

Spiritual Responsibilities of Circuit Stewards – a three part idea

No 5

Aim of the session

To help you to take some time to consider the spiritual responsibilities of Circuit Stewards and how they are best fulfilled

A bit of background

Caring for the spiritual life of the Circuit is one of the most exciting and creative parts of being a Circuit Steward. 'Spiritual' can be a rather vague term. Perhaps the best way of understanding it is to think of the overall health of the church, particularly in terms of measuring it against Our Calling and The Priorities.

Spiritual matters are often intensely personal. This is where the notion of 'servant leadership' is particularly important. It is vital to bring your own experience and passion to the challenge of improving the 'spiritual' health' of the Circuit. It is equally vital to be able to stand back from your own perspective and identify and enable the passions and gifts of others to flourish. That can often be very challenging. Others may have views that conflict with yours or that you simply have no sympathy with. In that situation it helps to be part of a team that can provide wisdom and perspective.

It is sometimes difficult for lay people to feel confident in this area. It can be seen as something that the expertise of the minister alone is competent to deal with. Again good teamwork is vital. Lay people bring a spiritual wisdom that they may not even recognise themselves and it is important that voice is heard to help the expertise of the minister to flourish in the Circuit.

What you need

A list of the discussion questions in each session for every member of your group

How to do it

- Over a number of weeks/sessions look at the different parts of this worksheet.
- Each session does not have to be over long but should allow you time to discuss and later reflect on the spiritual life of your circuit.
- You might want to consider completing part 1 individually before you arrive at the main meetings so you can take the time to simply share together
- Take about 45 minutes for each session in the set. Don't worry if you run over it probably means that you have been discussing something very important to the life of your circuit. You can always continue your session on another occasion.

Part 1

Take some time for personal reflection – Look at the questions below and try hard to find an answer to them. It is often helpful when you address these questions to imagine you are in conversation with a friend or perhaps a young person who is asking you these questions about your faith. This may take as long as 30 minutes

- *What excites me about my faith?*
- *How do I show that in action?*
- *What does prayer mean to me?*
- *What struggles do I have with prayer?*
- *What place does the Bible have in my faith?*
- *What does “quality worship” look like for me?*
- *In what ways, places and people do I see God at work in the church and the world?*
- *What struggles do I have in believing in God?*
- *What are the ways that most help me to grow most in faith?*
- *What levels of time do I give to these areas of life?*
- *What does that show about their priority for me?*

As a group share together some of the thoughts about this exercise. Sharing is as much about listening as talking and you may learn something new about the spiritual strength within your team.

Part 2

Reflecting on the Circuit

Work in your group at analysing the spiritual life of your circuit. Ask yourselves some of the following questions.

- *What is the quality of worship like in the churches?*
- *How might it be improved?*
- *What resources are needed?*

- *How are people being encouraged to grow in faith?*
- *Is there a strong network of small fellowship groups?*
- *What are the main obstacles, if any?*
- *What resources might be needed?*

- *What is most likely to draw those on the fringes of church life into a deeper involvement?*

Try to remember the variety of answers and responses from Session 1 when considering these questions and remember what is good for one may not be for another. Try to build the understanding that a variety of people worship in our pews into your thinking.

Part 3

Beyond the churches

Reaching out beyond the immediate church community is a key aspect of spiritual life. The following questions may help to think through how the churches and people of your Circuit express the love of God in their lives.

Use the following questions to explore the issue in your circuit.

- *In what ways are the churches of the Circuit engaging with the wider community?*
- *In what ways are they drawing people into the experience of faith?*
- *What 'fresh expressions' of church are there in your Circuit?*
- *In your opinion, what might people who are not part of the church community at present be looking for from the church?*
- *In what ways might the church respond?*
- *How are individual members in the Circuit expressing their faith in everyday life?*
- *How might the church best support them in their everyday work and witness?*
- *How can the worship of the church best engage with the wider community?*
- *What resources of training, personal support, equipment or finance might be needed in such areas?*

In every case, ensure if you have decided something needs to happen or change that you allocate a person to the task, extra resources if necessary and a deadline by which the action should have happened. Remember then to review progress when you meet or in between if that's more useful.

Ideas for what you might do next

- *Consider a programme such as the one detailed in the Healthy Churches Handbook to energise and build on the existing strengths in your circuit*
- *Ask the District Development Enabler, District Evangelism Enabler or the District Training Officer to assist you with some further development in this area*
- *Read up on current thinking*
- *Ask your church members what they would value*
- *Look at initiatives like "Back to Church Sunday" or "Everybody Welcome – Bob Jackson & George Fisher"*