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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.
- 1.2 The Chair of the Stationing Matching Group, the Revd Stephen Poxon, has guided the stationing matching process prayerfully and with wisdom and good humour as the Stationing Matching Group continues to face changing and challenging circumstances as outlined below in Section 2.
- 1.3 The circuit appointments submitted for Stationing Matching are now 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 Group meetings and every effort is 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 has been less marked this year as many Circuits work creatively, reconfiguring for mission and forming teams of lay workers and ordained ministers to ensure continuing and effective ministry.
- 1.5 The Committee wishes to commend the work of Circuits and Districts that have reconfigured in order to facilitate effective mission and ministry and the sharing of resources across the Connexion and would encourage others to continue to engage in these conversations.
- 1.6 As a result of reconfiguration, this year has seen a number of appointments in the matching process which need to be filled with some urgency and require presbyters and deacons to develop and use new skills. This has provided an opportunity to prioritise these appointments and other places in great need during the stationing matching process while also ensuring good support for ministers.
- 1.7 The Stationing Committee encourages Districts and Circuits to continue to review the wisdom and efficacy of very small Circuits, and the demands as well as benefits of very large circuit structures. The well-being of ministers in some contexts remains a matter of some concern.

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- 1.8 The continued collaboration between those involved in diaconal and presbyteral stationing is known to be beneficial. Development in such collaborative practice continues in order to promote coherent use of the resources of both orders of ministry.
- 1.9 The Stationing Committee wishes to thank those Circuits offering profiles for Initial Stationing. There continues to be a need for 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.
- 1.10 Following Notice of Motion 2019/207 to the Conference the Stationing Committee is continuing to work with the Council and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee to ensure that the Code of Practice for stationing is clear and unambiguous. Circuit invitation committees need to be aware of the issues and to have engaged with the section on unconscious bias located on the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Toolkit.
- 1.11 Work is underway to allow all stationing profiles to be managed online. A trial of the online application will be undertaken for the stationing matching process 2020/2021 and it is hoped that the full process will be introduced for the following year.

2. Report of the Stationing Matching Group

- 2.1 The Stationing Committee affirmed the process of 2018/2019 in inviting stationing regions to recommend circuit appointments which were deemed 'Critical'. The appointed Scrutiny Panel met, for 24 hours, as soon as was possible after the publication of the profiles and the Regional Groups had met to submit reasoned statements. This year 41 Circuit Appointments were accepted as 'Critical', compared to 48 the previous year, with a further one added before the second meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG 2).
- 2.2 As reported last year the Stationing Matching Group (SMG) had warmly embraced the 'experiment' of identifying critical appointments and this produced an atmosphere of confidence in the process at the first meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG 1) during the four days at the beginning of November. We began the process with 93 presbyters and 109 circuit appointments. 81 matches were made with an 80% success rate and for the 'critical' appointments this was 81%.
- 2.3 At the beginning of December, SMG 2 met with a few additional profiles from both presbyters and Circuits. We began seeking to fill the remaining 'critical' appointments and then the other circuit appointments and managed to make 21 matches with 81% of them having a successful outcome.

- 2.4 When SMG 3 met on 13 January there were only 10 presbyters to match and among the circuit appointments to be filled were 5 'critical' ones. One of the hallmarks of this year's process was the willingness of the Chairs of District to think and act creatively which resulted in 4 presbyters offering to move a year early. This meant that after all the visits had taken place following SMG 3 we were only left with one 'critical' appointment to fill.
- 2.5 Following SMG 3, the Stationing Action Group takes 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; it made a successful match with the final 'critical' appointment at the first meeting.
- 2.6 Last year it was reported that 'there continues to be the need for some monitoring and conversation about the whole stationing process in terms of racial bias, couples in ministry, gender, sexuality and age issues'. Through the SMG this year it was highlighted again that presbyters from the BAME community seem to be disadvantaged in our processes and this continues to be on the agenda of the Stationing Committee.

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

- 3.1 The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee 1 met on 2-3 January 2020.

3.2 Probationer Appointments

- Twenty-two presbyteral probationer profiles had been approved by the Initial Stationing scrutiny group.
- Two of these were for either a probationer or a minister of another Conference or Church (MOCC).
- One additional appointment was reassigned from a MOCC to a probationer appointment.
- One additional appointment had already been approved in a previous year for a probationer in 'In Service Training'.

3.3 Probationers

- Nineteen presbyteral probationers were matched with appointments.
- ISSC1 noted that three diaconal probationers had already been matched with appointments with one further match pending.
- One of the nineteen probationers is transferring as a probationer and the match was agreed subject to the recommendation of the transfer panel in March 2020.
- One of the nineteen was already matched following the conclusion of 'In Service Training'.

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3.4 The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee 2 met on 6 February 2020

3.5 **Ministers of other Churches and Conferences**

Thirteen ministers of other Churches and Conferences (prospective 'Recognised and Regarded' presbyters) were matched with appointments. Four of these were to appointments which were reassigned from probationer appointments.

Three ministers of other Churches and Conferences were not matched. Subsequent work by the Stationing Action Group did not lead to appointments. As things stand at the time of writing, their profiles are therefore being held over for stationing in 2021.

3.6 **Outstanding appointments**

Two probationer appointments remained unfilled. One of these has specific language needs.

3.7 At the start of the 2019/2020 year, there were only two appointments which had been submitted with ministers of other Churches and Conferences in mind. This was concerning, not least because 16 ministers of other Churches and Conferences were recommended through the panels. A number of Circuits were able to redesign appointments after SMG 3. It has been decided that publicity materials (short videos and postcards) will be produced to encourage more Circuits to consider this option at the start of stationing, and to help them with accurate information concerning the thoroughness of the discernment, stationing and induction processes.

4. **Report of the Stationing Action Group**

4.1 The Stationing Action Group (convened by the Revd Graham Thompson) commenced its work on 10 February 2020 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process there were 15 available appointments (of which one had been identified as 'critical'), including four superintendencies. Ten 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 eight presbyters (including three ministers of other Conferences and Churches) and one appointment have been added to the process. Three presbyters have withdrawn, for various reasons.

4.3 In February two matches were made of which one was agreed (the remaining 'critical' appointment). In March one successful match was made. The Group also agreed that a match that had been made during the Stationing Matching process should not go ahead and that the profile for the appointment concerned be withdrawn.

- 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 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 two appointments.

5. Report on diaconal stationing

- 5.1 Diaconal stationing began with 11 ordained deacons and four diaconal probationers and initially 13 Circuit profiles leaving a shortfall of two circuit appointments.
- 5.2 Following SMG 1 two more Circuits entered stationing with diaconal profiles. In addition, an unfilled critical presbyteral appointment, was reshaped into a diaconal appointment.
- 5.3. In the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee (DSSC) 2 all ordained deacons and diaconal probationers were matched to 15 circuit profiles. An ordained deacon was requested to move stations early to fill an appointment which had been reshaped. These matches were called at SMG 2.
- 5.4 Following SMG 2, one match was not confirmed and a diaconal probationer requested to withdraw from training. The DSSC did further work, re-matching one person and requesting another deacon to move early, which eventually resulted in both Circuits having confirmed matches.
- 5.5 During the year the DSSC has matched two deacons to diaconal appointments with The Queen's Foundation. These appointments, along with two mentioned earlier, were only possible because of deacons' commitment to live out the diaconal principles of itinerancy and direct stationing and the generosity and grace of Circuits in recognising and supporting connexional needs. The DSSC via the Stationing Action Group, made additional matches between Circuits and deacons who came later into the stationing process.

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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 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.

Projections

Number of Methodist presbyters and probationers in the active work

	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Connexional Year	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Start of year	1448	1387	1340	1290	1240
Normal retirements	78	60	60	60	60
Early retirements	13	14	8	8	8
Resignations	3	2	5	5	5
Other losses	0	1	2	2	2
TOTAL LOSSES	94	77	75	75	75
New probationers	27	23	19	20	20
Other gains	6	7	6	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	33	30	25	25	25
END OF YEAR	1387	1340	1290	1240	1190

Number of Methodist deacons and probationers in the active work

	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Connexional Year	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Start of year	134	135	134	133	132
Retirements	4	3	5	5	5
Resignations	0	1	0	0	0
Other losses	0	0	1	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	4	4	6	6	6
New probationers	5	3	5	5	5
Other gains	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	5	3	5	5	5
END OF YEAR	135	134	133	132	131

7. Moving forward

- 7.1 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 are needed, but where they are needed most while endeavouring to ensure their continuing well-being.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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****37/1. The Conference adopts the Report.**