# Updates to Church Stewards’ Handbook 2024

# p.3

update reference to 2023 edition of ‘CPD’.

# p.8

4th para. Check number of Districts and update to 2023.

# p.15

4th para. (The Church Council) Amend to add more text at end of paragraph:

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, electronically 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.

Delete next paragraph (“If extra (non-emergency) meetings are needed for certain types of business …”)

# p.16

final para. Delete this section/paragraph entirely (“Temporary arrangements… pandemic and beyond”) as it’s no longer relevant.

# p.18

# **Justice, Dignity and Solidarity**

# 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: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/strategy-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/user-guide/>. 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 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/resources-events-and-support/resources/equality-impact-assessment/>.

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: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>.

# p.19

*Update Finance to read the following:*

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 book keepers 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 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/finance/standard-form-of-accounts/>. TheTreasurer 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 <https://www.gov.uk/register-for-vat>

final para. Add a new paragraph after “Check if a church should be VAT registered…” as follows:

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](lcp%40methodistchurch.org.uk)

# p.22

Contacting the Connexional Team: Conservation Office: Delete ‘Manchester’ before ‘Central Buildings’

*Add the following as the second keeping in touch bullet point:*

Learning and Development Newsletter – news about learning and development opportunities

# p.23

final para. Amend final sentence to read :

…If your local church is in need of legal advice, ~~consider contacting~~ contact the Church’s ‘Panel’ of solicitors (tmcp.org.uk/property/panel-solicitors).