusion. The first was the pastoral insensitivity towards ministers and their families expressed in such situations as the one described above. The proposed change, the Committee believes, does not represent an over-privileging of ministers' interests against those of Circuits. It does represent an acknowledgement of the personal vulnerability of ministers in this process. The second argument was the inappropriateness of a bald vote 'coming out of nowhere' in a community of disciples who are accountable to one another in Christ. The Committee in no way wants to belittle the difficult dynamics

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and power issues that can arise within Circuits, but believes that an extensive, sensitive and confidential consultation process offers a better way forward.

6. This recommendation for changes to SO 545 offers an effective means of ensuring that the concerns of those opposed to the extension of an invitation are expressed before the Circuit Meeting makes its recommendation.

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***RESOLUTION

61/1. The Conference adopted the Report and amended Standing Orders as follows:

S.O. 545(2) Subject to Standing Order 547, at a Circuit Meeting in the fifth year of a minister's service in the Circuit the invitation may be extended for a specified number of years, not exceeding five.

(3) If a minister's initial invitation has been extended under clause (2) above or this clause and is open to further extension as provided in clause (3B) below, then at a Circuit Meeting in the last year of the current period of invitation the invitation may be extended for a specified number of further years, not exceeding five.

(3A) Any Circuit Meeting to consider extending an invitation under clause (2) or (3) above shall be held on or before the 20th September.

(3B) Any extension under clause (2) or (3) above may, if the minister and Circuit Meeting agree, be understood as final, but otherwise shall be open to further extension.

(3C) Prior to any Circuit Meeting where the extension of an invitation is to be considered, the circuit stewards shall ensure that appropriate consultations take place according to guidance issued from time to time on behalf of the Conference.

(3D) If, on the completion of those consultations, the minister concerned informs the Circuit Invitation Committee that he or she is seeking an extension, the committee shall prepare a statement giving its recommendation and the reasons for it, for presentation to the Circuit Meeting. The reasoned statement shall be circulated in confidence to the members of the Circuit Meeting two weeks in advance of the meeting.

(3E) If an extension is not recommended by the Circuit Invitation Committee, the minister may also prepare a statement giving reasons why an extension should be granted. Any such statement shall be circulated in confidence to members of the Circuit Meeting no later than a week in advance of the meeting. The Circuit Meeting shall consider both the statement of the minister and that of the Circuit Invitation Committee, together with any response from the committee to the minister's statement (in writing or made orally) and then proceed to vote.

(3F) If an extension is recommended by the Circuit Invitation Committee, there shall be circulated with the recommendation a notice in writing giving the name of the person who will be chairing the relevant Circuit Meeting and requesting members of the Circuit Meeting to inform the chair if he or she intends to oppose the recommendation, with the grounds for doing so. That request shall be repeated by the chair at the meeting. If no such intention is declared before the meeting or immediately following the request made at the meeting, then no vote shall be taken on the recommendation and the extension shall be taken as agreed.

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(3G) If the chair of the Circuit Meeting is informed by a member that he or she wishes to oppose the recommendation, the meeting shall consider the matter and then proceed to vote.

(3H) The voting on any resolution in the Circuit Meeting under clause (2) or (3) above shall be by ballot. A resolution for the extension of an invitation shall require for adoption a majority of 60% of those present and voting or, if for an extension which would include any period beyond a total appointment of ten years, 75%. The number of votes for and against and the total number of persons present and entitled to vote shall be recorded.

(4) (a) Whenever the question is under consideration of the extension or expiration of the period of invitation of a Superintendent, the Chair of the District shall be invited to be present or represented. **The Chair of the District or his or her representative shall have the right to take the chair.**

The same amendments shall be made (substituting “deacon” for “minister” as appropriate) in S.O. 546 which sets out the parallel provisions for the extension of diaconal appointments, inserting the equivalents of clauses (3C) to (3G) inclusive of S.O. 545 above as clauses (7) to (11) in S.O. 546, and renumbering S.O. 546(7) as 546(12).

A consequential amendment is as follows:

425 (3) Each Chair is authorised to visit officially any Circuit in the District in order to share in the exercise of oversight with the Superintendent, circuit staff, circuit stewards and other members of any circuit leadership team, and the Circuit Meeting, and to offer appropriate leadership and support. He or she shall do so with due notice to the Superintendent and others concerned. The Chair of the District may preside at any meeting for circuit or local church purposes at the invitation of the Superintendent but, **subject to Standing Order 545(4)a**, may not do so without his or her consent unless, in special circumstances, the Synod or district Policy Committee so directs, and in that event the Superintendent shall take all necessary steps to give effect to the decisions of that meeting.

61/1A. The Conference amended the Guidance on the Stationing of Ministers and Deacons (CPD, Book VI, Part 2, Section 1) as follows:

- i) Section B(6)(c): Circuit stewards ~~should~~ **are obliged under S.O. 545(3C) to** ensure that ~~adequate~~ **appropriate** consultation takes place with those Local Churches ...

- (ii) For Section B(6)(d), substitute:

The circuit invitation committee should meet and receive from the circuit stewards a report on the local consultations and should ascertain from the minister concerned, after further consultation with

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him or her if appropriate, whether an extension is sought. If so, the committee should prepare a recommendation for the Circuit Meeting. The procedure set out in S.O. 545 must then be followed.

- (iii) Section B(6)(e): **Where the** The Circuit Meeting, ~~in making its decision about~~ **is required to consider and vote on** the extension of the minister's appointment, **it** should take into account ...
- (iv) Section C(4)(c): Circuit stewards ~~should~~ **are obliged under S.O. 545(3C) to** ensure that ~~adequate~~ **appropriate** consultation takes place with the church(es) with whom the deacon is linked ...
- (v) In Section C(4)(d), make the same substitution as in (ii) above, reading "deacon" for "minister" in the first sentence.
- (vi) Section C(4)(e): **Where the** The Circuit Meeting, ~~in making its decision about~~ **is required to consider and vote on** the extension of the deacon's appointment, **it** should take into account ...

61/1B. The Conference directed that the changes to Standing Orders and Guidance adopted in Resolutions 61/1 and 61/1A above shall come into effect for the reinvitation process which commences during the connexional year 2009–2010.

B. Local Preacher Training and Supervision

1. It has been brought to the attention of the Law and Polity Committee that the current wording of Standing Orders 564A(2) and 564B(2) concerning persons on note and persons on trial as local preachers is causing some difficulty and confusion when attempts are made to apply it to particular circumstances. The difficulty is in the concept of 'residence' that occurs in each of those Standing Orders. In many situations, particularly urban ones, Circuits contain Local Churches which draw their membership from overlapping geographical areas. Secondly, those who are training to be local preachers whilst working under the oversight of the Forces Board in accordance with Standing Order 355 may find themselves located in a succession of circuits as they are posted to different appointments. Thirdly, students at a training institution which has been approved by the Methodist Council to supervise a training programme for local preachers (such as Cliff College) may be full-time or part-time and may be located in the Circuit in which a Local Church holds their membership, or in the Circuit in which the training institution is itself located, or in some other Circuit where they are lodging or undertaking a placement.
2. Amendments to Standing Orders are therefore proposed to make it clear that;
 - (a) when people on note or on trial as local preachers are primarily involved in the life of Circuits other than the one in which their membership is held, the Circuits concerned may make mutual arrangements as to which circuit supervises their training; and

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- (b) when people on note or on trial as local preachers are undertaking a training programme provided by a training institution that has been approved by the Methodist Council for the training of local preachers, the Circuit in which their membership is held may agree that the training institution arranges their tutoring, mentoring and training and provides the reports required by Standing Orders to the circuit concerned.

These amendments have the incidental effect of also removing the residence problem in relation to circuits drawing members from overlapping geographical areas.

The opportunity is also taken to make a minor amendment to correct a cross-reference in a related Standing Order.

***RESOLUTION

61/2. The Conference received the Report and amended Standing Orders as follows:

564A Persons on Note. ...

(2) Where persons on note **are primarily involved in a Circuit or Circuits other than that in which their membership is held,** ~~are temporarily resident in another Circuit,~~ their note may be implemented and their initial training **supervised in that other or one of those other Circuits (as the case requires)** ~~undertaken there~~ by mutual arrangement between **the Local Preachers' Meeting of two Circuits concerned.**

564B Persons on Trial. ...

(2) Where persons on trial **are primarily involved in relate to a Circuit or Circuits other than that in which their membership is held,** ~~are temporarily resident in another Circuit~~ their training may be supervised in **that other or one of those other Circuits (as the case requires)** ~~that Circuit~~ by mutual arrangements between **the Local Preachers' Meeting of two Circuits concerned.** The arrangements shall specify which Local Preachers' Meeting they are expected to attend.

564C Local Tutorial Arrangements. (1) Every Local Preachers' Meeting shall appoint a local tutor, who shall oversee the studies of those on note and on trial in the Circuit and, by arrangement, those on note and on trial in any adjoining Circuits. Such appointments shall be notified to the Connexional Team. Every help possible shall be afforded to those on note and on trial in their studies and training.

(2) Where there are a number of persons on note and on trial the Local Preachers' Meeting may appoint a training sub-group to oversee their studies and receive the reports required under this Standing Order. If a sub-group is so appointed, the Local Preachers' Meeting may agree to receive the report of the sub-group in place of individual reports on each person on note or on trial.

(3) Where a person on note or on trial is undertaking a training programme supervised by a training institution approved for that purpose by the Methodist Council, the Local Preachers' Meeting may agree with the training institution that the institution will provide the mentor, tutor and reports to the meeting required under Standing Orders for or in respect of that person.

560(2) Persons on trial who are members in the Circuit are expected to attend but they are not entitled to vote. This clause takes effect with any modifications made under Standing Order 564B(2), where it applies. ...

C. Administration of Baptism

It has been brought to the attention of the Law and Polity Committee that whereas Standing Orders 733 and 733A allow ministers (presbyters) of other communions who are either authorised to serve as a Methodist minister or granted the status of associate minister to conduct baptisms in Methodist churches, Standing Order 010A(2) does not mention this possibility. For the sake of clarity, the following amendments to Standing Order 010A are recommended to include such provision, and an analogous provision for deacons.

*****RESOLUTION**

61/3. The Conference received the Report and amended Standing Orders as follows:

010A Baptism. (1) Except in an emergency, baptism shall be administered only after instruction has been given to the candidate or to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a candidate who is a young child.

(2) Normally baptism shall be administered by a minister, or by a ministerial probationer appointed to the Circuit, **or a person authorised to serve as a minister who is appointed to fulfil ministerial duties in the Circuit under Standing Order 733, or a person granted the status of associate minister who is permitted to undertake such an act of ministry in the particular local church concerned under Standing Order 733A.** However, where local considerations so require, it may be administered, with the approval of the Superintendent, by a deacon or diaconal probationer appointed (in either case) to the Circuit, **or by a person authorised to serve as a deacon who is appointed to fulfil diaconal duties in the Circuit under Standing Order 733, or a person granted the status of associate deacon who is permitted to undertake such an act of ministry in the particular local church concerned under Standing Order 733A,** or by a local preacher. In an emergency baptism may be administered by any person.

(3) Normally baptism shall be administered at a service of public worship, but in

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exceptional circumstances, such as prolonged or serious illness, baptism may take place at another time, if possible in the presence of members of the Local Church.

D. Medical Reports Upon Candidates and Applicants for Transfer and Reinstatement

In recent years the processes of seeking, considering and reporting upon the required medical information about presbyteral and diaconal candidates, and applicants for transfer, reinstatement, retirement and return to the full work have evolved to meet current professional practice. Changes to the relevant Standing Orders are now proposed, to reflect these changes and to provide consistency.

***RESOLUTION

61/4. The Conference received the Report and amended Standing Orders as follows:

711 [Candidates] (4) The candidate shall, ***not later than the date determined by the Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees, complete and return to the Connexional Team member responsible for ministerial or diaconal candidates the medical questionnaire provided for that purpose,*** ~~see that a medical report signed by a qualified medical practitioner is sent, not later than the date determined by the Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees,~~ ***to for consideration and report by*** a doctor specified by the Team members responsible for ministerial and diaconal candidates in consultation with the medical committee appointed by the Methodist Council.

713 [Connexional Committees] (5) Each committee or section shall receive ... the medical reports of the ~~appointed~~ ***specified*** doctors, ...

- (7)(a) If the report by the ~~appointed~~ ***specified*** doctor states there is no medical objection to the acceptance of the candidate the Ministerial or Diaconal Candidates Selection Committee may recommend the candidate without further medical investigation.
- (b) Where there is such an objection and the committee resolves nevertheless to recommend acceptance or conditional acceptance its recommendation shall be subject to the endorsement of the medical committee of the Methodist Council, which shall investigate all such cases and report to the Conference.

730 [Transfers] (5) The Team member shall also:

- (i) require the applicant, ***not later than the date determined by the Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees,*** ~~to see that a medical report signed by a qualified medical practitioner is sent, not later than the date determined by the Ministerial and Diaconal Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committees,~~ ***to complete and return to the***

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Team member the medical questionnaire provided for that purpose, for consideration and report by a doctor specified by the Team member in consultation with the medical committee appointed by the Methodist Council;

761 [Reinstatements] (3) The convener of the interviewing committee shall be the Secretary of the Conference who shall

(i) procure a medical examination of the applicant and a report **require the applicant to complete and return the medical questionnaire provided for that purpose, for consideration and report by a doctor specified by the Secretary in consultation with the medical committee appointed by the Methodist Council;**

[(ii) ...]

(iii) appoint the interviewing committee in accordance with clause (4) below and supply to each member, before the committee meets, a copy of the application and any supporting documents submitted by the applicant, of the particulars, statement, references and reports obtained under clause (2) above and of the reports obtained under this clause;

790 [Application to become Supernumerary] (2) (a) Any minister or deacon seeking to become a supernumerary on the grounds of ill health who is not within the scope of clause (1) above shall, after giving notice to his or her Chair (and, in the case of a deacon, also to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order), apply to the ~~convener~~ **relevant member of the Connexional Team who shall refer the application to the chair** of the medical committee of the Methodist Council, who shall arrange for a medical examination **report**. All expenses in connection with such a medical examination **report** shall be borne by the medical committee.

793 [Return to the Active Work] (1) Subject to clause (2) below any application by a supernumerary minister or deacon in full connexion for permission to return to the active work shall be made to the Stationing Advisory Committee. The application shall be referred to the ~~convener~~ **chair** of the medical committee of the Methodist Council to **who shall** arrange for a medical examination, **report and make a recommendation** ~~the result of which shall be reported~~ to the Advisory Committee and, where application has been made to become a member of the Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme, to the Trustee of the scheme. The Advisory Committee shall consult the Chair and Superintendent of the supernumerary concerned, and, where the supernumerary is a deacon, the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, and make a recommendation to the Stationing Committee, which shall in turn make a recommendation to the Conference.