

10. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

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1. Membership

The Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) currently has a complement of 259 members. Of these:

127 are in the active work (including 10 probationer deacons)

118 are supernumerary deacons

9 are student deacons

5 are deacons who hold 'without appointment' status

In addition, there are 2 authorised deacons in the active work and 1 supernumerary associate deacon. The MDO also has 27 people who are 'Associates' of the Order and a number of 'Friends' who commit themselves to support the Order through prayer and advocacy.

Since the 2017 Convocation 8 members have died, 5 new full members were received by ordination into the diaconate, 4 accepted candidates and 7 members had permission to sit down.

At the time of writing the processes of the Ministerial Candidates' Selection Committee, the Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee and the Conference Diaconal Committee (CDC) are incomplete, and so the numbers of those who will be recommended to the Conference as candidates, for ordination and permission to sit down are not yet fully known.

2. MDO Deputy Warden

Following a period of discernment Deacon Richard Goldstraw sought to step down from his appointment as Deputy Warden of the Order and to take up a circuit appointment. During the autumn a discernment group met to identify through prayer, consultation and conversation a deacon to recommend to the Methodist Council for direct stationing as the Deputy Warden. In its January meeting the Methodist Council accepted the recommendation of Deacon Ruth Richey who will serve as the Deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order for 5 years from September 2018. The MDO is grateful to both Richard and Ruth for their willingness to serve and to the Methodist Council and all who actively supported the process of discernment by their membership of the discernment group or in other ways.

3. The Methodist Council Working Group on the MDO as a Religious Order, and Faith and Order work on Ministry in the Methodist Church

Members of the Order continue to seek to engage fully with the questions and opportunities raised in relation to the nature and understanding of the MDO as both a religious order and an order of ministry.

4. Stationing

During the stationing matching process 19 deacons were matched for stationing to appointments for September 2018 by the Methodist Conference. This includes 5 who will become new first year probationers.

The Order throughout the year continues to visit and share in conversations about potential future diaconal appointments with Circuits and Churches as they seek to discern how they are being called at this time and in their context, to join in the work of God in service to the world.

5. World Diakonia

In July 2017 four members of the Order travelled to Chicago to participate in the Assembly of the World Diakonia Federation, where over 400 diaconal ministers, deacons and diaconal orders from 28 countries gathered together. The purpose of gathering was not only to celebrate a common calling to a ministry focused on the servanthood of Christ but also to be open to being shaken by the wind of God's Spirit, so to 'create community, rock the foundations, face the chaos, explore the unknown, find a new perspective, nourish hope and to be scattered to serve'. This was a joyful, challenging and hopeful event, which sought to remind and encourage the call of the whole Church to be a witness of God for all of creation through loving and deliberate service throughout the world.

6. The Convocation

By the time the Conference meets, as part of the discipline of the Order, members will have met at the annual Convocation to give thanks for those who "are no longer part of our earthly fellowship", to rejoice with those who were ordained at the 2017 Conference and those who will be recommended to the Conference for ordination in 2018, to greet those who became diaconal students and pray for those who are 'sitting down'.

The Convocation will have received and benefitted from the presence and ministry of the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference alongside that of the

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Secretary of the Conference and other guests. It will have hosted and shared fellowship with a number of deacons from other Churches from within the UK and Europe and with Methodist deacons from the Nigeria and Southern African Methodist Churches and United Methodist Church of the USA.

At the end of the Convocation members will have rededicated themselves to the calling and ministry of a deacon in Christ's Church which includes living by the MDO rule, lifelong service and prayer and the discipline of direct stationing and itinerancy.

*****RESOLUTION**

10/1. The Conference receives the Report.

10/2. The Conference resolves that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall meet at the Hayes Conference Centre from Tuesday 7 May until Friday 10 May 2019.