

# Circuit stewards: the glue that keeps it all together



**The circuit stewards from the Hull (Centre and West) Circuit answer questions about their vital role in the Methodist Church**

## **What distinctive contribution do circuit stewards bring to the life of their circuits?**

We are a diverse group of people who bring many different skills and life experiences. We bring hard work, love and commitment. We provide continuity when leadership changes.

*We bring cohesion and support for churches struggling with change. We provide practical and pastoral support to ministers and lay staff and their families.*

We are the link between churches and the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) – the eyes, ears and mouths of the circuit in the CLT and of the CLT in the circuit.

*Because we are members of churches we can bring an everyday perspective of life to CLT discussions, and participate in decision-making processes that affect local churches.*

We uphold the decisions of the Circuit Meeting in the churches.

*We are a bridge of support between the local churches and the circuit: enabling the circuit and encompassing the churches to operate, eg provision of ministers, manses, grants.*

Circuit stewards form a network of information between all churches and bring a feeling of unity among all members of the circuit.



## **What do you find most fulfilling about your role?**

Being part of a great team who support each other and laugh together. If a circuit steward is struggling others will often help with their duties. Confidences and problems can be shared with people who are able to see 'the bigger picture'.

*Attending Church Council meetings we get to see new ideas that churches are trying!*

Making a difference for God's kingdom and in people's lives. Helping and supporting local churches, and helping a plan come to fruition. Making improvements to the home lives of ministers, and supporting them in their spiritual growth.

*Working with Christians from other churches and discovering their gifts. Sharing faith and fellowship with like-minded people. The sense of joy when you see the work of God being fulfilled.*

Seeing new people come to know Jesus is exciting – and even more exciting is seeing 'old Christians' awoken to the realisation that Jesus loves them!

*Being a part of a large and amazing family that I meet when visiting churches and attending circuit events, and where I meet people and develop relationships; show interest in them; and care about their well-being.*

The fact that you are an active member of the circuit and do not feel isolated as a member of your own individual church.





### What do you find most challenging about your role?

The workload can be heavy at times and work/life balance is hard. It can be difficult to switch off.

*Individuals in the churches don't always see that their circuit is working for everybody. It can also be hard to convince church leaders and congregations that change is necessary. Communication can be slow and this impacts progress.*

Some ministerial staff forget that, as lay volunteers, we too have our problems. Others don't always make full use of the circuit stewards, which is frustrating when you believe you have something to offer.

*It can be hard to find people prepared to take on responsibilities and to find the patience to achieve long-term change. Making unpopular decisions can be difficult and the stationing process can be hard. Most challenging is the unforeseen matter which has to be resolved, and it is only the circuit stewards who have that responsibility.*

Complying with Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) and outside legislation is a challenge. We often take on difficult roles that require knowledge outside our own experience, eg finance, property, management skills. And so we feel ill-equipped to be a leader with, for instance the responsibility for taking policy decisions, writing profiles and reports.

### As leaders, what are your priorities?

Raising awareness of and commitment to mission and outreach. It is important to help congregations see church as being the people, not the building, and to grow God's people to be vibrant and energised in doing God's work.

*Supporting the physical, emotional and mental well-being of staff, both lay and ordained.*

We want the circuit to succeed and to encourage all the churches to share in the vision – to think beyond the bounds of their own front doors. We try to ensure finite resources are deployed in the most efficient way.

*We need to 'be' Jesus to those outside the Church so that if we are asked "why do you behave like that?" we can say it's what Jesus would do.*

To be a unit that enables the circuit to be 'Spirit led, with a heart for Jesus and a passion for mission'.



### What qualities do you think a circuit steward needs?

The ability to show love for God, each other, the circuit, the churches and the world. Also, patience – in bucketloads!

*The desire and willingness to help ministerial staff, church members and the circuit steward team.*

The ability to be a team player. No person in the circuit is more important than any other.

*Integrity, commitment and the ability to know when to listen, when to offer advice and when to walk away. Fortitude, tenacity, discernment and the ability to be rational and level headed.*

A good knowledge of how Methodism works.

*The ability to be Spirit-led, to have a heart for Jesus and a passion for mission.*

A deep Christian faith, ideas to improve the work of the circuit, an optimistic outlook, and a sense of determination.

*Most of all we need pragmatism, flexibility, ability to think outside the box and respect other points of view, a sense of humour, and, sometimes, a very thick skin!*

## Vocation

**Who is God calling to be a circuit steward where you are?**

**How can you support your circuit stewards in this vital ministry?**