

Revised and
updated
2024

The Circuit Stewards' Handbook

A guide
for circuit
stewards in
the Methodist
Church



Siblings in Christ,

My father was a circuit steward and so a significant part of my introduction to the life of the Church, and the ways of Methodism in particular, were through the lens of his ministry in that office. There were lengthy meetings in our front room about (I gathered) the complexities of a circuit merger; there were long telephone conversations which (my mother told me) were necessary if the circuit was to find the right ministers in the stationing process; there were summer evenings when my parents were out 'getting the manse ready' for the incoming minister. These things mattered – and they matter still.

When, many years later, I was told in the ordination service that “this ministry will make great demands on you and your household”, I was all too aware that that is not only true of the ordained. The demands that we place on lay people who hold office, and on those close to them, are also considerable and of no office is that more true than of the circuit steward.

I was blessed in my own ministry in circuit by the circuit stewards with whom I was privileged to work. Their contribution to the leadership of the circuit, their encouragement of the churches they engaged with in periods of change and transition, their conscientious stewardship of the resources of the circuit, and (perhaps most of all) their care for my well-being and that of my family, are things for which I will always be grateful.

Such essential ministry cannot be reduced to a formula but its key points (both those contained in our Standing Orders and those which we learn from custom and good practice) can be helpfully articulated. This handbook does just that: it sets out the responsibilities of the circuit steward and offers guidance as to how those responsibilities can be discharged well. I hope and pray that it will be helpful in your ministry as a circuit steward but, more, I hope that that ministry will be a joy to you and an encouragement to others.



The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler
Secretary of the Methodist Conference

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This handbook accompanies the four-module *Induction Training for Circuit Stewards*, which is available to download from the Methodist Church website methodist.org.uk/CircuitStewards

Latest Standing Orders

This *Circuit Stewards' Handbook* is a working document. The Standing Orders quoted are from the 2023 edition of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD)*. *CPD* is updated every year so these may change. It is important to check the most up to date Standing Orders by viewing or downloading the most recent edition at methodist.org.uk/CPD

Please note that in this handbook, the word 'must' indicates an obligation under *CPD*, the law or both, whereas the word 'should' indicates good practice. This handbook has been checked by the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice for accuracy. This resource is not exhaustive. It must be read alongside and is not a substitute for *CPD*.

Web links

Most web links in the *Circuit Stewards' Handbook* are short-cut addresses to web pages and avoid links to specific pdfs (as these often break). Please let us know if any links are broken.

Being Prepared

What is a circuit steward?

The role of circuit steward is an important one in the life of the Methodist Church. It is also a personal vocation and part of an individual's discipleship: how we respond to God's love in Christ. Discipleship is – or should be – at the root of all that we find ourselves doing in the service of the Church and the world. This includes serving as a circuit steward.

It may be that you have taken on this role because others have identified gifts and graces in you that are suited to the position. Or it could be that you simply felt compelled to offer yourself in service. Whatever way you became a circuit steward, it is hoped that as you serve others this will help your own spiritual life to flourish.

The circuit is a key structure in Methodism. It is to circuits, not churches, that presbyters and deacons are stationed. And Methodism acknowledges that it is the circuit that is “the primary unit in which local churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help” (SO 500(1)).

Together, the circuit stewards exercise a responsibility for the more practical aspects relating to this “interconnexion” (such as property and finance), alongside a pastoral ministry to the ministers and their families. They share collective responsibility and oversight for the “spiritual and material well-being of the Circuit” (SO 531(1)), alongside the Superintendent and other ministers in their circuit.

The role of a circuit steward can be demanding. But those who have taken on this responsibility point to how rewarding and stimulating it can be as they seek to support and shape the circuit in response to the needs and challenges of its local area.

Each circuit steward has different skills and responsibilities. Combined with the skills of others, they enable the development of God's work in the circuit. With other circuit stewards, you will aim to have responsibilities towards:

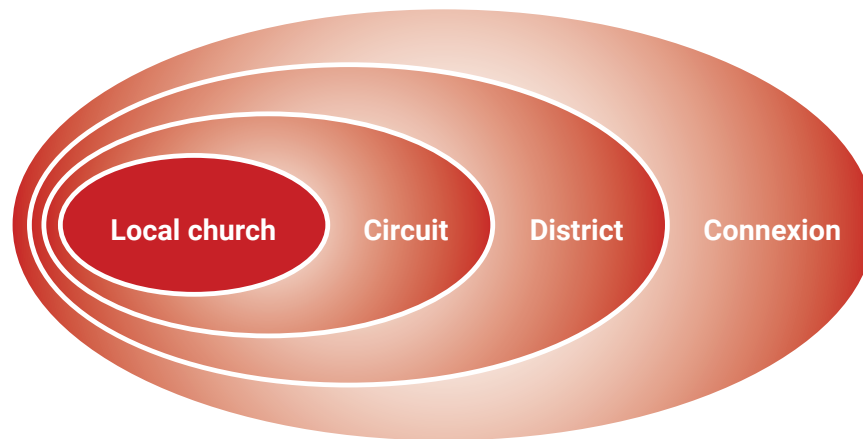
- exercising a general pastoral care for the circuit staff and their families
- meeting as a leadership team at least twice a year, before the Circuit Meeting
- keeping yourselves informed of the activities of each local church
- being aware of district and connexional policies affecting the circuit and its churches
- being sensitive to the needs of the circuit, and its officers and staff
- informing yourselves of developing movements in Methodism and the wider Church
- being alert to, and taking advice on, the legal consequences of this office and its responsibilities, eg lay employment, finance, property
- developing a vision and plan for mission within the circuit, ensuring appropriate consultation.

With your team of circuit stewards you will arrange, in a manner suitable to your circuit, how these responsibilities are exercised.

There are also specific duties relating to circuit life that circuit stewards are expected to share between them:

- finances and the circuit fund
- invitations and appointments
- manses
- meetings, eg Church Councils, Circuit Meetings and District Synods.

In order to understand fully the role of a circuit steward you also need to be clear what a circuit is and how it fits within the Connexion.



Methodist structure

Every Methodist church is in a **circuit**. Each circuit consists of a group of local churches served by local preachers and ministers, including the Superintendent.

Every circuit is in a **district**, led by a District Chair. In 2023 there are 29 districts in the Methodist Church.

Together the local churches, circuits and districts of the Methodist Church in Britain form the **Connexion**. But the Connexion is far more than a structure. It is an expression of belonging that expresses and witnesses to “a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God” (*Called to Love and Praise* (Methodist Conference, 1999), para 4.6.1).

Connexionalism is therefore a way of being Christian, in that all Christians are linked to one another, and no church, circuit or district is or can be an autonomous unit (see *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21st Century* (Methodist Conference, 2017)).

This can best be seen in the Methodist Conference, which meets in a different location each summer. Members are elected from each Methodist district, along with some who are elected by the Conference, representatives of connexional and other bodies and representatives from the United Methodist Church and the Irish Methodist Conference. The Conference is a place of Christian conferring, and is the supreme decision-making body of the Church.

So as a circuit steward, although the focus of your work may be at circuit level, it is always within the context of the local church, district and the Connexion. The calling of the Church, which is relevant to all levels of Church life and first expressed by the Methodist Conference in 2000, is being reiterated today.

Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

The Church exists to:

- increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love (**Worship**)
- help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care (**Learning and Caring**)
- be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice (**Service**)
- make more followers of Jesus Christ (**Evangelism**).

(adopted by the Methodist Conference, 2000)

Preparatory reading

The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD) is crucial for the ministry and work of circuit stewards. Volume 2 is updated annually after the Conference and contains Standing Orders relating to church and circuit life, setting out responsibilities, procedures and ways of working.

To ensure you have the most recent edition at the start of every connexional year we recommend that all circuit stewards download Volume 2 of *CPD* from methodist.org.uk/CPD. Alternatively, you can purchase the current printed edition from methodistpublishing.org.uk

The Learning Network provides a range of online learning and development opportunities, including a community of practice, where circuit stewards' can meet for mutual support. More details of these and videos from previous events can be found at methodist.org.uk/CircuitStewards

As a circuit steward, there are a number of other key resources helpful for providing a good foundation. All are available on the Methodist Church website from methodist.org.uk/ConferenceReports where you can search by date.

- *Called to Love and Praise* (1999 Conference report)
- *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21st Century* (2017 Conference report)
- *The Missional Nature of the Circuit* (2008 Conference report)
- *What is a Circuit Superintendent?* (2005 Conference report)
- *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth* (2020 Conference report).

Support for circuit treasurers is available at methodist.org.uk/Finance

A Circuit Steward's Year

There is no such thing as a set calendar for a circuit steward as no two churches, circuits or districts function identically with their meetings or allocation of duties.

Below is a starting point for circuits to use in creating their own circuit-specific calendar (see also Appendix 3). Some may not be the direct responsibility of circuit stewards, but it is useful to be aware of them for church and circuit life.

September

- Welcome services for new presbyters, deacons and lay employees
- Induction of probationers
- Meeting of ministers and circuit stewards (eg CLT)
- Circuit Meeting
- Review accounts (general fund – SO 532 and benevolence fund – SO 527(2)) for the previous connexional year and ensure these are audited
- Review policies (Safeguarding, Reserves, Health and Safety) and circuit vision/plan
- Attend Church Councils
- Attend District Synod: monitor for circuit impacts and requirements, eg Standing Order changes or sabbatical approvals
- Agree any profiles though District Policy Committee, particularly for probationers
- Prepare any reports for District Policy Committee, eg changes to worship patterns, church closures, major project consents

October

- Review stationing profiles and shortlist (see page 10 for more information)
- Attend Church Councils
- Statistics for Mission submissions
- District circuit stewards' meeting (if held)
- District Grants' Committee
- Provide input (if required) into report on any candidates for ministry from the circuit
- Review District Policy Committee outcomes
- Review and respond (if necessary) to grant application outcomes

November

- Stationing visits from prospective presbyters
- Preparation for Circuit Meeting in December (if one is being held)
- Meeting of ministers and circuit stewards (eg CLT) if there is a Circuit Meeting in December
- Property and finance schedules for circuit and churches due for completion and submission
- Prepare any reports for District Policy Committee

December

- Circuit Meeting (if one is being held)
- Stationing round two and visits from prospective presbyters
- Review District Policy Committee outcomes

January

- Matching round three and visits from prospective presbyters
- Attend Church Councils
- Provide input (if required) into report on any probationer ministers in circuit

February

- Meeting of ministers and circuit stewards (eg CLT)
- Preparation for Circuit Meeting in February/March, eg budget for next connexional year, ensuring that the budget set is supported by strategic financial planning
- Review circuit appointments and recruit circuit stewards and other roles as needed (eg circuit safeguarding officer)
- If required, prepare report for the District Probationers Committee

March

- Circuit Meeting, including appointment of Invitation Committee (SO 541(1)) and other committees, voting on memorials to the Conference, preparing reports for and voting on application to the District Policy Committee for the authorisation of persons other than presbyters to preside at the Lord's Supper
- Ministerial Development Reviews start
- Attend Church Councils and General Church Meetings

April

- Review District Policy Committee outcomes
- Attend District Synod
- Attend stationing training, if having an invitation review
- Attend Church Councils and General Church Meetings
- Annual manse visits (suggested)

May

- Ministerial Development Reviews usually completed this month
- Invitation interviews and committee meeting
- Updates due for district and circuit directories for September
- Preparation for Circuit Meeting (if one is held in the summer)
- Meeting of ministers and circuit stewards (eg CLT) if there is a Circuit Meeting in June

June

- Circuit Meeting (if one is being held)
- Preparation for District Grants Committee
- Preparation for District Policy Committee
- Follow the Conference for decisions that impact circuit/district (note the Conference can sometimes take place in early July)
- Start work on circuit profile for stationing

July

- Check District Policy Committee and grants outcomes
- Attend Church Councils
- Farewell services and events
- If needed, prepare manses for newly arriving presbyters or deacons

August

- Complete work on circuit profile for stationing
- Order copies of *CPD* and *Minutes of Conference*
- Preparation for September Circuit Meeting

Invitations and Appointments

Each year the Stationing Committee issues a Code of Practice for everyone involved in the invitation and stationing process, available at methodist.org.uk/StationingFormsAndGuidelines. This gives everyone, including circuit stewards, the information they will need.

Once it is available, the District Chair will organise a meeting for representatives of each circuit involved in the invitation/re-invitation process to introduce the Code of Practice. This must be read alongside Standing Orders 540-549.

Circuit stewards need to familiarise themselves with the whole process and ensure it is adhered to by the circuit and the individual churches.

The whole process of matching and/or offering an extension is a great privilege and responsibility for those involved. This involves being part of the stationing processes and is about prayerful discernment for circuits, ministers, their families and all involved. It is significant work that should be conducted as sympathetically as possible and this is best achieved by following the Code of Practice at all stages. The Code of Practice for those involved in invitations and appointments can be found at methodist.org.uk/StationingFormsAndGuidelines.

The Methodist Church believes that discrimination in any form cannot be tolerated and will seek to eliminate this. At its October 2019 meeting the Methodist Council directed that all members of Circuit Invitation Committees should be alerted to issues of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and to the content of the EDI Toolkit. Particular attention is drawn to the module on 'Unconscious Bias' to be found at methodist.org.uk/UnconsciousBiasTraining. This could be undertaken together in the circuit, or could be attended online at one of the sessions offered by the Learning Network: eventbrite.co.uk/e/unconscious-bias-training-tickets-387493412227

Remember that support is available for you within the district from the lay stationing representative or the District Chair.

Supporting Minister Well-being

Each minister is invited to develop a **support plan**, which is a living document that can become a covenant with the people providing support.

'Well-being' is a broad concept and is described as relating to the following areas in particular: "control by the individual over their day-to-day life (including over care and support provided and the way they are provided)".

The Care Act 2014 definition of Well-being

- This support plan is an **invitation** for them to intentionally take some time, away from crisis, to name the people/systems/disciplines which provide day-to-day support as well as where to go in an emergency situation.
- Ministers are invited to share with people what might be helpful for them to receive when they are in an emergency situation.

As circuit stewards, you are invited to consider:

- What enables each staff member to have an awareness of the Holy Spirit?
- What is practically useful for each staff member when times are hard?
- Is there anything we as circuit stewards can offer?

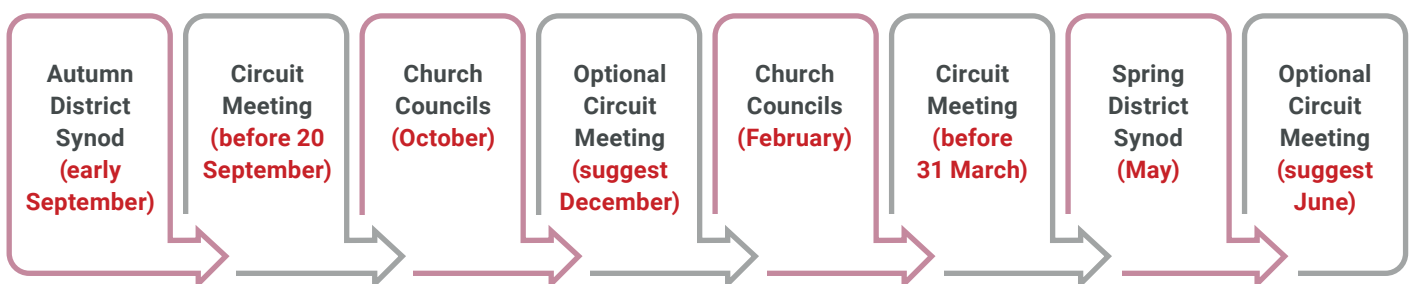
The Circuit Meeting

The Circuit Meeting is a focal point for the circuit (SOs 510-518). The Superintendent, who chairs the meeting, is responsible for the pattern of the meetings and setting the agenda. This includes pastoral and evangelism work, training needs, approval of those ready for admission as local preachers and the appointment (annually) of circuit stewards.

Through its policies, procedures, use of resources and decisions the meeting should nurture ministry and mission, ensuring appropriate representation from within the circuit. Members of the Circuit Meeting, including circuit stewards, are charity trustees and managing trustees for circuit property (normally manse) and funds, with responsibilities under the Charities Act. The provisions relating to managing trustees and their powers are identified in *CPD* Volume 2, Book II, Part 2, Model Trusts. Further information about being a trustee can be found in the Charity Commission's guide *The Essential Trustee*: [gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3) and at methodist.org.uk/ManagingTrustees

There must be a minimum of two Circuit Meetings per year (SO 514(1)), in September and March. Additional meetings can be held any time (for instance in December and May/June), which may allow for a more extended discussion of the life of the circuit. These also provide further opportunity for local churches to bring property approval requests. All meetings may be held physically, online or in hybrid form (as defined by SO 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate, see Book VII B, Part 6A of *CPD*. Fourteen days' written notice is required for meetings which include certain types of Circuit Meeting business (SO 502(7)), and in all cases notice of a Circuit Meeting must be sufficient to make it reasonably practicable for all Circuit Meeting members to attend.

To support the flow of information between the various parts of the Church ensure you follow this pattern of Circuit Meetings:



September Circuit Meeting

This must be held after the District Synod and before 20 September. This allows for invitations (SO 541) and extensions to be considered (SO 545, 546) and/or stationing needs to be addressed. It is unlikely that the treasurer will have the accounts audited in time for the September meeting, so they should be presented unaudited (or at the very least summarised). The auditor's report and finalised accounts will then be received at the March meeting.

March Circuit Meeting

This should meet after the February/March Church Councils and in time to send any memorials (SO 516) or the results of any voting on any deferred special resolutions of the Conference (SO 126(3) (5)) to the Conference Office. The deadline for both is 31 March.

If the audited accounts were not presented to the September meeting, then they should be presented to this meeting.

The constitution of the meeting

The constitution of the Circuit Meeting is listed in SO 510(1). The Superintendent may appoint a deputy to chair the meeting if necessary (SO 502(1)).

The Local Preachers' Meeting reports to the Circuit Meeting, whose members are responsible for acting on the advice of the Local Preachers' Meeting in recognising new Local Preachers and requesting extensions to their period on trial. This should be reviewed on a regular basis, ensuring it is sufficiently representative of "all areas of the life of the Circuit" (SO 510(1)(ix)).

Some questions for consideration:

- What "areas of the life of the Circuit" are under-represented?
- How can tokenism be avoided and genuine participation encouraged?
- What creative practice can help form a truly representative leadership for the circuit?

You may find helpful participation practice with all ages on the Methodist Church website in the Children and Youth resource *Voice Activated* at methodist.org.uk/VoiceActivated

The Circuit Meeting secretary and the Superintendent must list all the members on every agenda, as this will remove any doubt as to who has a vote (SO 514(2)).

When preparing the agenda before every Circuit Meeting, the Circuit Meeting secretary and the Superintendent should also identify those members who have a conflict of interest, duty or loyalty, such as a financial interest or through membership of another trustee body (for example, the District Synod). NB. Lay members' membership of their own local church Council is assumed and does not need to be separately identified (SO 514(2A)).

The Circuit Meeting Agenda

The Superintendent, as the chair of the Circuit Meeting, is responsible for its agenda.

The Superintendent will determine how the meeting is run. This will probably be on a reasonably formal basis, especially if the subject matter might be controversial or many people will wish to speak and time is limited.

It is helpful for circuit stewards to have advance notice of the business of the meeting, which will follow the guidelines in *CPD* Volume 2, Book VII, part 6. Items to note for circuit stewards include:

- **Justice, Dignity and Solidarity**

Every Circuit Meeting agenda should include a space to consider the work of the Strategy on Justice, Dignity and Solidarity as agreed at Conference 2021. Examples could include:

- Discussing the priorities for the circuit in terms of justice and inclusion
- Supporting leaders with deciding what personal EDI learning they need to do in order to fulfill their leadership role
- Reviewing the diversity of the Circuit Meeting and other committees within the circuit, and taking decisions about how to advertise vacancies in ways that improve the representativeness of leadership within the circuit
- Having honest conversations about whether people feel safe and included within churches and meetings, and discerning what steps need to be taken to implement change so that this is the case
- Allocating the task of completing or reviewing Equality Impact Assessments, or establishing a structure for doing this within the circuit, under the oversight of the Circuit Meeting.

- **Charity Commission**

Reports required for registered charities should be as inspiring, stimulating and informative as possible. See pages 7 and 30 for more information on finance.

- **Invitation Committee**

Agree how much authority regarding invitation responsibilities and duties should be delegated to the Invitation Committee. See page 10 for more information on invitations and appointments.

- **Annual manse inspections**

The Circuit Meeting must receive a report of the annual manses inspection and, at least every four years, must have a fuller discussion about the longer-term strategy and condition of the manses (SO 954). See page 23 for more information on property and manses.

- **Building projects**

Make sure that the provisions of SO 951 are followed for property projects presented to the Circuit Meeting. See page 23 for more information on property and manses.

More information on property projects is available from

methodist.org.uk/Property/Pathways

- **Archives**

Include archives annually on the agenda to remind people of the need to preserve minute books etc, and to comply with the responsibilities given under SO 015(2).

For retaining all records related to Safeguarding you should follow the Safeguarding Records Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church found at methodist.org.uk/SafeguardingPolicy

Current guidance on data protection must be adhered to (see page 23). Up to date information and guidance is also available on TMCP's website. With specific queries, email dataprotection@TMCP.org.uk

- **Minimum size of a church**

If there are local churches that are, or may be coming, under the provisions of SO 612 (minimum size of the Church Council), they will need to have members of the Church Council appointed by the Circuit Meeting.

If you have any former local churches that have become classes of other local churches under the previous iteration of SO 612 (ie pre-2021) or whose memberships have transferred under the current SO 612(2), then they must appear as an item on the Circuit Meeting agenda at least once per year in order to consider worship provision there SO 605A(8). The Circuit Meeting should also consider decisions relating to church closures, mergers or transfers of membership under SO 605A.

Sending a memorial to Conference

It is a key strength of Methodism that lay members play a major part in decision making and shaping the direction of the Church. This is done principally by submitting a memorial to the Methodist Conference. More information about submitting memorials can be found at methodist.org.uk/Memorials-to-the-Conference

A memorial is simply a request via a circuit or district to the Conference on any subject of connexional interest. It asks the Conference to take an action, or change a policy, or make a statement on an issue and is submitted through the following process:

1. Put your idea for a memorial to your circuit or your district
2. Circuit Meeting or District Synod votes in favour
3. Depending on your timing and where you presented your idea, the Circuit Superintendent or the Synod Secretary sends the memorial to the Memorials Secretary
4. The Memorials Committee discusses the matter and drafts a reply which it proposes to the Conference and publishes as part of the Conference Agenda.

Circuit Leadership Teams

In order to represent the wider life of the circuit, Circuit Leadership Teams (CLT) bring together the circuit staff, both ordained and lay (including, but not exclusive to, circuit stewards). Standing Orders (SO 515(2), SO 510 (1)(ix) and SO 551) encourage such leadership to utilise a variety of gifts and skills to benefit the circuit.

Agenda

As well as discussing agenda items, a CLT meeting is an opportunity to act as a 'think tank' away from a formal agenda. Pray together and seek the work of the Holy Spirit.

Although SO 531(3)(ii) advises that ministers, probationers and circuit stewards meet before the Circuit Meeting, this should not be a rehearsal of everything that the Circuit Meeting will rightly discuss and decide. Rather, use it as an opportunity to reflect and think creatively about matters facing the circuit.

Staffing

Circuit stewards should keep at the fore conversations about future staffing needs. Consider the advantages of inviting deacons, using the gifts of supernumeraries, employing lay staff, or recruiting volunteers.

A new 'microsite' within the main Methodist Church website: *Equipping Circuits* methodist.org.uk/EquippingCircuits contains advice for making good, purposeful lay employee and volunteer appointments – including thinking through and assessing mission and ministry needs, and recruitment and selection good practice.

Please note that the Methodist Conference 2022 passed the following resolution:

"The Conference urges circuit staff teams to review how young people under the age of 23 might be more intentionally and actively supported to consider their calling and be guided onto local preaching/worship leading or other relevant courses."

If your circuit is considering changing the number of ministers stationed to it, then remember that the District Policy Committee needs to be consulted and Synod must give permission before that decision can be implemented (SO 438).

The Warden or Deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) are available to help circuits consider staffing needs. They can advise on creating or sustaining a diaconal appointment (profile).

These profiles are usually specific and the focus cannot be changed without first negotiating with the Warden of the MDO.

If your circuit involves a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP), include the relevant officers of other denominations and the district ecumenical officer in your discussions.

Supervision

Ministers across the Connexion are required to be involved in a process of Reflective Supervision throughout their ministry. This is an important part of their work that allows them to reflect carefully on ministerial life for their own sake, the sake of the people they serve and the church as a whole. It enables ministers to flourish by giving them an opportunity to discuss different aspects of their work, and enables support for them in handling the more complex areas of being a minister. It involves between nine and 12 hours of dedicated time during the Connexional year, and might involve travel to and from appointments. Some ministers have been recognised as having the skills to offer supervision to others and may therefore have responsibilities placed on them by the church. Much more can be found out about supervision here:

media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/supervision-leaflet-a5-6pp-june21_tb1llyc.pdf

Supporting your minister by understanding the need for supervision and praying for them regularly adds to their sense of well-being.

Ministerial Development Review (MDR)

Every presbyter or deacon in a circuit or district appointment, and every supernumerary minister who has entered a formal agreement with a circuit to undertake pastoral responsibility in one or more local churches, must engage in ministerial development review (SO 743). In MDR, ministers are given feedback on one area of their ministry. They are supported by their person in oversight (in most cases this is the Circuit Superintendent or District Chair) and by a lay person, these two people accompany them as they reflect on the chosen area of their ministry. Detailed guidance is offered at methodist.org.uk/MDR. Ministers are encouraged but not obliged to share their MDR goals annually with the CLT and others.

Sabbaticals for ministers

Appropriate discussions need to take place (often at the CLT) about sabbatical arrangements. There are more details about sabbatical preparation on the Methodist Church website: methodist.org.uk/Sabbaticals

Developing the circuit's mission: conversation partners

The Circuit Meeting is responsible for considering and developing the circuit's mission. Members of the Learning Network (methodist.org.uk/LearningNetwork) and district mission enablers are available to support this. There is also a Mission Planning Toolkit available on the Methodist website at methodist.org.uk/MissionPlanning

It is a good idea to invite the District Chair to participate in mission conversations on a regular basis as well.

**Provide
an
appropriate
welcome to
incoming
ministers**

Voluntary district officers are also useful conversation partners, and could give advice in their areas of expertise. Such officers might include advisors on disability, property, or children's and youth work.

You should work alongside the Superintendent to ensure the best welcome possible for incoming ministers, including their move into a recently vacated manse (see *CPD* Volume 2, Book VII, Parts 1 and 2).

Mission and the Circuit Steward

SO 500 states: “The Circuit is the primary unit in which local churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purpose of mission, mutual encouragement and help.”

The 2005 Conference report ‘What is a Circuit Superintendent?’ reminds us that the Superintendent acts as the chief officer in the Circuit Leadership Team. Therefore, you will be responsible (with others) in leading the circuit in mission.

God for All is the Methodist Church’s strategy to expand our commitment to be an inclusive, growing, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church. We believe that these are all facets of one gospel: the gospel of Jesus Christ, which we are called to receive and respond to.

Partnering with the Church’s commitments detailed in the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity, the Justice-seeking Church report, and Action for Hope, God for All longs for:

- new people to become disciples of Jesus Christ,
- faith to deepen for everyone, and
- diverse communities and churches to experience transformation.

God for All invites circuits and churches into prayerful and decisive action, coordinated strategy, and organised teams that build on the deep theological rooting and positive will for cultural change in the Methodist Church. It names intentional, concrete steps and sets out key programmes and resources to help take these steps. The details of these can be found below and updated information can be found at methodist.org.uk/Evangelism

God for All is not a tick list of activities to compulsively work through or robotically manage. The following programmes and resources are not pre-packaged initiatives, nor ‘top down’ information to merely download and insert, nor challenges to do more and work harder out of desperation. Rather, they are invitations for diverse circuits across the theological spectrum to journey together deeper into the gospel, to clarify and affirm a life-giving mission, and to make reflective decisions about how to spend their time, energy, and resources on the most important activities – and all of this by God’s grace.

As circuit stewards called with the circuit team to equip and organise circuits for mission and ministry, stay with these key questions as you explore and discern God’s invitation to you and those you serve with:

- What is the gospel? Simply put, the gospel is the ‘main thing’: it is crucial that everything we do arises from and reflects the good news. How do we talk about the gospel in our circuits – what is it, actually? If we asked our circuit meeting or worship

Big questions for discernment

service to answer that question, what kinds of responses would we get? How might we describe the good news in ordinary language to someone who is 'unaffiliated' or new to spiritual exploration? Though there will certainly be diverse faithful individual responses to this question, it will be important for the circuit and churches to develop a shared understanding of how the gospel connects to their mission, and an expectation that God means to change them as they undergo the gospel together.

- Do you really know your local contexts? How are your churches befriending and falling in love with their communities? What are the hopes, anxieties, laments, desires, and gifts of the people in those communities? What can you learn and seek together in relationship? It will be important for churches and circuits to discover these answers and to fall in love with their contexts not simply by commissioning research or sending out e-surveys, but by actually meeting new people and having real conversations.
- What is the core capacity or orientation you may need to develop as a circuit? If you could ask God for one animating energy for mission and ministry that would bring joy and confidence to your circuit, what would it be? Evangelism and faith sharing? Confidence in seeking justice? Boldness in testimony? Addressing conflict with charitable honesty? How might you seek to receive and develop this capacity?
- What new thing will you try to activate behaviour change? In order to be the Church, we need to leave the building and get out there and try. Transformative moments don't just happen through prayer and bible study, as important as they are. And talking about evangelism and mission is not the same thing as doing evangelism and mission. What will you actually do together to positively change the behaviour of the church or circuit?
- What do you need to let go of in order to centre the most important things? As you survey God for All's strategic areas below, keep the above questions before you.

1. Centred in God

God is the Three-in-One who creates us, loves us, frees us, saves us, and transforms us to be who God has always been calling us to be. If we are faithful, our mission flows intentionally from this orientation. The Centred in God strategic area focuses on deepening the discipleship of Methodist people and lays a foundation for God for All as a whole. It aims to inspire and equip Methodists to be rooted and grounded in prayer, and to make Our Calling a lived reality, particularly through participating in the 12 commitments of A Methodist Way of Life: methodist.org.uk/MWOL

Circuit stewards, as part of the circuit leadership team, have a key role in engineering a discipleship pathway for the people in the churches of their circuit: ensuring that opportunities are available to travel to all twelve 'stations', and fostering a culture of reflection and conversation about their experiences of worship and mission.



It might help to think about which churches in the circuit are particularly good at living out the different individual stations; they can help other churches in the circuit that wish to develop in this area.

See: methodist.org.uk/TravellingTogether

2. Everyone an Evangelist

The Methodist Church is committed to being an evangelistic church: making more followers of Jesus Christ is one of the core parts of Our Calling. All disciples are called to listen for, speak of, and live out the good news. Yet, as a Church, we can often lack confidence with evangelism. We want to be a Church which authentically shares our faith through our prayers and by our lives and with our words, so that new disciples are made, faith deepens, and communities are transformed. The following programmes seek to help equip the whole Church for evangelism:

- Everyone an Evangelist – a course for groups from local churches and circuits to explore their calling to evangelism and step into a practical evangelistic project.
- Evangelism for Leaders – a five-session course on Zoom for Methodist leaders, lay and ordained, to equip leaders to confidently model evangelism; to intentionally prioritise evangelism and to encourage and equip others as evangelists.
- The Community of Evangelists – a group of Methodists called and spiritually gifted as evangelists that support and encourage diverse evangelists for our world today.

Find out at methodist.org.uk/EquippedForEvangelism

3. Missional growth and leadership

As Methodists, we want to see more people exploring faith, more people coming to a living faith in Jesus Christ, more people growing in discipleship and more people becoming committed members of Methodist churches. Great growth requires great change, and great change requires great leaders. Leadership in circuits is shared, with the Superintendent and the circuit stewards, ministers and lay workers all leading the circuit in mission together. Mission planning at church and circuit level is a key tool for growth.

A church's mission plan frees the church from the burden of having to do every good thing in order to focus on the few things God is calling them to do to reach their community with God's love. A circuit mission plan allows the circuit's resources, including staff time, buildings and finances, to be allocated where they will be best used for God's mission, and allows opportunities for New Places for New People and Church at the Margins to be discerned.

- Guidance and resources to help you discern and write a really simple, useful mission plan can be found at methodist.org.uk/MissionPlanning
- Resources for circuit mission planning, including guidance for smaller churches considering a merger, can be found at methodist.org.uk/MergeForMission
- The team coaching programme offers lay and ordained leaders from the same circuit the opportunity to gain new insights and work better as a team, being transformed for the sake of transformation in the world God loves. Find out more and register your interest at methodist.org.uk/TeamCoaching

4. New Places for New People

The Methodist Church sees starting New Places for New People (NPNP) in every circuit as a vital part of responding to the gospel of God's love, revealed to us in Christ. Our aim is to see new people becoming disciples of Jesus and forming new Christian communities in rural, estate, urban, suburban and village contexts. NPNPs are an extremely fruitful means of connecting new people, new people groups, and new residents to Christian exploration and community. In addition, NPNPs bring learning from research and development, identify and strengthen emerging leaders, and help the whole Church reflect on and examine its calling.

NPNP communities are all about encouraging a change in missional culture so that every circuit makes beginning an NPNP a core priority in their mission plan. NPNPs can be started anywhere, in diverse contexts. The Methodist Church has suggested the following contexts and people groups as priorities for NPNPs in the next five years:

- new towns or new housing developments
- student/young adult/university
- families with children
- replanting in an existing place or second site of a growing church
- Church at the Margins
- digital

Find out more about how to start and fund a New Place for New People here:

- How to start a New Place for New People: methodist.org.uk/NPNPBegin
- The NPNP practical guide to starting new circuit-based Christian communities: Circuit NPNP funding process: methodist.org.uk/CircuitNPNPFunding
- Funded district NPNPs: methodist.org.uk/NPNPDistrictProjects

5. Church at the Margins

Church at the Margins is a vital dimension of New Places for New People. Its vision is to nurture and build new Christian communities amongst and led by people who are economically marginalised. We know we are not taking God to the margins: we believe God is present with and in all people, in all circumstances. The goal is that every district and circuit will include Church at the Margins as part of their mission actions plans by 2025.

These new Christian communities will embrace four key elements:

- **Creating connections:** Create spaces where people truly encounter one another, discover friendship, and in which the gifts of people experiencing poverty are recognised, valued and received.
- **Nurturing communities:** Communities where power is shared and transformed, and people with lived experience of poverty are recognised as the experts.
- **Sharing the Gospel:** Communicating the good news of God's transforming love and justice for all people.
- **Seeing transformation:** New Christians are nurtured in discipleship and new communities emerge which challenge and respond to injustice. Enabling those at the economic margins to transform the wider Church through their gifts.

Find out more here:

- An introduction to Church at the Margins: methodist.org.uk/ChurchAtTheMargins
- Church at the Margins training: methodist.org.uk/CAM-Training
- Church at the Margins stories: methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discover-church-at-the-margins/church-at-the-margins-stories/
- Faith Rooted Community Organising: Faith Rooted Community Organising (methodist.org.uk)

6. Digital evangelism

In the age of digital communication and community, the internet is a crucial platform for evangelism and mission. Together as the Church, we seek to understand, explore, and innovate around what it means to be followers of Jesus in digital space. We offer the following resources to help Methodists reach new people, share their faith, and build new Christian communities online:

- Social media and digital training
- Resources, guidance and campaigns for digital evangelism
- Support and resourcing for Methodists who are experimenting and innovating with mission, evangelism and pioneering online
- The Story Project – an online testimony library where you can access other people's testimonies and share your own.
- Pioneering Digital Communities – a course for people seeking to establish a new Christian community online.

Find out more at: methodist.org.uk/DigitalEvangelism

7. Rural mission and ministry

Rural mission and ministry is part of the landscape in nearly all our circuits. It is often where some of the hidden treasure lies. Each context and place is different, but the church at its most local expression can be small, beautiful and offer depth to our relationships. A rural church with vision can connect with and impact the whole community, truly embodying God for all.

Key programmes:

- Starting out: training for those leaders new to rural life and mission:
arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse
- Rural hope network – join a hopeful rural conversation:
eventbrite.com/cc/rural-hope-1123799

Want a personal conversation?

The Evangelism and Growth team would love to Zoom into your circuit leadership team meeting or Circuit Meeting. In whatever slot you have available on your agenda – from 30 minutes to 90 minutes – we will listen to what you are wrestling with in mission and ministry, offer a short introduction to God for All, and explore questions together.

Circuit stewards can email evangelism@methodistchurch.org.uk to book us in for a Circuit Meeting or circuit leadership meeting in the year ahead.

Other Meetings

Church Councils

Circuit stewards are ex-officio members of, and entitled to attend, all official meetings connected with the circuit (see SO 552) – except for Local Preachers' Meetings (unless they are a local preacher). One circuit steward must be appointed by the circuit stewards to attend each Church Council (SO 610(1)(xii)). Note that LEPs have different governance arrangements (SO 611).

Circuit stewards 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 may need to be shared with other circuit staff or officers.

District Synod (Representative Session)

“The Synod is the policy-making court of the District, serving as a link between the Conference and Connexional Team on the one hand, and the Circuits and Local Churches on the other...”

(SO 412(1))

The District Synod meets each spring and autumn. If Synod is held in your circuit then those circuit stewards will usually be part of the team responsible for its smooth running.

SO 410(1)(iv) states that one circuit steward from each circuit in the district (or a substitute elected by the Circuit Meeting) must be a representative to the Synod. Each circuit also sends lay representatives: these will often include the other circuit stewards. All ministers stationed in the district are required to attend.

Finance and the Circuit Fund

Collectively, circuit stewards are the treasurers of the circuit fund (SO 532) and so are required to:

- collect assessments (SO 532(1)(i)): in determining the assessment, circuits must take into account “the needs and ability to pay of each Local Church” (SO 515(3))
- provide for the stipends due to circuit staff
- pay staff expenses
- discharge any other financial claims on the circuit as agreed in the budget
- pay the circuit contribution to the Methodist Church Fund (SO 532(2)), which may be paid via the district, and the district expenses.

It is now common practice to appoint one of the circuit’s stewards as ‘circuit treasurer’, who takes the majority of responsibility for the circuit’s finances on behalf of all the circuit stewards.

Funding is available for New Places for New People. More information can be found at: methodist.org.uk/CircuitNPNPFunding

Payroll

The circuit stewards must ensure that stipends and agreed allowances to meet circuit expenses are paid to ministers and other staff, including any lay employees.

- All ministers are paid through the Central Stipends Scheme that is administered by the Connexional Team.
- Lay employees’ salaries can be paid locally, but this requires experience of PAYE, so many circuits now opt to use the payroll services of the Connexional Team for their lay employees. If employees’ salaries are paid locally, the circuit stewards should ensure that the Apprentice Levy is paid: media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/apprenticeship-levy_Q3UchZk.pdf

The circuit stewards must ensure that each month the required level of funds is available in the appropriate bank or Central Finance Board (CFB) account to meet the full payroll costs, including National Insurance, pension contributions, etc.

Budget

Each year the circuit stewards must present to the Circuit Meeting a forecast budget covering a 12-month period with an indication of how the costs will be met (see Appendix 3). When assessing contributions from local churches, prior discussion with individual church treasurers is essential. Some circuits hold a meeting of treasurers, whilst other circuits approach each church treasurer on a one-to-one basis. However these discussions take place they should always be treated sensitively. The annual budget should also include those circuit projects that will require long-term financial planning.

Circuit stewards must then maintain the payment of financial obligations as set out in the annual budget, including payment to district funds and the upkeep of circuit properties

Annual accounts (SO 012)

(eg manses).

The Methodist financial year is from 1 September to 31 August. Each September the annual accounts are presented to the Circuit Meeting, having been examined by the appropriate person (as defined below).

Circuits with a total income or expenditure in excess of £250,000 must prepare their accounts on an accruals basis. Where gross income is £1,000,000, or the income is over £250,000 and gross assets are over £3.26m, then a registered auditor must be appointed. An audit is concerned with gathering evidence that a true and fair view is shown in the accounts.

Circuits where gross income or total expenditure is less than £250,000 in each of the last three years can choose to have their accounts independently examined rather than audited. An independent examination must be undertaken by a registered Independent Examiner. It is a form of scrutiny that provides assurance that nothing is amiss.

Reserves

An important part of financial planning is setting an effective reserves policy for the circuit (see Standing Order 012(6)) in order to ensure effective stewardship of its financial resources. Reserves should not be allowed to accumulate or sit unused for years. There should be a clear plan for the level required and how to deploy excess reserves or how to build up insufficient levels. More detailed guidance can be downloaded from methodist.org.uk/Accounts

Items for the circuit stewards/ treasurer to note

Ensure you are aware of the auditors or independent examiners used by the Church Councils in your circuit (SO 012(4)).

- Note any trust bodies within the circuit (eg large churches, projects) registered with the Charity Commission.
- If the circuit is a registered charity an annual report must be produced, showing how circuit activities are for the public benefit. The report should be given to the treasurer for each church. If this is something you have not done before, there may be experience within the circuit you can draw on. Also, the National Audit Office produces examples of good practice in annual reports that you can download from nao.org.uk, while the Directory of Social Change, dsc.org.uk, offers advice for creating better annual reports.
- If any of the local churches are running cafés or similar activities ensure they fulfil VAT requirements. If you are not sure if a church should be VAT registered, you can check the government website gov.uk, under the VAT registration section.
- Confirm that all lay employees are being paid the Living Wage in line with the Conference resolutions. This is not the same as the minimum wage nor the National Living Wage. For more information see methodist.org.uk/Stipends-and-lay-employment-rates. The annual Conference report from the Connexional Allowances Committee includes an update on this area.

- You may need to be aware of pension arrangements available for lay employees. For the latest advice on pensions, see the lay employment section on the Methodist Church website at methodist.org.uk/LayEmployment. See also tpt.org.uk for the Pensions Trust website.
- Support, including induction training in some areas, may be available through your district office or district treasurer, or visit methodist.org.uk/Finance
- The Methodist Church holds a block membership with the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT, acat.uk.com) for all districts, circuits and churches completing accruals accounts. Details can be found at methodist.org.uk/for-churches/Finance/ACAT. All other local churches can receive a copy of the ACAT newsletter through their circuit.
- Find other guidance on the web pages of the Charity Commission at gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission or visit honorarytreasurers.org.uk for an online forum with fellow practitioners.

Property

Manses and circuit properties

Each circuit steward has specific duties and responsibilities in relation to manses and other circuit properties (SO 533 and SO 952-954).

- Liaise regularly with ministers on the state of the manses and undertake renovations and repairs as necessary to maintain the quality of their homes. In this you need to be aware of taxation implications, as some work done on a manse when the minister is in residence can be classed as 'benefit in kind' and is taxable and has to be reported (gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-a-to-z). You can gain further information from Citizens Advice citizensadvice.org.uk by searching for tax on benefits in kind. You can find more information about the Guidelines for Manses on methodist.org.uk/Property/Manses
- Arrange for quinquennial inspections to be carried out every five years on all circuit property (including manses, closed churches and burial grounds). It is suggested that a quinquennial manse inspection takes place in the early part of the final year of a minister's appointment, as this will help to inform what work needs to be carried out before a new minister begins their appointment. Ensure accredited professionals are appointed for inspections of listed buildings (further details can be found on methodist.org.uk/conservation-listed-buildings/accredited-professionals). Review the findings and recommendations of the inspection – this could include making a forward plan to address repair and defects in order of priority, along with a budget to ensure funding is available – and take any necessary action (ensuring that the necessary consents are in place beforehand) (SO 952-954). Send copies of each manse quinquennial report to the district property secretary (SOs 954(x)). More information about the Quinquennial Inspection Guidance is at methodist.org.uk/Property/QI
- As this is a minister's home and base of work for ministry, it is reasonable for ministers to expect that the manse complies with the legal requirements for suitable housing in accordance with the Standards in Book VII, Part 2, Guidelines on Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses. More information about repairs and maintenance can be found on methodist.org.uk/Property/Manses
- CPD, Book VII, Part 2.3 states that an incoming minister should be provided with a current Energy Performance Certificate (valid for 10 years) and that circuits should seek a minimum of a 'C' energy efficiency rating. We have guidance about EPC's on methodist.org.uk/Property/Manses and there is guidance on ways to improve energy efficiency on methodist.org.uk/Property/NetZero
- When a church ceases to meet, there are various steps that need to be taken as part of the closure process. The Guidance for Closed Church Buildings was created collaboratively with the aim of providing useful information, checklists and templates to assist with this process. The guidance can be found on methodist.org.uk/Property/A-Z. If the building is to be sold, please refer to TMCP's guidance on tmcp.org.uk/property/sales.

- The Methodist Church is committed to Justice, Dignity and Solidarity. We believe that all people are uniquely made in the image of God, and we aim to live this out in the Church and in our communities. You can read more about this commitment in the **Conference report** and the **User Guide** will help you engage with this work. For information about how to help buildings to be more accessible, please look at **methodist.org.uk/Property/AccessibleBuildings**
- As churches and circuits look to respond to the climate emergency, a set of practical steps and recommendations have been created to help churches reduce energy usage and associated carbon emissions. The guidance has been divided up into four steps that churches can work through at their own pace, recognising that Step 4 may not be possible for every church. Full details of the four steps, including a case study of how one church moved through all four, can be found at **methodist.org.uk/Property/NetZero**
- Prepare the annual property schedules, both of accounts and investments and of the state of the properties, and report on any action required (SO 953).
- Be involved in matters such as the purchase, sale, extension or alteration of manses and take appropriate action in collaboration with the district property secretary and, where appropriate, the Connexional Team and Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP). Further guidance can be found on **tmcp.org.uk/property**
- Ensure the log book includes Annual Property Schedules, Quinquennial Inspection Reports, District Manse Reports and other relevant repairs or alterations. A log book for each manse should include worksheets, invoices, guarantees, inspection certificates and other documents (SO 954(ix)). If a log book has not been kept, a template can be found on **methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/schedules-and-forms**
- Be aware of the annual sum for manse maintenance as recommended by the District Synod. Prepare a budget of expenditure for each property to be brought up and maintained at the Connexional Standard.
- Present a report on the local property to the Circuit Meeting annually and after every quinquennial inspection (SO 953).

Charter for outgoing and incoming ministers

Any manse that is changing over occupancy should be ready in good time to be a place of welcome for the incoming minister. The Conference has agreed a Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers, which sets out what those moving into a manse can reasonably expect, as well as guidelines for providing an adequate manse. This is in *CPD* Volume 2, Book VII, Part 1. Remember, these are minimum standards. It is useful to ask: "What is the best welcome we could offer?" and then aim for that. More information can be found on **methodist.org.uk/Property/Manses**

Property matters

Property schemes requiring consent are described in Standing Order 930 and include all sales and purchases, leases and rentals, but not furnishings or the execution of non-structural repairs. To find out if consent is required, then look at the flow chart found on **methodist.org.uk/Property/Pathways**. Information about possible grant funding can be found at **methodist.org.uk/Property/Grants**

However, a project may require connexional consent if any of the buildings in the circuit are listed or in conservation areas. So the advice of the Connexional Conservation Officer should be sought at the earliest opportunity. Email conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk, and further details can be found on methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/conservation-listed-buildings

Districts have full responsibility for giving consent to all property schemes and these schemes are submitted online by churches and circuits on online.methodist.org.uk/login. Guides for using the Consents website can be found on propertyconsent.methodist.org.uk/guide. Circuit stewards are fully involved with schemes related to manses and any other circuit properties. Experience has shown that they will also frequently be involved with schemes put forward by local churches. The district property secretary and district consents panel members are available for advice and guidance on all these matters.

Support for all issues relating to property and full details of all property consents, returns and schedules can be found on the website at methodist.org.uk/Property. The monthly Property Matters online newsletter also offers helpful information at methodist.org.uk/Property/PropertyMatters

Special property circumstances

If a manse becomes vacant and a decision is made to retain the building with it being occupied by a paying tenant, the circuit stewards must ensure that the property letting complies with all relevant legislation. Note that ministers are not tenants. The TMCP web pages have guidance on this subject at tmcp.org.uk/property/letting-property-and-third-party-use. You should also contact your insurer to update your policy. Please note that these lettings must be reviewed every two years and consent must be given again at that time.

If a property is empty for more than a short period, you should let your insurer know as this could affect the validity of the policy. You can find out more information about looking after empty properties on methodist.org.uk/Property/A-Z. If you are in doubt about your legal obligations, contact the Church's Panel Firms (tmcp.org.uk/property/panel-solicitors). Please note that the Conference Office can provide guidance on interpretation of Standing Orders and Methodist constitutional practice, but is unable to advise individual circuits on their particular circumstances or legal obligations.

Ecclesiastical Exemption must not be used for other buildings and the guidance of the Conservation Officer should be sought in the case of any ambiguity. Please email conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk or find out more information on methodist.org.uk/conservation-listed-buildings/ecclesiastical-exemption

If you are new to matters relating to property the mnemonic BASICS might be helpful.

Build relationships

You are likely to work with the same tradespeople time after time, so it is worth keeping your professional relationships friendly and productive. Try to build up a few contacts, so you have someone to fall back on if your regular person cannot handle the job. If you need assistance finding a suitable tradesman, you could look on maintenancebooker.org.uk

Act quickly

Do not be tempted to let a problem fester in order to save money. It will not go away and will probably end up costing you more.

Service regularly

Boilers and gas cookers need to be serviced annually and have a Gas Safe certificate to keep them safe and reduce the risk of anything going wrong. As well, electrical safety should take place every five years. There is guidance on regular maintenance inspections at methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/regular-inspections

Invest time and money

You need to dedicate enough time to keeping the manse in good condition and be prepared to finance its upkeep. This will save the circuit expensive repair bills in the long run. If the manse is an old property then it is more likely to need increased maintenance.

Carry out inspections

You need to inspect the property regularly or arrange for it to be inspected by the manse visitors. Ministers do not always know how to carry out basic maintenance on a property, and may not tell you about problems until they leave. These regular checks will give you a good idea of the state of the property. A list of annual maintenance checks can be found on methodist.org.uk/Property/A-Z. There is guidance on regular maintenance inspections at methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/regular-inspections

Shop around

There is no point cutting corners and paying less for a shoddy job. Get a minimum of three quotes from reputable tradespeople to ensure you are getting the most cost-effective job. Follow procurement guidelines shown in Appendix 2.

Safeguarding

The aim of the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy is to create Christian communities of love and care, where good practice to promote the welfare of children, young people and adults becomes a way of life. The full policy and any updates can be found at methodist.org.uk/SafeguardingPolicy

It is advisable to read through the policy and note those responsible over key areas in your circuit. Make sure you know who the circuit safeguarding officer is and have a copy of their contact details.

Support is also available from your district safeguarding officer (see the district website for their details) and from the Connexional Safeguarding Team (tel: 020 7467 5189, email: safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk).

As a circuit steward, you will need to complete the Foundation and Advanced Safeguarding training within six months of taking up your appointment.

The Foundation Module promotes awareness of possible safeguarding concerns. The training equips all adults, both volunteer and paid, working in different roles in the Methodist Church to be confident in sharing safeguarding concerns with the appropriate person.

The Advanced Module enables safeguarding officers, ministers and other leaders in churches to gain a deeper understanding of their role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, and to develop confidence in fulfilling these. Circuit Stewards are required to attend in recognition of their responsibilities within the life of the church, especially in respect of the ministerial stationing process.

The training is renewed every four years and once you have undertaken the Foundation Module you only have to renew at the Advanced level.

In your role as circuit steward, it is vital you:

- promote the importance of safeguarding
- encourage those required to attend the training
- speak up about the importance of following correct procedures
- maintain good practice
- remind everyone of the value of creating safer space.

Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

The Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity was launched in 2021. It commits the church to structural, cultural and attitudinal change in order to prioritise justice and respect for all, especially those who have previously been excluded.

The strategy calls for us to learn from one another so that we can recognise God's presence more fully in our life together and create a culture of care and connectedness. A guide to this strategy is available at methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-MC-Strategy.

The strategy includes a range of actions, including mandatory training for all leaders and an Equality Impact Assessment that will be used in all spheres of Methodist life, to ensure the impacts of policies and activities on different groups of people is understood. Details of the Equality Impact Assessment can be found at methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-Church/EIA

Mandatory EDI Training

All church stewards are asked to complete mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training, which consists of unconscious bias training, an EDI module, and personal annual learning. The training is available in a number of formats, including for people to access themselves directly on MCBX (the online training platform). Full details can be found at methodist.org.uk/Mandatory-EDI-Training

Additional Responsibilities

Decisions of the Conference

Circuit stewards need to be aware of any decisions of the Conference that impinge upon circuit life, especially any reports commended for local discussion. Some special resolutions of the Conference (SO 126(3), (5)) will be placed on the agendas of the Circuit Meeting and all Church Councils.

Each year the Conference Agenda is available on the Methodist Church website, while the Conference Business Digest, published annually after the Conference, offers a summary of the decisions made (methodist.org.uk/Conference).

Pastoral care of ministers

Circuit stewards need to show pastoral support and sensitivity to individual ministers and their families. This involves meeting the ministers individually and not just collectively. It is good practice in many circuits for one or two stewards to be assigned to each minister for the year.

The circuit safe

An inventory of the documents kept in the circuit safe must be made and updated at least once a year (SO 903(3)). These will probably include building deeds, certificates of Registration for Public Worship or Marriage, and other such legal documents. It is good practice to have a witness present when opening the safe.

District grants and other sources of funding

If the circuit is applying for grants then complete the correct form. This must then be passed to the district secretary concerned (SO 439). The district grants officer can give details of submission dates and support offered in your district.

Funding is available for New Places for New People. More information can be at methodist.org.uk/CircuitNPNPFunding

Copyright law

A list should be created of churches in your circuit that have licences from Christian Copyright Licensing International and/or Calamus. There are several types of licence and many churches now need a Performing Rights Licence (PRK or PCL) to allow them to show film clips, DVDs or put on live music performances. If a church has a theatre company, it will need a Local Authority Performance Licence. It is advisable to check the licensing requirements at uk.ccli.com/copyright-licences

If churches are using printed copies of hymn books such as *Singing the Faith*, a licence is not required unless you photocopy or project the words. Visit methodist.org.uk/Copyright for full details on copyright, including links to Singing the Faith+ for copyright details specific to reproducing hymns.

Data protection

Circuits need to be aware of the guidelines in relation to data protection. The Information Commissioner's Office provides a helpful summary and advice regarding the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) can be found at ico.org.uk/for-organisations

The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) website also has useful information and guidance at tmcp.org.uk/about/data-protection

Positive Working Together

Positive Working Together, an initiative of the Methodist Church, was primarily concerned with combating bullying and harassment. It has since expanded to include promoting healthy working relationships and managing conflict.

A key focus of the work is advice and regular training for District Reconciliation Groups (DRGs). DRGs provide assistance and information within districts to achieve reconciliation between people in dispute, offering support for those experiencing bullying or harassment.

However, working together positively is the job of everybody in the Church. A summary document *Positive Working Together – A Short Guide*, with other material, can help everyone play their part, available at methodist.org.uk/PositiveWorkingTogether

Other resources include:

- **Growing through conflict workshops**

A one-day workshop, delivered regionally, exploring conflict and its transformation. It is recommended that circuit stewards attend this when offered. See methodist.org.uk/Learning for details of what is happening in your region.

- **Positive Working Together Guidelines**

methodist.org.uk/IntroducingPositiveWorkingTogether

These guidelines were produced to assist districts, circuits and local churches in promoting good working relationships, managing conflict and dealing with bullying and harassment within the Church. The latter often occur when issues of conflict arise and are not resolved. The guidance, therefore, provides information and resources about conflict management and the promotion of positive working.

They may also be useful for those accused of behaving in this way. The intention is to provide help with informal resolution while recognising that in some cases it is appropriate to resolve matters formally through recognised Church procedures.

- **Shared Commitments**

methodist.org.uk/PWT-SharedCommitments

A reflective half-day session for church councils or groups based on *Positive Working Together – A Short Guide*.

Visit methodist.org.uk/PWT-OtherResources for a list of other relevant Methodist materials.

Visit methodist.org.uk/PWT-FurtherHelp for a list of other organisations offering further support, advice and training.

Appendix 1: Contacting the Connexional Team

**Remember,
the
Connexional
Team is
available
to help you**

Methodist Church House

25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF

Tel: 020 7486 5502

Email: enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk

Property Support

25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF

Tel: 020 7467 5271

Email: property@methodistchurch.org.uk

Web Applications Team (Consents and Annual Returns)

25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF

Tel: 020 7486 5502

Email: onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk

Conservation Office

(for advice on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)

Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ

Tel: 0161 235 6722

Email: conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk

Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ

Tel: 0161 235 6770

Web: tmcp.org.uk

Learning Network

Web: methodist.org.uk/LearningNetwork

Appendix 2: Procurement

Best practice

When making purchases for the Methodist Church, we are not spending our own money nor are we protected by consumer laws. It is recommended that you follow the Connexional Team's Procurement Policy which operates under best practice principles and adopts the following objectives:

- securing maximum value for money
- complying with all relevant legislation
- avoiding risk.

In order to do this, the Methodist Church requires that procedures and processes are in place to ensure that:

- competitive bidding and tender processes are performed
- suppliers are appropriately selected and authorised for use
- suppliers are monitored for financial and non-financial performance
- goods and services are purchased only with proper authorisation
- goods and services received are correctly recorded
- payments are only made for goods and services authorised and received.

Spend thresholds

- Below £5,000 – ideally, seek three quotations but no competitive process required for selection.
- £5,000 to £25,000 – three formal written quotations, including one from a local supplier (if a suitable supplier is available).
- £25,000 to £50,000 – a minimum of three competitive tenders, including one from a local supplier (as long as a suitable supplier is available).
- Over £50,000 – a minimum of four written competitive tenders, including one tender from a local supplier (as long as a suitable supplier is available).

General principles

Circuits should use district-negotiated contract agreements (where they exist) in order to maximise purchasing power for the whole Church and to obtain optimum value for money. When there are no district-negotiated contracts in place, circuits are encouraged to adopt the Connexional Team's Procurement Policy. All this should be agreed by the circuit meeting or circuit leadership team as appropriate.

The Connexional Team has a Procurement Manager who may be able to give guidance in exceptional cases. However, they cannot not conduct a procurement process outside the Connexional Team. Guidance and further information on the Connexional Procurement Policy can be sought from: procurement@methodistchurch.org.uk

Date	Action
<p>End of November Year 1</p>	<p>Request from circuit staff details of expenses to be reimbursed for the first quarter and their contribution for personal phone calls.</p> <p><i>(The quarterly activities need to be repeated each quarter.)</i></p>
<p>End of May Year 1</p>	<p>Forms P11D provided by Payroll and Benefits in Financial Services, the Connexional Team, need to be completed and returned for each member of staff. These contain details of 'benefits in kind' received by staff in the financial year ending 5 April and will include relevant expenditure since 6 April in Year 0. <i>The Dictionary of Taxation</i> from Ministerial Benefits at Methodist Church House gives good advice on what to include.</p>
<p>August Year 1</p>	<p>To avoid complications with accruals in the accounts, pay all amounts due before the end of the month and bank all money received.</p>
<p>September Year 2</p>	<p>A statement of accounts should be presented to the Circuit Meeting.</p>
<p>October Year 2</p>	<p>Accounts need to be audited by a qualified auditor if income or expenditure is over £250,000; or independently examined by a suitably competent person who is not a member of the Circuit Meeting.</p>
<p>End of November Year 2</p>	<p>The Standard Form of Accounts should be completed, signed by the treasurer, auditor/independent examiner and Superintendent and sent to relevant circuit officer.</p> <p><i>(The agreed Circuit Reserves Policy must be submitted with the accounts.)</i></p>

Appendix 3: The Methodist Financial Year

**From 1
September
to 31
August**

The Methodist financial year runs from 1 September to 31 August. As illustrated in the table below, each financial year also requires work to be done in the preceding and following months.

The following is a list of activities for a typical financial year (Year 0-2).

Date	Action
December Year 0	Provide figures for applications for connexional funds for Year 1.
February/ March Year 0	Set budget and assessments for Year 1 for presentation at Circuit Meeting. You will have received information on stipends, pensions and travel expenses for Year 1 and advice on tax matters. The district treasurer will have sent details of the District Assessment. Other expenses will have to be judged from previous years, bearing in mind inflation or other increases. Assessments can be set in a variety of ways. Ideally, these should not be based solely on membership but take into account such items as giving, investment income, etc, and also reflect the 'ability to pay'. The share system is used by a number of circuits where churches 'volunteer' how much they can afford to give. It is useful to receive each church's accounts and may be valuable to have a meeting of all church treasurers.
August Year 0	Church Assessments for September are officially due eight working days before the beginning of the quarter and the stipends payment is due four working days before the beginning of the quarter. It is useful to pay as many of these, if possible, by transfer through Central Finance Board or bank accounts. These transactions must be recorded in the accounts for Year 1 if accruals accounting is used (a requirement for circuits whose income or expenditure is in excess of £250,000 in a year).
September Year 1	District Assessment is due by the seventh day of the quarter, preferably by direct transfer. Other payments should be made during the year as required.

The above does not cover basic activities such as bookkeeping, record-keeping, opening bank accounts, changing signatories, reconciling bank statements, drawing up and presenting annual accounts and making the best use of resources, funds and reserves.

Appendix 4: Our Calling and A Methodist Way of Life

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

The good news is that God loves you unconditionally, no strings attached.

In response to this gift, there are twelve things that we do individually and together as we grow as followers of Jesus that help us to worship God, serve others, be evangelistic, and learn and care together. Doing or not doing these things doesn't make God love you any more or any less – but doing them may help you realise how deeply you are loved by God.

As far as we are able, with God's help, we:

			
Pray We pray daily	Worship We worship with others regularly	Notice We notice God in Scripture and the world	Care We care for ourselves and those around us
			
Learn We learn more about our faith	Open We practise hospitality and generosity	Serve We help people in our communities and beyond	Flourish We care for creation and all God's gifts
			
Challenge We challenge injustice	Tell We tell of the love of God	Live We live in a way that draws people to Jesus	Share We share our faith

Discipleship Pathways: travelling together

The process of discipleship aligns our lives to keep following Jesus, and becoming more like him. We do this as individuals and as a community through shared spiritual practices and reflecting together.

Discipleship is a dynamic process. The path is not normally linear, but more like travelling on a train network.

The twelve core practices of A Methodist Way of Life are represented by stations. All of them are ways for new people to be drawn into the life of discipleship.



- Each station is a place where disciples grow in maturity, and step out in mission and action.
- We learn as we reflect together on what happens at each station.
- The Holy Spirit should be driving! We go where the train takes us.

Being a disciple on the pathway

As a circuit steward, you are first and foremost a disciple. What does being a faithful disciple look like?

Get on the train! Discipleship starts with a choice. We need to say yes, we're willing to go where Jesus wants to take us.



All twelve stations help us grow in faith. Which is your home station? Are there any you avoid?



We learn together between stations as we talk and reflect on our experiences. The Holy Spirit changes us. Where does your church provide places for reflection together?



Being a circuit steward, a leader of disciples

As a circuit steward, you have a particular calling to help to build a culture of discipleship in your church.

Be on the journey with the others. Support them as they grow in faith. Guide them to stations that will open up new possibilities for them.



All twelve stations should be open for travellers. Is any construction work needed in your church, and what's the most urgent need? Are any stations over-constructed?



Feedback, corrections, amendments or suggestions for this guide are welcome to
mvw@methodistchurch.org.uk

If you would like to request this resource in an alternative format,
please contact us to discuss your needs at publishing@methodistchurch.org.uk



The **Methodist** Church

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