

Aim of the session

To help you to take some time to consider this important element of a Circuit Stewards Role.

What you need

- *A copy of the Worksheet for all participants or a copy of the discussion elements and questions*

How to do it

- *You might want to split this idea into 2 sessions and work on them separately*
- *Take care not to get judgemental or into a position where you think you know details when you are only voicing an opinion*
- *Choose a member of the group to guide discussions and keep an eye on the time*

Subject of discussions

Part 1

Start by looking at the following three statements which are advice from an experienced Circuit Steward.

Take 5 minutes to look at the statements on your own.

Three crucial points for supporting your Ministers

- **Pray for them regularly**
- **NEVER sing the praises of the previous minister**
- **Get to know them and work out how best to help them flourish**

What do you think of the statements?

Do they fit with your understanding of how you work alongside a Minister?

Do they hit the spot or are they missing something crucial?

Next come together as a group and discuss your thoughts (you should probably allow 10 minutes for this). The statements can obviously divide opinion or encourage consensus within the group. Try hard to reach a position on which you are agreed and begin to think about any actions you might need to take to make your views a reality.

Before you move on consider if you need to do anything practical. If so agree the things you intend to do and who is going to do them. Make sure you discuss them the very next time you meet to see how things have gone.

Part 2

Explore what you know about your Minister

These questions are designed to encourage a team of Circuit Stewards to unpack where the strengths of the ministerial team lie. Allow yourselves 40 minutes for this activity.

(You could work on this list of questions at a CLT meeting instead/aswell when the Ministers are there and can offer an insight into some of the questions. Make sure they understand it is about supporting them and getting to know them better - not about Minister bashing. There is a real need for pastoral sensitivity here with some of the questions so use your best judgement.)

Ask yourself

What type of person are they?

- What plans and dreams do they have?
- What sort of personality do they have? Shy/extrovert; busy & quick / slow & reflective;
- What makes them tick?

How appropriate are they for the Circuit in which they serve? – bearing in mind congregations etc

What are the best gifts they offer?

What kind of working style do they have?

- Quick to take decision or find themselves avoiding decision?
- Easy/Hard to get to know?
- Hesitant? Decisive?
- Strong or weak at administration?
- What are they over-looking?

What sort of leader are they?

- Keen on consensus?/good listener?
- All talk?
- Never consults?
- Pastorally sensitive?
- Strategic planner?
- Great in meetings?

What do they feel about Ministry?

- What led them to ministry?
- How have they found the experience?
- What expectations have their background and culture given them?
- What do they find really hard in ministry?
- What is the best thing for them about being a minister?

How can they be supported

- Where are they most likely to need support and in what way?
- What excites and energises them?
- What slows them down/discourages them?
- What disappointments have they had to face in the past?
- What difficulties do they face currently?
- What strengths and pressures does their family or home situation bring?
- What resources are around to support them?

Associated Questions

- What consequences are there for the Circuit from the answers you have come up with?
- What can the Circuit best learn and gain from each person in the team/from a particular minister?
- In what ways can you as a Circuit Steward best help the minister and the Circuit to work together and to flourish?
- What help that the Circuit can provide to others is most likely to be useful to them?
- What resources may be needed (extra training or orientation, development of new skills, practical help etc.) to produce the best opportunities for minister and Circuit?
- What needs to be avoided?

Remember: **You may think that know the answers to the questions about your colleagues without asking them but that can be risky.** If you take this approach always remember to see if reality lives up to what you suspect. Assumptions don't always lead to the best team work or job allocation.

Always find ways to discuss with your Minister anything of critical importance for the life of the circuit.

Ideas for what you might do next

- *Find ways for others to get to know your Ministers better – maybe at a “Parkinson style” interview session which could be fun and at the same time informative. This is particularly great for new Ministers as they arrive.*
- *Build up a prayer network within your circuit for your ministers*
- *Encourage your members to use the Bookmark style prayer card*
- *Build up within your circuits a network of folk who will support them pastorally – say through a babysitting rota if appropriate or similar,*
- *Arrange to give constructive and careful feedback on every occasion you are in contact with your Minister*
- *Make a point of finding ways at every meeting/ session to play to the strengths of your Minister*
- *Work out best how to work alongside them and be a part of a team with them.*