

Circuit Stewards – Update on Response to Memorial M14 (2016)

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For Information
Resolution	27/1. The Council receives the report. 27/2. The Council commends this report to the Conference as a further reply to M14 (2016).

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Update on response to Memorial M14 (2016) regarding support for circuit stewards
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network is currently nearing completion of work on a new scheme which will be piloted in the first half of 2017 and introduced as a connexional resource in September 2017. • A Circuit Stewards Handbook is being developed. • A consultation with District Property Secretaries revising the on-line Property Handbook is taking place.

1. The 2016 Conference received Memorial 14 from the Aire and Calder (16/17) Circuit.

M14 Support for circuit stewards [DR/8.5.5]

The Aire and Calder (16/17) Circuit Meeting (Present: 92; Voting: 88 for, 0 against) draws the attention of the Conference to the responsibilities carried by circuit stewards.

The Aire and Calder Circuit was formed in 2011 through the bringing together of four Circuits. The new and significantly enlarged Circuit of 32 churches and over 1,500 members makes increasing demands upon the eight circuit stewards. Alongside the superintendent minister and the rest of the circuit staff, the Circuit is dependent on their skills, enthusiasm, insights and initiatives for the Circuit's governance, strategic development and mission focus. Circuit stewards provide Circuits with their most senior lay leadership yet, in many Circuits, the recruitment of circuit stewards with the skills and time to give to the role is becoming more difficult to secure. However, without this lay leadership Circuits could not function as intended and a very different form of leadership would be required to ensure the survival of the circuit system.

Apart from the considerable flow of helpful information that comes to circuit treasurers from the Financial Services department of the Connexional Team, together with the equally helpful section, 'Managing Trustees and Methodist Money' within the Church's website, in our view circuit stewards receive only minimal support from the Connexional Team either in the form of training, systematic communication or encouragement. We believe this situation needs to change. The Circuit proposes that the Secretary of the Conference and the Methodist Council:

- (a) develop an appropriate connexionally agreed training and support system for circuit stewards;
- (b) develop a direct line of communication between the Secretary of the Conference and circuit stewards so that circuit stewards are kept up to date with significant policy, strategy and good practice development in the Methodist Church, in particular as Conference decisions affect the life of Circuits.

Reply

The Conference welcomes the memorial from the Aire and Calder Circuit Meeting regarding the duties and responsibilities of circuit stewards. The Conference particularly wishes to note and affirm the contribution and dedication of circuit stewards as senior lay leaders within the life of the Methodist Church. The Conference notes work currently under way on the redesign of circuit steward training in the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network which will be piloted during the next connexional year. The Conference also notes and wishes to encourage the practice in some Districts of gathering together groups of circuit stewards for mutual learning, sharing and support. The memorial raises some important issues about communication and the Conference therefore directs the Methodist Council to identify appropriate mechanisms for regular communication with circuit stewards on policy, strategy and good practice.

The purpose of this paper is to update the Council regarding the response to the memorial, and to offer a further reply to it.

2. The memorial raises some important issues about communication and the Conference therefore directed the Methodist Council to identify appropriate mechanisms for regular communication with circuit stewards on policy, strategy and good practice.
3. Learning and development support for circuit stewards is currently ad hoc with huge variations between individual circuits and districts. Whilst there are a number of examples of good practice, and development and learning provision for circuit stewards is available across the DMLN regions, there is at present no connexion wide scheme for the training and support of circuit stewards. The Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network is currently nearing completion of work on a new scheme which will be piloted in the first half of 2017 and introduced as a connexional resource in September 2017.
4. The scheme will have a number of resources aimed at preparing people for the role of circuit steward and has the following outcomes:

By the end of the programme learners will be able to:

- Be confident in their calling and in the main aspects of their role.
- Demonstrate an understanding of *Our Calling* and the calling and structures of the Methodist Church.
- Demonstrate an understanding of their role in the context of the circuit and the structures of the wider Methodist Church.
- Be able to work in collaboration with ordained colleagues in exercising pastoral and missional leadership in relation to the whole life of the circuit.

- Understand their main duties within the context of the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD)* and demonstrate a working knowledge of the Standing Orders relevant to their role.
 - Develop as a visible community of stewards, recognisably skilled, resourced and respected.
5. In addition, a Circuit Stewards Handbook is being developed, available both as a PDF and in a flexible format for use as a resource locally, and a range of learning resources which circuits can draw upon according to their particular circumstances. Officers are also currently exploring the possibility of programmes of advocacy and support for circuit stewards at district and regional levels, building upon existing good practice in some parts of the connexion.
 6. Work is underway in consultation with District Property Secretaries revising the on-line Property Handbook. Updated sections will be highlighted in the quarterly Property Matters e-newsletter, which provides and promotes a range of resources for property secretaries across the connexion.
 7. The Standard Form of Accounts provides a consistent template to treasurers for the preparation of accounts – it and the associated guidance are updated annually by the Team under the oversight of the Accountancy Support Group. Implementation of the new charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) was supported by training offered, particularly to district and circuit treasurers, during 2016 at several locations around the connexion.
 8. The annual Resourcing Mission Forum helps officers at district and circuit level to think about how they can most effectively exercise stewardship of resources of people, property and money in pursuing God’s mission; feeding into the work of church and circuit stewards.

*****RESOLUTION**

27/1. The Council receives the report.

27/2. The Council commends this report to the Conference as a further reply to M14 (2016).