

Hearing a Call...Saying, Yes.

London District Candidates Committee faced a very positive challenge in 2008-9: a potential ten candidates were offering for ministry. In fact two of these later decided that it would be too much of a rush to candidate this year so they are developing their portfolio with the intention of candidating next year.

So, eight candidates came to the District Candidates Committee - five through the Foundation route and three through the 'portfolio' route. The three days of interviews were moving, challenging, intense and exhausting for everyone, but through them, the committee met eight very different people, and they were convinced that each of them had been called to God in different ways for ministry. The creative presentations given as part of the interviews by the 'portfolio route' candidates were a new experience, but one that spoke volumes to the committee. We discovered the value of allowing candidates to present themselves to us in their own way.

The eight candidates are a wide range of ages from their twenties to their fifties, and between them they come from three different continents. The multi-cultural nature of the London District is clearly reflected through the candidates and they were able to express their different cultural heritages through the interviews (especially through the portfolio candidates' creative presentations). The candidates have a range of backgrounds - with some who had worked in the connexional team, people working in the charitable sector, in the medical world and in the civil service. One has candidated with the intention for now of carrying out workplace ministry. His ability to explain the theology and practical advantages of that was a challenge to many hearing him.

Foundation training has been very helpful for some candidates, particularly when they have not had formal education for a long time. It was less helpful for another candidate who, the committee felt, had been 'moulded' in a particular way that had subdued his real personality. The portfolio candidates in contrast had had a great deal of intense experiences through working on their portfolios in a short space of time, and they had clearly enjoyed the process of placements, reading and discernment. Some seemed genuinely amazed that they had been called by God and there was a freshness and humility in their attitude which was delightful to witness.

We have just received the wonderful news that all eight of the London District candidates have been accepted for training for the presbyteral ministry by the Connexional committee, although they had very mixed experiences of that process. At least two of the eight found the Connexional committee very frustrating and difficult. They felt intimidated at some stages and that they were not being really heard. Others found it a good and affirming experience.

The District are asked to continue to remember the eight student ministers in prayer: Elizabeth Osei, Val Reid, Debra Chidakwa, James Cruddas, Alex Terrett, Adam Dyjasek, Linda Pearce, Michael Simpson.

By Claire Potter