

42. Methodist Diaconal Order General Report

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1. Membership

The Methodist Diaconal Order currently has a complement of 261 members. Of these:
129 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 Order also has 25 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 2018 Convocation 2 members have died, 5 new full members were received by ordination into the diaconate, 5 became accepted candidates and 4 members had permission to sit down.

2. Our life together as deacons and members of the Order

Convocation 2018 The Convocation met at the Hayes Swanwick and was pleased to welcome and receive the ministry of both the President and Vice-President of the Conference. The President led the welcome service for Deacon Ruth Richey appointed to serve by the Methodist Council as the new Deputy Warden.

Following on from the Order's involvement in the World Diakonia Conference of 2017, the Convocation welcomed a number of international and ecumenical deacons, including the Vice-President and Secretary of Diakonia Africa-Europe region: Deaconess Ibrionke Oworu and Deacon Gordon Pennykidd; and we renewed our friendship with the Methodist Church of Southern Africa Order of Deacons, the United Methodist Church as well as with our ecumenical partners. Together, we listened, consulted and learned as we sought to hear what God's Spirit was saying and to focus on what matters.

Area Groups During this connexional year we have sought to continue to deepen our Area Group life to reflect and discern on what God is saying and what truly matters. We began this process as a way to prepare ourselves to be open and ready for where God is leading the Church in its discerning around the diaconate and the Order. We identified the anchor-points that will be necessary to keep us faithful and steady: *Prayer* – a call to remain attentive through the life of prayer; *Compassion* – a call to root ourselves in God's goodness, compassion and love; *Courage and Confidence* – a call to move beyond fear and make a difference; *Transformation* – a call to keep trusting in the creativity of our God who makes all things new. We trust God will use our work of prayer, listening and engaging with each other as a means to deepen our life in Christ, with one another and as we seek to serve within God's Church as it joins in God's activity in the world.

3. Our life and ministry within God's Church

The Faith and Order Report: The Theology and Ecclesiology underpinning the Diaconate

The Faith and Order Committee and its secretary the Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt have continued to engage with members of the Order through consultation with its Area Groups. Members eagerly await the final report at this year's Conference. We know it will bring invitations and opportunities to us and to the whole Church, as well as potential change and

challenge that we may not at first find easy and we may fear. Yet we are actively praying as members of the Order that we, together with the whole Church, will continue to be prepared to be those who fulfil God's calling as disciples of Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

Stationing In 2018/2019 the stationing matching process held a very different challenge for the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee that advises the Warden in the stationing of deacons to appointments. This year there were more circuit diaconal profiles than deacons available for stationing. It was extremely affirming and encouraging to visit Circuits, to read their profiles and to observe the clarity and understanding of ordained diaconal ministry to which they witnessed. Yet it made the task of discernment a demanding one and unfortunately some appointments have remained unfilled. At the time of writing, 16 ordained deacons and two probationer deacons have been matched.

Our Calling and Carry on Serving At Convocation 2019 we plan to launch some new material. The first is a new short film about how deacons enable and contribute to the Church in its living out of *Our Calling*; the second is a magazine telling the story of deacons' ministry: *Keep Calm and Carry on Serving*. In addition at the beginning of 2019 a new website was launched as part of the main Methodist Church website. The Order is grateful to many members of the Connexional Team who have supported and helped to make these and other activities of the Order happen.

4. Our relationship with other diaconal orders and deacons

Diakonia Africa-Europe region (DRAE) In June 2019 DRAE will celebrate 25 years since its formation. The Order has been an active member since those early days, with Deacon Betty Vaughan being one of the signatures on the inauguration document and Deacon Jackie Fowler serving a three year term as its President. The Order is able to send several members to be present at this DRAE conference taking place in Scotland.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa Order of Deacons: In April, the Warden and Deputy Warden were able to take up an invitation to visit and participate in the Convocation of the Order of Deacons in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

42/1. The Conference received the Report.

42/2. The Conference resolved that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order shall meet at Yarfield Park, Staffordshire from Monday 4 May until Thursday 7 May 2020.