

## 24. Stationing Committee report

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 As you read this report, there are many who will be disappointed that their Circuits still carry vacancies for ministers. The challenges facing the Stationing Committee this year have been many and varied and it is the Committee's belief that it has acted in the best interests of the Connexion in its deliberations and decisions. The Committee continues to wrestle with the issue of ordained ministers and those entering probationer appointments identifying very limited geographical availability. While many have exceptional reasons for doing so, we would remind all candidates that, unless specifically identified during the candidating process, the expectation is that ministers will be available for stationing across the British Connexion.
- 1.2 There has also been an increase in the number of ministers applying for permission to live in their own homes. Again, the committee would point out that permission will only be granted under exceptional circumstances since it is a requirement that ministers will reside in a manse.
- 1.3 However, this also places on Circuits a responsibility to ensure that the manse accompanying any appointment is fit for purpose, meets fully the approved requirements and is well maintained.

### 2. Stationing matching

- 2.1 The first priority of the Stationing Matching Group is to match Circuits and presbyters in such a way that the Methodist Church is enabled and equipped to fulfil its calling to share in God's mission.
- 2.2 As in previous years, the Stationing Matching Group met on three occasions. In the first matching round there were 152 appointments to be matched and 111 presbyters available for stationing. In total, 105 matches were made and of these 85 led to invitations being offered and accepted. In the second round of matching, 25 matches were made and of these 19 led to invitations being offered and accepted. In the third and final round of matching, nine matches were made of which seven led to invitations being offered and accepted. Following the third Stationing Matching Group meeting in January the task of matching available presbyters was passed to the Stationing Action Group which undertakes its task by monthly telephone conferences. This year presented an unusually large number of superintendencies to be filled and has resulted in a review of the priority that should be given to filling these appointments.

### 3. Initial stationing

- 3.1 The Initial Stationing Sub-Committee (ISSC) met on 5-6 January 2015. The task of the ISSC is to match prospective presbyteral probationers and prospective Recognised & Regarded (R&R) presbyters entering their first appointments in the British Connexion to appointments where the probationer or presbyter will flourish and be enabled to contribute to the mission of the

Circuit. A total of 34 prospective presbyteral probationers and 4 prospective R&R presbyters were matched. Four appointments were left unfilled.

- 3.2 Once again, both in the matching of ordained presbyters and those in initial stationing, the Stationing Matching Group and ISSC have been faced with the challenge of an increasing number of profiles which offer only limited geographical availability. The matching process is constantly under review by the Stationing Committee and each year adjustments and changes are made to the ways of working.

#### **4. Stationing Action Group**

- 4.1 The Stationing Action Group commenced its work on 2 February 2015 and will continue through to the Conference. At the beginning of the process there were 36 available appointments (including 14 superintendencies) and 8 presbyters available for stationing.
- 4.2 At the first Stationing Action Group in February, 37 appointments were unfilled. At the end of March, 23 Circuits sought permission to withdraw their appointments and with the agreement of the Convener of the Stationing Action Group, the Chair of the Stationing Matching Group and the Chair of the Stationing Committee, approval was given so that alternative arrangements could be made.
- 4.3 The Stationing Action Group also assists the Warden of the Diaconal Order in matching remaining deacons to circuits. One such match was made at the March meeting of the Stationing Action Group.

#### **5. Diaconal stationing**

- 5.1 There were 20 deacons available for stationing for September 2015. This included five deacons (one of whom was a prospective probationer) married to presbyters. Two of those presbyters were not available for stationing. Of the deacons to be stationed, two were married to each other and six were prospective probationers.
- 5.2 The process commenced with ten appointments, none of which were designated by the circuit as probationer appointments. A further five appointments were opened during the process, making a total of fifteen appointments. One deacon sought and was granted permission to serve in an appointment outside of the control of the Church.
- 5.3 During the period from the beginning of February to the end of March, the Stationing Action Group had already proposed various matches and this work continued until the end of May when two further Circuits were given permission to withdraw their appointments. In this period, a number of presbyters and deacons also became available for stationing and some circuit appointments were added to the list and these were duly considered. From the beginning of June, the appointments where either a minister was not available, a match had not been agreed or where the minister had severe geographical restrictions which could not be met were placed in the hands of the Unstationed Ministers' Group convened by the Secretary of the Conference. I am now able to report that since that meeting and at the time of writing (23 June 2015) two appointments (one presbyteral and one diaconal) remain without a minister and three ministers (one who has been recommended for Recognised and Regarded status) are at present without an appointment. It is hoped that further work on this and related matters will continue during the Conference.

5.4 The Stationing Committee would like to encourage Circuits to think about diaconal ministry and the possibility of creating diaconal appointments as they consider their strategic staffing needs.

## 6. Changes to the process of initial and diaconal stationing

6.1 The Stationing Committee continues to work towards greater harmonisation between presbyteral and diaconal stationing processes and will continue to refine its current processes, recognising the constraints that exist.

## 7. Code of Practice

7.1 Feedback for consideration by the Stationing Committee from those recently involved in the stationing and reinvitation process is important and valued as it enables the committee to give up-to-date and relevant guidance through the Code of Practice. Below are the most significant introductions or changes to the Code for those involved in stationing in 2016.

7.2 Guidance has been introduced as to how to proceed if an existing presbyteral appointment is being changed or an existing diaconal appointment is being changed or closed.

7.3 It is recognised that the distinctive gifts and skills of ministers need to be fully explored by Circuits so that these gifts and skills can be used to the benefit of each minister and the enrichment of the Circuit's mission. Included in the revised Code is additional guidance as to how a Circuit and a presbyter should address such exploration during the visit of a matched presbyter and how, if the presbyter accepts an invitation to the circuit appointment, this affects the subsequent agreement in the Letter of Understanding.

## 8. Projections

### Number of active Methodist presbyters in Full Connexion

	Actual	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Connexional Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Start of Year	1685	1675	1636	1585	1547	1511
Normal Retirements	64	77	73	63	54	54
Early Retirements	9	5	8	8	8	8
Resignations	12	7	7	7	7	7
Other Losses	0	2	2	2	2	2
TOTAL LOSSES	85	91	90	80	71	71
New Probationers	51	43	34	37	30	30
Other Gains	7	9	5	5	5	5
TOTAL GAINS	58	52	39	42	35	35
END OF YEAR	1658	1636	1585	1547	1511	1475

## Number of active Methodist deacons in Full Connexion

Connexional Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Start of Year	132	137	137	137	139
Retirements	6	5	5	5	5
Resignations	1	0	0	0	0
Other Losses	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL LOSSES	8	6	6	6	6
New Probationers	13	6	6	8	8
Other Gains	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GAINS	13	6	6	8	8
END OF YEAR	137	137	137	139	141

Standard estimate	
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### 9. Conclusion

- 9.1 Finally, the challenges facing the Committee do not seem to be diminishing in the short term. The Committee wishes to affirm the commitment of all those involved and, in particular, to express its thanks to Kate Woolley who has, for several years, been the chief editor of the Code of Practice and who is now stepping down from that role and from the Committee.
- 9.2 The Revd David Emison is also stepping down this year as Chair of the Stationing Matching Group. He has served in this role for six years and his calmness and wisdom have been greatly appreciated by all involved, as have the many telephone conversations held to address specific issues.
- 9.3 The Committee extends its best wishes to both Kate Woolley and the Revd David Emison as they continue to serve the Church in other contexts.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

**24/1. The Conference adopted the Report.**