

27. Stationing Committee

Contact name and details	Pamela Lavender, Chair of the Stationing Committee pamelajlavender@gmail.com
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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 Following the adoption of Notice of Motion 2018/205 by the 2018 Conference, the Stationing Committee agreed a process by which the circuit appointments submitted for Stationing Matching could be identified and scrutinised in order better to meet the needs of the Connexion. 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 The imbalance between the number of available circuit appointments and the number of presbyters available for stationing to circuit appointments continues to be of concern and is likely to remain as a concern in the future.
- 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. This has provided an opportunity to prioritise these appointments and other places in great need during the stationing matching process.
- 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.
- 1.8 The continued collaboration between those involved in diaconal and presbyteral stationing has been welcomed and is known to be beneficial. There is a continued development in such collaborative practice to promote coherent use of the resources of both orders of ministry.
- 1.9 Work is underway to allow all stationing profiles to be managed on-line. It is hoped that there will be a small trial for the stationing matching process for 2019/2020 and if this is successful the full process will be introduced for the following year.

2. Report of the Stationing Matching Group

- 2.1 The Stationing Committee reviewed the new procedures of 2017/2018 and agreed to have two categories in Stationing Matching, rather than three, with regions able to recommend circuit appointments that were deemed 'critical'. A small group was appointed to be a Scrutiny Panel to enable this process and in an attempt to make Circuits and Districts more rigorous in

their applications for presbyters along with a greater sense of accountability and equality across the Connexion.

- 2.2 The Panel met, for 24 hours, as soon as was possible after the publication of the profiles and the Regional Groups had met to send in reasoned statements. 48 circuit appointments were accepted as 'critical' with a further one added before the second meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG2).
- 2.3 The atmosphere during the first meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG1) was very positive and the 'experiment' of the 'critical' category was warmly embraced. We began the process with 99 presbyter profiles and 120 circuit profiles. 84 matches were made with an 85.5% success rate and for the critical appointments this was 87%. This compares to last year's 79%.
- 2.4 At the beginning of December SMG2 met with a few additional profiles from both presbyters and Circuits. We began seeking to fill the remaining 'critical' appointments and then considered the other circuit appointments, making 24 matches with 75% of them having a successful outcome.
- 2.5 SMG3 met on 15 January and matched the remaining 10 presbyters who were available. This year's process will be reviewed through the Stationing Committee and the Chairs' Meeting. After this the Stationing Action Group took over seeking to match any remaining presbyters and deacons who became available during the rest of the connexional year. This group meets by a telephone conference call once a month.
- 2.6 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 and this is now firmly on the agenda of the Stationing Committee.

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

3.1 The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee met on 3-4 January 2019.

3.2 Appointments

- 30 presbyteral profiles had been approved by the Initial Stationing Scrutiny group.
 - 25 of these were for a probationer.
 - two were for a minister of other Conferences and Churches.
 - three circuits had submitted a profile for either a probationer or a minister of another Conference or Church.
- One circuit appointment for a probationer presbyter was submitted after the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee had met.

3.3 Probationers

- 20 presbyteral probationers were matched with appointments.
- ISSC noted that two diaconal probationers had already been matched with appointments.
- One further presbyteral probationer was matched with an appointment by the Stationing Action Group in April, following the outcome of a Ministerial Candidates' and Probationers' Oversight Committee panel.
- One presbyteral probationer who had curtailed their probation in the second year of probation was matched with a probationer's appointment by the Stationing Action Group in April.

3.4 Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences (MOCCs)

Seven ministers of other Churches and Conferences (prospective 'Recognised and Regarded' presbyters) were matched with appointments. Four of these were to Circuits who had submitted MOCC profiles. The other three were probationer appointments which were subsequently rearranged to be suitable for a minister of another Conference or Church.

One minister of another Church was not matched. Subsequent work by the Stationing Action Group did not lead to an appointment. His profile is therefore being held over for stationing in 2020.

3.5 Outstanding appointments

Two probationer appointments remained unfilled. One of these was subsequently filled at SMG3 and the other was withdrawn.

3.6 The scrutiny of initial stationing profiles in the 2018/2019 connexional year led to some changes to the profiles and the process by the Stationing Committee. It has been decided that in future years there will be two initial stationing sub-committees: ISSC1 for probationer presbyters, and ISSC2 for ministers of other Churches and Conferences. Chairs of Districts have been asked to encourage Circuits to consider a minister of another Conference or Church, alongside other possibilities when they are approaching the stationing process and information has been provided to assist that decision.

4. Report of the Stationing Action Group

4.1 The Stationing Action Group (convened by the Revd Graham Thompson) commenced its work on 11 February 2019 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process there were 24 available appointments (of which three had been identified as 'critical'), including eight superintendencies. Six 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 seven presbyters and three appointments have been added into the mix. Three presbyters have withdrawn, for various reasons.

4.3 In February seven matches were made of which five were agreed. In March three matches were made and none were successful. In April four matches were made; three were successful.

4.4 Following submission of a reasoned statement, requests to withdraw 11 circuit profiles were agreed, as at the end of March.

4.5 Following the matches made in April there will still be eight appointments remaining, of which three are for superintendents, including one that has been identified as 'critical'. We are likely to have a number of unfilled appointments at the end of the year but fewer than in recent times.

4.6 The 'critical' appointment continues to be the focus of activity as we seek to meet the needs of an appointment that has been identified and agreed as being of significance to the future mission and ministry of the Connexion.

5. Report on diaconal stationing

5.1 As we began the stationing process, this year held a different challenge for the Order; that of more diaconal appointments than deacons available for stationing. There were 22 Circuits

seeking a diaconal appointment and 14 deacons (including two student deacons) available to be matched.

5.2 The Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee (DSSC) had the demanding task of seeking to discern which of the 22 Circuit appointments it would fill and which it would not be able to match. Using the circuit stationing profile and notes from the circuit visit, the committee considered:

- which profiles indicated the potential and availability of other resources should there not be a deacon matched to their appointment;
- which profiles indicated that a diaconal vacancy would challenge their basic capacity for ministry and mission;
- what new work might be able to 'wait' a further year before beginning; and
- how might the gifts, graces and skills of the deacons in the stationing process be best matched to ensure they went to places where they were most needed yet to places where they could also best flourish.

5.3 At DSSC1 two deacons were considered to have significant pastoral needs and were therefore matched for SMG1. The remaining ten ordained and two probationer deacons were then considered in DSSC2 and matched for SMG2.

5.4 During the year the DSSC has been able to make some additional matches between Circuits and deacons who came later into the stationing process.

6. Code of Practice

6.1 The Code of Practice has incorporated the changes to the process and the current criteria in relation to 'critical' appointments (as described in section 2 above).

6.2 The Code now specifically points to the reflective retreats offered to ministers particularly as they move towards the end of their appointments.

6.3 Where an extension being considered is that of a pioneer minister, the Code points out that advice must be sought from the Connexional Pioneering and Church Planting Officer.

6.4 The sample Letters of Understanding now include a paragraph about 'Supervision'.

6.5 There are many policies and protocols which have a bearing on stationing and a small group is identifying these in order to enable hyperlink references within the Code of Practice, for example, the current Code references the 'Competencies for Superintendents' agreed by the Ministries Committee.

7. Projections

Number of Methodist presbyters and probationers in the active work

Connexional Year	Actual 2016/2017	Actual 2017/2018	Estimate 2018/2019	Estimate 2019/2020	Estimate 2020/2021
Start of Year	1490	1448	1387	1341	1290
Normal Retirements	61	78	60	60	60
Early Retirements	5	13	10	8	8
Resignations	5	3	5	5	5
Other Losses	2	0	2	2	2
TOTAL LOSSES	73	94	77	75	75

New Probationers	21	27	26	19	20
Other Gains	10	6	5	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	31	33	31	24	25
END OF YEAR	1448	1387	1341	1290	1240

Number of Methodist deacons and probationers in the active work

Connexional Year	Actual 2016/2017	Actual 2017/2018	Estimate 2018/2019	Estimate 2019/2020	Estimate 2020/2021
Start of Year	135	134	135	131	130
Retirements	6	4	5	5	5
Resignations	0	0	0	0	0
Other Losses	0	0	1	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	6	4	6	6	6
New Probationers	5	5	2	5	5
Other Gains	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	5	5	2	5	5
END OF YEAR	134	135	131	130	129

8. Moving forward

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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. Immediately, that means that the Committee is called carefully to help shape and then implement policies which enable the deployment of our ordained ministers in ways that best serve the mission of the Church. More broadly, the Committee recognises that it is called with others to examine the nature of presbyteral and diaconal ministry in a changing Church and a changing world. Such an examination should include a consideration of how we best foster vocations and nurture leadership potential in a diverse range of people so that those whom the Spirit is calling to ordained ministry might hear the call of God at each stage of their pilgrimage and be enabled to respond by using their gifts effectively in God's service. 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. 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

27/1. The Conference adopted the Report.