



## Job description

As their title suggests, communion stewards play a key role in communion services! The act of communion which happens in our churches today originates from the Passover and mirrors the meal Jesus had with his disciples before his Crucifixion.

Communion stewards make sure that everything that is needed for a communion service is on hand, and work to ensure that everyone involved in the service understands what is going to happen, in what order and when.

As part of the group of people who facilitate worship in the church, communion stewards help the congregation to engage in one of the most significant events in the life of the church. The role is a voluntary one, which can last for up to six years, and is a way for committed members to offer their time and energy in service of the Church and God.

The Methodist Church has rich seam of traditions to draw upon when it comes to celebrating Holy Communion and so the exact nature of the communion steward role varies throughout the Connexion. For example, some churches will have Communion weekly, some monthly and there will be others who arrange to hold the service quarterly. No matter how often communion is held the communion steward's work begins well before the Sunday communion service.

This work includes:

- Checking on the Circuit Plan when the next Communion services are to be held.
- Making sure there is enough communion wine (which is non-alcoholic) in supply.
- Replacing any broken or chipped glasses.
- Making sure there is fresh bread/communion wafers in supply.
- Cleaning the chalice and paten, which sit on the communion table, if they are used.
- Making sure the cloths used to cover the communion table are clean and in good repair.
- Making sure there is an appropriate Order of Service available for the minister and the congregation if necessary

If the local church has a team of communion stewards, the senior steward will contact the presbyter who will be leading the service to chat about how the service will actually run.

Some of the things to clarify with the presbyter are:

- How the communion wine and bread will be distributed, whether at the communion rail or to the pew.
- The extent to which communion stewards will be involved in the service.
- If a collection will be taken and at what point in the service this will happen.
- If there will be individual glasses for communion wine or a common cup.
- If there will be a 'loaf' of bread which may be broken as part of the service

On the day of a service stewards prepare the elements for Communion, that is the bread and communion wine along with glasses, wiping clothes, chalice and plate. These will be laid out on the communion table, often called The Lord's Table, either before the service starts or will be brought forward at an appropriate time by the communion stewards.

During the service communion stewards are, in the words of CPD, *'responsible for the directing the approach of communicants to the Lord's Table in an orderly and expeditious manner.'*

Because there are a range of approaches to communion across the Connexion the steward's role may include:

- Making sure communicants approach the Communion rail, where the minister will offer the bread and wine directly to people, at an even pace. In other churches communion stewards will distribute the elements to where people are seated, sometimes saying appropriate words from the Communion service to each communicant. There may be other methods used – if you want to find out, just ask!
- Being aware of the needs of those less able, so that they too can participate in the service
- Doing readings or leading prayers
- Uncovering and covering the elements at the appropriate points in the service
- Recording the numbers of those taking communion

Despite the variety of some Communion customs there are a number of duties that every communion steward across the Connexion will be involved with. These are:

- Preparing the bread - If bread is used, rather than wafers, it must be prepared before the service. Often the bread is diced beforehand, but not so far in advance that it turns dry. Even though it will lead to leftovers it is important to have plenty of bread. Ministers usually say the words 'This is my Body' echoing Jesus' words from The Last Supper so any leftovers should be disposed of reverently