

Handbook

for

Circuit Stewards

The **Methodist** Church 

Acknowledgements:

This handbook has been compiled by the Circuit Stewards small group and is based on a handbook created by the Southampton District. This in turn was based on original work done in the Birmingham and Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Districts.

We acknowledge all the previous works with grateful thanks.

CIRCUIT STEWARD HANDBOOK

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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*
- ✳ *help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care*
- ✳ *be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice*
- ✳ *make more followers of Jesus Christ*

Conference 2000

PRIORITIES FOR THE METHODIST CHURCH

In partnership with others wherever possible, the Methodist Church will concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments on this priority:

To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world: and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church.

As ways towards realising this priority, the Methodist Church will give particular attention to the following:

1. Underpinning everything we do with God-centred worship and prayer
2. Supporting community development and action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor – in Britain and worldwide
3. Developing confidence in evangelism and in the capacity to speak of God and faith in ways that make sense to all involved
4. Encouraging fresh ways of being Church
5. Nurturing a culture in the Church which is people-centred and flexible

Conference 2004

Actions that are both ethical and consider the environment

WHAT IS A CIRCUIT STEWARD?

Circuit Stewards love God, the Church, the world and especially those fellow workers committed to their care. They rely on both the grace of God and the expertise they have developed in other fields to carry them through this task.

The role of a Circuit Steward is both a practical and strategic job enabling individuals to find fulfilment in Christian service and as such each Circuit Steward will discover different and personal ways to respond to God's call.

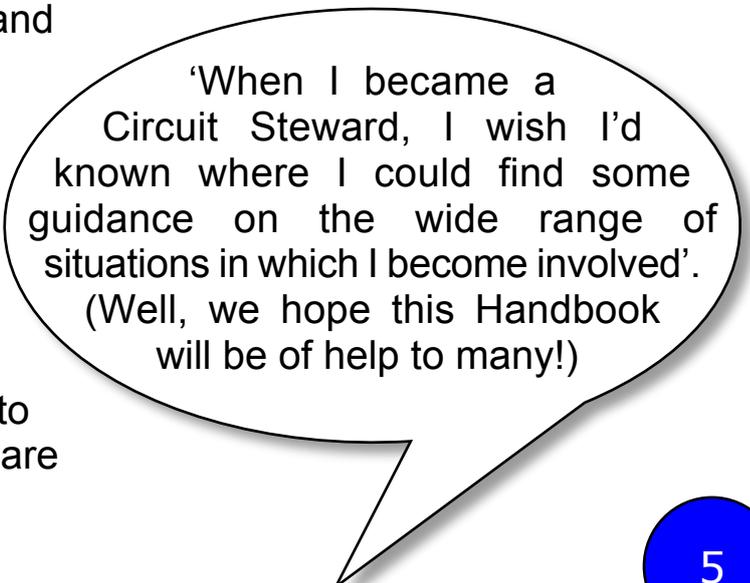
The Circuit Stewards are responsible, with the Superintendent and Ministers, Deacons and Probationers appointed to the Circuit, for the spiritual and material well-being of the Circuit, and for upholding and acting upon the decisions of the Circuit Meeting. Standing Order (SO)531 (1) (Standing Orders can be found in Volume 2 of The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD) – see page 20 for details of CPD).

Circuit Stewards share collective responsibility for leadership as members of the Circuit Leadership Team along with the Superintendent and Circuit Ministers and in that role have specific duties.

From that general responsibility it follows that the Circuit Stewards should:

1. exercise a general pastoral care for the Circuit staff and their families
2. meet as a Leadership Team regularly as local circumstances need
3. keep themselves informed of the activities of each local church
4. be aware of District and Connexional policies affecting the Circuit and its churches
5. be sensitive to the needs of the Circuit and its officers and staff
6. inform themselves of developing movements in Methodism and the Church generally
7. be alert to and take advice on the legal consequences of their office and its responsibilities, eg lay employment, finance, property
8. develop vision and plan for mission within the Circuit, ensuring appropriate consultation

.... and arrange in a manner suitable to the Circuit how these responsibilities are exercised.



'When I became a Circuit Steward, I wish I'd known where I could find some guidance on the wide range of situations in which I become involved'.
(Well, we hope this Handbook will be of help to many!)

PERSON SPECIFICATION FOR CIRCUIT STEWARDS

ESSENTIAL

A person who:

- * has a Christian faith and a commitment to serve
- * is willing to be supportive and affirming of others
- * has personal credibility, be confident, able to maintain confidentiality, committed and willing to work in a voluntary capacity
- * has strong communication skills, ideally able to speak at Circuit events and to contribute within services and elsewhere on behalf of the Circuit
- * has some of the following skills: an administrator, team worker, minute secretary, property administrator and managing trustee
- * is consultative, with the ability to be analytical and to contribute to the Leadership Team
- * has a sense of humour
- * is an agent for change

DESIRABLE

A person who:

- * has managerial experience and/or some understanding of employment law, given the Circuit's responsibility for the employment of Lay Employees
- * has a working knowledge of Methodist church structures and protocols and some experience of Circuit Meetings and events
- * exercises flexibility
- * is tenacious
- * has the ability to ask for help
- * is supportive of Ministers
- * has sensitivity
- * has an understanding family
- * has a willingness to learn on the job
- * has some financial understanding
- * possesses negotiating skills

SPECIFIC DUTIES OF CIRCUIT STEWARDS

The Circuit Meeting is a focal point for the Leadership Teams of the Circuit churches. Its responsibilities combine spiritual leadership and administrative efficiency. Its concern includes pastoral and evangelism work, training needs, approval of those ready for admission as Local Preachers and (annually) of Circuit Stewards. Through its policies, procedures, and decisions it needs to nurture ministry and mission, ensuring accurate representation from within the Circuit. Members of the Circuit Meeting, and hence Circuit Stewards, are Managing Trustees for Circuit property (normally manses) and funds. The general powers of Managing Trustees are identified in CPD. The Circuit Steward team are expected to share the following responsibilities between them:

FINANCES AND THE CIRCUIT FUND (see page 10):

The Circuit Stewards are the treasurers of the Circuit Fund.

It is the Circuit Stewards' duty to ensure that the Circuit Fund is managed properly and efficiently according to current accounting principles and money management so as to comply with the obligations imposed upon them by Standing Orders. That will require one Circuit Steward of acknowledged competence to assume especial responsibility for the Circuit Fund or, if there is no such steward then another competent person who is directly responsible to the Circuit Stewards. Many circuits now appoint someone for the specific task of acting as Circuit Treasurer and often they have no other responsibilities within the team.

MANSES (see page 12):

The Circuit Stewards are responsible for the interior repair and decoration and furnishing of the manses:

The improvement, repair, maintenance, suitability and location of manses are matters for which the Circuit and District are responsible through different bodies. They are responsible for the maintenance and decoration of the manses and furnishing them with office equipment.

INVITATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS (see page 14):

The Circuit Stewards are responsible for proposals for invitations to Ministers and Deacons to serve in the Circuit and for negotiating with Ministers over appointments to the Circuit and to a chaplaincy, the pastoral oversight of youth and community work and to a team ministry

MEETINGS: CHURCH COUNCILS, CIRCUIT MEETINGS AND DISTRICT SYNOD: (see page 15)

One Circuit Steward is to be appointed to each Church Council and at least one to the District Synod.

The Circuit Stewards are ex officio members of and entitled to attend all official meetings connected with the Circuit – except the Local Preachers Meeting unless they are themselves Local Preachers.

Circuit Stewards should decide amongst themselves which of their number are to attend the various meetings and then to report back to all.

CIRCUIT STEWARDS: NOTES ON GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. SUPPORT AND CARE:

- * Be available for Circuit staff and seek help if need be
- * Be sensitive to needs and situations
- * Provide support rather than make inappropriate demands
- * Be aware of special arrangements which are necessarily needed for certain appointments
- * Offer listening/supportive role to Minister/Lay Employees
- * Be available if necessary to intercede between Minister/Lay Employees and local church
- * Participate as appropriate in the Circuit Staff review process

2. OFFER HELP TO INCOMING/OUTGOING MINISTER/LAY EMPLOYEE

- * Prepare welcome pack
- * Discuss welcome or farewell service with Superintendent
- * Publicise events and arrival well in advance
- * Make contact with sensitivity
- * Consider particular circumstances with young families/retirement
- * Make time for social contact

3. CIRCUIT STEWARDSHIP: TEAM WORK

- * Let each Circuit Steward work with one or a group of churches
- * Try to attend services and events as well as Church Councils
- * Let your role be known within the congregation
- * Exchange information with other Circuit Stewards
- * Allocate one Circuit Steward to work with one Minister/Lay Employee

4. ATTEND MEETINGS

- ✳ Make an effort to attend Synod and any specially arranged District meetings
- ✳ Work with Superintendent/Leadership Team to make meetings more efficient and effective
- ✳ Ensure proper preparation for meetings
- ✳ Share with other Stewards attendance at meetings
- ✳

5. CREATE A SENSE OF CIRCUIT COMMUNITY:

- ✳ Organise Circuit Day for all churches to worship together
- ✳ Circuit Fundraising/event/retreat/quiet day
- ✳ Be present and make yourself known
- ✳ Join Circuit review sessions

6. THE WORK EXTENDS BEYOND THE CIRCUIT BOUNDARIES:

- ✳ Participate in area Circuit Steward meetings
- ✳ Keep abreast of Methodist Recorder and sister church publications
- ✳ Surf Methodist web site
- ✳ Keep informed of Synod, Conference and Connexion decisions/policies
- ✳ Ministers as well as Circuit Stewards have responsibility to disseminate information from District and Connexion
- ✳ Be aware of 'other mother church', if your Circuit has LEP (Local Ecumenical Partnership churches)

7. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY:

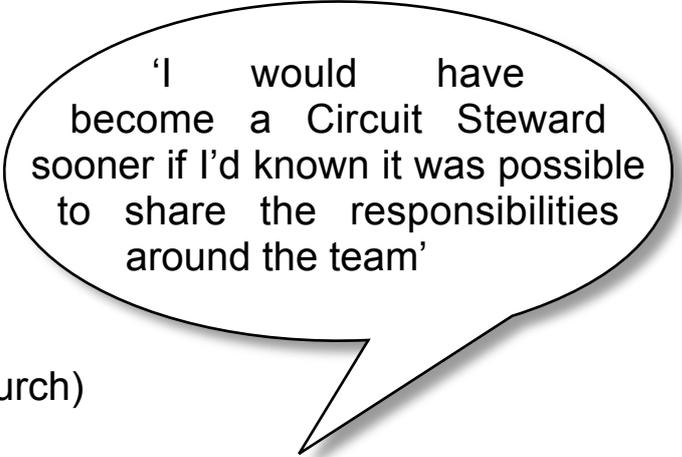
- ✳ The Circuit Meeting has overall responsibility
- ✳ Be aware of where to get advice on matters of: property, lay employment, safeguarding, finance, charity (see page 20)
- ✳ Ensure records of Circuit business are maintained and accessible
- ✳ Never be afraid to ask for guidance from District or another Circuit
- ✳ Keep an up-to-date Synod Directory at hand (see page 20)
- ✳ For any matter of discipline, confer with your friendly District Chair

8. CIRCUIT VISION:

- ✳ Live by Kingdom Values
- ✳ Share spirituality
- ✳ Organise review/discussion/consultation/vision days
- ✳ Keep the work/mission/vision of the Circuit under constant review
- ✳ Be alert to changing patterns of ministry within the Methodist and wider Church
- ✳ Prayer

9. PRACTICALITIES:

- * If appropriate let one member of the team take responsibility for Circuit finances
- * If appropriate let each Circuit manse have its own Manse Steward
- * If appropriate let one member of the team take responsibility for co-ordinating all property matters (all manse and church building matters)
- * Ensure you offer adequate support and information to your successor (possibly using this handbook as your transition checklist)
- * Use CPD (Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church) (see page 20)



'I would have become a Circuit Steward sooner if I'd known it was possible to share the responsibilities around the team'

FINANCES

THE CIRCUIT FUND

The Circuit Stewards are collectively treasurers of the Circuit Fund. Most Circuits have one of their stewards who has the necessary skills and knowledge to take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the Circuit Funds. Otherwise the Circuit must secure a competent person to carry out these duties under close supervision of the stewards.

NB: The term 'Circuit Treasurer' does not occur in CPD. The responsibility lies with the Circuit Stewards. However, it is now common practice to appoint one of the Circuit's Stewards as Circuit Treasurer, who could take the majority of the responsibility on behalf of the Circuit Stewards.

The Circuit Stewards have to present to the Circuit Meeting a forecast budget covering a 12 month period and an indication of how the costs will be met. Sometimes Circuit Projects will require long-term financial planning. Discussions with individual Church Treasurers is essential when assessing contributions from the Churches prior to presenting figures to the Circuit Meeting for its consideration. Some Circuits hold a meeting of treasurers whilst other Circuits approach each Church Treasurer on a one-to-one basis. It should always be treated as a sensitive issue.

The Circuit Stewards must ensure that stipends and agreed rates of allowances to meet Circuit expenses are paid to Ministers and other staff including any Lay Employees. Accurate records must be kept.

In exercising financial control the Circuit Stewards know that SO 012(1) states

'Methodist money shall not be held in private accounts but in official bank accounts requiring the signatures of, or electronic authorisation by, two persons for withdrawals'

They must maintain the payment of financial obligations as set out in the annual budget, eg payment to District funds, the upkeep of Circuit properties (manses) etc

The financial year is from 1 September – 31 August. The annual accounts are presented to the Circuit Meeting having been examined by a qualified person.

THE FINANCIAL ROLE OF THE CIRCUIT STEWARD

Standing Orders states that the Circuit Stewards are the treasurers of the Circuit Fund and that they should:

1. collect assessments
2. provide for the stipends due to Circuit staff
3. pay staff expenses
4. discharge any other financial claims on the Circuit agreed in the budget
5. pay assessment to District Treasurers

It is also clear that it is the responsibility of Church Treasurers to pay the assessment set by the Circuit Meeting.

The Methodist Financial Year runs from 1 September to 31 August. However, the work for a particular financial year starts well before 1 September and ends long after 31 August. Specific guidelines are issued each year and are distributed through the network of Senior Circuit Stewards.

Circuits with other employees can either arrange for them to be paid by the Connexion or register as employers and pay them directly. This will involve other responsibilities with regard to salaries and taxation which are not covered in the above scenario.

Clearly the above does not cover basic activities such as book-keeping, 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.

Circuit Stewards should also be aware of the fact that Supernumerary Ministers are entitled to payment for all services that they lead and relevant expenses and ensure that systems are in place at all churches to guarantee these payments are made. Circuits are advised by Finance Department annually of the recommended preaching fee and mileage rate for Supernumeraries.

If you need more guidance, contact the District Treasurer (see page 20)

MANSES

The duties and responsibilities of a Circuit/Circuit Property Steward in relation to manses are briefly summarised as follows;

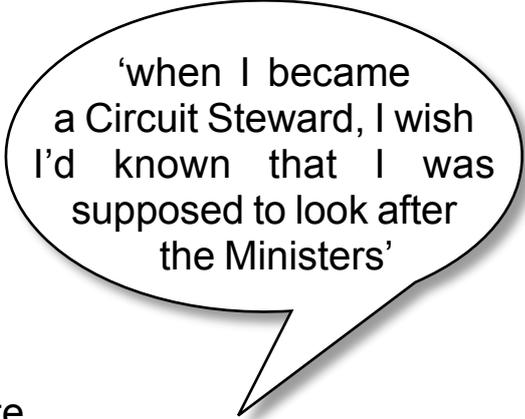
1. Liaise regularly with Ministers on the state of manses and undertake renovations and repairs as necessary;
2. Arrange for Quinquennial inspections to be carried out every 5 years on each manse; review the findings and recommendations of the inspectors and take any necessary action; send copies of Schedule E and the Quinquennial report to the District Manses Secretary. A copy of the Quinquennial report must also go to the District Property Office (see page 20)
3. Prepare the annual property schedules (Schedule C), both of accounts and investments and of the state of the properties, and take any action required;
4. Be involved in matters such as the purchase, sale, extension or alteration of manses and take appropriate action in collaboration with the District and the Connexional Property Office in Manchester (see page 20);
5. Open and maintain a log book for the retention of the annual property schedules and other relevant material, and ensure that the log book is kept up to date. Establish a file for each manse in which to retain Quinquennial reports, work sheets, invoices, guarantees, inspection certificates, etc Be aware of the annual sum for manse maintenance recommended by Synod.
6. Present a report on the local property to the Circuit Meeting annually and after every Quinquennial inspection.

See SO 533, 803, 952, 953, 954

CARE OF MANSES

Before the arrival of a new Minister, arrange for the following duties to be performed where necessary

- * Carpets cleaned
- * Paintwork washed
- * Curtains cleaned
- * Cupboards – empty and clean
- * Cooker clean- both hob and oven in good working order
- * Refuse from previous occupant removed
- * Any disarrangement rectified, everything restored to previous positions
- * Where possible provide a list of useful names and addresses
- * Hedges and shrubs trimmed
- * Lawns cut
- * Beds weeded
- * Rubbish removed
- * Sheds clean and empty
- * Garage(s) empty



'when I became a Circuit Steward, I wish I'd known that I was supposed to look after the Ministers'

Also ensure for all manses that there are adequate smoke detectors and fire blankets and that annual gas inspections are carried out. Where practicable, install a broadband connection in each manse.

NB the sale or purchase of manses and church buildings requires separate District procedures and guidance should be sought from District officers.

SCHEDULES

The following is a list of Schedules relevant to the care of manses:

- Schedule B: Annual Statement of Financial Affairs
- Schedule C: Property Inspection for each manse (by Circuit Stewards)
Property Inspection for each church
- Schedule D: Summary Report

NB 1 CPD Part 2 pages 730/731 provides a Charter for incoming Ministers and Deacons.

NB 2 Be aware of taxation implications - see Finance Section under P11D This is because some work done on manses when the Minister is in residence can be classed as 'benefit in kind' and would be taxable and has to be reported. It can get very complicated! If you need more guidance, contact the Manses Secretary (see page 20)

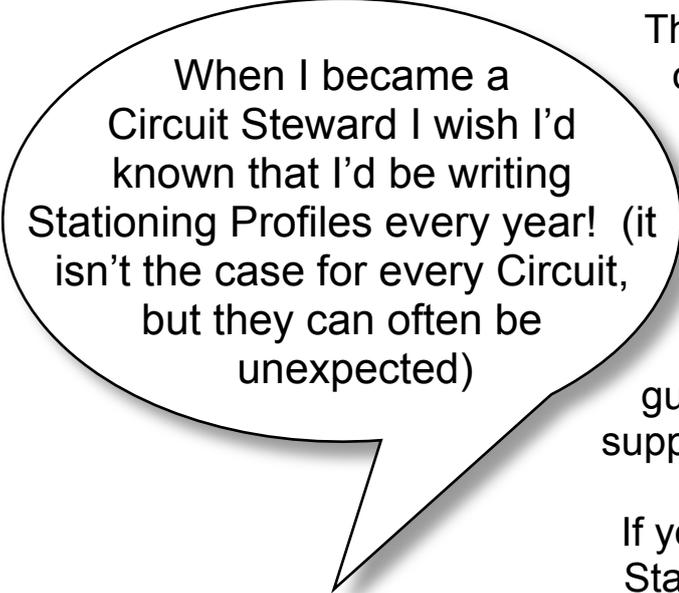
INVITATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Each year the Stationing Committee issues a Connexional Good Practice guide for everyone involved in stationing. The guide is intended to help all those involved in the invitation and stationing process and should be read in conjunction with Conference requirements. These are set out in the latest edition of CPD.

Your responsibility as a Circuit Steward is to ensure that the process is adhered to by the Circuit and individual churches. Ministers should expect consistency in the application of the process. Do not assume you know the process because you have been involved with it before, the detail will vary from year to year.

Circuit Stewards should familiarise themselves with the whole process and at the March Circuit Meeting ensure that an Invitation Committee is appointed and what powers are delegated to the committee.

The September Circuit Meeting needs to be held early in the month to allow time for the decision to be forwarded to the District.



When I became a Circuit Steward I wish I'd known that I'd be writing Stationing Profiles every year! (it isn't the case for every Circuit, but they can often be unexpected)

The whole process of stationing and/or offering an extension is stressful for the Circuit but very much more so for the Minister and family. It is the Circuit Stewards job to ensure that all consultations are conducted as sympathetically as possible and this is best achieved by following the guidelines at all stages. Remember that support is available within the District.

If you need more guidance, contact the Lay Stationing Representative (see page 20)

MEETINGS: CHURCH COUNCILS, CIRCUIT MEETINGS AND THE DISTRICT SYNOD

Circuits work in different ways and have a variety of patterns of meetings. Meetings may include:

Circuit Stewards
Circuit Meeting
Property Committee

Leadership Team
Manse Committee
District Meetings

CHURCH COUNCILS

A Circuit Steward is an ex-officio member of, and entitled to attend, all official meetings connected with the Circuit, except for local preachers meetings (unless they are a local preacher). Any Circuit Steward is therefore entitled to attend the Church Council of any church within the Circuit. One Circuit Steward should be appointed, by the Circuit Stewards, to attend each Church Council (SO 610). It is important to note that LEPs will have different governance arrangements.

The Circuit Steward will be able to:

- ★ represent the Circuit at the meeting
- ★ offer information on matters relating to Circuit events and Circuit policy
- ★ gather information on local church events or concerns that need to be reported back to the rest of the Circuit Leadership Team

DISTRICT SYNOD (REPRESENTATIVE SESSION)

Synod is the policy making court of the District, serving as a link between the Conference and connexional team on one hand, and the Circuits and local churches on the other.

Under SO 410 one Circuit Steward of each Circuit in the District is a representative to Synod. Each Circuit also sends lay representatives: these will often include the other Circuit Stewards. All Ministerial staff stationed in the District attend too.

At Synod there are opportunities to:

- ★ meet with representatives from other Circuits
- ★ find out what is happening in the District
- ★ pass on information relating to the Circuit
- ★ vote on resolutions
- ★ elect representatives to Conference

The nominated steward will report back to the other Circuit Stewards who have not attended Synod

MAKING MEETINGS WORK

If you are responsible for the meeting use the following questions as a checklist as you prepare

If you are attending a meeting that isn't working use them to diagnose what's wrong and help make the meeting more effective

THIRTEEN KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Is there a clear purpose/agenda?
2. Are the appropriate people present?
3. Is there an agreed finishing time?
4. Do people know why they are there – have they been given enough information to make an informed decision?
5. Do people know and trust each other?
6. Is the meeting chaired fairly and clearly?
7. Is someone taking minutes or notes?
8. Has the necessary preparation been done?
9. Is there clarity about the decisions being made, and are decisions properly followed up by named individuals?
10. Are any special needs being addressed, eg hearing impairment, transport needs, meeting times?
11. Is the environment/meeting place appropriate and conducive to the business of the meeting?
12. Is there a need for confidentiality, and has this been addressed?
13. Are people offered refreshments?

TWO PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Senior Circuit Steward

In my 3rd year as a Circuit Steward (CS), I have completed one year as senior CS, and have two still to go. We have a lot taking place in our Circuit, including a complex property development, which leads to a lot of legal, technical and schedule-filling involvement, as well as many meetings! Chairing the core committee is good: it does have its moments, but is not as challenging as working with solicitors! Central to the development, however, is not the administrative stuff, but to focus on the resulting mission in the surrounding area of Basingstoke.

CPD refers to the 'spiritual and material well-being of the Circuit' as ingredients of the CS role. I would certainly find the job unsatisfying without becoming really involved with the congregations of the three churches I am linked with, their Church Councils and their aspirations for the kingdom – for that is the life-blood of the Circuit and of our Christian commitment! Professionally, I have been involved in much strategic planning and hence I do greatly appreciate my involvement in this aspect of Circuit life. Planning for the future of the Circuit, fully guided by the Holy Spirit, is a crucial aspect of the CS role.

Describing our role in terms of lists and things-to-do, buildings and annual schedules, gives only part of the story. I am convinced the role depends on relationships. We have a vibrant and imaginative team of Ministers and lay workers in our Circuit, and trying to develop appropriate care for them in our CS team is fundamental. The aim, surely, must be to have spirit-filled relationships with the Super (pivotal!), and with the other Ministers & Lay Employees, with the Churches, and with as many members whose names I can remember! Only then can we reflect on how things are going, and how folk are doing their job, and help the Circuit achieve its aims.

A Circuit Steward

'There's not a lot to it, but...'

Invited to become a Circuit Steward with these words and discovering that they were not entirely accurate, I wondered what I had let myself in for.

Discovering that, together with a few others, I was responsible for looking after churches, manses, Ministers and policy was daunting. I quickly learnt how to think on my feet, look as if I knew what I was doing, calm ruffled feathers and, above all, I learnt the art of delegation!

I could not have prepared for this role. There are the practical jobs dealing with the mundane life of the Circuit, but for me they were less significant than three tasks that took me by surprise.

The first revolved around attending church council meetings and this took on a life of its own. It was easy, if tedious, to go to the meetings, but beyond that there was a need and desire to build relationships with those in the congregations. I was welcomed to their special events and services, confided in and showered with encouragement and support, with the occasional wise words of advice. In a rural Circuit such as this one, the small churches can often feel isolated and vulnerable. Having someone from the wider Church take an interest and support them can give a sense of self-worth, confidence and empowerment.

Alongside that there is the role of offering practical and pastoral support to the Ministers. Their humanity sometimes conflicts with the expectations churches and individuals put on them. Even trying to guard their day off can be a challenge. I found I could never do too much listening and upholding.

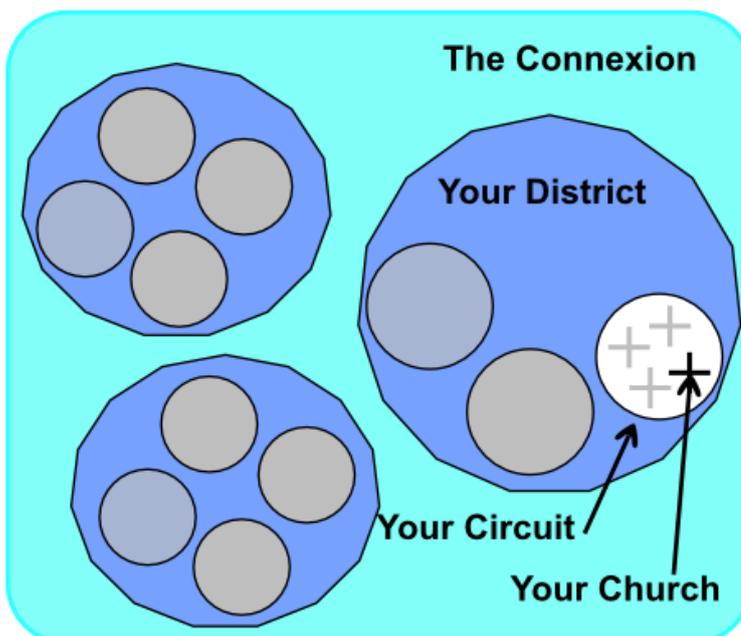
Finally, being part of the decision making in the Circuit was exciting. Being a steward gave me a wider view of District and Connexional activity. Trying to link the two together and attempting to lead the Circuit forward tested skill and strength and brought immense reward.

There is a lot to do, but the rewards were unexpected and God blessed abundantly. And I love the job!

THE STRUCTURE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

- * Local churches (about 6,000 in England, Scotland and Wales) are grouped into Circuits (600+), each having a **Circuit Superintendent**. Circuits are grouped into Districts (31) led by a **District Chair**.
- * The Methodist Church or **Connexion** is served nationally by the Connexional Team, most of whom are based at Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Rd, London NW1 5JR (020 7486 5502).
- * The Property and Resourcing Mission sections are at Central Buildings, Oldham St, Manchester M1 1JQ (0161 236 5194).
- * There are posts for the strategic development of various aspects of the work, such as youth work, children's work, mission and evangelism, **Women's Network**, pastoral care, formation in ministry, etc
- * The post of **General Secretary** provides overall co-ordination and strategic direction to the Connexion's work, under the guidance of the **Methodist Council**, a representative body.
- * The policy-making body of the Methodist Church is the annual Conference to which the Districts send elected representatives both lay and ordained.
- * A **President** and **Vice President** are elected and serve for one year.

Structure of the Methodist Church in the UK



Your Church is part of a group of Churches called a 'Circuit'

Your Circuit is one of a number of Circuits that combine to form a 'District'

All the District together are part of the 'Connexion'

KEY RESOURCES AND PEOPLE

In the **District Directory**, issued each year for Synod in September, contact details can be found for:

- * The District Chair
- * The Synod Secretary
- * The Chair's PA
- * The District Treasurer
- * The Manse Adviser
- * The Lay Employment Adviser
- * The Training Officer
- * The District Development Enabler
- * The District Evangelism Enabler
- * The Property Secretaries (Property and Finance)
- * The District Safeguarding Officer
- * A number of other officers and resource people

Extra copies of the District Directory can be obtained from the Synod Secretary or the District Administrator.

OTHER KEY RESOURCES:

- The current issue of **CPD – The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church** (this is now available for free download as a searchable pdf from www.methodist.org.uk)
- Publications and resources are available from Methodist Publishing: 17 Tresham Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6SG.
Phone: 01733 235962, Email: www.mph.org.uk