

CODE OF PRACTICE

*For all involved in the
Invitation and Stationing
Process of Deacons and
Presbyters
2024*

NOTES FOR USERS

This Code of Practice is provided for:

- District Chairs, District Lay Stationing Representatives and the Warden of the Diaconal Order.
- Presbyters and deacons who are in or entering circuit appointments and whose period of invitation regarding those appointments is currently due to end in 2024.
- Circuit Stewards and Superintendents of Circuits where presbyters or deacons are due to have extensions of their invitations considered or are sitting down or are leaving at the end of their current invitation in 2024.
- Circuit Stewards and Superintendents of Circuits who are considering opening up a new presbyteral, diaconal or probationary appointment in 2024.

Throughout this document the use of the term ‘minister’ is intended to mean both presbyters and deacons although, for ease of reference, the information for the stationing of presbyters and the information for the stationing of deacons are in separate parts – Part 1 being for presbyters and Part 2 for deacons.

In writing this Code of Practice, we recognise that gender is not binary and we do not wish to offend. However, there are areas in CPD where the terms ‘he’ and ‘she’ are still used and it is essential that we quote CPD accurately. The language in CPD needs to be changed systematically and this takes time, thus we are **still** using ‘he’ or ‘she’ when quoting CPD but recognising that this should read ‘they’.

This Code of Practice is to be followed by all those involved in the invitation and stationing process. It should be read in conjunction with the Conference requirements set out in *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD)*, Sections 54, 77 and 78 and in the “Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers” and “Guidelines on Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses” (CPD Volume 2, 2022, pages 801 to 804 , see also SO 803)), with which everyone concerned should become familiar. Volume 2 of CPD is freely available at: [conf-2022-cpd-vol-2.pdf \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/conf-2022-cpd-vol-2.pdf).

The Conference has the ultimate authority over appointments on an annual basis. [SO 549]

If you have any queries about the content, require clarification of any points or just need someone to talk to about the process, then your District Chair and your District Lay Stationing Representative are available throughout the process. They will be working together to support you through it. Presbyters and deacons may also want to share their thinking with colleagues and their support group. The Warden of the Diaconal Order is available throughout the process to deacons and Circuit Stewards considering diaconal appointments.

Contact details:

District Chair

District Lay Stationing Representative

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Warden of the Diaconal Order

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SECTION A

INTRODUCTION TO THE INVITATION AND STATIONING PROCESS

- A1.** The process by which invitations are offered and accepted, and the stations are made, is one through which the parties concerned and, ultimately, the Conference are attempting to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the presbyters and deacons and to the Circuits about how the Church's resources, in terms of its ordained ministers, are best used. The present process of stationing, dealing with both extensions of invitations and new invitations, has been in place for several years and research carried out for the Stationing Committee shows it has the approval of the great majority of those who have been involved. The stationing process does not conclude until the stations are adopted by the Conference, and Circuits and ministers are expected to adhere to the good practice outlined in this document throughout.
- A2.** This Code of Practice is produced to ensure consistency of approach across the Connexion and is to be followed.

The Stationing Committee upholds the principle that the process must be free of all wrongful forms of discrimination, this includes discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation (these are protected characteristics). Where there is any suggestion that the procedures in reviewing an appointment or in recommending a particular minister have been subject to wrongful discrimination then the matter shall be referred to the Stationing Committee, or to the Stationing Matching Group (if it is in session), or to the Initial Stationing Sub-committee as appropriate. The relevant committee will judge whether the position can be rectified or whether the appointment should remain unfilled. An appeal against this judgement may be made to the Stationing Committee.

- A3.** As well as being part of a connexional process we should also remember that stationing involves presbyters and deacons, their spouses/partners and families, Circuit Stewards and, in the case of a deacon, the Methodist Diaconal Order working together in partnership. This partnership requires trust in each other but also in the system as it is operated by the Church through District Chairs, District Lay Stationing Representatives and, in the case of a deacon, the Warden of the Diaconal Order.
- A4.** The need for adequate information to be shared must be balanced by confidentiality. Such confidentiality is particularly necessary in very sensitive situations, for example when an invitation is declined either by a Circuit or a minister or in discussions within Circuit Invitation Committees. It is inappropriate for there to be discussion in a public arena (such as electronic communications in a newsletter, blog or other form of social media) of the reactions of ministers or their families and friends or Circuits to the communication of a particular match or to its success or failure. Ministers' profiles should always be treated with great care and sensitivity by Circuit Stewards, Church Stewards and members of Invitation Committees (please see paragraphs **I5** and **N5**).

Connexional guidelines on the use of social media are available at [Social media guidelines \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/social-media-guidelines).

- A5.** Do not assume you know the process because you have been involved with stationing before. Changes occur regularly and dates by which actions have to be taken change from year to year.
- A6.** Where the station being considered involves a formal ecumenical partnership or an ecumenical area SO 547 applies, and the District Chair and the appropriate Ecumenical Officer should also be consulted.
- A7.** For ministers to be stationed in a Methodist/URC LEP, a very helpful document prepared by the Methodist/URC Liaison Committee titled, *Orientation for Incoming Ministers to Methodist and United Reformed LEPs*, is available from District Chairs and at [methurc_orientation_process_0108.doc \(live.com\)](#)
- A8.** Guidelines about the stationing or re-invitation of ministers who are Recognised and Regarded (R&R) as ministers of the Methodist Church admitted into Full Connexion and who are currently serving in an appointment in the Methodist Church in Britain are available from District Chairs and at [rr-ministers-and-future-appointments-in-mcb-march-2021.pdf \(methodist.org.uk\)](#)
- A9.** Where a diaconal appointment is involved, the Warden of the Diaconal Order **must** be consulted.
- A10.** Where ministerial couples enter the stationing process in the same year every effort will be taken to find suitable appointments for them both but the Church cannot guarantee this. Where the couple are both presbyters there should be a conversation with the District Chair to discuss the prioritisation of their appointments in the context of the needs of the Church. Where a presbyter and deacon are married to each other or in civil partnerships or a committed relationship a similar discussion will also establish which stationing route is to be followed first i.e. that of diaconal or of presbyteral stationing. **It is essential that the Warden of the Diaconal Order is also consulted at this stage.** Where one partner is either a probationer deacon or a probationer presbyter it should be assumed that the stationing of the probationer will take priority and that the ordained partner will be matched with an appointment if one is available at the earliest opportunity (which could not be earlier than SMG2). The outcome of these conversations should be recorded in writing noting that the Church cannot guarantee to find suitable appointments for both partners or to fund an additional year of training (see SO 775). The names of any presbyters and deacons in the process who are married or in civil partnerships or a committed relationship to another presbyter and/or deacon will be forwarded to the Chair of SMG, and declared to SMG1 at the start of its business.
- A11.** The normal expectation is that all ministers will reside in the manse provided by the Circuit. Where, in exceptional circumstances, a presbyter or deacon is requesting permission to reside in their own home, in accordance with SO 803(10), they shall make application to the Ministries Committee Manses Group (mcmg@methodistchurch.org.uk) prior to a profile being submitted in order that the appropriate application can be considered and resolved **prior** to the commencement

of SMG1. No profile will be matched at SMG without permission if such an application is still to be considered. **(N.B. If an extension is being sought, then a new application needs to be approved prior to any extension being agreed.)**

A12. Where a member of the Stationing Matching Group is returning to Circuit ministry, they will be matched with an appropriate appointment prior to the first meeting of the group. This will enable them to participate without conflict of interests and, in the case of a District Chair, to be present throughout to represent the Circuits and presbyters in their District. There is an agreed protocol to ensure fairness and transparency.

SECTION B

TIMETABLE FOR INVITATIONS AND STATIONING FOR 2023

2023	
March	Circuit Invitation Committee appointed.
April/May	Preparation meeting for all presbyters, deacons, spouses/partners, Superintendents, Circuit Stewards and Church Stewards involved in stationing 2024. The process must not begin before this meeting or a conversation with the Chair and the Lay Stationing Representative still involved or the Warden of the Diaconal Order .
June to September	Different stages of the process progress as detailed in this Code of Practice.
7 September	Application forms for presbyteral probationer appointments, and for Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences (MOCC) to be with the District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative.
11 September	Closing date for submission of application forms for presbyteral probationer appointments to the Conference Office by the District Chairs.
By 20 September	Circuit Meeting at which extensions and/or new appointments are decided.
21 September	Circuit profiles for appointments for ordained presbyters and completed profiles of ordained presbyters and ordained deacons to be with the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative who will forward diaconal profiles to the Warden of the Diaconal Order.
28 September	Closing date for submission of all profiles to Stationing Administration. The District Chair will submit the Circuit profiles for presbyteral appointments and the profiles of ordained presbyters; the Warden of the Diaconal Order will submit the Circuit profiles for deacons and the profiles of ordained deacons.
By 29 September	Regional Stationing groups to have met and forwarded clearly labelled information of Critical appointments to the Scrutiny Panel at stationingadministration@methodistchurch.org.uk
October	Preparation for Circuit Stewards, other members of the Circuit Invitation Committee and Church Stewards who will be involved when a presbyter or a deacon visits the Circuit.
5 October	Meeting of the Critical Scrutiny panel.
11 October	Meeting of the Critical Scrutiny Appeals Panel. All appeals to have been sent to scrutinygroup@methodistchurch.org.uk
After 14 October	Circulation of Circuit profiles and profiles of ordained presbyters and deacons.
6-9 November	Stationing Matching Group 1 – followed by visits.
27 November – 2 December	Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee 1 consults deacons in stationing.
4-5 December	Stationing Matching Group 2 – followed by visits.
2024	
4 – 5 January	Initial Stationing Sub-Committee meets to consider appointments for presbyteral probationers.
5 – 8 January	Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee 2 meets.

10 January	Stationing Matching Group 3 – followed by visits.
February	Stationing Action Group takes responsibility for further remaining stationing matters for presbyters and deacons.
8 February	Stationing of Ministers of Other Churches or Conferences (MOCC).
March	Appointment of Circuit Invitation Committees for next year.
By 25 March	The last date for Circuits to seek permission to withdraw appointments with a Reasoned Statement.
June	Conference adopts the stations.

SECTION C

CIRCUIT INVITATION COMMITTEE

- C1.** The Circuit Invitation Committee is a standing committee of the Circuit and must be appointed annually. [SO 541(1)] This is because it may be necessary to call a meeting of the Circuit Invitation Committee at short notice, and it is not permissible to resort to co-opting arrangements at that point, as any such co-options could skew the Circuit Meeting's desire that the Invitation Committee be properly representative of the Circuit.
- C2.** At its October 2019 meeting, the Methodist Council directed that all members of the Circuit Invitation Committees should be alerted to issues of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), and to the content of the EDI Toolkit. The Council further directed that it expected every member, new or current, of the Circuit Invitation Committees to have completed the training in Unconscious Bias. It also recommended that every member should refresh their training every four years. Information can be found at [Courses | MCBX \(theologyx.com\)](#) and <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/9012/edi-toolkit-1-4.pdf>. See also: [Mandatory EDI Training \(Equality, Diversity and Inclusion\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](#) to see how this applies to your role.

The Methodist Church believes that as discrimination in any form is contrary to the Gospel, the Church will act to resist and challenge any form of discrimination. Where a concern or suggestion is raised that an appointment might have become the subject of any form of discrimination, the matter will be referred to the Stationing Committee, or to the Stationing Matching Group (if it is in session), or to the Initial Stationing Sub-Committees as deemed appropriate by the District Chair. After hearing the evidence and satisfying itself as to the details, the relevant committee will make a decision about whether the appointment can reasonably be included in the stationing matching process. If it is found that any form of discrimination has influenced views or opinions of any person involved in the process, the decision for exclusion (if necessary) in matching, will be taken by the Stationing Committee.

On an occasion where the Church identifies instances of discrimination, it will robustly address the issue and make any changes necessary to reduce or eradicate any further instances, whilst also ensuring compliance with the Equalities Act (2010). Furthermore, where necessary the Church will enhance systems and processes to reduce the likelihood of further incidents. The Methodist Church actively encourages all presbyters, deacons and lay members to challenge any instance of inappropriate behaviour or discrimination. [*Principles and Protocols for Stationing Matching of Presbyters 2023*].

As identified in **A2**, discrimination includes any of the protected characteristics, defined by law – age, race, sex, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, disability, maternity and pregnancy.

- C3.** The responsibilities of the Circuit Invitation Committee are;
- To prepare a recommendation to the Circuit Meeting regarding any re-invitation of a presbyter or deacon.

- To issue an invitation to a presbyter if the Circuit Meeting has given the committee delegated powers to do so (see **C7**).
- To consider any application for curtailment of an appointment.

Circuit Invitation Committees are not required to issue invitations to deacons, probationer deacons and probationer presbyters being stationed into the Circuit because those stationed to these appointments are directly stationed (i.e. there is no issuing and accepting of invitations in the processes that lead to deacons, probationer deacons and probationer presbyters being stationed by the Conference in a particular appointment).

- C4.** In order to carry out the above responsibilities, the Circuit Invitation Committee needs to have the confidence of the Circuit Meeting, to be a manageable size and to be balanced fairly. The membership should have adequate representation of the whole Circuit, not simply those churches likely to be affected by staff changes. The core membership is the Circuit Stewards and others who are ex-officio members of “all official meetings (however described) connected with the Circuit” as described in SO 552. (This includes ministers appointed to the Circuit.) Additional members are drawn from the Circuit, elsewhere in the Connexion, another Methodist Church, or, where appropriate, ecumenical partners. [SO 541(3)] In those Circuits where the ex-officio membership is extremely large, care should be taken to ensure that meetings of the Invitation Committee are of a manageable size, and not all ex-officio members may wish to exercise their right to attend.
- C5.** Recognising the importance of the conversations at Circuit Invitation Committee meetings, the Chair of the Circuit Invitation Committee or the Circuit Stewards should have a conversation with the District Chair about whether there are reasons why it would be helpful for someone with knowledge of the stationing process, and from outside the Circuit, to be present at the committee. The person will not vote at the meeting.
- C6.** When a minister’s appointment is under review it is deemed inappropriate for them to be present when the Circuit Invitation Committee is considering their appointment and re-invitation (except as indicated in **E9** and **J9**). There is a reasonable view that the presence of the current minister could limit a full and open conversation about future plans, although they may be present if there is a specific need for them to advise the panel. Where the appointment of a Superintendent is being reviewed, SO 502 explains who should chair the Circuit Invitation Committee in the Superintendent’s absence.
- C7.** The Circuit Meeting must decide whether to give the Circuit Invitation Committee delegated powers to accept a match where an initial invitation of a presbyter is concerned. Delegated powers are highly desirable in the case of an invitation in order to avoid a delay caused by the need to call a Circuit Meeting before an invitation can be issued. Delegated powers cannot be given to the Circuit Invitation Committee where a re-invitation is being considered. [SO 541(5)]

SECTION D

PREPARATION and TRAINING MEETINGS

(MAY 2023-)

(See also separate training for Visits: Sections I and N)

- D1. A preparation/training meeting to outline the stationing process is arranged during May. This marks the beginning of the process of considering what actions need to be taken when an initial invitation or deemed invitation or, in the case of a deacon, initial appointment, or a subsequent extension is coming to an end in August 2024.

Although a minister may choose to inform Circuit Stewards, prior to this meeting, that they wish an extension to be considered or that they wish to move to another appointment, **no minister should be asked to make such a decision or be held to things they had previously indicated until after there has been time for reflection following the preparation/training meeting.**

- D2. This opportunity for training is arranged by the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. Presbyters, deacons, spouses/partners, Superintendents and Circuit Stewards involved in reviews or moves are invited and encouraged to attend. Church Stewards involved in the process should also attend.
- D3. If they have not already done so, now is a good time for presbyters and deacons to reflect on the direction of their ministry and the reasons why they may or may not wish to continue in their present station. Deacons should also seek a conversation with the Warden of the Order. Suggested areas for personal reflection are included below.
- D4. Circuit Stewards should reflect on the Circuit's Mission Plan, policy and what forms of ministry will be needed in the future. Some reflective questions are included below. Any resulting changes to Circuit Policy should be approved by the Circuit Meeting before the re-invitation/stationing process begins. **Should such reflections lead to a desire for the closure of a diaconal appointment, the Warden of the Order must be informed.**
- D5. Subsequent to these meetings and having allowed time for reflection, Circuit Stewards should approach the presbyter or deacon concerned, on an informal basis, to discern their mind on considering an extension or moving on.
- D6. Reflections before and during the whole stationing process **(N.B. The following is not a checklist that is required to be followed, but suggestions and guidance born out of experience.)**

a) Circuit Stewards

1. The Circuit Mission Plan and Policy is the essential basis for your thinking and prayers. Existing policy should include an overview of the different ministries required i.e. presbyters, deacons and lay employees. Consideration should be given, in consultation with the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative, as to whether an appointment should be filled immediately if a minister decides to

move on (**N.B. however, that where a Circuit is considering reducing the number of ordained staff, no minister should be denied the opportunity to seek an extension.**) The decision to reduce staff should be made without reference to the effect on particular ministers in the Circuit. Any decisions on reduction of ministerial staffing and the re-invitation process should be kept separate.

2. You might then want to consider the following before and at your meetings with the presbyter or deacon:
 - What skills, gifts and experience does the Circuit most appreciate?
 - What ongoing tasks have been identified?
 - Have we, with this presbyter or deacon, become a confident Circuit that works well as a team?
 - Are we too dependent upon this presbyter or deacon? (If so what can be done to reduce this dependency?)
 - How would change affect ecumenical work or other work done in the wider community?
 - What are the personal circumstances of the presbyter or deacon that need to be considered e.g. spouse's/partner's employment, children's education, health needs, ease of access to family and support network?
 - If an extension were to be offered, what is the appropriate length (up to five years)?
3. You might also consider how change might affect the other staff:
 - Is change likely to have an effect on staff dynamics?
 - What effect would it have on the superintendency?
 - Are future opportunities best suited to presbyteral, diaconal or lay ministry?
 - Would it afford an opportunity to someone entering into a first appointment in our Connexion, e.g. a probationer presbyter or a presbyter of another Church or Conference?
 - Is there a need for change to bring fresh impetus and thinking to bear?
 - Would a change alter the theological balance in the ministerial team?
 - What would we do if a presbyter or deacon was not appointed?

b) Presbyters and deacons

1. Time should be taken to reflect and pray about the direction of your ministry. You may have been considering a call to a new area/scope for your ministry in which case it is important that you seek guidance and support in making sense of your call. The Stationing Advisory Committee exists throughout the year to meet with ministers who wish to explore opportunities for ministry in various areas of society and community life outside the Circuit system, and to give advice and recommend permission if appropriate and necessary. Any minister considering a move into full time chaplaincy, or an appointment not within the control of the church, or wishing to return to Circuit work must contact the convener of the Stationing Advisory Committee panels. Deacons must consult with the Warden of the Diaconal Order on the direction of their vocation.

Presbyters and deacons considering a move “for the first time” are strongly encouraged to attend **First Move in Ministry** – a two-part event designed to help

Ministers in their first appointment consider their next steps in Ministry. The first part, in particular, helps ministers, through reflection and conversation, to consider whether to move station or ask for an extension. The second part assists in considering the outcome of that choice and the associated processes. From 2020, this opportunity is fully funded as part of the Church's vocations strategy and as part of your Continuing Development in Ministry.

2. Taking into account Circuit Policy and your aspirations:
 - What skills, gifts and abilities do you feel you have that make your contribution valuable?
 - Have you been able to utilise your gifts in the way you would have wished?
 - Do you want to stay because of developing work, which you wish to see completed?
 - Have you completed everything that you could have realistically hoped to achieve?
 - Is your vision for the churches or community becoming a reality; are there areas of work still needing developing?
 - Are there new initiatives that excite you and in which you feel you have the gifts to participate?
3. The life of the whole Circuit and your contribution within the ministerial team needs careful consideration:
 - Would you wish an extension to be considered because it seems right for the Circuit?
 - By staying, are you providing continuity?
 - Do you feel that staying in the Circuit would continue to stretch you in new and exciting ways or are there signs of dryness?
 - How do your skills, gifts and abilities complement the current team?
 - Has the appointment become comfortable and you fear the unknown?
 - Are you prepared to be surprised by God?
4. Personal and support needs should be considered – children's education, spouse's/partner's employment, special health needs, ease of access to family, the needs of vulnerable family members, established friendships and support networks.
5. Deacons should also take into account, when considering a decision, their Rule of Life which includes a commitment to itinerancy and direct stationing.
6. Where appropriate, the Connexional Safeguarding team will provide the Assistant Secretary of Conference with any relevant information in advance of specific discussion on individuals in the Stationing Matching process. Where necessary, such detail will be passed to the relevant Chair of District.
- D7.** There is an annual MDO stationing discernment retreat in the spring for deacons to begin to explore and discern with God and others the next step in their vocational journey. All ordained deacons in their penultimate year of an appointment are invited. This is a fully funded event.
- D8.** Presbyters at the end of their first (or subsequent) appointment will need to consider

whether they are called to ministry as a Superintendent. This should form part of a conversation with the District Chair in the light of the competencies for Superintendents (agreed by the Ministries Committee)

https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/8437/competencies-6_superintendents.pdf

PART 1 The Process for Presbyteral Appointments

SECTION E

WHERE AN EXTENSION IS BEING CONSIDERED

In Section E, the wording in quotation marks is taken from SO 545, which should be consulted in advance of the start of the extension process. It should be noted by all involved, that ministry in the Methodist Church is **Itinerant** (see [Itinerancy \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)), this allows gifts and graces to be shared equitably across the connexion for the benefit of all and our mission. It is suggested that long periods without change have a negative impact on both Circuits and ministers and that periods of appointment in excess of 10 years should be the exception rather than the norm and should be very closely examined by both parties. Similarly, the circuit should give consideration to continuity and the impact of too many changes in any particular connexional year.

It is important to note that when a re-invitation is being sought by a Minister of another Church or Conference (MOCC), that re-invitation is subject to the presbyter having secured an extension to their 'Recognised and Regarded' status, or been recommended to be received into Full Connexion, through the process specified in the Handbook for Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences 2023/2024: [Induction Handbook \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk). See [Ministers of other Churches \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk) for more information.

- E1.** In the case of Circuits that are reconfiguring or amalgamating the relevant Circuit Invitation Committees (see **Section C**), they must seek the advice of the District Chair as to how to proceed. Guidance is to be found in the Stationing Committee paper 'Advice for Circuits which are Reconfiguring' at [Stationing forms and guidelines \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)
- E2.** The Circuit Meeting where an extension will be decided must take place on or before 20 September. [SO 545(3A)] Where the extension being considered is that of the Superintendent, then "...the Chair of the District shall be invited to be present or represented. The Chair of the District or his or her representative shall have the right to take the chair." [SO 545(4)(a)]
- E3.** Where, before the end of June, a presbyter has indicated a wish for an extension to be considered as part of the process of discernment, it is very important that Circuit Stewards offer to meet them and members of their household to discuss any personal or family issues that they feel would be relevant in any decision regarding an extension. The Circuit Stewards should, in considering applications for extensions, consider the process as part of the Circuit strategy for mission in relation to overall staffing needs in the short and medium terms.
- E4.** The Circuit Stewards are obliged to ensure that appropriate consultation takes place in local churches. The time limit for the consultation period shall be agreed between the Circuit Stewards and the individual presbyter (not more than three weeks). It is important that the presbyter is made aware of how the consultation is being planned

and who is responsible in each of the churches for gathering feedback. Care should be taken to avoid holding the consultation during a period of sabbatical leave of the presbyter concerned.

- E5.** It is the responsibility of the Circuit Stewards to ensure that the consultation that takes place in the churches for which the presbyter has pastoral charge is in accordance with the code of practice contained in this document. The consultation process may be delegated to the Church Stewards for each church in question. If the consultation exercise involves two or more ministers in the same church, separate Circuit or Church Stewards should undertake the consultation for each minister.

Where Circuit Stewards delegate the consultation to Church Stewards, all Church Stewards should be briefed on the process to be undertaken, the type of questions to be asked and the form of, and timescale, for the feedback required. Those Church Stewards involved in the process should attend the District Stationing Preparation Meeting as described in this section (see **E19**).

The full explanation of how the consultation should be carried out begins at **E18**.

- E6.** If the appointment in question is that of the Superintendent then all churches in the Circuit, not just those in the pastoral charge of the Superintendent, should be consulted. Circuit Stewards should consult with Church Stewards at each church in the Circuit but full consultations are only required for those churches in the Superintendent's particular care. It is recommended that the District Chair, Lay Stationing Representative or substitute be invited to the Circuit Invitation Committee when considering a Superintendency.
- E7.** Circuit stewards must also initiate other consultations if the ministry in question extends beyond the local church (e.g. chaplaincies, schools, local community agencies, etc.), District and connexion in the case of a Superintendent. They must also consult as is required by local ecumenical agreements. The views obtained in all these consultations must be made clear to the Circuit Meeting in a Reasoned Statement.
- E8.** The Circuit Stewards together should prepare a written report on the consultations. This report should focus on the actions, gifts and graces of the presbyter and should avoid personal criticism or judgement, but may offer concerns. As soon as possible after completion of the consultations, the report should be shared with the presbyter by the Circuit Stewards, along with the appropriate debriefing on the consultations (see **Appendix 5**). The Circuit Stewards should ascertain from the presbyter whether an extension is to be sought when the presbyter has had time to reflect on the feedback provided. Both parties should agree any notes taken at this meeting.
- E9.** If an extension is sought, the Circuit Invitation Committee should meet to receive from the Circuit Stewards the report on the consultations. The presbyter should attend the meeting at which the Circuit Invitation Committee receives the report from the Circuit Stewards, in order to respond to points made in the report. The presbyter and any family members or others directly affected by the decision should leave the meeting before the discussion prior to a recommendation being reached. The committee should prepare a statement for the Circuit Meeting giving its recommendation and the

reasons for it. The Reasoned Statement should also describe the consultation process undertaken. Whatever the decision, it should be conveyed to the presbyter well in advance of the Circuit Meeting and the presbyter should receive the statement. At least three weeks before the Circuit Meeting, a copy of the statement shall be sent to the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative who may suggest modifications to comply with good practice and with Standing Orders.

The Reasoned Statement shall be circulated in confidence to the members of the Circuit Meeting two weeks before the meeting. [SO 545(3D)] Sample Reasoned Statements and sample notices to accompany the circulation of Reasoned Statements are included in **Appendix 2**.

- E10.** “If an extension is not recommended by the circuit Invitation Committee, the presbyter may prepare a statement giving reasons why an extension should be granted, and of what length and if an extension is recommended but the presbyter wishes to advance reasons why it should be of a different length he or she may prepare a statement to that effect. Any such statement shall be circulated in confidence to members of the Circuit Meeting no later than a week in advance of the meeting. The Circuit Meeting shall receive both the statement of the presbyter and that of the Circuit Invitation Committee, together with any response from the committee to the presbyter’s statement (in writing or made orally), and then consider the matter and proceed to vote.” [SO 545(3E)]
- E11.** “If an extension is recommended by the circuit Invitation Committee, there shall be circulated with the recommendation a notice in writing giving the name of the person who will be chairing the relevant Circuit Meeting and requiring members of the Circuit Meeting to inform the chair of the meeting in written form no later than one week before the time fixed for the commencement of the meeting if they intend to oppose the recommendation or move an amendment, with the substance of their grounds for doing so. If no such intention has been notified by the time allowed then no vote shall be taken on the recommendation and the extension recommended by the committee shall be taken as offered by the meeting.” [SO 545(3F)] **(N.B. Any written form should contain the signatures of the member or members who oppose the recommendation.)**

If the chair of the meeting is uncertain about the tone of the letter of objection (Is it too personal or defamatory?) they should forward the letter to the District Chair and District Lay Representative to decide. A sample notice is included in **Appendix 2**. The Chair should inform the presbyter in advance of the Circuit Meeting if someone intends to oppose their recommendation or move an amendment and their reasons for doing so. The presbyter may respond in writing if they so wish. The Circuit Invitation Committee should also be informed if their recommendation is to be opposed and the reasons for doing so.

- E12.** “If such an intention has been notified by one or more members by the time allowed, the written grounds for opposing or proposing an amendment to the recommendation shall be circulated no later than 24 hours before the meeting and the meeting shall hear the member or members concerned, a response by and on behalf of the Circuit Invitation Committee and any response by the presbyter and shall then consider the matter and proceed to vote.” [SO 545(3G)] The presbyter and any family should

withdraw from the meeting immediately prior to the vote.

E13. At both the Circuit Invitation Committee and the Circuit Meeting, any discussion should be full and open. The recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee, the desires of the presbyter and their household, relevant Circuit Policy and strategic planning, the views of the local churches concerned and other relevant consultations must all be considered in coming to a decision. Members of the presbyter's family who are also members of the Circuit Meeting should declare an interest at the beginning of this item of business as a matter of important good practice.

E14. The presbyter should have the right of reply to any points made and the right to address the meeting should they so wish. "During any discussion while the meeting considers the matter under clause (3E) or (3G) [of SO 545, as shown] above, after the presbyter has withdrawn, the chair shall not permit any new ground against extension, or in favour of altering its length to be advanced. Should that nevertheless happen, the presbyter must be informed and given the opportunity of responding." [SO 545(3GA)] Members of the presbyter's family who are also members of the Circuit Meeting should withdraw immediately prior to the vote.

The Circuit Meeting must be held in a closed session whenever considering ministerial invitations. [SO 514(3)(d)]

E15. The voting on any resolution in the Circuit Meeting...or on an amendment to any such **resolution**, shall be by ballot. A resolution for the extension of an invitation shall require for adoption a majority of 60% of those present and voting or, if for an extension which would include any period beyond a total appointment of ten years, 75%. Unless the meeting, in exercise of its power to regulate its own procedure, [see SO 517] decides otherwise, the same majority shall be required for an amendment altering the length of the proposed extension, and if varying lengths are for consideration they (including that proposed in the original resolution) shall be voted on in a descending order, the first (if any) to receive the required majority being deemed to have been adopted as a substantive resolution. The number of votes for and against and the total number of persons present and entitled to vote shall be recorded." [SO 545(3H)] Those present and voting excludes abstentions. [SO 008(vi)]

E16. The District Chair must be informed as soon as possible of the outcome of the Circuit Meeting by the Chair of that meeting.

E17. Where an extension is issued and accepted, a new Letter of Understanding should be agreed between the presbyter and the Circuit Stewards. It should give the length of the extension and should include any other matters agreed during the invitation process. The letter should be copied to and approved by the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. **The Letter of Understanding should be issued within six weeks of the decision to grant an extension.** This records the result of the invitation process but does not affect the Conference's power to station annually as it sees fit.

Consultation in local churches

- E18.** The purpose of consulting appropriate local churches is to give the Circuit Invitation Committee a clear understanding of the ministry and work being done within the church and community, how the local people view its further development and to assess how best that can be achieved. These local views will then form part of the committee's overall assessment.
- E19.** Where the Circuit Stewards wish to delegate consultation in local churches to Church Stewards, the Circuit Stewards must arrange for the Church Stewards at each church affected to be thoroughly briefed as to what feedback is expected on a possible extension and how it should be obtained. These Church Stewards should attend the Stationing Preparation Meeting arranged by the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. The Circuit Stewards should develop open questions that they or the local stewards should use to elicit the feedback they require (see **E5**).
- E20.** Circuit Stewards should provide guidance for a face-to-face or 'phone conversation (not social media or email) around matters such as the following or consult the District Chair or Lay Stationing Representative:
- What are the ministerial gifts and skills that your context requires?
 - Are the particular pastoral needs of the church community being responded to effectively?
 - Is the ministry of word and sacrament offered by the presbyter appropriate to your context?
 - Has the ministry exercised by the presbyter encouraged and developed outreach in the community?
 - In what ways might a change of ministry affect ecumenical work and work done with organisations in the community?
 - In what ways would a change of ministry affect the ongoing work in your context?
 - What skills and gifts in ministry does your context need now?
- (N.B. Such questions lead to views, not votes. No voting should take place nor should any questions be asked that could be construed as votes.)**
- E21.** Consultation must be sufficiently representative of the local church bearing in mind the mix of the people in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. It must not be skewed by factions. A typical consultation should obtain personal soundings on a one-to-one basis from the Church Stewards, chairs/secretaries of main committees and junior church and youth workers' representatives. In ecumenical situations, consultation with other denominations is vital and also community aspects of the presbyter's work must be covered. Only in very small churches (mainly in rural areas) may it be sensitive to consult with all members but, again, no vote must be taken. Recognising that pastoral charge can change during the life of an appointment, the Circuit Invitation Committee should be mindful to consult more widely in the Circuit than the present configuration of the appointment.
- E22.** Where the extension being considered is that of the Superintendent then not only

should the churches in their pastoral charge be consulted but also all the other churches in the Circuit. Relevant questions will need to be asked of the officers of the other churches, and other Circuit officers should be consulted individually.

- E23.** Where the extension being considered is that of a Pioneer minister, advice must be sought from the Connexional Evangelism and Growth Team. As in **D6**, any decisions on reduction of ministerial staffing and the re-invitation process should be kept separate. However, it is recognised that some Pioneer appointments could have been time limited at the outset due to specific funding, for example.
- E24.** The individual consultations need to be done sensitively and unobtrusively so as not to add to the stress of the presbyter and their family at a time of potential anxiety. Those consulted should be told that all answers are given in confidence and that all replies will be non-attributable. A list of the names of all people consulted and their position within the church must be kept. In the interests of natural justice, the presbyter must be made aware of the views obtained on matters appropriate to the topics considered in **E20** when feedback is given.
- E25.** Circuit Stewards should ask presbyters and their close household members whether it would be helpful for a form of pastoral support to be put in place during the consultation period. It may well be that many presbyters will already have appropriate support systems, but if this is not the case support from a close colleague (within or outside the Circuit or ecumenically) or a supernumerary minister, or an appropriate lay person might be helpful.

Such pastoral care might involve:

- Being available as the presbyter and family discern whether or not they wish to ask for an extension to be considered.
- Being in regular contact during the consultation period and discussions in the Invitation Committee.
- Being available to offer support in advance of and during the Circuit Meeting.
- Continuing to offer support whatever the outcome of the Circuit Meeting.
- Keeping the presbyter informed of the progress of the consultation process.

An offer of this form of pastoral care would also be valuable for presbyters entering the stationing process itself.

SECTION F

WHERE A NEW APPOINTMENT IS REQUIRED

- F1.** Circuit Stewards must inform their District Chair as soon as they are aware of a potential vacancy in order that appropriate advice and support may be offered.
- F2.** The Circuit Invitation Committee in consultation with the Circuit Leadership Team and the Superintendent should consider, in the light of Circuit Policy, what form of ministry (presbyteral, diaconal or lay) is required, if any, to achieve the required goals and what the necessary qualities and requirements of that ministry should be. If the vacancy is for a Superintendent, consult with the Chair and Lay Stationing Representative (see link in **D8**).

Circuit Stewards should ensure that appropriate consultation takes place in local churches so that they are able to represent the Circuit's views on current needs, new opportunities to be addressed and preferred styles of worship in relation to a new appointment.

The committee might also consider the desirability, if presbyteral ministry is required, of a part-time appointment (see https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf07_23_policy_of_pt_appts_pc.doc) or Pioneer Ministry (see **E23**) or someone entering into a first appointment in the Church e.g. a probationer presbyter or a presbyter from another Church or Conference (MOCC). First appointments in our Connexion are dealt with as outlined in the Timetable in **Section B**.

Circuits should be aware that a probationer appointment and MOCC appointment must be shaped in accordance with the criteria currently in force, as set by the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and similar criteria for MOCC appointments.

The Circuit should not leave to the last minute thinking about its position if a presbyter is not available through the matching process. No Circuit profile can be withdrawn prior to the beginning of April. If a Circuit wishes to have a profile withdrawn it must submit an application with a short Reasoned Statement by 25 March. All applications will be considered and reported to the April Stationing Action Group who will determine which profiles can be withdrawn, ensuring that sufficient number and variety of appointments remain for those presbyters still to be stationed. All remaining profiles stay available for matching until the 9 June when a profile can be withdrawn without a statement with the agreement of the convenor of the Stationing Action Group.

Circuits are encouraged to consider the contribution that can be made by any Supernumeraries in the Circuit when looking at their staffing needs. Circuits should refer to the material on the Methodist Church website on the ministry of Supernumeraries, see: [Stationing forms and guidelines \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

- F3.** The District Chair will ensure that profile forms are sent to each presbyter and Circuit in the process. The District Chair will arrange individual meetings with each presbyter seeking a new appointment (and their spouse/partner, where appropriate) and, separately, with Circuit Stewards of each Circuit where a presbyteral vacancy is to occur. The meetings are to enable the sharing of aspirations with the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative and also to confirm the accuracy of information in draft profiles. If notes are taken at such meetings, they should be agreed by all parties present.
- F4.** These meetings should take the form of an open and reflective discussion. Presbyters and Circuit Stewards should make preparations accordingly.
- F5.** Following the meetings, presbyters and Circuit Stewards should finalise their respective profiles and send them to the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative by 21 September. These profiles must then be forwarded to Stationing Administration by 28 September. Profiles must have a minimum font size of 10 point and only two sides will be printed.
- F6.** An appointment that is half-time or more must go through the matching process. One that is less than half-time will be listed in the profile book but will not normally be considered during the matching process.
- F7.** Presbyteral and Circuit profiles received by 28 September will be collated by Stationing Administration and published in two volumes – one containing profiles of all presbyters moving; the other, profiles of all stations seeking a presbyter (but excluding those designated by the Stationing Committee as probationer appointments). The presbyters' profiles will be sent electronically in PDF format to a named Circuit Steward in each Circuit seeking a presbyter; the profiles of stations will similarly be sent to all presbyters who are moving.

This enables all involved to have the same information on which to base their actions. Hard copies of profiles will also be available and all those receiving profiles will be asked to indicate a preferred format.

- F8.** When a profile is submitted for a presbyteral probationer, if a new manse is being purchased the profile must give clear evidence of the financial strategy for the purchase. The profile must also contain a declaration that the circuit is aware of suitable housing available in the area and have a clear plan if alternative arrangements need to be made.
- F9.** No presbyter will normally be stationed unless a profile has been submitted. Following its publication, no profile may be changed without the permission of the Chair of the Stationing Matching Group and the Chair of the Stationing Committee. Revised profiles will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.
- F10.** There must be no communication between presbyters and receiving Circuits and vice versa, or advocacy on behalf of either party, at this stage of the process. Should any such communication be shown to have taken place, then the match will not be made. It is recognised and accepted, however, that presbyters may wish to access a Circuit website at this stage.

- F11.** Having carefully read through the profiles, Circuit Stewards should discuss with their District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative presbyters that they think could be possible matches for them and why. Likewise, presbyters should carefully read through Circuit profiles and identify possible matches for them and why and discuss these with their District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative who may encourage broadening of perceived matches, or to consider ministry in one of the island districts. Each should identify up to five possible matches and ministers may include up to five 'critical' appointments. In each case, if there are any profiles that should not be matched for significant pastoral reasons, make sure they are identified in these discussions.
- F12** It should be made clear to all those involved in stationing that any prior knowledge they may have of a presbyter should not be shared with anyone else.
- F13.** Those identified matches will be taken very seriously but can only be an indication for the District Chair of the type of presbyter or station being sought. They will be used to inform the stationing matching process and are indications of the kind of gifts, skills and qualities for which the Circuit is looking and indications of the opportunities for which a presbyter is hoping.
- F14.** The Stationing Matching Group (see **Section H**) meets on three occasions in the period from late October to early January to undertake the matching process (see **Section B** for the Timetable). At these meetings, each District Chair represents the Circuits and presbyters in their District. The District Lay Stationing Representative or another authorised representative attends if the District Chair is not available.
- F15.** Presbyters (including those on sabbatical) and Circuit Stewards should make themselves available for the two/three weeks following each Stationing Matching Group meeting to allow for visits to be made and reflected on.
- F16.** The District Chair of the vacant station will contact the Circuit Stewards immediately after the Stationing Matching Group meeting (or the next day) to provide a name of a presbyter who should be invited to visit. The District Chair will also inform presbyters in their District, from whom they can expect an invitation to visit.
- F17.** Visits (see **Section I**) should take place on a mutually agreeable date but within 10 days of the name being suggested, bearing in mind that a Saturday visit is most likely.
- F18.** After allowing time for prayer and reflection, but within two days, presbyters and Circuit Stewards should declare their mind to each other and to their own District Chair.
- F19.** If both reactions are positive, the Circuit Invitation Committee, where it has been given delegated authority, may proceed to offer a formal invitation to a presbyter. When the invitation is accepted then both the Circuit Stewards and the presbyter should inform their respective District Chair who will inform Stationing Administration. The formal invitation must then be confirmed in writing. A Letter of Understanding should also be written and agreed. Copies should be sent to the District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative (see **I16** and **Appendix 1**).

- F20.** If one or both reactions is/are negative, then the District Chairs should be informed, and the presbyter's District Chair will inform Stationing Administration (see below and **Appendix 6**). After ensuring that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles have been observed, a further possible match will be explored at the next Stationing Matching Group meeting. To help with further matches, where an initial match has been declined, appropriate feedback should be sent by the presbyter and Circuit Stewards using the form provided in **Appendix 6** (see also **I16** and also **A4** regarding confidentiality).
- F21.** Following the last meeting of the Stationing Matching Group in January 2024 any remaining presbyteral vacancies will be dealt with by the Stationing Action Group. To allow the Action Group to do its work, action must not be taken to fill a still vacant station until 9 June or such later time as the Stationing Committee may decide (but see **F2** above).
- F22.** If a Circuit and presbyter agree to major changes to an existing appointment, a new Letter of Understanding should be drawn up and sent to the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative before it is finalised. Any proposed changes to an appointment at any point during a probationary period must have the consent of the District Chair and the Connexional Team member responsible for presbyteral probationers, who shall normally consult the District Policy Committee and the connexional oversight committee respectively. [SO 723(2)(c) and SO 723(3)(d)]

SECTION G

HELP IN COMPLETING PROFILE FORMS

- G1.** Profile forms, when completed, are available to all concerned in the stationing process. They provide the facts on which decisions are made and are the key to the process working effectively. Their open availability within the system ensures equality of treatment. They are used to inform the process and must not be used as a vehicle for special persuasion or pleading, which is likely to be counter-productive. They should be accurate, honest and provide sufficient detail clearly and concisely. Where a Circuit submits more than one profile in any given year, complete information and the use of a distinct title for each (not just a numeric) should be included.

Although it is deemed inappropriate for a presbyter to be present when the Circuit Invitation Committee is considering their appointment and re-invitation (see **C6**), they may be consulted in the preparation of a Circuit profile.

Presbyters and Circuits should share drafts of profiles with their District Chair and their District Lay Stationing Representative before a final version is agreed.

- G2.** The information on the profiles must adhere to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles (see **C2**) and be capable of being relied upon by the Stationing Matching Group, by presbyters, spouses/partners and Circuit Stewards. If there is any change in circumstance or detail during the process that affects the information given in the profile it must be communicated to the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative as appropriate at the earliest opportunity for further communication to all those involved in the process (see **F7**).
- G3.** Profile forms for presbyters and Circuits are available from the District Chair and will be distributed as needed by the District Chair or District Lay Stationing Representative.

The forms must be completed electronically and submitted as a Word document. This enables spacing to be adjusted to fit the information provided.

However, to ensure that there is a similarity in the profiles and equality of opportunity in providing information, the presbyteral and Circuit profiles must not exceed two sides of A4 paper and have a minimum font size of 10 point.

- G4.** As well as the advice offered at the preparation meeting, completed anonymised profiles from previous years will be available from the District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative to give you indications of what might be included. They will also discuss with you your initial thoughts and advise on content and style.
- G5.** Those who have entered the invitation process are participants in **itinerant** ministry (see [itinerancy \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://itinerancy.methodist.org.uk), which covers the whole of the Connexion. Expressions of necessary geographical location will restrict the ability of the

Stationing Matching Group to find an appointment and could lead to being without an appointment at own expense.

- G6.** You must remember that it is, in the end, your profile that has to be communicated in your own words. The objective is honesty, providing a reliable document to enable the process to work to maximum effect.

SECTION H

THE STATIONING MATCHING PROCESS

- H1.** The Stationing Matching Group meets on three occasions in the period from late October to January each year. Since 2010, all presbyteral vacancies have been considered at a single meeting of the Matching Group (see the Timetable in **Section B**) known as Stationing Matching Group 1 (SMG1).

The second meeting of the Stationing Matching Group (SMG2) will deal with appointments and presbyters which were not successfully matched at SMG1 and any newly available appointments and presbyters.

The third meeting (SMG3) will consider any remaining unmatched appointments and unmatched presbyters.

- H2.** At each matching meeting, the procedure is the same. All available appointments and presbyters' expressions of interest are displayed on a board for each District so that the position is clear to all in the meeting.

District Chairs and District Lay Stationing Representatives meet at Regional Stationing Groups by 29 September to identify critical appointments (see **Appendix 4**), which will be submitted to a scrutiny panel of the Stationing Committee. Similarly, the Regional Stationing Group identifies and agrees the names of presbyters with exceptional personal circumstances which bear on stationing. Before any matches are made these situations and the information from the scrutiny panel will be notified to the Chair of the Matching Group.

- H3.** At the beginning of SMG1, the identified critical appointments will be notified to the meeting and agreement is reached on how the number of vacancies to be filled is divided up into a number of rounds, how many rounds there should be and how the different number of vacancies to be filled in each District should be allocated in each round.
- H4.** As each round proceeds, the order in which those Districts with vacancies to be filled in that round are called is determined by the Stationing Matching Group. The District Chair is asked to nominate the station they wish to be considered at that point. If no match is agreed the District Chair can substitute an alternative station.

The profiles of presbyters who have expressed an interest in that particular appointment and the profiles of those presbyters in which the Circuit has shown an interest are considered first. All expressions of interest are taken very seriously but are not a straitjacket to be applied rigidly. Should there be no names to consider from this process then alternative suggestions are sought and considered.

- H5.** When an appointment is called, every reasonable effort is made to match a presbyter to the appointment before moving on to the next call. Any proposed exception to this must be put to the meeting by the Chair and agreed. In this way 'less popular' stations are treated equally with those that would appear easier to fill, so upholding the connexional principle on which the process is based.

- H6.** Once all the Districts in a particular round have been called and names suggested for them, the process moves on to the next round and so on, until there are no presbyters left to suggest for stations.
- H7.** In deciding in what order to call the stations to be filled, District Chairs have to face the fact that not all of their stations may be filled. Even where District Policy Committees have provided a provisional guide of an order of selection, District Chairs have to be able to adjust the order in which they call their stations in the light of how the process unfolds.
- H8.** Profiles and what is said to District Chairs and District Lay Stationing Representatives in the individual discussions prior to the matching process are taken very seriously in the discussion. Especial concern is exercised to respect confidences and great sensitivity is exercised in the use of information that is not available on the profile forms.
- H9.** The best possible match of skills, graces and needs is sought for all stations and presbyters. Thus, all matches are only pencilled in as the particular round unfolds until they are all agreed finally at the end of the meeting.
- H10.** All involved in the process (especially at the local level) must recognise that one sought after presbyter or any presbyter can only be stationed in one place. Likewise, only one presbyter can go to a 'popular' location.
- H11.** The Stationing Action Group continues the process of stationing after SMG3 has been completed, normally beginning in February each year and working through telephone conferences. Membership of the group comprises a convener appointed by the Stationing Committee, a representative from each Regional Stationing Group, a representative of the Connexional Team and the Chairs of the Stationing Committee and the Stationing Matching Group.

SECTION I

VISITS

(See **I15** for the visit of a probationer presbyter or a MOCC)

- I1.** The District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative should arrange appropriate preparation for all those who expect to be involved when a matched presbyter visits the Circuit. This preparation should take place prior to Stationing Matching Group 1 which meets early in November. Those expected to participate in the preparation are the Circuit Stewards, other members of the Circuit Invitation Committee and Church Stewards who will be involved when a presbyter visits.
- I2.** When a match has been made by the Stationing Matching Group, or the Stationing Action Group, the purpose of the visit is for opportunities to be provided for the presbyter and the Circuit to explore the match so that both can discern whether it is right.
- I3.** Immediately following a Stationing Matching Group meeting, or a meeting of the Stationing Action Group, the District Chair will notify each presbyter and Circuit in their District of any match that has been made.

It is advisable for those who will be involved in the visit to keep the following days free as the visit should take place within ten days.

- I4.** When the name of a presbyter has been provided the Circuit Stewards should make a telephone call, after 9:00am the following day, to the presbyter concerned and invite them together with their spouse/partner and children or a friend (as appropriate) to visit at a mutually agreed time.

The Circuit Stewards are responsible for organising the visit. They should ascertain from the presbyter what family or other circumstances may need to be taken into account during the visit. Where children are visiting it may be that activities will need to be provided and an opportunity for rest. The family may wish for appropriate people to help in their supervision, bearing in mind the requirement for current DBS clearance. Such arrangements should be discussed and mutually agreed prior to the visit.

The length of the visit should be agreed and some ideas about a programme for the visit should be discussed. The presbyter should be asked whom they would like to meet and what areas of the Circuit they would wish to see.

The presbyter should also be asked if they would wish to make a presentation or an opening statement to the Circuit Invitation Committee or lead devotions when they meet with them. If so, necessary preparations should be put in place.

Circuit Stewards should be familiar with the condition of the manse prior to the visit and be able to describe the work they intend to complete before the presbyter takes up the appointment. They should also listen carefully to any requests that the presbyter and their family make. Of course Circuits will not necessarily be able to meet all the requests but the visit should be followed by a Letter of Understanding stating what work will be undertaken and when (see **I16** and **Appendix 1** for a sample Letter of Understanding).

The manse should conform to SO 803. If a new manse is to be purchased then the purchase should be complete before April, similarly if the manse is currently let, the lease must be finalised before April and the tenants should have moved out before then. There should be a satisfactory and up-to-date Manse Inspection Report (within the past five years). The Report must contain information about when any outstanding work will be completed.

Presbyters and circuits should engage appropriately with the visits as failure to do so could lead to being left without an appointment at their own expense in the case of presbyters or with a presbyteral vacancy in the case of Circuits.

- 15.** The presbyter's profile should only be copied for **members of the Circuit Invitation Committee, the Superintendent and the Church Stewards from churches where the presbyter would have pastoral charge. Where the appointment is for a Superintendent, the profile should only be copied for members of the Circuit Invitation Committee (including the other presbyters and deacons in the Circuit) and for each of the senior Church Stewards in the Circuit.** Presbyters' profiles are confidential documents, should always be treated with great care and sensitivity by Circuit Stewards, Church Stewards and members of the Invitation Committee. The profiles, both paper and electronic versions, **should be destroyed by them once the stationing process is complete.** This should be immediately after Conference, however, those charged with formal oversight, i.e. Chair of District, Circuit Superintendent and Warden of the Diaconal Order, will keep a copy of the profile (General guidance on GDPR can be found at: [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/guidance/general-data-protection-regulations-gdpr))
- 16.** Once the visit has been arranged, but before it takes place, it would be helpful if further information could be shared with the presbyter. Such information might include local knowledge of schools, hospitals, transport, shops and places of interest. Further details about the Circuit may also be appreciated. This might include the Circuit plan, local church mission statements, Circuit Policy, newsletters and website addresses. It is important that Circuit Stewards ensure that travel directions and a meeting place for the visit are in place. A folder of this information should be ready to be sent electronically or posted as soon as the name of a presbyter is received.
- 17.** Where a presbyter is travelling a long distance to a Circuit, overnight accommodation should be arranged, if required. For their rest and relaxation, it is most appropriate for a presbyter and those accompanying them to be accommodated in a hotel or something similar. Circuits are responsible for expenses, including overnight accommodation and these should be agreed and paid on the day of the visit.

- I8.** Visits are stressful and tiring for all concerned. Care should be taken that not too much is packed into one day. It should not be a non-stop round of meeting, greeting and visiting. The watchword is sensitivity for all involved. During the visit the presbyter and the family or friend should be given time to themselves. The Circuit must make provision for accompanying family or friends when the presbyter has role specific conversations (e.g. as in **I11** below). Circuit Stewards will also need time to absorb and reflect on the information provided to them.
- I9.** The presbyter and those accompanying them should look at the manse and those other facilities in the vicinity which they wish to see. They should also see the churches in the section. If visiting every church would be too time-consuming it may be worth thinking about preparing a PowerPoint presentation or something similar.
- I10.** The presbyter should have a conversation with the Superintendent, by telephone if necessary.
- I11.** Most importantly, time needs to be given to meetings with local Church Stewards of churches for which the presbyter will have pastoral charge. The presbyter should also meet others whom they identified in the introductory conversations with the Circuit Stewards (see **I4**). Meetings should give the opportunity for conversation. They should not be likened to an interview.
- I12.** The presbyter should meet with members of the Circuit Invitation Committee (including other presbyters and deacons, especially when a Superintendent is to be appointed). If the Circuit Invitation Committee is large in number, sensitivity suggests that not all members should participate in this meeting with the presbyter although all should have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation for the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is for the presbyter and the Circuit Invitation Committee to share in a process of discernment in order that both parties are fully equipped to reach a decision on the match. The committee should be well prepared and should plan, in advance, questions to be asked and by whom. The areas of conversation should include the results of consultations regarding current priorities, future mission and ministry opportunities, worship and preaching and should draw out the presbyter's experience, style and approach. There should be the opportunity for the gifts and skills of the presbyter to be explored, including those that may not be on the profile. Lengthy hypothetical scenarios should be avoided and questions relating to race, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability issues must not be asked. If the presbyter indicated in the introductory conversations with the Circuit Stewards that they would like to make a presentation or an opening statement (see **I4**), time should be allocated for this and for any subsequent questions that may arise. It is not appropriate for family members to be part of this conversation.
- I13.** After the visit has taken place, **no invitation may be offered immediately** and both parties should allow appropriate time for prayer, discernment and reflection as to determine whether this match is God's will for them. **Circuits should allow at least 24 hours for discernment before contacting the presbyter, while presbyters should be allowed up to a further 24 hours to respond to the Circuit.** The Circuit Invitation Committee should consult with Church Stewards. Recognising that the match may not be exact to the Circuit profile, the Circuit Invitation Committee should discern if, by inviting the presbyter, the presbyter's distinctive gifts and skills could be used to

their benefit and if the mission No invitation should be offered immediately and approve of the Circuit would be enriched through their ministry. At this point Circuit Stewards and presbyters may also wish to consult with the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. The final decision as to whether an invitation is made to a presbyter rests with the full Circuit Invitation Committee, assuming that they have been given delegated powers by the Circuit Meeting.

- I14.** Within two days, Circuit Stewards and presbyter should be in touch with each other to express their minds and also with their respective District Chairs to inform them of the outcome. Whatever the outcome of the visit, this should be confirmed in writing to the presbyter. Should an invitation not be offered by the Circuit or accepted by the presbyter then the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative should receive reasons for this in writing in order to inform the next stage of the stationing process (see **Appendix 6** for proforma). Issues around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will be robustly challenged and could lead to the profile being withdrawn from the process (see **C2**). There should be no broadcast of the process and outcomes of stationing on Facebook or other social media platforms. **Use of social media relating to stationing could be a breach of the Code of Practice (see A4).**
- I15.** Where a probationer presbyter or a presbyter of another Church or Conference is identified by the Initial Stationing Sub-Committee for an appointment, the Circuit Stewards should invite the probationer or presbyter to visit the Circuit as soon as possible following the match. The same procedure for the visit should be followed except as at **I11**, **I13** and **I14**. The visit should in no way be considered as an occasion for an interview but rather for initial introductions and familiarisation. The person to be stationed along with members of their family should be given an opportunity to introduce themselves to the members of the Circuit Leadership Team and representatives of the local churches. They must be given the opportunity to meet the designated supervisor, to see the manse and to discuss any issues that may arise as a result. The Circuit Invitation Committee does not offer or decline an invitation to the probationer or presbyter. The match is part of the process of direct stationing by the Conference. Only in exceptional circumstances can the person to be stationed appeal against the proposed stationing. The Circuit has no right of appeal. Circuit stewards should report the outcome of the visit to their District Chair.
- I16.** A Letter of Understanding (see sample in **Appendix 1**) should be agreed between the Circuit Stewards and the presbyter, probationer presbyter or presbyter of another Church or Conference **and issued to them within six weeks of the visit**. It should include details of the pastoral charge to be committed to a presbyter or pastoral responsibility to be committed to a probationer presbyter.

The Letter of Understanding records the result of the invitation process or (if **I15** applies) of the matching process and visit. It does not affect the Conference's power to station annually as it sees fit.

In addition, it should include a general description of the expectations which the Circuit, on behalf of the Methodist Church, has of all its presbyters, together with a statement of the initial length of the invitation or (in the case of a probationer presbyter or a presbyter in a first appointment in the British Conference) deemed

invitation. It should also include details of the manse and of any work to be done at the manse before the presbyter arrives. It should include an assurance that the Circuit will uphold the standards of good practice set out in various sections of CPD and an assurance that the presbyter understands their responsibilities in the care of the manse.

The Letter should be approved by the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. It is very important that the Letter is signed by the senior Circuit Steward and the presbyter. Copies should be sent to the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative.

Letters of Understanding are an important part of the Stationing process, and they should be agreed and signed within **six** weeks of the visit. They were introduced following the Supreme Court decision that ministers were not employees of the Church. For this reason, **the wording has been carefully chosen and should not be altered**. However, content important to each match, including but not limited to, any agreement reached between the presbyter and the Circuit Stewards, should be included and reference to the gifts and graces of the minister and the needs of the circuit may be made. However, the paragraph immediately before the signatures should always appear where it is currently located.

PART 2 The Process for Diaconal Appointments

SECTION J

WHERE AN EXTENSION IS BEING CONSIDERED

In Section J, the wording in quotation marks is taken from SO546 which should be consulted in advance of the start of the extension process. It should be noted by all involved, that ministry in the Methodist Church is **itinerant** (see [Itinerancy \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)). This allows gifts and graces to be shared equitably across the connexion for the benefit of all and our mission. It is suggested that long periods without change have a negative impact on both Circuits and Ministers, and that periods of appointment in excess of 10 years should be the exception rather than the norm and should be very closely examined by both parties. Similarly, the Circuit should give consideration to continuity and the impact of too many changes in any connexional year.

- J1.** When the extension to an initial appointment or subsequent re-invitation of a deacon is under consideration, the Warden of the Diaconal Order **must be informed and consulted by the Circuit and the deacon throughout the process.**
- J2.** In the case of Circuits that are reconfiguring or amalgamating, the relevant Circuit Invitation Committees (see **Section C**) must seek the advice of the District Chair as to how to proceed. Guidance is to be found in the Stationing Committee paper 'Advice for Circuits which are Reconfiguring' whose link can be found here: [Stationing forms and guidelines \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)
- J3.** The Circuit Meeting where an extension will be decided must take place on or before 20 September **and the Warden shall be informed of this decision by 5 October.** [SO 546(5)]
- J4.** Where, before the end of June, a deacon has indicated a wish for an extension to be considered as part of the process of discernment, it is very important that Circuit Stewards offer to meet them and members of their household to discuss any personal or family issues that they feel would be relevant in any decision regarding an extension. The Circuit Stewards should, in considering applications for extensions, consider the process as part of the Circuit strategy for mission in relation to overall staffing needs in the short and medium terms.
- J5.** The Circuit Stewards are obliged to ensure that appropriate consultation takes place in local churches and other agencies as appropriate to the work in which the deacon is involved. The time limit for the consultation period shall be agreed between the Circuit Stewards and the individual deacon (not more than three weeks). It is important that the deacon is made aware of how the consultation is being planned and who is responsible in each of the churches for gathering feedback.
- J6.** It is the responsibility of the Circuit Stewards to ensure that the consultation that takes place in the churches in which the deacon is located is in accordance with the code of practice contained in this document. The consultation process may be delegated to the Church Stewards for each church in question. If the consultation

exercise involves two or more ministers in the same church, separate Circuit or Church Stewards should undertake the consultation for each minister. Where Circuit Stewards delegate the consultation to Church Stewards, all Church Stewards should be briefed on the process to be undertaken, the type of questions to be asked and the form of and timescale for the feedback required. These Church Stewards involved in the process should attend the District Stationing Preparation Meeting as described in **Section D** of this document. While, the full explanation of how the consultation should be carried out begins at **J18**.

- J7.** Circuit Stewards must also initiate other consultations in the local community where the ministry of the deacon is a vital link with the church. They must also consult as is required by local ecumenical agreements. The views obtained in all of these consultations must be made clear to the Circuit Meeting in a Reasoned Statement.
- J8.** Together, the Circuit Stewards should prepare a written report on the consultations. This report should focus on the actions, gifts, and graces of the deacon and should avoid personal criticism or judgement but may offer concerns. As soon as possible after completion of the consultations, the report should be shared with the deacon by the Circuit Stewards, along with the appropriate debriefing of the consultations. The Circuit Stewards should ascertain from the deacon whether an extension is to be sought when the deacon has had time to reflect on the feedback provided. Both parties should agree any notes taken at this meeting.
- J9.** If an extension is sought, the Circuit Invitation Committee should meet to receive from the Circuit Stewards the report on the consultations. The deacon should attend the meeting at which the Circuit Invitation Committee receives the report from the Circuit Stewards in order to respond to points made in the report. The deacon and any family members or others directly affected by the decisions should leave the meeting before the discussion prior to a recommendation being reached. The Committee should prepare a statement for the Circuit Meeting giving its recommendation and its reason for it. The Reasoned Statement should also describe the consultation process undertaken. Whatever the decision, it must be conveyed to the deacon well in advance of the Circuit meeting and the deacon should receive the statement. At least three weeks before the Circuit Meeting, a copy of the statement shall be sent to the District Chair, The District Lay Representative and the Warden of the Diaconal Order, who may suggest modifications to comply with good practice and with Standing Orders. The Reasoned Statement shall be circulated, in confidence, to the members of the Circuit Meeting two weeks before the meeting [SO 546(8)]. Sample Reasoned Statements and sample notices to accompany the circulation of Reasoned Statements are included in **Appendix 2**.
- J10.** “If an extension is not recommended by the Circuit Invitation Committee, the deacon may prepare a statement giving reasons why an extension should be granted, and of what length and if an extension is recommended but the deacon wishes to advance reasons why it should be of a different length, he or she may prepare a statement to that effect. Any such statement shall be circulated in confidence to members of the Circuit Meeting no later than a week in advance of the meeting. The Circuit Meeting shall consider both the statement of the deacon and that of the Circuit Invitation Committee, together with any response from the committee to the deacon’s

statement (in writing or made orally), and then receive the matter and proceed to vote.” [SO 546(9)]

- J11.** “If an extension is recommended by the Circuit Invitation Committee, there shall be circulated with the recommendation a notice in writing giving the name of the person who will be chairing the relevant Circuit Meeting and requiring members of the Circuit Meeting to inform the chair of the meeting in written form no later than one week before the time fixed for the commencement of the meeting if they intend to oppose the recommendation or move an amendment, with the substance of their grounds for doing so. If no such intention has been notified by the time allowed then no vote shall be taken on the recommendation and the extension recommended by the committee shall be taken as offered by the meeting.” [SO 546(10)]

A sample notice is included in **Appendix 2**. The Chair should inform the deacon in advance of the Circuit Meeting if someone opposes the recommendation and their reasons for doing so. The deacon may respond in writing if they so wish. The Circuit Invitation Committee should also be informed if their recommendation is to be opposed and the reasons for doing so. **(N.B. any written form should contain the signatures of the member or members who oppose the recommendation.)**

- J12.** “If such an intention has been notified by one or more members by the time allowed, the written grounds for opposing or proposing an amendment to the recommendation shall be circulated no later than 24 hours before the meeting and the meeting shall hear the member or members concerned, a response by or on behalf of the circuit Invitation committee and any response by the deacon and shall then consider the matter and proceed to vote.” [SO 546(11)]

- J13.** At both the Circuit Invitation Committee and the Circuit Meeting, any discussion should be full and open. The recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee, the desires of the deacon and their household, relevant Circuit Policy and strategic planning, the views of the local churches and community concerned and **the views of the Warden of the Diaconal Order must all be considered in coming to a decision**. Members of the deacon’s family who are also members of the Circuit Meeting should declare an interest at the beginning of this item of business as a matter of important good practice.

- J14.** The deacon should have the right of reply to any new points made and the right to address the meeting should they so wish. “During any discussion while the meeting considers the matter under clause (9) or (11) above after the deacon has withdrawn, the chair shall not permit any new ground against extension, or in favour of altering its length, to be advanced. Should that nevertheless happen the deacon must be informed and given the opportunity of responding.” [SO 546(11A)]

The Deacon should withdraw immediately prior to the vote.

The Circuit Meeting must be held in a closed session whenever considering ministerial invitations. [SO 514(3)(d)]

- J15.** “The voting on any resolution in the Circuit Meeting...or on an amendment to any such resolution, shall be by ballot. A resolution to offer an invitation shall require for adoption a majority of 60% of those present and voting or, if for an extension which would include any period beyond a total appointment of ten years, 75%. Unless the meeting, in exercise of its power to regulate its own procedure, [see SO 517] decides

otherwise, the same majority shall be required for an amendment altering the length of the proposed extension, and if varying lengths are for consideration they (including that proposed in the original resolution) shall be voted on in descending order, the first (if any) to receive the required majority being deemed to have been adopted as the substantive resolution. The number of votes for and against and the total number of persons present and entitled to vote shall be recorded.” [SO 546(12)] Those present and voting excludes abstentions. [SO 008(vi)]

- J16.** The District Chair and the Warden of the Diaconal Order must be informed as soon as possible of the outcome of the Circuit Meeting by the Chair of that meeting.
- J17.** Where an extension is agreed, a new Letter of Understanding should be agreed between the deacon and the Circuit Stewards. It should give the length of the extension and should include any other matters agreed during the invitation process. **This must be completed within six weeks of the visit.** Copies of the letter should be sent to the District Chair, the District Lay Stationing Representative **and the Warden of the Diaconal Order**. This records the result of the invitation process but does not affect the Conference’s power to station annually as it sees fit.

Consultation in local churches

- J18.** The purposes of consulting appropriate local churches are to give the Circuit Invitation Committee a clear understanding of the ministry and work being done within the church and community, how the local people view its further development and to assess how best that can be achieved. These local views will then form part of the committee's overall assessment.
- J19.** Where the Circuit Stewards wish to delegate consultation in local churches to Church Stewards, the Circuit Stewards should arrange for the Church Stewards at each church affected to be thoroughly briefed as to what feedback is expected on a possible re-invitation and how it should be obtained. These Church Stewards should attend the Stationing Preparation Meeting arranged by the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. The Circuit Stewards should develop open questions that they or the local stewards could use to elicit the feedback they require.
- J20.** Circuit Stewards should provide guidance to the Church Stewards for a face-to-face or phone conversation (not social media or email) around matters such as the following:
- In what ways has the vision for the diaconal appointment developed since the profile was drawn up?
 - Have the expectations of the Circuit and the expectations of the deacon been met and, if not, why not?
 - Has the work developed in new and unexpected directions?
 - How does the appointment ‘sit’ amongst the mission priorities of the Circuit?
 - What kind of ministry does the Circuit wish to offer and to whom?
 - Do we need to consider a differing set of skills and gifts to develop the work further?

If answers are not forthcoming, consult the District Chair, Lay Stationing Representative or Warden. **(N.B. Such questions lead to views, not votes. No voting should take place nor should any questions be asked that could be construed as votes.)**

- J21.** Consultation must be sufficiently representative of the local church bearing in mind the mix of people in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. It must not be skewed by factions. The consultations should obtain personal soundings on a one-to-one basis from a responsible officer of each committee, a leader of each organisation with which the deacon is involved, as well as from Church Stewards. In ecumenical situations consultation with other denominations is vital and also community aspects of the deacon's work must be covered. Only in very small churches (mainly in rural areas) may it be sensitive to consult with all members but, again, no vote must be taken.
- J22.** The individual consultations need to be done sensitively and unobtrusively so as not to add to the stress of the deacon and their family at a time of potential anxiety. Those consulted should be told that all answers are given in confidence and that all replies will be non-attributable. A list of the names of all people consulted and their position within the church must be kept. In the interests of natural justice, the deacon must be made aware of the views obtained on matters appropriate to the topics considered in **J20** when feedback is given.
- J23.** Circuit Stewards should ask deacons and their close household members whether it would be helpful for a form of pastoral support to be put in place during the consultation period. It may well be that many deacons will already have appropriate support systems but, if this is not the case, support can be gained from a close colleague within the Diaconal Order (inside or outside the Circuit or ecumenically), a supernumerary minister, or an appropriate lay person.

Such pastoral care might involve:

- Being available as the deacon and family discern whether or not they wish to ask for an extension to be considered.
- Being in regular contact during the consultation period and discussions in the Invitation Committee.
- Being available to offer support in advance of and during the Circuit Meeting.
- Continuing to offer support whatever the outcome of the Circuit Meeting.
- Keeping the deacon informed of the progress of the consultation process.

An offer of this form of pastoral care might also be valuable for deacons entering the stationing process itself and deacons are encouraged to use the support of their spiritual directors.

SECTION K

WHERE A NEW APPOINTMENT IS REQUIRED OR AN EXISTING APPOINTMENT IS BEING CHANGED OR CLOSED

- K1.** Circuit Stewards must inform the Warden of the Diaconal Order and their District Chair as soon as they are aware of a potential vacancy in order that appropriate advice and support may be offered.

The District Chair should ensure that Circuit Stewards are aware that deacons are directly stationed and that whilst there is no obligation for a deacon to be a Local Preacher, all are trained worship leaders.

- K2.** Circuit Stewards should ensure that appropriate consultation takes place in the Circuit Leadership Team, with the Superintendent and in local churches so that they are able to represent the Circuit's views on current policy, needs and new opportunities to be addressed in relation to a new appointment.

The Circuit should not leave to the last minute thinking about its position if a deacon is not available through the matching process. No Circuit profile can be withdrawn prior to the beginning of April. If a Circuit wishes to have a profile withdrawn it must submit an application with a short Reasoned Statement by 25 March. All applications will be considered and reported to the April Stationing Action Group who will recommend to the Warden which profiles could be withdrawn, ensuring that sufficient number and variety of appointments remain for those deacons still to be stationed. All remaining profiles stay available for matching until 9 June when a profile can be withdrawn without a statement with the agreement of the convenor of the Stationing Action Group.

- K3.** At any point in the year the Warden of the Diaconal Order is available to discuss with District Chairs and Circuit staff (including Circuit Stewards) the opportunities for diaconal ministry in a Circuit by visiting the Circuit.

Application for new or continuing diaconal appointment is made by the Circuit completing a Circuit profile form (S13) available from [Stationing forms and guidelines \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk) or Stationing Administration. **(N.B. It is vital that this conversation takes place, as this is direct stationing.)**

- K4.** The District Chair will ensure that forms are sent to each Circuit seeking a deacon. The District Chair will arrange individual meetings with each deacon seeking a new appointment (and their spouse/partner, where appropriate) and, separately, with Circuit Stewards of each Circuit where a diaconal vacancy is to occur. The meetings are to enable the sharing of aspirations with the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative and also to confirm the accuracy of information in draft application forms and profiles. If notes are taken at such meetings, they should be agreed by all parties present.

- K5.** These meetings should take the form of an open and reflective discussion. Deacons and Circuit Stewards should make preparations accordingly.

- K6.** Ordained deacons should send their completed profiles to the District Chair and the

District Lay Stationing Representative by 21 September. The District Chair or the District Lay Stationing Representative will then forward them to the Warden of the Diaconal Order by 23 September, who will submit them to Stationing Administration by 28 September.

- K7.** In the case of probationer diaconal appointments, the Warden of the Diaconal Order will work with the Training Institution to ensure probationer profiles are submitted and will be involved in discussion about suitability or otherwise of any appointment for a probationer deacon.
- K8.** Circuit profiles and profiles of ordained deacons received by 28 September will be collated by Stationing Administration and published in two volumes – one containing profiles of ordained deacons moving; the other, profiles of Circuits seeking a deacon. The volume of deacons' profiles will be sent electronically to all District Chairs and all District Lay Stationing Representatives who will then assist Circuits seeking a deacon in the identification of possible deacons, they feel will be appropriate. This information will be fed back by 30 November to the Warden of the Diaconal Order by the District Chair or the District Lay Stationing Representative. Circuit profiles will be circulated to ordained deacons.
- K9.** There should be no communication between deacons and receiving Circuits and vice versa, or advocacy on behalf of either party, at this stage of the process. Should any such communication be shown to have taken place, then the match will not be made. It is recognised and accepted, however, that deacons may wish to access a Circuit website at this stage.
- K10.** Circuit Stewards should discuss with their District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative, deacons that they think could be suitable for the appointment and identify three deacons, with reasons. Likewise, deacons should carefully read through Circuit profiles and be prepared to discuss these with the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee when they attend the DSSC stationing conversations in November. In each case, if there are any profiles that would not be appropriate for significant pastoral reasons, make sure they are identified in these discussions.
- K11.** Those suggestions will be taken very seriously but can only be an indication of the type of deacon/appointment being sought. It must be noted that the needs of both deacons and Circuits are taken into consideration and matching is never based on geography alone.
- K12.** The Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee will have as one of its members a representative from the Training Institution with responsibility for diaconal students when it is discussing probationer appointments. The Sub-Committee meets in early January to undertake the matching process and reports its work to the following Stationing Matching Group.
- K13.** Deacons (including those on sabbatical) and Circuit Stewards should make themselves available for the two/three weeks following each Stationing Matching Group meeting to allow for visits to be made and reflected on. Although the majority of diaconal appointments are brought to Stationing Matching Group 3, on occasions for significant pastoral reasons, a deacon may be considered and

matched for Stationing Matching Group 2 (see **M1** bullet points).

- K14.** The District Chair of the vacant station will contact the Circuit Stewards immediately after the Stationing Matching Group meeting (or the next day) to provide a name of a deacon who should be invited to visit. The Warden or Deputy Warden will inform deacons from whom they can expect an invitation to visit.
- K15.** Visits (see **Section N**) should take place on a mutually agreeable date but within 10 days of the name being suggested, bearing in mind that a Saturday visit is most likely.
- K16.** Deacons are directly stationed and, therefore, an invitation to serve in the Circuit is not appropriate and should not be issued by the Circuit Invitation Committee, nor should there be a conversation seeking knowledge of whether a deacon is happy to come following a visit. It is assumed that matches made with the diaconal matching process will hold unless there are significant reasons as to why this should not be the case. Within two days of the visit, after allowing 36 hours for prayer and reflection, deacons and Circuits should offer the Warden of the Diaconal Order, the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative some written feedback about the visit, preferably electronically. All diaconal appointments are confirmed by the Warden of the Diaconal Order who will inform Stationing Administration **only** after all visits of both ordained and probationer deacons have taken place. After the Warden has confirmed the appointment, a Letter of Understanding should be copied to and approved by the Warden of the Diaconal Order, the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative as well as the individual deacon concerned (see **N14** and **Appendix 1**).
- K17.** If one (or both) of the parties has major reservations about the match made, where possible, a further match may be made at the following Diaconal Stationing Subcommittee meeting. Where an initial match has not been upheld, appropriate feedback should be sent, in writing, by the deacon and Circuit Steward to the Warden.
- K18.** Following the last meeting of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee, any remaining diaconal vacancies will be dealt with by the Stationing Action Group. To allow the Action Group to do its work, action must not be taken to fill a still vacant station until 9 June or such later time as the Stationing Committee may decide (but see **K2** above).
- K19.** **When a Circuit is proposing major changes to an existing appointment, the Warden of the MDO and the District Chair must be consulted and advice sought before any changes are made to that appointment. Once any changes have been agreed, a new Letter of Understanding should be drawn up.**
- K20.** **When a Circuit feels it is necessary to close an existing diaconal appointment, the Warden of the MDO, District Chair and Lay Stationing Representative must be informed in writing, stating the reasons why the appointment is being closed. Care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate exit strategy for closing the appointment has been agreed and implemented and that appropriate pastoral support is in place for the deacon concerned.**

SECTION L

HELP IN COMPLETING PROFILE FORMS

- L1.** Profile forms, when completed, are available to all concerned in the stationing process. They provide the facts on which decisions are made and are the key to the process working effectively. Their open availability within the system ensures equality of treatment. They are used to inform the process and must not be used as a vehicle for special persuasion or pleading, which is likely to be counter-productive. They should be accurate, honest and provide sufficient detail clearly and concisely. Where a Circuit submits more than one profile in any given year, complete information and the use of a distinct title for each (not just a numeric) should be included.

Deacons and Circuits should share drafts of profiles with the Warden of the Diaconal Order, their District Chair and their District Lay Stationing Representative before a final version is agreed. Probationers will be guided through the process by their respective tutors.

- L2.** The information on the profiles must adhere to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles (see **C2**) and be capable of being relied upon by the Diaconal Stationing Sub Committee, by the Stationing Matching Group, by presbyters, by-deacons, spouses/partners and Circuit Stewards. **If there is any change in circumstance or detail during the process that affects the information given in the profile it must be communicated to the Warden of the Diaconal Order, District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative at the earliest opportunity, for further communication to all those involved in the process.**
- L3.** Profile forms for ordained deacons are available on the Methodist Church website, or from Stationing Administration. Probationer deacons will receive their profile forms from their training institution.

The forms must be completed electronically and submitted as a Word document. This enables spacing to be adjusted to fit the information provided.

- L4.** As well as the advice offered at the preparation meeting, completed profiles from previous years will be available from the District Chair and District Lay Stationing Representative to give you indications of what might be included.

They will also discuss with you your initial thoughts and advise on content and style.

You must remember that it is, in the end, your profile that has to be communicated in your own words. The objective is **honesty**, providing a reliable document to enable the process to work to maximum effect.

SECTION M

THE STATIONING PROCESS

M1. The Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee meets in November to undertake a conversation with all deacons in the stationing process.

Prior to that conversation, all ordained deacons will receive copies of the profiles of appointments to be filled. During the conversation a deacon is encouraged to share preferences of the **kind of appointment** they feel drawn towards but no guarantee can be given that they will be stationed to any of the preferences. All District Chairs and Lay Stationing Representatives will receive copies of the profiles of deacons available for stationing. During discussions with their Circuits, they will be able to identify up to three possible deacons they feel may offer the gifts and skills being sought. These preferences are indicative of the kind of deacon the Circuit feels drawn towards and no guarantee can be given that any of their preferences will be stationed there.

Following those conversations, the process of stationing is as follows:

- At the November meeting of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee the Warden of the Diaconal Order, in consultation with the committee, identifies deacons with exceptional circumstances, and identifies appropriate appointments for them.
- These deacons are identified for appointments at Stationing Matching Group 2. The Warden of the Diaconal Order, Deputy Warden and the Chair of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee or another representative of that committee will be members of the Stationing Matching Group. The Warden will call the matches.
- After Stationing Matching Group 2 the deacon is confirmed by the Warden or Deputy Warden of their matching.
- At the same time the Circuit is informed, by the District Chair, of the deacon that the Warden wishes to match in their appointment. The Circuit is asked to contact the deacon to arrange a visit.
- The visit, which should take place as soon as possible after the notification, is not an interview but a chance for both parties to meet and exchange further information.
- Following the visit, the deacon and the Circuit are asked to contact the Warden of the Diaconal Order, the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. The matching is to be regarded as a given unless there are significant or exceptional reasons as to why the match may not hold, and the match may be reviewed by the Warden.
- The Diaconal Stationing Sub-Committee meets prior to Stationing Matching Group 3 to identify appointments for all other deacons and diaconal probationers. These deacons are identified for appointments at Stationing Matching Group 3.
- Circuit Stewards should arrange visits as above, for ordained and probationer deacons as soon as possible following Stationing Matching Group 3.

M2. Should any stationing matters remain outstanding after Stationing Matching Group 3 in January, these will be dealt with by the Stationing Action Group in consultation with the Warden of the Diaconal Order.

SECTION N

VISITS

- N1.** The District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative should arrange appropriate preparation for all those who expect to be involved when a deacon who has been identified for an appointment visits the Circuit. This preparation should take place prior to Stationing Matching Group 2, which meets in early December. Those expected to participate in the preparation are the Circuit Stewards, other members of the Circuit Invitation Committee, and Church Stewards from the churches where the deacon will serve and who will be involved when a deacon visits.
- N2.** When a deacon has been identified for an appointment the purpose of the visit is to confirm the stationing, which should be regarded as a given, apart from in exceptional circumstances.
- N3.** Immediately following a Stationing Matching Group meeting, or a meeting of the Stationing Action Group, the Warden will notify each deacon and Circuit of any appointment that has been identified.

Probationer deacons and Circuits, in which probationers have been identified for appointments, will be notified of the appointments after Stationing Matching Group Meeting 3 in January.

It is advisable for those who will be involved in the visit to keep the following days free as the visit should take place within ten days.

- N4.** When the name of a deacon has been provided, the Circuit Stewards should make a telephone call, after 9:00am the following day, to the deacon concerned and invite them together with their spouse/partner and children or a friend (as appropriate) to visit at a mutually agreed time.

The Circuit Stewards are responsible for organising the visit. They should ascertain from the deacon what family or other circumstances may need to be taken into account during the visit. Where children are visiting it may be that activities will need to be provided and an opportunity for rest. The family may wish for appropriate people to help in their supervision, bearing in mind the requirement for current DBS clearance. Such arrangements should be discussed and mutually agreed prior to the visit.

The length of the visit should be agreed and some ideas about a programme for the visit should be discussed. The deacon should be asked whom in particular they would like to meet and what areas of the Circuit or community they would wish to see.

The deacon should also be asked if they would wish to make a presentation or an opening statement to the Circuit Invitation Committee or lead devotions when they meet with them. If so, necessary preparations should be put in place.

Circuit Stewards should be familiar with the condition of the manse prior to the visit and be able to describe the work that they intend to complete before the deacon takes up the appointment. If appointment is for a diaconal probationer, a copy of the District Manse Inspection should be provided to the Warden. Circuit Stewards should also listen carefully to any requests that the deacon and their family make. Of course, Circuits will not necessarily be able to meet all the requests but the visit should be followed by a Letter of Understanding stating clearly what work will be undertaken and when (see **Appendix 1** for a sample Letter of Understanding).

The manse should confirm to SO 803. If a new manse is to be purchased, then the purchase should be complete before April. Similarly, if the manse is currently let, the lease must be finalised before April and the tenants should have moved out before then. There should be an up-to-date Manse Inspection report.

Deacons and Circuits should engage appropriately with the visit as failure to do so could lead to deacons being left without an appointment or Circuits with a diaconal vacancy.

- N5.** The deacon's profile should only be copied for members of the Circuit Invitation Committee, the Superintendent and the Church Stewards from churches where the deacon will serve. Deacons' profiles should always be treated with great care and sensitivity by Circuit Stewards, Church Stewards and members of the Invitation Committee. Church Stewards, Circuit Stewards and members of the Circuit Invitation Committee must destroy copies, both paper and electronic copies once the stationing process is complete, at the latest by a few days after Conference. General guidance on GDPR can be found at [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/gdpr)
- N6.** Once the visit has been arranged, but before it takes place, it would be helpful if further information could be shared with the deacon. Such information might include local knowledge of schools, hospitals, transport, shops and places of interest. Further details about the Circuit may also be appreciated. This might include the Circuit plan, local church mission statements, Circuit Policy, newsletters and website addresses. It is important that Circuit Stewards ensure that travel directions and a meeting place for the visit are in place. A folder of this information should be ready to be sent electronically or posted as soon as the name of a deacon is received.
- N7.** Where a deacon is travelling a long distance to a Circuit, overnight accommodation should be arranged, if required. For their rest and relaxation, it is most appropriate for a deacon and those accompanying them to be accommodated in a hotel or something similar. Circuits are responsible for expenses, including overnight accommodation, and these should be agreed and paid on the day of the visit.
- N8.** Visits are stressful and tiring for all concerned. Care should be taken that not too much is packed into one day. It should not be a non-stop round of meeting, greeting and visiting. The watchword is sensitivity for all involved. During the visit the deacon and their family or friend should be given time to themselves. The Circuit must make provision for accompanying family or friends when the deacon has a role specific conversations (e.g. as in **N12** below). Circuit Stewards will also need time to absorb and reflect on the information provided to them.
- N9.** The deacon and those accompanying them should look at the manse and those other

facilities in the vicinity, which they wish to see. They should also visit the churches where the deacon will serve.

- N10.** The deacon should have a conversation with the Superintendent, by telephone if necessary. A probationer deacon should meet with their supervisor.
- N11.** Most importantly, time needs to be given to meetings with local Church Stewards of churches in which the deacon will serve and members of the community with which the deacon will be involved. The deacon should also meet others whom they identified in the introductory conversations with the Circuit Stewards (see **N4**). Meetings should give the opportunity for conversation. They should not be likened to an interview. At these meetings conversations should try to draw out the deacon's experiences, style and approach.
- N12.** The deacon should meet with members of the Circuit Invitation Committee. If the Circuit Invitation Committee is large in number; sensitivity suggests that not all members should participate in this meeting with the deacon, although all should have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation for the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is for the deacon and the Circuit Invitation Committee to explore how the appointment will work in practice, bearing in mind the results of consultations regarding current needs and new opportunities will need to be addressed. The committee should be well prepared and Should plan, in advance, questions to be asked and by whom. Lengthy hypothetical scenarios should be avoided and questions relating to race, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability issues must not be asked. If the deacon indicated in the introductory conversations with the Circuit Stewards that they would like to make a presentation or an opening statement (see **N4**), time should be allocated for this and for any subsequent questions that may arise.
- N13.** Deacons are directly stationed and, therefore, an invitation to serve in the Circuit is not appropriate and should not be issued by the Circuit Invitation Committee, nor should there be a conversation seeking knowledge of whether a deacon is happy to come following a visit. It is assumed that matches made within the diaconal matching process will hold unless there are significant reasons as to why this should not be the case. Within two days of the visit, after allowing time for prayer and reflection, deacons and Circuits should offer the Warden of the Diaconal Order, the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative some written feedback about the visit, preferably electronically. All diaconal appointments are **confirmed** by the Warden of the Diaconal Order who will inform Stationing Administration **only** after all visits of both ordained and probationer deacons have taken place. After the Warden has confirmed the appointment, a Letter of Understanding should be copied to and approved by the Warden of the Diaconal Order, the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative as well as the individual deacon concerned (see below and **Appendix 1**). Within two days, Circuit Stewards/Superintendents and deacons should be in touch with the Warden of the Diaconal Order, the Chair of District and the District Lay Stationing Representative to offer feedback on the visit.
- N14.** A Letter of Understanding should be agreed between the Circuit Stewards and the deacon. It should include a description of the nature of the work to be undertaken by the deacon, including details of any resources available to support the appointment. It is

helpful if the areas of work that a deacon is expected to undertake are clear and prioritised to avoid any unfulfilled expectations.

In addition, it should include a general description of the expectations that the Circuit, on behalf of the Methodist Church, has of all its deacons together with a statement of the initial length of the appointment. It should also include details of the manse and of any work to be done at the manse before the deacon arrives. It should include an assurance that the Circuit will uphold the standards of good practice set out in various sections of the CPD, and an assurance that the deacon understands their responsibilities in the care of the manse.

It should give details of any support mechanisms being established and any other resources available (including adequate project finances and other resources where appropriate) to support the appointment. The Circuit should also give assurance that they will actively support the deacon, bearing in mind the often isolating nature of the work and, especially, the deacon's commitment to being a member of the Methodist's Diaconal Order.

The Letter of Understanding records the result of the diaconal matching process and visit. **It must be completed within six weeks of the visit** It does not affect the Conference's power to station annually as it sees fit.

The Letter should be approved by the Warden of the Diaconal Order, the District Chair and the District Lay Stationing Representative. It is very important that the Letter is signed by the senior Circuit Steward and the deacon. The Letter of Understanding should be completed within six weeks of the visit taking place. It should be sent to the District Chair, the District Lay Stationing Representative and to the Warden of the Diaconal Order.

A sample of a Letter is included in **Appendix 1** of this document. The samples should be adapted to fit the particular circumstances of each appointment and any agreement reached between the deacon and the Circuit Stewards. However, the paragraph immediately before the signatures should always remain unchanged.

Any match must remain confidential until the stationing matching for deacons has been completed.

APPENDIX 1(a) SAMPLE LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING (PRESBYTERAL APPOINTMENTS)

To be written on headed paper with the address and contact details of the Circuit

Letter of understanding <Name of Presbyter>

<Name of Circuit> **Period of Invitation** From Sept 2024 to Aug 20...

The appointment

This *full time (or *part time) appointment is as a Methodist Minister (presbyter) to the <name of Circuit> Circuit.

The presbyter will share with colleagues in the exercise of pastoral responsibility in the Circuit. It is currently expected that they will do so through exercising *pastoral charge primarily in <names of churches> (**or other specified responsibilities**). It is recognised that, during the course of the appointment, after discussion and agreement, this may vary in response to the developing needs of the Circuit and any changing membership of the Circuit staff.

Areas of responsibility

(Please expand at each relevant point below with reference to the Circuit profile, including any agreed variations therein, so that all are clear what has been agreed about the areas of responsibility (See Section I). Any specific expectations in any of the areas should also be included.)

- Preach and lead worship in the above churches and elsewhere in the Circuit.
- Be responsible in collaboration with others for the pastoral care of church members.
- Encourage congregations, groups and individuals in their faith journeys.
- Guide the churches in acts of mission, both within the church and in outreach.
- Build on existing contacts in local communities and with church user groups and develop this outreach work.
- Develop existing ecumenical links.
- Explore opportunities to improve inter-faith understanding within the community.
- Help develop a shared vision, locally ecumenically and within the Circuit.
- Help churches to identify priorities and focus resources upon them.
- Exercise your particular distinctive and God-given gifts on a Circuit-wide basis and as appropriate beyond the Circuit.
- **(If the presbyter has identified on their profile, or at the visit to the Circuit, any distinctive gifts and skills, explain how these gifts and skills might be used to the benefit of the mission of the Church and the presbyter.)**

This involves:

- Working collaboratively as a member of the Circuit Staff (and agreeing Circuit ministerial responsibilities with ministerial colleagues).
- Engaging with Circuit Staff and stewards in pursuit of challenges and opportunities with regard to the future direction and development of circuit-wide issues and policies.
- Working in partnership with Church Stewards and pastoral visitors.
- Attending and supporting social and fellowship events (e.g. coffee mornings, women's fellowship).
- **(Include any other expectations.)**

Supporting each other

The Circuit Stewards exercise a general pastoral care for and are sensitive to the needs of ministers and their families. We meet with ministers as a leadership team on a regular basis.

We encourage our ministers to have sufficient rest and recreational time to develop family life, hobbies, exercise and fellowship and also to have time for continuing study, learning and reflection upon experience.

Every ordained minister is required to meet one-to-one with a trained, resourced and approved supervisor in line with the Methodist Church Supervision Policy (2021-2026) ([What is supervision? \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)) to reflect on their vocation and practice at least six times per year. Others with significant pastoral responsibility are encouraged to be in supervision. Ministers are also required to undertake Ministerial Development Review each year.

(Insert any particular Circuit policies concerning time off, study, support etc.)

Period of invitation

This *initial invitation is for <number> years in accordance with SO 543(1) (or 547(2)). It will therefore be open to extension in <year> by a decision of the Circuit Meeting in September <year>.

or

This extension of invitation is for <number> years in accordance with SO 545(2) (or 545(3)). It will therefore be open to further extension in <year> by a decision of the Circuit Meeting in September <year>.

Provision of housing

[For example...] A manse is provided as described in the Circuit/appointment profile.

The Circuit, with the support of the District Manses Committee, is committed to uphold the standards of good practice set out in the "Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers" and "Guidelines on Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses" (CPD Volume 2, 2022,

pages 801 to 804, see also SO 803). The Circuit also upholds the principle that the care of manses is a matter of partnership and co-operation between the occupant(s) and the Circuit Stewards. Circuit Stewards must have whatever access is necessary, whilst respecting the privacy of the manse, to ensure that the property is kept in good repair. It is the responsibility of the occupant(s) to ensure that the manse is kept clean and presentable. An annual review and ongoing programme of maintenance and redecoration will be sustained by the Circuit.

Changes that we anticipate prior to your arrival in August <year> include redecoration to the interior and some re-carpeting. Your input into this process will be sought and appreciated.

(When the occupant(s) vacate the manse the guidance contained in the publication of CPD at the time should be followed.)

Other resources to be provided

[For example...] The Circuit makes budget provision for local training of ministers, lay employees and for those exploring vocation in ordained ministry. *(Include any other commitments given to supporting the presbyter.)*

***[In every case, without change]* This letter records the outcome of the invitation process. It does not fetter the freedom of the Conference to station annually, as it sees fit. Nor does it preclude the development, during the period of invitation, of the understanding, by the Circuit Meeting and the Church Councils, of their mission and policies, or by the presbyter of their vocation.**

Signatures:
<name>

Senior Circuit Steward
On behalf of the <name of Circuit> Circuit of the Methodist Circuit
<date>

<name>

Presbyter

APPENDIX 1(b) SAMPLE LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING (PROBATIONER PRESBYTERAL APPOINTMENTS or PRESBYTER OF ANOTHER CONFERENCE, ENTERING INTO A FIRST APPOINTMENT IN OUR CONNEXION)

To be written on headed paper with the address and contact details of the circuit

Letter of Understanding

<Name of Presbyter>

<Name of Circuit>.....

Period of Invitation From Sept 2024 to Aug 20...

The appointment

This full time (or part time) appointment is as a Methodist Minister, probationer presbyter (or presbyter of another Conference, entering into a first appointment in our Connexion) to the <name of Circuit> Circuit.

The probationer presbyter appointed (or presbyter of another Conference, entering into a first appointment in our Connexion) will share with colleagues in the exercise of pastoral responsibility in the Circuit. It is currently expected that they will do so through exercising *pastoral charge (or in the case of a probationer presbyter *pastoral responsibility) primarily in <names of churches> (*or other specified responsibilities)*. It is recognised that, during the course of the appointment, after discussion and agreement, this may vary in response to the developing needs of the Circuit and any changing membership of the Circuit Staff. For probationer presbyters, any proposed changes to the appointment, at any stage during the probationary period, requires permission from the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee through the District Chair. For Ministers of Other Churches and Conferences, there would not normally be any changes to this appointment in the first two years.

Areas of responsibility

(Please expand at each relevant point below with reference to the Circuit profile, including any agreed variations therein, so that all are clear what has been agreed about the areas of responsibility. Any specific expectations in any of the areas should also be included.)

- Preach and lead worship in the above churches and elsewhere in the Circuit. **(In the case of a probationer presbyter who will not have authorisation to preside at the Lord's Supper, include what arrangements will be put in place for them to assist in the conduct of the Lord's Supper at least once in each quarter.)**
- Be responsible in collaboration with others for the pastoral care of church members.
- Encourage congregations, group, and individuals in their faith journeys.

- Guide the church in acts of mission, both within the church and in outreach.
- Build on existing contacts in local communities and with church user groups and develop this outreach work.
- Develop existing ecumenical links.
- Explore opportunities to improve inter-faith understanding within the community.
- Help develop a shared vision, locally ecumenically and within the Circuit.
- Help churches to identify priorities and focus resources upon them.
- Exercise your particular distinctive and God-given gifts on a Circuit-wide basis and as appropriate beyond the Circuit.
- **If the presbyter has identified on their profile, or at the visit to the Circuit, any distinctive gifts and skills, explain how these gifts and skills might be used to the benefit of the mission of the Church and the presbyter.**

This involves:

- Working collaboratively as a member of the Circuit staff (and agreeing Circuit ministerial responsibilities with ministerial colleagues).
- Engaging with Circuit staff and stewards in pursuit of challenges and opportunities with regard to the future direction and development of Circuit-wide issues and policies.
- Working in partnership with Church Stewards and pastoral visitors.
- Attending and supporting social and fellowship events (e.g. coffee mornings, women's fellowship).
- **(Include any other expectations.)**

Supporting each other

The Circuit Stewards exercise a general pastoral care for and are sensitive to the needs of ministers and their families. We meet with ministers as a leadership team on a regular basis.

We encourage our ministers to have sufficient rest and recreational time to develop family life, hobbies, exercise and fellowship and also to have time for continuing study, learning and reflection upon experience.

Every ordained minister is required to meet 1:1 with a trained, resourced and approved supervisor in line with the Methodist Church Supervision Policy ([What is supervision? \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)) to reflect on their vocation and practice at least times per year. Others with significant pastoral responsibility are encouraged to be in supervision.

(Insert any particular Circuit policies concerning time off, study, support etc. and, in this case of a probationer presbyter or a presbyter of another Conference entering into a first appointment in our Connexion, how provision will be made for supervision, support and time for study.)

Period of invitation

This period of deemed invitation is for <number> years in accordance with SO 543 (or 547). It will, therefore, be open to extension in <year> by a decision of the Circuit Meeting in September <year>.

Provision of housing

[For example...] A manse is provided as described in the circuit/appointment profile.

The Circuit, with the support of the District Manses Committee, is committed to uphold the standards of good practice set out in the “Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers” and “Guidelines on Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses” (CPD Volume 2, 2022, pages 801 to 804, see also SO 803). The Circuit also upholds the principle that the care of manses is a matter of partnership and co-operation between the occupant(s) and the Circuit Stewards. Circuit Stewards must have whatever access is necessary, whilst respecting the privacy of the manse, to ensure that the property is kept in good repair. It is the responsibility of the occupant(s) to ensure that the manse is kept clean and presentable. An annual review and ongoing programme of maintenance and redecoration will be sustained by the Circuit.

Changes that we anticipate prior to your arrival in August <year> include redecoration to the interior and some re-carpeting. Your input into this process will be sought and appreciated.

(When the occupant(s) vacate the manse the guidance contained in the publication of CPD at the time should be followed.)

Other resources to be provided

[For example...] The Circuit makes budget provision for local training of ministers, lay employees and for those exploring vocation in ordained ministry. *(Include any other commitments given to supporting the presbyter)*

***[In every case, without change]* This letter records the outcome of the matching process and visit. It does not fetter the freedom of the Conference to station annually, as it sees fit. Nor does it preclude the development, during the period of deemed invitation, of the understanding, by the Circuit Meeting and the Church Councils, of their mission and policies, or by the presbyter of their vocation.**

Signatures:

<name>

Senior Circuit Steward

On behalf of the <name of Circuit> Circuit of the Methodist Circuit

<date>

<name>

Presbyter

<date>

APPENDIX 1(c) SAMPLE LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING (DIACONAL APPOINTMENTS)

To be written on headed paper with the address and contact details of the Circuit

Letter of understanding <name of Deacon>

<name of Circuit>

Period of Invitation From Sept 2024 to Aug 20...

<title of appointment/churches> Appointment

The appointment

This full time (or part time) appointment is as a Methodist Minister (Deacon) to the <name of Circuit> Circuit.

The deacon appointed will remain committed to being a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order and share with colleagues in a ministry of servant leadership, pastoral care and outreach and prayer, seeking to equip God's people for service in the world as set out in the profile.

Areas of responsibility

(For example, outline the major areas of responsibility within the Circuit and enlarge as necessary.)

-
-
-
-

This involves:

(For example, if there is anything specific or 'special' about the appointment or ways of working, it can be noted here.)

Supporting each other

[For example...]

The Circuit Stewards exercise a general pastoral care for and are sensitive to the needs of ministers and their families. We meet with ministers as a leadership team on a regular basis.

We encourage our ministers to have sufficient rest and recreational time to develop family life, hobbies, exercise and fellowship and also to have time for continuing study, learning and reflection upon experience.

(In the case of a diaconal probationer enter additional information related to how provision will be made for supervision, support and time for study.)

We support the Deacon in their lifelong commitment to the MDO and the obligations and expectations, particularly the requirements to attend the Area Group, Annual Convocation and Spiritual Direction.

Every ordained minister is required to meet 1:1 with a trained, resourced and approved supervisor in line with the Methodist Church Supervision Policy ([What is supervision? \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)) to reflect on their vocation and practice at least six times per year. Others with significant pastoral responsibility are encouraged to be in supervision.

Period of invitation

This initial appointment is for <number> years in accordance with SO 542(4). It will therefore be open to extension by invitation in <year> by a decision of the Circuit Meeting in September <year>.

or

This extension of invitation is for <number> years in accordance with SO 546(3) (or 546(4)). It will therefore be open to further extension in <year> by a decision of the Circuit Meeting in September <year>.

Provision of housing

[For example...]

A manse is provided as described in the Circuit/appointment profile.

The Circuit, with the support of the District Manses Committee, is committed to uphold the standards of good practice set out in the “Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers” and “Guidelines on Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses” (CPD Volume 2, 2022, pages 801 to 804, see also SO 803). The Circuit also upholds the principle that the care of manses is a matter of partnership and co-operation between the occupant(s) and the Circuit Stewards. Circuit Stewards must have whatever access is necessary, whilst respecting the privacy of the manse, to ensure that the property is kept in good repair. It is the responsibility of the occupant(s) to ensure that the manse is kept clean and presentable. An annual review and ongoing programme of maintenance and redecoration will be sustained by the Circuit.

Changes that we anticipate prior to your arrival in August <year> include redecoration to the interior and some re-carpeting. Your input into this process will be sought and appreciated.

(When the occupant(s) vacate the manse the guidance contained in the publication of CPD at the time should be followed.)

Other resources to be provided

[For example...]

The Circuit makes budget provision for local training of ministers, lay employees and for those exploring vocation in ordained ministry.

There will be a regular steering group to meet with the deacon to support the work. The convener of that group is.....

There will be available an annual budget of..... to support the appointment, apart from the usual travel and out-of-pocket expenses as agreed by the Circuit.

(*[In every case, without change]* This letter records the outcome of the deacon's visit to the Circuit as part of the stationing process. It does not fetter the freedom of the Conference to station annually, as it sees fit. Nor does it preclude the development, during the prospective period of appointment, of the understanding, by the Circuit Meeting and the Church Councils, of their mission and policies, or by the deacon of their vocation.)

Signatures:

<name>

Senior Circuit Steward

On behalf of the <name of Circuit> Circuit of the Methodist Circuit

<date>

<name>

Deacon

<date>

**APPENDIX 2(a)
SAMPLE REASONED STATEMENT AND NOTICE TO CIRCUIT
MEETING MEMBERS WHERE AN EXTENSION IS
RECOMMENDED BY THE CIRCUIT INVITATION COMMITTEE**

Sample notice

<name of Circuit> Circuit
<date, time and venue of Circuit Meeting>

Private and Confidential

**To Members of the Circuit Meeting
Re: Extension of the appointment of <name of presbyter or deacon>**

Please find enclosed a Reasoned Statement giving the recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee and the reasons for it. If any member of the Circuit Meeting intends to oppose this recommendation or move an amendment, they are required to inform the Chair of the Circuit Meeting, <name>, in written form no later than one week before the commencement of the meeting indicating their intention with the substance of their grounds for doing so.

Please note that these documents are confidential and for the members of the Circuit Meeting only.

The Circuit Meeting will be chaired by:
<Name of person who will chair the meeting>
<Address>
<Tel no>
<E-mail address>

<*Signed by Circuit Meeting Secretary*>

Sample reasoned statement

Extension of the invitation of <name of presbyter or deacon>

Recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee:

The Circuit Invitation Committee recommends that the presbyter/deacon be invited for a further <number> years from September 2024.

The Reasoned Statement for the recommendation from the Circuit Invitation Committee to the Circuit Meeting on <date of meeting>:

The current *invitation **(in the case of a period begun as a probationer presbyter or of a first-term presbyter not initially open to invitation [period of deemed invitation/ in the case of a first-term deacon] period of appointment)** of <name of presbyter or deacon> comes to an end in August 2024. They indicated to the Circuit Stewards that they are willing to offer an extension of <number> years.

The Circuit Stewards then ensured that appropriate consultation took place, as follows, in accordance with SO 545 (SO 546 in the case of a deacon) and the Code of Practice 2024.

Circuit Stewards met with <name> and the family to talk about aspirations and family and personal issues.

Circuit Stewards ensured that a consultation process was put in place in the local churches. Views from a representative sample of people were sought about the gifts and graces of <name> in relation to the challenges and developing work of the church.

Circuit Stewards sought views from the wider community and ecumenical partners.

Circuit Stewards reflected on Circuit Policy.

The Circuit Invitation Committee met to receive from the Circuit Stewards a written report on the feedback and, after due consideration, the above recommendation to the Circuit Meeting was agreed.

After further consultation with <name>, they confirmed that they are willing to offer an extension of <number> years.

Reasons for the recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee:

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-
-

Points for reflection and exploration that have been discussed with..... following the consultation:

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-

**APPENDIX 2(b)
SAMPLE REASONED STATEMENT AND NOTICE TO CIRCUIT
MEETING MEMBERS WHERE AN EXTENSION IS NOT
RECOMMENDED BY THE CIRCUIT INVITATION COMMITTEE**

Sample notice

<name of Circuit> Circuit
<date, time and venue of Circuit Meeting>

Private and Confidential

To Members of the Circuit Meeting

Re: Extension of the appointment of <name of presbyter or deacon>

Please find enclosed a reasoned statement giving the recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee and the reasons for it.

Please note that these documents are confidential and for the members of the Circuit Meeting only.

The Circuit Meeting will be chaired by:

<Name of person who will chair the meeting>

<Address>

<Tel no>

<E-mail address>

<Signed by Circuit Meeting Secretary>

Sample reasoned statement

Extension of the invitation of <name of presbyter or deacon>

Recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee:

The Circuit Invitation Committee does not recommend any further invitation.

The Reasoned Statement for the recommendation from the circuit Invitation Committee to the Circuit Meeting on <date of meeting>:

The current *invitation (in the case of a period begun as a probationer presbyter or of a first-term presbyter not initially open to invitation *period of deemed invitation/ in the case of a first-term deacon *period of appointment) of <name of presbyter or deacon> comes to an end in August 2024. They indicated to the Circuit Stewards that they are willing to offer an extension of <number> years.

The Circuit Stewards then ensured that appropriate consultation took place, as follows, in accordance with SO 545 (SO 546 in the case of a deacon) and the Code of Practice 2024.

Circuit Stewards met with <name> and the family to talk about aspirations and family and personal issues.

Circuit Stewards ensured that a consultation process was put in place in the local churches. Views from a representative sample of people were sought about the gifts and graces of <name> in relation to the challenges and developing work of the church.

Circuit Stewards sought views from the wider community and ecumenical partners.

Circuit Stewards reflected on Circuit Policy.

The Circuit Invitation Committee met to receive from the Circuit Stewards a written report on the feedback and, after due consideration, the above recommendation to the Circuit Meeting was agreed.

After further consultation with <name>, they reaffirmed their willingness to offer an extension of <number> years.

Reasons for the recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee:

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APPENDIX 3

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

There are five basic principles to observe when giving feedback of any kind.

Wherever possible, feedback should be:

1. specific and clear;
2. regular and balanced;
3. timely and planned;
4. owned;
5. constructive in nature (e.g. - you might consider trying....).

1. Specific and clear

In order to obtain feedback that is specific and clear, the questions posed when seeking feedback also need to be clear and focused. The questioner needs to ask what is good and valued, could be improved or adapted, what is less helpful or unhelpful, and what suggested areas for attention and improvement there are (see **E20, J20**). The questions need to elicit examples of practice and behaviour that fit these categories. Too generalised questions will elicit too generalised feedback. While specific and clear the feedback questions must be open questions (rather than closed ones) so it is helpful to ask:

- What are the gifts and skills of -- (*presbyter*) -- that you most appreciate?

It is not helpful to ask,

- Is -- (*presbyter*) -- a skilled and inspiring leader?

2. Regular and balanced

The series of feedback questions must challenge respondents to name some positive as well as more challenging issues. Feedback, which is only negative, prevents the hearer from engaging with it. Less balanced feedback is more likely just to be rejected. If a range of views can be expressed, it is easier and more possible for a minister to engage with it well.

Many ministers are not used to receiving and engaging with feedback on a regular basis. This will change as ministers become more familiar with seeing supervision and MDR records. It is important for those offering written feedback to consider how best to support a minister engaging with written feedback, especially if they have not been through a re-invitation process before, or for a very long time (see **E25, J23**). Care should be taken to ensure that feedback is offered in a supportive and not a careless way.

3. Timely and planned

The same principles underlying a consultation period apply to the element of giving and receiving of feedback, namely that it should allow sufficient time to be comprehensive but

limited in length so that it is not too dominant and stressful and uncertain an experience. It is therefore important to set out in writing the time-line for seeking feedback, the process used to collate the feedback and offer it to the minister indicating who will do this and agree a venue and date to offer it. This kind of careful planning can re-assure a minister that the process is not careless or rushed or too drawn out. **(Make a plan, agree it and stick to it!)**

4. Owned

In the life of a Christian community, all feedback should be owned when submitted and not be anonymous. The process of collating the summary of feedback then removes names to prevent individual comments being identified. It should be clear when seeking feedback that this is the case. Those collating the feedback need to know who offered which comment – in order to assess its significance and context but these identifying markers are then removed during the process of collation (see **E24**). Roles **can** sometimes be used helpfully, - a church member said... or a colleague minister said....

5. Constructive

Feedback must be honest and real but wherever possible it should be positive about how something that is less than helpful could be made better. So, a comment that identifies that chairing of meetings is a little unfocused and the process is not always clear could be attached to a suggestion to try using a timed agenda to keep better focus. The framing of the questions seeking feedback can suggest to respondents that they might offer suggestions of how to improve in a particular area of work. Feedback on a personal characteristic that cannot be changed or amended is not valid and should never be feedback in a re-invitation process. Feedback on someone's ethnicity, gender, nationality or age is not permitted in any circumstances and should be shredded on receipt. Those receiving and engaging with written feedback will engage more effectively with requested changes of practice if they feel encouraged by hearing what is valued and going well and if it is their practice of ministry which is the focus of the feedback.

It is helpful for those giving and receiving feedback to recognise it is demanding as a process for all concerned and one to be characterized by integrity, care and skill.

APPENDIX 4

CRITICAL APPOINTMENTS (form to be completed and sent to stationingadministration@methodistchurch.org.uk)

STATIONING MATCHING 2023-2024

S4 DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL APPOINTMENTS – PROFORMA FOR REASONED STATEMENTS

Name and number of Circuit and District		
Region		
District priority	Number of critical appointments in District	Priority number for this appointment (1 is highest)
Agreed Regional Band	Number of critical appointments in Region	Agreed Regional Band (A-C with A being most critical)
Number of churches in circuit with the membership numbers for each church		
Number of churches in this appointment		
Number of members in this appointment. Please note that it is possible for small appointments to be designated as critical if they meet sufficient criteria (e.g. in an island context)		
Number of members in whole Circuit		
Details of other staff in Circuit, lay and ordained.		
Please indicate any anticipated changes to staffing/responsibilities before the commencement of this appointment		
If this application is for a one or two minister circuit, please explain how the Circuit is working with neighbouring circuits and outline any plans for the future		

<p>If this appointment were not filled what would be the implications for other appointments, such as a probationer or MOCC?</p>	
<p>Please make notes against the criteria this appointment meets below. Please do not feel you need to complete every box.</p>	
<p>A Missional priority, significant Fresh Expression or new work. <i>This can be in the planning stage but cannot be purely a long term intention. What present or immediate plans are there for this in the next year? Please give specific details.</i></p>	
<p>B The need for a specific skill not available within the current staff team <i>This could include leadership and language skills. Please identify the particular skills needed and why.</i></p>	
<p>C Significant Ecumenical commitment <i>This must be a significant plan or a reality (not just an aspiration). Please indicate if this appointment is part of an ecumenical area or a covenanted partnership. If this is an ecumenical project please give details of why a Methodist Presbyter is needed. To what extent would the mission of the church be impeded should a Methodist minister not be appointed- please give details of other non-Methodist staff in the area/partnership</i></p>	
<p>D An area where not to station a Methodist puts Christian presence at great risk</p>	
<p>E Geographical isolation <i>This includes islands and extreme rural communities where there are no clergy colleagues in reasonable proximity.</i></p>	
<p>F A large pastoral load <i>Where not to fill would leave any member of existing staff with more than 250 members or more than 10 small and widely spaced churches. (These are guideline figures.)</i></p>	

<p>G A history of multiple fragilities <i>Ongoing complex situations arising from:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The recent death of a presbyter/deacon in circuit.</i> ▪ <i>Where a circuit has experienced significant conflict or division in recent years.</i> ▪ <i>Recent experience of complaints, safeguarding issues, ill health of ministers or resignations.</i> 	
<p>Any other factors you wish the Scrutiny Group to be aware of. Please make a note here if there are additional confidential matters which the Chair wishes to communicate to the group by telephone.</p>	

These criteria are neither exclusive nor exhaustive. We are aware of the different strains and needs round the pastoral care of a large number of members in one or two large congregations and the care of fewer members scattered in many small and more distant congregations.

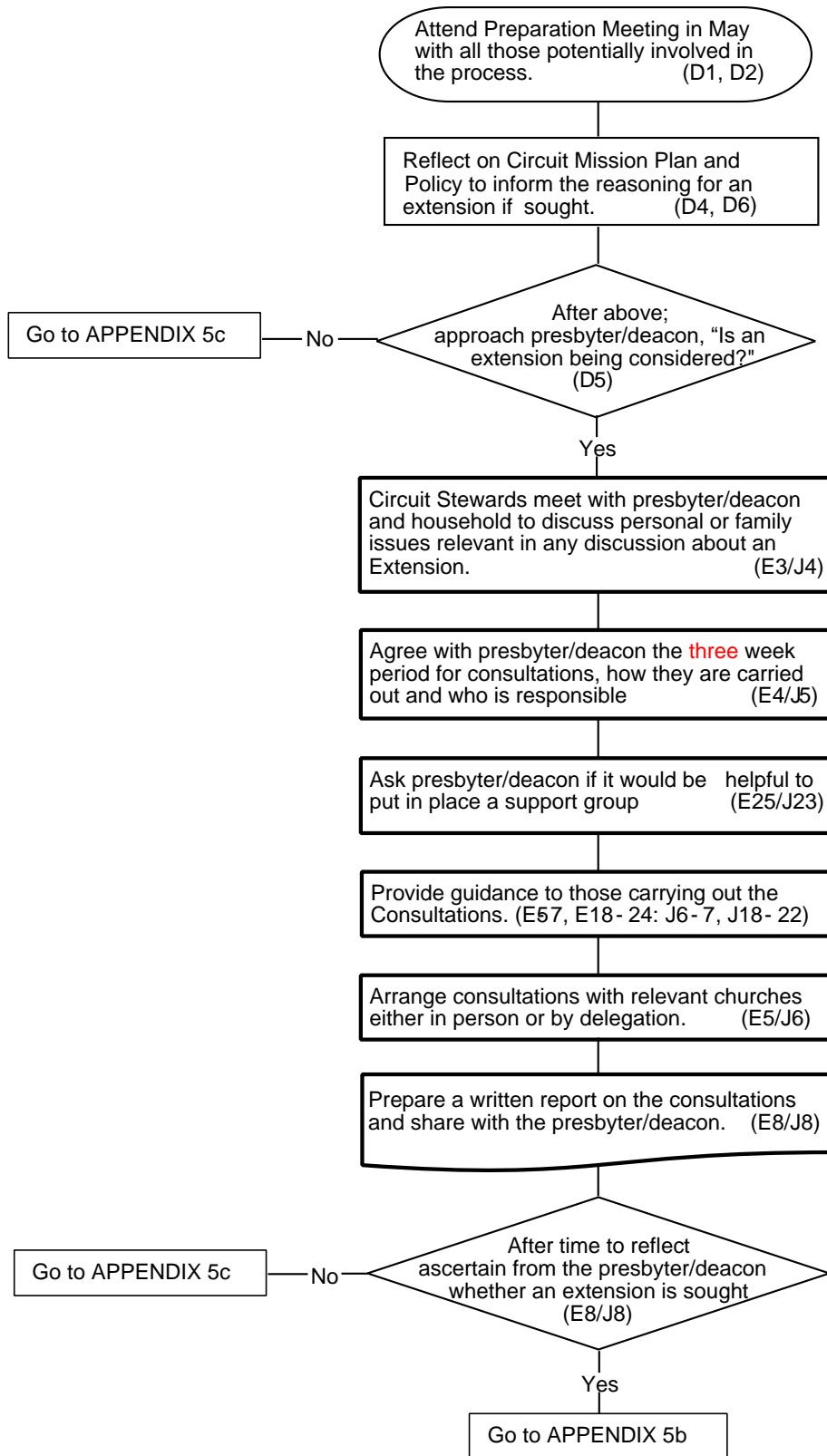
- The Scrutiny Group will prayerfully examine the profiles and Reasoned Statements. In order to ensure that the Scrutiny Group designates those places of the most acute need connexionally, it is likely that such places will match at least **three or four** of the criteria. If one criterion is particularly significant for an appointment, then that appointment may be designated as ‘critical’ while only matching one or two of the criteria.
- The Chair of the Scrutiny Group may, with the agreement of the group, contact the Chair of District during the scrutiny meeting for clarification if required.
- Normally, no more than one appointment from any one circuit can be accepted as ‘critical’. Exceptions to this may apply particularly for very large circuits with multiple appointments in stationing. On occasions, it is felt to be essential that one of two appointments is filled and therefore, the Circuit wishes both to be submitted as critical in the hope that one will be so designated. Districts are asked to make a call on which is the most important and only submit that one – if they face this situation.
- Appeals process. Any Chair wishing to appeal a decision of the Scrutiny Group may do so by sending a clearly titled Reasoned Statement to scrutinygroup@methodistchurch.org.uk **within three days** of receiving the decision. **Do not** send your Reasoned Statement to any other e-mail address. Appeals are considered by at least three members of the Scrutiny Group plus the Chair of Chairs and a nominated Lay Stationing Representative. Results of appeals will be communicated to Chairs by e-mail.
- A scrutiny process will run before SMG2, if required, by previously unforeseen circumstances. Normally, no further appointments will be designated as ‘critical’ after SMG2.
- If designated Critical, the Stationing Matching Group will make every effort to match and fill the appointment but cannot guarantee to be able to do so.
- Feedback on the decisions of the Scrutiny Group will be provided to the Chairs of District and Lay Stationing Representatives before the profiles are published. When published those profiles designated as Critical will be identifiable.
- Please be assured that this form is used only for the purposes of the Scrutiny Group.

The Critical Scrutiny Group will read all of the Circuit profiles submitted for stationing. The profiles smaller than those which would be accepted for the appointment of a probationer should be accompanied with a Reasoned Statement to explain why their inclusion is essential. The Group will inform the Chairs of District and the Lay Stationing Representatives if such an appointment does not meet the expectations required, in order that the Circuit can reconfigure the profile for another type of appointment (probationer, MOCC, deacon, etc.) or consider other ways of supporting mission

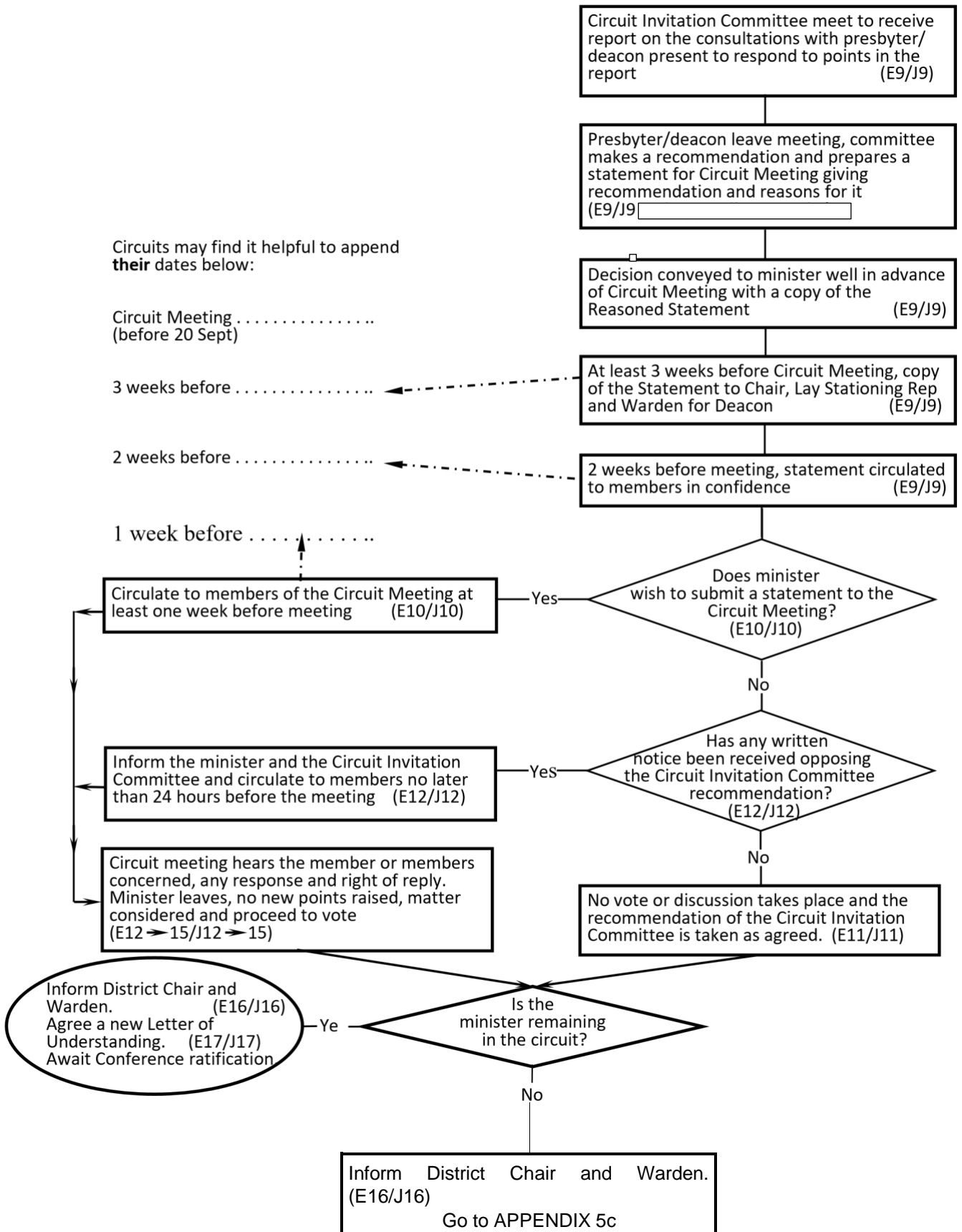
APPENDIX 5(a, b, c)

CIRCUIT STEWARDS STATIONING FLOWCHARTS (MAY 2023-)

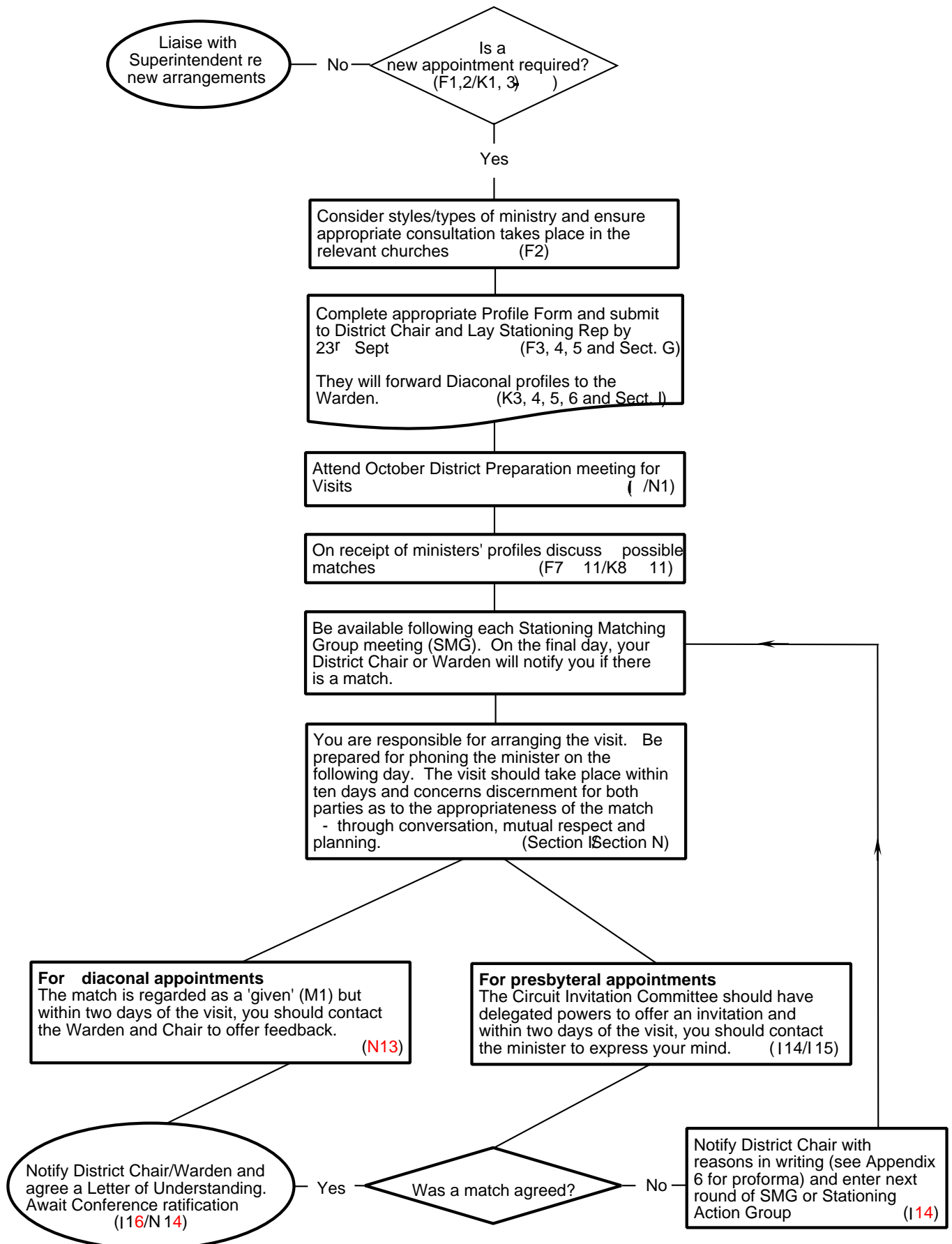
a) The Start of the Process



APPENDIX 5(b) Post-Consultation, a Minister/Deacon Seeks an Extension



APPENDIX 5(c) Where a Presbyter/Deacon is not Remaining in the Circuit



APPENDIX 6(a)

REPORT OF A STATIONING MATCH – CIRCUIT

- This form is only to be used to help further rounds in the stationing process where a stationing match has been declined.
- When complete, the form should be sent by the person who has signed it, to the presbyter concerned, the Chair of District and the Lay Stationing Representative of both Districts concerned, within one week of the visit.
- The Chair with oversight of the Circuit will then send the form to the Chair of the Stationing Committee, the Chair of the Stationing Matching Group, the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. The form will remain confidential to these people.
- If necessary, information on this form may be shared during the adoption of the stations by the Conference. It will be destroyed following Conference.

Name and number of Circuit.	
Name of presbyter matched.	
At which stationing round was this match made? (SMG1, SMG2, SMG3, Stationing Action Group).	
Date and duration of the visit.	
Did other people accompany the presbyter? If so, how were they involved with the visit?	
Outline of the timetable of the visit.	
Was this adhered to?	
Was the match declined by the Circuit Invitation Committee or by the presbyter or both?	
The reason why an invitation has not been offered or has not been accepted. Please give as much detailed information as clearly as possible.	

Any other information?	
Signed by the Chair of the Circuit Invitation Committee (or a member of the CIC) on behalf of the CIC.	
Date of signature	

APPENDIX 6(b) REPORT OF A STATIONING MATCH – PRESBYTER

This form is only to be used to help further rounds in the stationing process where a stationing match has been declined.

- When complete, the form should be sent within one week of the visit by the presbyter to their Chair of District and Lay Stationing Representative. The Chair will send it to the Chair and Lay Stationing Representative of the other District involved.
- The Chair with oversight of the Circuit will then send the form to the Chair of the Stationing Committee, the Chair of the Stationing Matching Group, the Ministerial Coordinator for the Oversight of Ordained Ministries and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference. The form will remain confidential to these people.
- If necessary, information on this form may be shared during the adoption of the stations by the Conference. It will be destroyed following Conference.

Name and number of Circuit.	
Name of presbyter matched.	
At which stationing round was this match made? (SMG1, SMG2, SMG3, Stationing Action Group).	
Date and duration of the visit.	
Did other people accompany the presbyter? If so, how were they involved with the visit?	
Outline of the timetable of the visit.	
Was this adhered to?	
Was the match declined by the Circuit Invitation Committee or by the Presbyter or both?	
The reason why an invitation has not been offered or has not been accepted. Please give as much detailed information as clearly as possible.	

Any other information?	
Signed by the presbyter	
Date of signature	