

Revised and  
updated  
2024

# The Church Stewards' Handbook

A guide  
for church  
stewards in  
the Methodist  
Church



## Siblings in Christ,

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The first Sunday that my wife and I attended the church in which we worship, the steward had an announcement to make. She was stepping down and the church needed to find someone to replace her. She said a few words about the responsibilities of a steward and invited anyone who wished to know more to talk to her or her fellow stewards. Anyone in the congregation who knew nothing else about a church steward would have been sure of one thing – it's a big and important job.

The role description is daunting. Stewards are to give “leadership and help over the whole range of the church's life and activity [and]... to hold together in unity the variety of concerns that are contained within the ministry of the Church.” Small wonder that our *Constitutional Practice and Discipline* insists that every church has at least two stewards. As you consider the role to which you have been called, or for which you are thinking of offering yourself, this excellent handbook will be a guide to the range of life and activity of a church steward.

The role includes a vast array of tasks. Some are weighty, such as deciding with the minister how to handle a dispute that is affecting relationships in the congregation. Others are light, such as ensuring that there is a glass of (fresh!) water in the pulpit. Many will not be seen or noticed but all are important, because all contribute to the local church being what God is calling it to be.

Like all who have served in circuit appointments, I thank God for the stewards who have given so much of their time and energy to their churches and their ministers. I thank God for the work that stewards have done, for the companionship that I have enjoyed, for the well-chosen words (and wisely observed silences) in the vestry, for the encouragement or caution which helped me to choose the right course of action, and for the laughter at those little moments of unwitting comedy that every church has known.

It might be a big job – but it is a vital one and often a joyous one. I hope and pray that as you read this handbook and exercise the responsibility, you will know the joy and know that others are giving thanks for you.



**The Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler**  
Secretary of the Methodist Conference

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### Latest Standing Orders

*The Church 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](https://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*.

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### Methodist Church website

Support for church stewards (and other office holders) can be found at [methodist.org.uk/OfficeHolders](https://methodist.org.uk/OfficeHolders)

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### Web links

Most web links are shortcut addresses to web pages, rather than links to specific PDFs (as these often break).

# Our Calling

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The calling of the Methodist Church, which is relevant to all areas of church life and first expressed by the Methodist Conference in 2000, is being reiterated today.

Our Calling will form a foundation and motivation for all that you do as a church steward in your local church.

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. It does this through Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism.

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)

As part of a church leadership team, you will explore how the resources of the church can be used to fulfil Our Calling.

With a key responsibility for worship, stewards work with others to create places people can meet together to worship God, in a variety of ways.

The pastoral care of the congregation and the wider community is an important responsibility of the steward. Finding ways of listening to and building relationships with those in the church and the local community is often difficult but essential as the church lives out Our Calling.

As a steward, you might be encouraging others to serve and provide for the needs in your local community; supporting those looking to share the good news in ways relevant to your context; and creating opportunities for people to learn and grow in their faith. You may be actively involved in one of these areas, but as part of the stewards' team your particular role is to hold together all the ways Our Calling is supported in your church.

In all of this, through Our Calling, you are finding ways for the local church to live out God's love in the wider world.

# The Church Steward's Year

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There is no such thing as a set calendar for a church steward, as no two churches function identically.

This is a starting point for stewards to use in creating their own specific calendar.

## September

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- Welcome services for new presbyters, deacons and lay employees.
- Circuit Meeting.
- Attend Church Council.
- Monitor impact of Circuit Meeting and District Synod decisions.

## October

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- Attend Church Council.
- Arrange how the stewards team will support Advent and Christmas worship and outreach activities.
- Gather and submit data for the Statistics for Mission (see [methodist.org.uk/Statistics](https://www.methodist.org.uk/Statistics)).

## November

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- Property and finance schedules for churches due for completion and submission.

## December

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- Support Christmas worship and outreach activities.
- Circuit Meeting (optional).

## February

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- Attend Church Council.
- Arrange how the stewards team will support Easter worship and outreach activities.

## March

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- Attend Church Council and General Church Meeting.
- Circuit Meeting

## April

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- Attend General Church Meeting.
- Support Easter worship and outreach activities.

## June

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- Attend Church Council (optional).
- Circuit Meeting (optional).

## July

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- Attend Church Council (optional).
- Attend farewell services and events.

# Being Prepared

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## What is a church steward?

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Church stewards are at the heart of the local church. Working as a team with other stewards, presbyters, deacons and probationers, they have responsibilities within the full scope of church life. They rely both on the grace of God and the expertise they have developed in other fields to carry out their roles.

Being a church steward is a ministry in its own right, as a person realises their unique contribution to the leadership of the local church. Therefore, it is a personal vocation and part of an individual's discipleship – a response to God's love in Christ. As the church steward serves others, this should enable their own spiritual life to flourish.

Being a church steward is also part of the ministry of the church. Over time, the church's focus and needs will change and so the requirements of the steward's role will change too. This means that different people will be best suited to the steward's role at different times in the church's life.

Across a dispersed church, there are many nuances in how the church steward role is exercised, and the role will vary according to context, cultural setting, local arrangements and ways of working. The experience, gifts and graces that a team of stewards bring will also influence how the roles are carried out. The Standing Orders that govern church stewards provide a framework within which the role can be exercised in a way that best fits the local context and enables the work of God to be accomplished.

With other church stewards, you will hold the 'general responsibilities of a steward' (SO 633). These can be broken down into four key areas to:

- exercise pastoral care and leadership with the minister
- hold together in unity the variety of concerns within the Church
- uphold and act upon the decisions of the Church Council
- draw others into leadership, where appropriate.

## Appointing a church steward

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The process begins with the identification of people who may wish to take on the post, followed by informal conversations with possible stewards, all underpinned by prayer.

At this stage, there should be a careful balance between identifying those who could be a good steward and being open to all those eligible. It may be that a prospective steward is identified because others have seen the gifts and graces in them needed for the role. It could be that they feel called to offer themselves in service. Often it is the person no one has thought of who makes the best steward!

A prospective steward is then encouraged to consider the appointment. It is important that enough time is allowed for them to think and pray about the role and how they will balance it with family life and other commitments. Anyone putting themselves forward as a church steward is required to be a member of the local church or a supernumerary minister stationed in the Circuit (SO 632(1)).

Once a potential steward has agreed that they are willing to take up the role, a written nomination is given to the minister, who takes this to the General Church Meeting (GCM). The formal process of appointment happens when members of the GCM vote (SO 632(1)).

After following the processes prayerfully, if no one appears to take on the role, there will need to be a review of how the steward's role in that church is carried out. Could some of the work be shared? A possible solution may be to have stewards who carry out the Sunday responsibilities and those whose role focuses on other aspects of leadership. There could be something that prevents people in the church taking office, prompting a review of church life. The Church Council may need to spend time focusing on what God is saying to the church on this occasion. Ultimately, if no one can be found, the church needs to consider its position moving forward.

Church stewards are elected and re-elected annually at the GCM and may normally hold office for a maximum of six years (SO 607(3)). After this, the steward must give up the role for at least one year, unless the exception to the six-year rule under SO 607(4) applies. The six-year rule has many benefits. It means that no one person is over-burdened for too long; there is a steady flow of new knowledge and experience into the role; those on the fringes of the church can be encouraged into new roles; and those who feel a call to serve the church have opportunities open to them. The local church may want to consider building up a practice of succession planning to ensure the posts can always be filled.

## Young stewards

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Increasingly local churches are encouraging young people into a variety of roles including that of a church steward. If you are a youth steward or if you are encouraging others to become youth stewards, there is helpful guidance in the resource *Voice Activated* (see sections 5 and 7, on participation): [methodist.org.uk/VoiceActivated](https://methodist.org.uk/VoiceActivated)

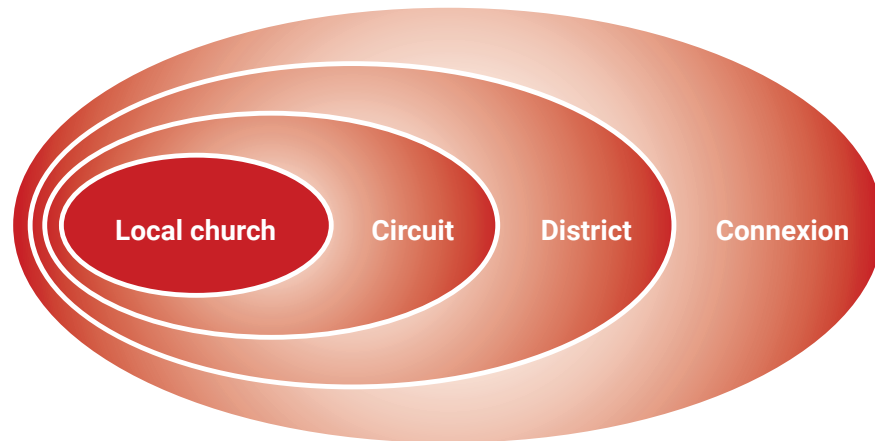
If a person under 18 years old is appointed as a steward, it is important to recognise their gifts and skills and value them as a young person in this role.

It is worth remembering that there are a number of boundaries that age brings and there will be some roles a young steward cannot take on if they are under 18. A young person can be a member of Church Council, but cannot be a trustee. They also cannot be on the Pastoral Committee, although they can be a member of other committees in the church.

For other stewards in the team, it is vital to remember that this steward is a young person and appropriate safeguarding guidelines and good practice must be put in place. If you need further support with this, contact your District Safeguarding Officer.

## Methodist structure

In order to understand the role of a church steward, you need to know how it fits into the wider circuit, district and Connexion.



The Methodist Church has noted that, “An individual’s commitment to Christ can truly be realized only in full participation in the worship, witness and service of the Christian community, and this is normally best achieved through the local church and the web of its relationships with others.” (*Called to Love and Praise*, Methodist Conference, 1999, paragraph 4.4.8.)

The local church, therefore, provides a place for people to be together for worship and fellowship; a place to find ways to live out their calling.

Every Methodist church is in a circuit. Each circuit usually consists of a group of local churches overseen by the Superintendent Minister and served by local preachers and ordained ministers (presbyters and deacons). It is worth noting that ministers are appointed to circuits, not to local churches.

Every circuit is located in a district, which is a geographical group of circuits, overseen by a district chair. There are 29 districts in the Methodist Church in 2023. Twice a year, in spring and autumn, the district holds a synod, for worship, information sharing and decision making.

Together the local churches, circuits and districts of the Methodist Church in Britain form the Connexion. Connexionalism is a way of being together, 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).

One expression of Connexionalism can 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. There are also representatives of connexional and other bodies, the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly (3Generate) and representatives from the World Church. The Conference is a place of Christian conferring, and is the supreme decision-making body of the Church.

As a church steward, although the focus of your work may be at local church level, it is always within the context of the circuit, district and the whole of the Connexion.



# Leadership

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The church steward is a key leadership role in relation to both practical duties and responsibilities held for the congregation and the wider church. It is a leadership role that should be carried out graciously, building trust with others.

The Methodist Church has an understanding of shared leadership. We “all contribute to and participate in the ministry of the whole people of God.” (*Ministry in the Methodist Church*, Methodist Conference 2018, para 4.3.2) As a result, leadership is expressed in a diversity of ways.

Church stewards may work closely with the minister, or through leadership teams that include other office-holders or lay employees. Many places have a Senior Steward who takes on particular key leadership roles and is the main point of contact. There will often be a shared ministry with other stewards, including communion stewards, welcoming teams and vestry or Sunday stewards who carry out the needed ministry when worship takes place. Part of the church stewards’ role is to find ways in which people’s gifts are recognised, nurtured and employed in the shared leadership of the church’s life and witness.

Being in leadership brings with it an expectation that you will think strategically about how things are done, question why, and consider if things could be done differently to better accomplish the work of God in your area. As a steward, you are in a representative role, so sometimes you will need to undertake tasks that you may not feel particularly called to, but that you do on behalf of the whole church community.

At every level of the church’s life, across the Connexion, people are called and appointed to a variety of roles to exercise particular kinds of oversight, ensuring the church remains true to its calling. Presbyters, deacons, probationers and the church stewards play a part in exercising this important role in the local church.

If you are a steward in a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP), it is important to note that ecumenical partners have different understandings of ministry, so leadership takes different forms. As a leadership team, it will be important to work out how the role of a Methodist church steward fits within the context of the LEP.

## Pastoral care

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Stewards exercise pastoral care for a wide range of people within the church, which includes being aware of the pastoral needs of the stewards' team. They do this alongside others appointed to pastoral roles (eg class leaders, pastoral visitors).

They have a particular role in providing pastoral care and support for the minister and their family. The church stewards, as a team, will also need an awareness of the pastoral needs of the local community.

## Invitations and appointments

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A church steward will often be consulted when the question of a ministerial appointment arises. When the time comes for the re-invitation of a minister or the search for a new one, the process will be handled by the circuit stewards, liaising with the church stewards at the appropriate points. The circuit stewards and the district chair will follow the Code of Practice for everyone involved in the invitation and stationing process as they work with the local church and stewards. It is important that any conversations that happen in this period are handled carefully and sensitively and follow the guidelines offered.

## Confidentiality

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The Methodist Church has a clear policy regarding confidentiality. *With Integrity and Skill* is a report that offers guidance for good practice in matters of confidentiality for anyone who exercises a pastoral role (lay, ordained, paid or voluntary) on behalf of the Methodist Church. A full set of guidelines on confidentiality can be found at [methodist.org.uk/Confidentiality](https://www.methodist.org.uk/Confidentiality)

# Church Stewards – Particular Duties

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Alongside the general duties of a church steward are the particular duties (SO 634, see Appendix 1). As a team of stewards, you will arrange how best these responsibilities are exercised. Your role might not always be to do the task, but rather to use the gifts of other church members to ensure that it happens – and happens to the glory of God in that place.

## Supporting your minister

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Individuals flourish when they feel part of a mutually supportive team. While your minister has pastoral responsibility for you as a member of the local church, it is important that you support your minister in every way you can. Praying for them regularly is important. Asking how they are, and if there is any way you can help them be the best they can, goes a long way in supporting their ministry for the whole church community.

Having an awareness of their family commitments and other responsibilities within the church helps to ensure they maintain a good balance to their life and they are able to respond fully to God's calling. For all exercising pastoral care, some situations can be emotionally demanding and it is important to recognise this in creating a supportive atmosphere. This mutual support of each other will help build a healthy and flourishing church leadership.

## Worship

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One of the church stewards' particular duties revolves around gathered worship on a Sunday morning. Gathering to worship God is one of the core elements of A Methodist Way of Life (see Appendix 4.) It is a joyful gift to be with other disciples in the presence of God. It is also one of our most public activities and is a powerful evangelistic opportunity; in some ways it is our 'shop-window.' Always be mindful of the impression that a first-time visitor will form; will it be of a loving, warm, diverse community of people who come expecting to meet God together, to share stories, and be transformed?

The person named on the plan has overall responsibility for the worship service, and as a steward your role is to liaise with the preacher and with others who may be involved. You may well know the congregation better than a visiting preacher will, and you can offer advice to help them plan an act of worship that fits the local context well, and offers a degree of continuity to the services that preceded it. If your church has worship leaders available to help, let the visiting preacher know well in advance so that they can involve them in the planning from the start. Remember that worship leaders are trained and permitted to plan and lead the whole of an act of worship apart from the sermon.

You will need to collaborate with a range of other people, including music groups and organists, computer and sound operators, Junior Church leaders, and readers to ensure that the service runs smoothly, and that everyone knows what is happening, where and when.

Prior to the preacher arriving, the steward makes sure that everything is prepared for worship. If the preacher has been asked for the order of service beforehand, it is important that this information is passed on to the relevant people. It can be disheartening for a preacher to arrive and find people are not properly prepared to participate in the worship of God.

A visiting preacher may also need to know at what point in the service the offering is usually taken, if the children leave during the service, and if computer projection facilities are available. Many churches include this information in a letter that is sent out to preachers in advance (see Appendix 2).

All arrangements and conversations should happen before the service so that, on the day, the steward can support the preacher in enabling the act of worship rather than troubleshooting.

Preparing an act of worship takes a lot of skill and time for the preacher. It is helpful to spend time looking at *Worship: Foundations* – an introduction to preparing and leading worship in the Methodist Church: [methodist.org.uk/Worship/Foundations](http://methodist.org.uk/Worship/Foundations). This can help you reflect on the elements of worship and the flow of the service.

On the day, the steward will be the first person at church to make sure the space is created to enable the people of God to worship. Key tasks include checking the light, sound, hearing loop and heat, welcoming those contributing to the service and making sure the technology is working. A checklist could be developed by each local church detailing how to prepare the space for worship (see Appendix 3).

The nature of Sunday has changed and Sunday worship may no longer be appropriate for some communities. If the church has embraced worship at different times to fit the needs of the local community, the stewards' role is still to ensure that acts of worship are supported and enabled.

## Welcome

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The atmosphere in the church is often generated by the stewards through their welcome. Welcoming those involved and ensuring that door stewards are there to greet both regular attenders and those attending for the first time, is an important role. It is helpful if, as a team of stewards, you think through how you welcome the preacher, give them the information needed and allow them the time and space to prepare to lead worship.

Resources to help churches think about how they become a welcoming community can be found at [methodist.org.uk/Guidance/Welcome](http://methodist.org.uk/Guidance/Welcome)

## The vestry

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Creating the right atmosphere in the vestry before and after worship is important. The stewards have the role of trying to judge what is the best approach for each preacher, which can sometimes be tricky. Often it is better to let the preacher determine this, either on the day or in the conversations beforehand. What is important is for all those involved

to understand that the vestry is a place for preparation for worship and for reflection afterwards.

You can do a lot to make the vestry environment a place where the preacher might encounter God, just by removing junk or unnecessary clutter.

Always offer to pray with the preacher before worship. Ensure you make time for this prayer – it is helpful if it is not hurried. This helps create a calm atmosphere centred on God before worship begins. This can be a time to gather all those involved in leading worship that day. In your prayer, pray for the preacher, for all those involved in leading, for the congregation meeting to worship, and for God to speak to individuals through the worship. If you do use printed prayers, try to read them as if they were your own. Note that some preachers prefer to spend the time before worship mixing with the congregation – be attentive to their needs.

## After worship

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After the service, the steward must offer to pay travelling expenses to the preacher (SO 634(1)). Circuits are advised annually of the recommended preaching fee and mileage rate for supernumeraries and local preachers. If a preacher is visiting from a distance, the steward should also arrange hospitality after the service.

## Local arrangements if there is no preacher planned

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Increasingly, the circuit plan will indicate a local arrangement for churches. As with any act of worship, the stewards' role is to make sure this happens and that those leading are supported and equipped. Resources to support a local arrangement are available at [methodist.org.uk/Ministry/LAS](http://methodist.org.uk/Ministry/LAS)

A subscription service of ready-to-use services is available from The Worship Cloud: [theworshipcloud.com/view/written/thevine](http://theworshipcloud.com/view/written/thevine)

If a preacher is suddenly unable to keep an appointment, the church steward's role is to ensure an act of worship takes place – not necessarily to lead it! The materials for a local arrangement can be used if time allows. If there is a minister or local preacher in the congregation, they may be happy to help. When there is no one available, consider creating space for silent prayer, ask a few people to pick their favourite hymn and talk about its importance in their faith journey, or share a Bible passage together and discuss how God speaks to you through this. In all of this, remember Wesley's words, "The best of all is, God is with us."

## Notices and collections

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The notices and collection are a part of the worship and as such must fit into the pattern of the service (SO 634, Appendix 1). If notices are printed on a sheet, they do not need to be announced as well. Announcements should only be made if they are of particular importance and need further explanation.

Any notices that are announced should be appropriate to the context and pastoral needs of the people. Often a steward's role is to stop unsuitable last minute notices that should be shared in another way (SO 634(2)).

The stewards will arrange with the preacher when the collection takes place. The taking up of the collection is usually done as a response to God's word.

Counting and accurately recording the collection, giving it to the appropriate person or bank and enabling people to Gift Aid does not have to be a task for the steward, but it is the stewards' responsibility to make sure it is done and done well. Collections should always be counted by two people and a collection record sheet completed and signed. This should then be banked promptly and intact without any deductions for expense payments (see Appendix 5 for further information on good stewardship).

## Baptism

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Church stewards have always been tasked with assisting in the preparation for baptism (SO 634(4), Appendix 1). In many places, this is a role that has been passed on to others, such as the cradle roll or first steps secretary, or the minister. However, it is still the stewards' role to make sure that this happens, and to extend hospitality and welcome to the families, who are often part of the local community and on the fringes of church life.

## Learning from other places

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During your time as a steward, it is worth taking time to worship at a number of different churches to note what works well and what does not. It can be valuable to ask someone from another church to attend your church as a mystery worshipper, noting strengths and areas for improvement. It can be very difficult to see the things that need changing in our own practice and often much easier to see them in others.

## Local preachers on trial

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You may be asked to be present at a local preacher's trial service. If a local preacher on trial is due to lead a service that will be reported on as part of their first or second interview, a church steward, in collaboration with two local preachers, is required to provide a report (SO 566(3)-(4)). The Local Preachers' Meeting will guide you if this is required.

# Church Council and Other Committees

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All church stewards are automatically members of the Church Council and members of the Pastoral Committee (SO 610(1)vi and SO 644). They are also entitled to appoint one steward to any official committee connected to the local church – these might include the worship committee, finance and property group or the Junior Church leaders' gathering (SO 643(2)). The stewards ensure any new policies arising from all these meetings are communicated to the congregation and that decisions are upheld and acted upon.

## The Church Council

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The Church Council has authority and oversight of the whole ministry of the local church, including the management of its property. In many cases, it will appoint committees for particular areas to coordinate the work done and to report back to the Church Council. It is important to note that the Church Council is a charity trustee body, and therefore all members of the Church Council are trustees.

Within church life, there may be groups focusing on worship, fellowship and learning. The church may be looking to its local neighbourhood and setting up groups to explore evangelism, service and participation in the life of the community. The church may cooperate with other agencies and/or ecumenically in this. The church could set up committees to focus on the care and best use of the building or good stewardship of finances. Any groups that are created will be accountable to the Church Council.

There must be a minimum of two Church Councils each year (SO 613(1)). These normally occur in September/October and February/March. Additional meetings can be held at other times and often take place in June/July to allow more extended discussion of church life. The 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 Church Council business (SO 502(7)), and in all cases notice of a Church Council meeting must be sufficient to make it reasonably practicable for all Church Council members to attend.

Before every Church Council meeting, all Church Council members should declare any conflicts of interest or loyalty they may have, such as financial interests or membership of other trustee bodies (for example, the Circuit Meeting) (SO 613(2A)).

In smaller churches, where the membership does not exceed 49, the Church Council can agree that all members who are willing to serve can be allowed to sit on the Church Council (SO 610(1)(x)). This should be reviewed annually by the Church Council (SO 610(2)).

To encourage every member to participate in the meeting, you could explore the material provided in *Voice Activated* (sections 4 and 5) at [methodist.org.uk/VoiceActivated](https://methodist.org.uk/VoiceActivated)

## Being a trustee

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All members of the Church Council, including church stewards, perform the role of managing and charity trustees for the local church, with responsibilities under the Charities Act. Further information on this 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](https://methodist.org.uk/ManagingTrustees)

## General Church Meeting

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The General Church Meeting meets annually (unless Standing Order 622(2) applies), but can meet more frequently. It has a responsibility to consider the whole ministry of the church. This includes its financial affairs, the election of church stewards and representatives, and any other purposes – which may have been directed by Conference.

For the General Church Meeting to work well, it requires a proper representation of everyone in the local church, including those who are newcomers.

## Church leadership teams

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Many local churches now have a leadership team or stewards' meeting where all stewards, the minister and, possibly, any lay employees gather for fellowship and to discuss the mission and ministry of the church. Decisions and ideas from this meeting can then be taken to the Church Council.

## Circuit Meeting

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Stewards have responsibilities across a wide range of church life and therefore they may be invited to other meetings outside of the local church. The Circuit Meeting is the focal point for the circuit with a wide-ranging agenda, including pastoral and evangelism work, training needs, approval for those ready for admission as local preachers and the appointment of circuit stewards (SO 510). There will be at least one church steward and the church treasurer attending from each church in the circuit, plus others as decided by the Circuit Meeting and Church Council.

## District Synod

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Stewards may find themselves invited to attend the District Synod. This usually occurs twice a year and provides a link between the Conference and the circuits and local churches (SO 412(1)).



# Safeguarding

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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](https://methodist.org.uk/SafeguardingPolicy)

It is advisable to read through the policy and note those responsible for key areas in your circuit. Make sure you know who the church safeguarding officer and the circuit safeguarding officer are 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](mailto:safeguarding@methodistchurch.org.uk)).

As a church steward, you will need to complete the Foundation Module training within six months of taking up your appointment. This promotes awareness of safeguarding concerns. The training equips all adults working in different roles in the Methodist Church, both volunteer and paid, to be confident in sharing safeguarding concerns with the appropriate person.

At present, church stewards are not required to complete the Advanced Module, but are warmly invited to do so. This training 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.

In your role as church 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.

# Positive Working Together

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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](https://methodist.org.uk/PositiveWorkingTogether)

Other resources include:

- **Growing through Change and Conflict workshops**  
A one-day workshop, delivered regionally. See [methodist.org.uk/Learning](https://methodist.org.uk/Learning) for details of what is happening in your region.
- **Positive Working Together guidelines**  
[methodist.org.uk/IntroducingPositiveWorkingTogether](https://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 occurs 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.
- **Shared Commitments**  
[methodist.org.uk/PWT-SharedCommitments](https://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](https://methodist.org.uk/PWT-OtherResources) for a list of other relevant Methodist materials.

Visit [methodist.org.uk/PWT-FurtherHelp](https://methodist.org.uk/PWT-FurtherHelp) for a list of other organisations offering further support, advice and training.

# Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

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## Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

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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](https://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](https://methodist.org.uk/Inclusive-Church/EIA)

## Mandatory EDI Training

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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](https://methodist.org.uk/Mandatory-EDI-Training)

# Additional Responsibilities

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## Property

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Support and guidance for issues relating to property can be found at [methodist.org.uk/Property](https://methodist.org.uk/Property). Details for property consents and annual returns can be found at [online.methodist.org.uk/login](https://online.methodist.org.uk/login)

Property Matters is a monthly online newsletter that offers helpful information. You can subscribe and see previous editions at [methodist.org.uk/Property/PropertyMatters](https://methodist.org.uk/Property/PropertyMatters)

For help and advice on matters relating to listed buildings and conservation areas please contact the Conservation Offer or visit [methodist.org.uk/Property/Conservation](https://methodist.org.uk/Property/Conservation)

Quinquennial inspections are arranged every five years and should you be asked to assist in booking an inspection, guidance can be found at [methodist.org.uk/Property/QI](https://methodist.org.uk/Property/QI)

## Finance

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Church finances are handled by the church treasurer, appointed annually by the Church Council. The Church Council must also appoint an auditor or independent examiner (SO 012(3)).

Although the church treasurer looks after the church's finances throughout the year, they do not have sole responsibility for the finances of the local church. That responsibility rests with the Church Council as the local managing trustees of the church's property (property includes all property, funds, investments and contents held on the Model Trust). The Church Council will also oversee general funds and benevolence funds, as well as money that may have been received from a legacy for a particular purpose. It is the responsibility of the whole Church Council to understand the finances, to question the treasurer and to have sufficient oversight of the finances.

Each church treasurer is responsible for keeping the books, presenting the accounts, and providing the Church Council with sufficient information to enable informed decision making. Churches can employ bookkeepers to assist with these duties, but the Treasurer would need to maintain oversight. A Standard Form of Accounts is published to support churches in the completion of their annual account. Guidance can be found at: [methodist.org.uk/Accounts](https://methodist.org.uk/Accounts). The Treasurer also has a duty to ensure that the systems and procedures which support the financial administration keep the possibility of fraud to a minimum (see Appendix 5).

If your church is a trust body registered with the Charity Commission (this will be the case for churches with a gross annual income of more than £100,000), the Church Council will need to produce an annual report showing how the church's activities are for the public benefit. If the church is running a café or similar project, it must be fulfilling the VAT requirements. Check if a church should be VAT registered at [gov.uk/register-for-VAT](https://gov.uk/register-for-VAT)

Check also that the primary purpose of any church café or similar project is to advance the church's religious purposes. The rules around trading income for charities are complicated and sometimes a separate trading company may be required for tax reasons. For guidance, contact [lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk)

## Copyright law

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If churches are using printed copies of hymn books such as *Singing the Faith*, a licence is not required, but one is needed if photocopying hymns or projecting words. A local church may need several types of licence to allow them to show film clips, DVDs or put on live music performances.

The Methodist Church offers guidelines at [methodist.org.uk/Copyright](http://methodist.org.uk/Copyright)

## Data protection

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Churches need to be aware of the guidelines in relation to data protection.

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

# Supporting Yourself

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In all the business and busy-ness of being a church steward, it is vital not to forget the nurturing of your own spiritual health and well-being. Serving as a steward can be a time of spiritual growth and giving. It may be that you are already part of a house group or are planning to join one, or you may have other tools in place to support your faith journey.

There are a number of resources to support you on the Methodist Church website, including *A Word in Time* Bible study ([methodist.org.uk/a-word-in-time](https://methodist.org.uk/a-word-in-time)), Prayer of the Day ([methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day](https://methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day)) and resources to support spirituality ([methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/spirituality](https://methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/spirituality)).

You could spend time simply reflecting on these questions:

- What is God affirming in you at the moment?
- What does God desire for you as a church steward?
- What kind of church steward does God want you to become?
- What grace or strength do you need from God to do this?

Whatever way you find best supports you the most important thing is to make time for this – time to spend with God.

## Conference reports

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As a church steward, there are a number of key Conference reports that are helpful for providing a good foundation. These are all available at [methodist.org.uk/ConferenceReports](https://methodist.org.uk/ConferenceReports)

- *Called to Love and Praise* (1999 Conference report)
- *Ministry in the Methodist Church* (2018 Conference report)
- *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21st Century* (2017 Conference report)
- *With Integrity and Skill* (2008 Conference report)
- *Children and Holy Communion* (2000 Conference report)
- *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth* (2020 Conference report)

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## Keeping in touch

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There are several ways to stay in touch with what is happening across the Methodist Church.

Sign up for a range of free newsletters at [methodist.org.uk/SignUp](https://methodist.org.uk/SignUp)

These include:

- The Methodist News – weekly news and information digest
- Learning and Development – news about learning and development opportunities
- The Well – news for Methodist children and youth workers
- LPWL e-news – news for local preachers and worship leaders.

Sign up to receive *the connexion* magazine. This is a free print magazine about the life and work of the Methodist Church. It brings together inspirational stories from Methodist people who are passionate about sharing God's love to change lives. Subscribe at [methodist.org.uk/theconnexion](https://methodist.org.uk/theconnexion)

Follow the Methodist Church on:

- Twitter [@MethodistGB](https://twitter.com/MethodistGB)
- Instagram [@methodistchurch](https://www.instagram.com/methodistchurch)
- Facebook [@MethodistChurchinBritain](https://www.facebook.com/MethodistChurchinBritain)

## Contacting the Connexional Team

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### Conservation Officer,

Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ

Tel: 0161 235 6722

Email: [conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:conservation@methodistchurch.org.uk)

### Learning Network

[methodist.org.uk/LearningNetwork](https://methodist.org.uk/LearningNetwork)

**Members of the Connexional Team** can provide help and support to local churches. Find a full list of contacts at [methodist.org.uk/ConnexionalTeam](https://methodist.org.uk/ConnexionalTeam)

### Methodist Church House,

25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF

Tel: 020 7486 5502

Email: [enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk)

### Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP)

Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ

Tel: 0161 235 6770

Web: [tmcp.org.uk](https://tmcp.org.uk)

**Web Application Teams (Consents and Annual Returns),**

25 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9SF

Tel: 020 7486 5502

Email: [onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:onlinesuitesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk)

Please note that the Conference Office can provide guidance on interpretation of Standing Orders and Methodist constitutional practice, but is unable to advise individual local churches on their particular circumstances or legal obligations. It is best reached via [lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:lcp@methodistchurch.org.uk). If your local church is in need of legal advice, contact the Church's 'Panel' of solicitors ([tmcp.org.uk/property/panel-solicitors](http://tmcp.org.uk/property/panel-solicitors)).



# Appendix 1: Standing Order 634

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## Church Stewards – Particular Duties.

- 1) The church stewards shall be responsible for seeing that all services, meetings and other engagements appointed on the circuit plan in connection with the Local Church are duly held, ensuring that the preacher is welcomed before the service and attended afterwards, that whenever necessary, hospitality is arranged for him or her and that his or her expenses are paid and, in the unforeseen emergency of a failure on the part of a preacher or other responsible person to keep the appointment, for seeing that a service or meeting suitable to the occasion is actually held.
- 2) It shall be the duty of the church stewards to oversee the preparation and delivery of necessary public announcements and to ensure that no announcement is made save such as is in accord with the general usage of the Methodist Church.
- 3) The church stewards shall ensure that due notice of all public collections is given, the taking of the collections is arranged, the amounts collected are entered in a book or other form of record kept for the purpose and that they are remitted to the treasurer or other persons authorised to receive them without delay.
- 4) The church stewards shall ensure that all necessary arrangements are made for the administration of the sacrament of baptism after due notice has been given to the presbyter or presbyteral probationer exercising pastoral responsibility in relation to the Local Church, in the case of children by the parents or guardians, in other cases by the candidate for baptism.

## Appendix 2: Template Letter for Preachers

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Dear **xxxx**

On behalf of the people worshipping at **xxxx** Methodist Church, we are delighted that you are scheduled to lead worship on *date and time*.

Currently the focus of our worship is *information on the current worship focus and any particular resources being used*, so we would ask you to base your service on the following:

*Insert passages or worship focus here.*

As you begin your preparations, I would like to share some information, which might be helpful.

We like to produce a printed Order of Service, so it is helpful if you send me your Order of Service by *time*, to *email address*.

We use *Singing the Faith* and *add details of any other music resources used* and we would encourage you to use these resources. We project the words for songs and have large print copies available.

A projector, screen and laptop are all available upon request and we are happy to put services into PowerPoint. Music can be played through the audio system. If you intend to use any of these, please let me know so that they can be set up in advance.

We are keen to use members of our congregation to help lead worship. We have assigned people to read the Bible, unless you prefer to do it yourself. We would also encourage you to liaise with *name of worship leader* who is happy to help lead the service.

There are a number of children and young people in worship. We worship together at the *beginning/end* of the service, *before/after* the children and young people go to junior church. We would encourage an all-age address in this time together. Please state in your order of service when the children and young people will leave. For all age worship, the junior church will remain in the worship area throughout the service.

A number of members of our congregation need the assistance of the hearing loop system, so please use the microphones provided. There are members of our congregation who are visually impaired. We provide large print copies of hymns, but we ask that any additional resources you use are also available in large print.

Coffee and tea are served after worship and we hope you will join us for refreshments.

We operate a rota system of worship stewards on duty on a Sunday, who will welcome you and care for you in the vestry. The steward on duty that day is ***name***.

Should you wish to discuss anything, please do not hesitate to contact me. I hope that this will assist you in the preparation of worship and help you to feel at home among us. May God bless you as you prepare to share worship with us.

Yours sincerely,

Email: ***add your email address***

Phone: ***add your phone number***

## Appendix 3: Sample Checklist for Worship Preparation

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- Arrive in plenty of time to prepare the space for worship.
- Check heating and lighting are working.
- Check the worship space is set up.
- Set chairs out as required – café style, theatre style or in the round.
- Put up tables if needed, eg if the service is café style or if there are prayer stations, crafts or activities that will require tables.
- Set the lectern up for the preacher as required.
- Make sure the preacher has all they need, including a Bible and hymn book.
- Mark the passages/hymns.
- Provide water for the preacher and others involved in leading worship.
- Put out hymn books, Bibles and worship books as needed.
- Have large print copies of all books and song words available.
- Check that the hearing loop is working.
- Get everything ready for the collection. Get out collection plates, ask people to take up the offering and arrange for any retiring collection.
- Put signs outside to let people know where worship is happening.
- Unlock any fire doors.
- Make sure all stewards on the day are aware of fire procedures.
- Check the sound system operator has all they need.
- Check that any audio-visual materials, such as PowerPoints or film clips, have been arranged.
- Make sure the music group and organist have everything required.
- Once there are more than two stewards in the building, unlock the front doors.
- Have a plan for the building to be both accessible and secure while worship is taking place.
- Switch the urn on.
- Arrange for music or the organ to be playing as people arrive.
- Create an atmosphere, prior to the service, for people to prepare for worship.
- Pray with the preacher before the start of the service.

## 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.

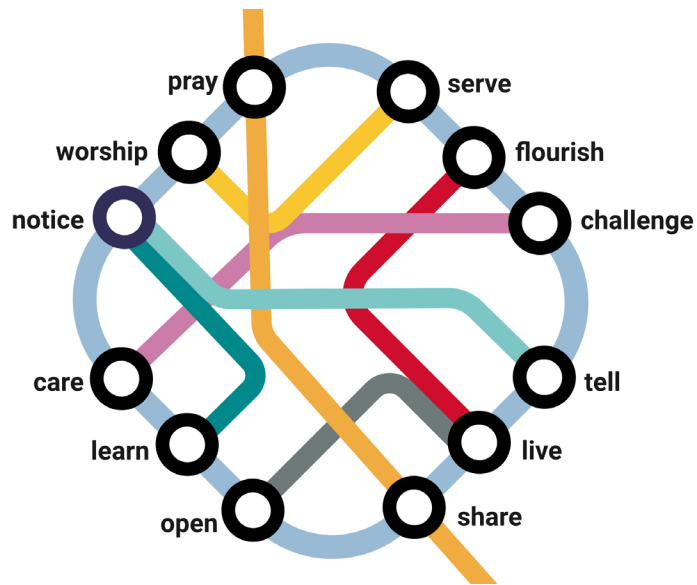
As far as we are able, with God's help, we:

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

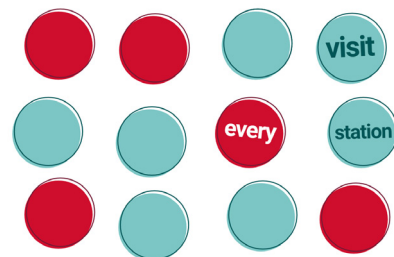
### Being a disciple on the pathway

As a church 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?



## Being a Church Steward, a leader of disciples

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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?



As a church 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?



## Appendix 5: Stewardship: Reducing the Risk of Fraud

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Local Methodist churches are sadly not immune to fraud. Fraud is dishonesty, involving:

- false representation, for example identity fraud
- failure to disclose information
- abuse of position to make a gain or cause loss to another.

Each church treasurer has a duty to ensure that the systems and procedures that support the financial administration keep the possibility of fraud to a minimum.

The trustees (Church Council) have a legal duty to take adequate steps to protect and detect bribery, fraud, financial abuse and other irregularities and to implement and monitor sound financial controls and procedures.

Fraud not only results in financial loss and police action, but reputational damage to the Methodist Church, potential regulatory action by the Charity Commission and an impact on future funding and grants.

Minimise the potential for fraud by taking the following steps.

### Managing bank accounts

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- In accordance with SO 012(1), ensure that Methodist money is held in established and official bank accounts, not in personal accounts.
- All payments must be agreed by at least two trustees.
- A panel of at least four signatories should normally be available to sign cheques or authorise electronic payment instructions. Blank cheques must never be signed. Payees should never sign a cheque that is to pay them.
- Each cheque or payment instruction requires two signatures in accordance with SO 012(1).
- No cheque should be signed or countersigned without the signatories having adequate supporting evidence of the authenticity of the payment.
- Retain all spoilt cheques and make them available to the auditor/independent examiner.
- Online banking payments should only be made using software which provides the facility for dual authorisation by personnel approved by the Church Council. In some circumstances, a supplementary list of payments that have been made should be subsequently countersigned by a trustee.
- Investments in deposits or other financial products must be approved by the Church Council.
- Any transfers of investments should also be authorised by the Church Council.



## Keeping records

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The Church Council must ensure there is supporting documentation for all transactions. Planned-giving receipts should be recorded on a control sheet, which can then be reconciled with a register of donors committed to supporting the church financially on a regular basis.

## Bank mandate

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The Church Council should annually confirm the names on the bank mandate and ensure that there is occasional change.

## Cash

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If small expenses are paid in cash, then a separate small expenses account should be kept and all payments recorded and supporting vouchers/receipts filed. These payments should be signed off by a trustee each time the cash float is topped up.

## Year-end procedure

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The superintendent minister (or other nominated minister) or senior steward should examine the year-end statements from the bank, Central Finance Board (CFB) and the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP). A senior steward or minister should accompany the treasurer at the signoff meeting with the auditor.

## Division of responsibilities

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Wherever possible, avoid a concentration of financial responsibility into one or two people. Ideally, have different people as treasurer, Gift Aid secretary, counters of the offertories and controllers of the envelope scheme.

# Appendix 6: 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 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](mailto:procurement@methodistchurch.org.uk)

## Appendix 7: Stewards within Methodism

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From *A plain account of the people called Methodist*, John Wesley, 1748 (Davies/Ab vol 9, p. 272):

But long before this I felt the weight of a far different care, namely, care of temporal things... So I chose out first one, then four, and after a time seven, as prudent men (sic) as I knew, and desired them to take charge of these things upon themselves, that I might have no encumbrance of this kind.

The business of these stewards is:

- To manage the temporal things of the Society;
- To receive the subscriptions and contributions;
- To expend what is needful from time to time;
- To send relief to the poor;
- To keep an exact account of all receipts and expenses;
- To inform the Minister if any of the rules of the society are not punctually observed;
- To tell the Assistants in love if they think anything amiss, either in their doctrine or life.

The rules of the stewards are:

1. Be frugal. Save everything that can be saved honestly.
2. Spend no more than you receive. Contract no debts.
3. Have no long accounts. Pay everything within the week.
4. Give none that asks for relief either an ill word or an ill look. Do not hurt them if you cannot help.
5. Expect no thanks from man.

*Note: Assistant was an early title for a preacher or minister. To 'save' translates as being economical and should not be confused with storing up money in the bank.*

Feedback, corrections, amendments or suggestions for this guide are welcome to  
[mvw@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:publishing@methodistchurch.org.uk)



The **Methodist** Church

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