

# Circuit Stewards Induction Pack

## Role description

Circuit stewards love God, the Church, the world and especially those 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 the role enables 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. Attend the circuit executive meetings and any appropriate circuit meetings you are appointed to as described below
3. Keep themselves informed of the activities of the churches through the circuit communications
4. Be aware and adhere to the 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 aware of the legal responsibilities of their office as a Methodist Circuit Trustee, for example, issues around lay employment, finance, property, safeguarding, data protection
8. Share in developing a vision and plans for mission within the circuit, ensuring appropriate consultation
9. Plan induction courses for new presbyters and deacons and lay workers
10. Organise Circuit events for the churches

## **Specific duties of the London Forest circuit steward team**

### **Circuit Fund**

CPD has this to say;

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

The circuit stewards have a collective responsibility as circuit trustees 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.

The Forest Circuit has a Treasurer (Flo Corbett) with the specific skills and knowledge for the day to day running of the circuit fund. She maintains 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). She ensures that stipends and agreed rates of allowances to meet circuit expenses are paid to ministers and other staff including any lay workers. This involves accurate records being kept of income tax, National Insurance, superannuation and other items of book-keeping.

The circuit treasurer presents to the Circuit Meeting a forecast budget covering a 12 month period and an indication of how the costs will be met following an annual church treasurers meeting to discuss the assessments made by the circuit churches. Sometimes circuit projects will require long-term financial planning. The financial year within the Methodist Connexion is from September 1st - August 31st. The annual accounts are presented to the Circuit Meeting having been audited by a qualified professional person.

### **Manses**

CPD states:

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

The Forest Circuit hopes to set up Finance & Property Teams to support the work of maintenance, record keeping, quinquennial inspections, repairs and suitability of the manses. The annual property schedules are prepared and action taken to maintain the property investment. They 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, ratified by the Circuit Meeting.

Each manse will have a named manse steward therefore circuit stewards should not need to have any practical involvement except for the collective responsibility as circuit trustees.

### **Invitations and appointments of presbyters and deacons**

CPD states:

*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).*

As a circuit steward you have a shared responsibility to ensure that the stationing process is adhered to by the circuit and individual churches. Ministers should expect consistency in the application of the process and circuit stewards should familiarize themselves with the whole process through the up to date documents for stationing.

The process starts with the District Representative Synod prior to the final year of a minister's appointment. The Circuit Meeting ensures 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 according to the guidelines. The Circuit Meeting is held ideally before 20<sup>th</sup> September to allow time for the decision to be forwarded to the District Office.

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.

In the Forest Circuit the Circuit Stewards report to the Circuit Meeting on issues around human resource. As trustees circuit stewards have a shared responsibility for the employment of lay staff and the pastoral oversight of youth and community work.

## **Meetings**

Circuit stewards are required to attend the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) Meetings and a number of official meetings as appointed in accordance with the Forest Circuit.

These may include Circuit Meeting and 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 preachers' 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.

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

## **Person specification**

Circuit stewards are drawn from all walks of life and each bring their own experiences and abilities to the role. Some skills and abilities that are essential to the role are:

### **Essential**

1. A Christian faith and a commitment to serve with responsibility as a trustee in a voluntary capacity
2. Willing to be supportive and affirming of others, working collaboratively in a team
3. Able to take a representative role, respect confidentiality
4. Satisfactorily complete the 'Safer Recruitment Process'

5. Able to communicate clearly both verbally and in writing with some computer skills
6. Consultative, with the ability to contribute to the CLT
7. To be an agent for change and a willingness to learn
8. A sense of humour

### **Desirable**

1. A working knowledge of Methodist church structures and protocols and some experience of Circuit meetings and events
2. Managerial experience and /or some understanding of the employment of lay workers
3. Financial understanding and/or some grant funding experience
4. To have sensitivity, tenacity and ability to ask for help
5. An understanding family
6. Negotiating/reconciliation skills

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N.B. Attention is also drawn to the 'Job Description' document included with the Information Pack.