

Pouring the wine - Non-alcoholic grape juice is used and while the reasons for this stretch back into Methodism's history one very positive consequence is that people who struggle with alcoholism can confidently participate in the service. Either a single large cup or glass is used, called a chalice. If so, a small cloth to wipe the lip of the cup is needed. Alternatively small thimble sized glasses can be used, and these are most useful when the elements are distributed to where the congregation are seated. Again, it is important to have enough wine already poured for the communicants and while it is can be difficult to judge numbers, the record book is a good place to refer to for an idea on how much wine you are likely to need

Often separate collections are taken during communion services and these are taken by the stewards, counted and recorded before being handed to the church treasurer. The money goes into something called the Benevolence Fund and these collections are set aside specifically for charitable purposes to be used at the discretion of the presbyter. The money could be donated to Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF) or used in a ministry which impacts those less privileged in the local community.

Caring for the poor and the marginalised is a priority for Christians, and no less the Methodist Church, so this part of the service is a way for the congregation exercise that responsibility and reflect something of the love Jesus manifested.

When the service is over communion stewards take responsibility for clearing away the items used. Their checklist at this stage is as follows:

- Wait until the service is over and everyone has dispersed before clearing away!
- Dispose of the unused elements (the bread, communion wine), and how this happens must be agreed with the presiding minister
- Putting away the Service Books if used, and not already out away by the door stewards
- Collect communion glasses
- Cleaning, or arranging for the cleaning of the linen cloths and covers if they were used during the service
- Putting church furniture and furnishings back to their normal positions

If you are interested in becoming a Communion Steward please talk to you Minister, Senior Steward or a Communion Steward



## 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