

Induction pack for circuit stewards

Job description

Circuit Stewards love God, the Church, the world and especially those fellow workers committed to their care. They rely on both the grace of God and the expertise they have developed in other fields to carry them through this task. Essentially it is a practical job enabling individuals to find fulfilment in Christian service and as such each circuit steward will discover different and personal ways to respond to God's call.

The Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) puts it this way;

The circuit stewards are responsible, with the Superintendent and ministers, deacons and probationers appointed to the Circuit, for the spiritual and material well-being of the Circuit, and for upholding and acting upon the decisions of the Circuit Meeting (S.O. 531 (1)).

Circuit Stewards work as a team and share collective responsibility for leadership and specific duties.

From that general responsibility it follows that the circuit stewards should:

1. Exercise a general pastoral care for the ministers, deacons and probationers and their families
2. Meet with ministers, deacons and probationers as a leadership team at least twice a year, before the Circuit Meeting
3. Keep themselves informed of the activities of each local church
4. Be aware of District and Connexional policies affecting the circuit and its churches
5. Be sensitive to the needs of the circuit and its officers and staff
6. Inform themselves of developing movements in Methodism and the church generally
7. Be alert to and take advice on the legal consequences of their office and its responsibilities, for example, issues around lay employment, finance and property
8. Develop a vision and plans for mission within the circuit, ensuring appropriate consultation

Specific duties of the circuit steward team

Circuit Fund:

CPD has this to say;

The circuit stewards are the treasurers of the circuit fund (S.O. 532).

It is the circuit stewards' duty to ensure that the circuit fund is managed properly and efficiently according to current accounting principles and money management so as to comply with the obligations imposed upon them by S.O. 532.

That will require one circuit steward of acknowledged competence to assume particular responsibility for the circuit fund or, if there is no such steward then another competent person who is directly responsible to the circuit stewards.

Manses:

CPD states;

The circuit stewards are responsible for the interior repair and decoration and furnishing of the manses. S.O. 533.

The improvement, repair, maintenance, suitability and location of manses are matters for which the circuit and District are responsible through different bodies.

Invitations and Appointments:

According to CPD;

The circuit stewards are responsible for bringing to the invitation committee and/or the Circuit Meeting, as appropriate, proposals for invitations to ministers to serve or for ministers or deacons to continue serving in the Circuit (S.O. 534).

Also, circuit stewards are responsible for negotiating with ministers over appointments to the Circuit and to a chaplaincy, the pastoral oversight of youth and community work and to a team ministry.

Meetings:

Church Councils, Circuit Meetings and the District Synod.

One circuit steward is to be appointed to a Church Council and at least one to the District Synod.

The circuit stewards are ex officio members of, and are entitled to attend all, official meetings connected with the Circuit. Circuit stewards should decide amongst themselves which of their number are to attend the various meetings and then to report back to all.

Person specification

Essential

1. A Christian faith and a commitment to serve
2. Willing to be supportive and affirming of others
3. The person will need to have personal credibility, be confident, committed and willing to work in a voluntary capacity
4. The ability to have strong communication skills, ideally able to speak at Circuit events and to contribute within services and elsewhere on behalf of the Circuit
5. The person will need to be an administrator, team worker, minute secretary, property administrator and managing trustee
6. Consultative, with the ability to be analytical and to contribute to the Leadership Team
7. Able to be an agent for change
8. A sense of humour

Desirable

1. Managerial experience and /or some understanding of employment law, given the Circuit's responsibility for the employment of lay workers
2. A working knowledge of Methodist church structures and protocols and some experience of Circuit meetings and events
3. Flexibility
4. Tenacity

5. Ability to ask for help
6. Supportive of Ministers
7. Sensitivity
8. An understanding family
9. Willingness to learn on the job
10. Financial understanding
11. Negotiating skills

Circuit Finance

The circuit stewards are collectively treasurers of the Circuit Fund. Most circuits have one of their stewards who has the necessary skills and knowledge to take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the circuit funds. Otherwise the Circuit must secure a competent person to carry out these duties under close supervision of the stewards.

The circuit stewards have to present to the Circuit Meeting a forecast budget covering a 12 month period and an indication of how the costs will be met. Sometimes circuit projects will require long-term financial planning. Discussions with individual Church treasurers is essential when assessing contributions from the Churches prior to presenting figures to the Circuit Meeting for its consideration. Some circuits hold a meeting of treasurers whilst other circuits approach each church treasurer on a one-to-one basis. It should always be treated as a sensitive issue.

The circuit stewards must ensure that stipends and agreed rates of allowances to meet circuit expenses are paid to Ministers and other staff including any lay workers. This will involve income tax, National Insurance, superannuation and other items of book-keeping. Accurate records must be kept.

They must maintain the payment of financial obligations as set out in the annual budget, for example the payment to District funds and the upkeep of circuit properties (manses).

The financial year within the Connexion is from September 1st - August 31st. The annual accounts are presented to the Circuit Meeting having been examined by a qualified person.

Manses

The duties and responsibilities of a circuit /circuit property steward are briefly summarised as follows:

1. Obtain regular reports on the state of property and undertake renovations and repair as necessary
2. After every Quinquennial (5yr) inspection consider the findings and recommendations of the inspectors and take any action required
3. Prepare and consider the annual property schedules, both of accounts and investments and of the state of the property, and take any action required
4. Consider matters such as the purchase, sale, extension or alteration of the property and take appropriate action in collaboration with the District and the Property Officers in the Connexional Team
5. Appoint or employ a caretaker of the premises, if required, and supervise his/her work
6. Open and maintain a log book for the retention of the annual schedules property, quinquennial inspection reports and other relevant material and periodically examine the log book and ensure that records are up to date
7. Present an annual report on the local property to the Circuit Meeting and after every quinquennial inspection

Invitations and Appointments

Your responsibility as a circuit steward is to ensure that the process is adhered to by the circuit and individual churches. Ministers should expect consistency in the application of the process. Do not assume you know the process because you have been involved with it before.

The process starts in the March prior to the final year of appointment. Circuit stewards should familiarise themselves with the whole process and at the March Circuit Meeting ensure that an Invitation Committee is appointed and what powers are delegated to the committee.

Clear guidelines are given and should be followed:

- a) If the circuit wishes to offer an extension to the present minister
- b) If a station will become vacant for whatever reason

Consultations with the individual churches take place during June and July. Do ensure that the guidelines are read carefully.

The September Circuit Meeting needs to be held early in the month to allow time for the decision to be forwarded to the District Office. It is suggested that this happen before the 20th.

Stationing has various phases depending on need. Arrangements for meeting a proposed new minister take place as soon as possible after the relevant Stationing Committee (between October and January). It's important to plan well for this meeting, to be aware of particular needs and interests of prospective ministers and their families - and to create a good and welcoming impression of the Circuit. A warm welcome goes a long way!

The whole process of stationing and/or offering an extension is stressful for the circuit but very much more so for the minister and family. It is the circuit stewards' job to ensure that all consultations are conducted as sympathetically as possible and this is best achieved by following the guidelines at all stages. Remember that support is available within the District.

Meetings

There are a number of official meetings which circuit stewards must attend but, as each circuit has its own way of working, there are also other meetings which may require the participation of the circuit steward.

These may include:

- Circuit stewards team
- Leadership team
- Circuit meetings

- Manses committee
- Property committee
- District meetings

Church Councils

A circuit steward is an ex-officio member of; and entitled to attend; all official meetings connected with the circuit, except for local preacher's meetings unless they are also a local preacher. Any circuit steward is therefore entitled to attend the Church Council of any church within the circuit. A circuit steward should be appointed, by the circuit stewards, to attend each Church Council.

The circuit steward will be able to:

- represent the circuit at the meeting
- offer information on matters relating to circuit events and circuit policy
- gather information on local church events or concerns that need to be reported back to the rest of the circuit leadership team

District Synod

The Synod is the policy making court of the District, serving as a link between the conference and connexional team on one hand, and the circuits and local churches on the other.

One circuit steward of each circuit in the district is a representative to Synod. Each circuit also sends lay representatives, these will often include the other circuit stewards. All ministerial staff stationed in the District attend too.

At Synod there are opportunities to:

- meet with representatives from other circuits
- find out what is happening in the District
- pass on information relating to the circuit
- vote on resolutions
- elect representatives to conference

The nominated steward will report back to the other circuit stewards who have not attended Synod