

The Church of England

Guild of Vergers



A Guide to Organising a Guild Festival

Leading the way since 1932

Presidents: The Archbishops of Canterbury and York

ORGANISING A GUILD OF VERGERS FESTIVAL

This leaflet is provided to help you with some of the questions that will arise whilst planning the Festival you have kindly offered to host, or are thinking of hosting, on the Guild's behalf. Thank you for taking up the challenge.

THE HOST BRANCH/AREA

The Guild encourages an active involvement of the members in your Branch/Area where possible. Please include them in the planning process and share the load. Previous Festivals have always been enhanced by the presence, on the day, of the members of the local Branch/Area acting as hosts to "sign-in" the members on their arrival and guide them around to the various rooms or buildings.

NAME

The Central Council hopes that two Festivals will be hosted each year, (*although in some years a decision might be made in Council to host one main Festival for a particular reason*), and that each Festival should be named after the Province that they are held in, so the title of your Festival should be either "*The Canterbury Province Festival*" or "*The York Province Festival*" followed by the name of your Church, Parish, Cathedral or Branch as appropriate.

CONSENT

It is important to have the support of your Parish Priest/PCC, Cathedral Chapter, College or other Church authorities, and we are very grateful for their encouragement. It is from them that you must seek permission to use the building and any equipment needed on the day. They must be consulted about anything that may have Health & Safety and/or insurance implications, for example ascent of the tower or high level tours.

INSURANCE

The Guild has insurance policies in place, including Public and Employers' Liability Cover (the latter in accordance with legislation), relating to the Central Council as the governing body and to Officers acting on their behalf, all placed with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group (EIG).

However, there may be aspects that need to be catered for at local level so it is recommended that suitable enquiries be made with your Church authorities and adequate arrangements instigated as required.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Any children or vulnerable adults from the host Church's community that are taking part in the day, (such as servers, choristers etc...), should be supervised under that Church's usual arrangements to comply with the local Child Protection Policy.

Any attendees who are under the age of 18 will require the consent of, and must be accompanied at all times by, a named responsible adult. This should be made clear on the booking form, with space provided for this information to be recorded. Those responsible for signing members in on the day should also have this information to hand should the young person become separated from their guardian at any point.

Although all reasonable steps are taken, and many members by virtue of their work have been successfully CRB checked, the Guild cannot take responsibility for any un-chaperoned minors attending, nor can they guarantee that all attendees have a valid CRB certificate.

COSTS

As our Festivals become more and more professional in the way that they are planned, with booking forms, special orders of service and, sometimes, the odd souvenir item, the administration costs are on the increase. With this in mind, the host Branch/Area needs to be aware of all costs and not undertake anything that they cannot happily afford to recoup within the cost set for the day in the form of a fee levied on those attending.

The costs of the day, including all administration, hire of rooms/facilities, any staff costs, catering etc... will need to be met from this fee, as the Guild nationally is not in a position to either subsidize a Festival in the first place, or bail-out a Branch if there are unpaid costs to be met after the event. It may be felt that appropriate sponsorship could be sought from businesses, both locally and nationally, that would wish to support the Festival in exchange for suitable advertising.

The nature of the businesses to be approached should always be taken into consideration, so that there is no conflict of interest, or business that might cause offence to members or the Church at large. It would be sensible to provide a contingency fund that could be used after the event should there be an unfortunate shortfall of income.

Conversely, if there is any surplus after all obligations are met, it will be for the Branch/Area hosting the event to decide how that is used. The National Treasurer will gladly advise. Rather than utilizing the Branch account, it may be found more convenient to open a separate “Festival” account for the purpose.

Following the Festival, when all payments have been made, a financial summary should be sent to the National Treasurer.

The main meal is usually the single most expensive item of the day, and the Council agreed some years ago that a two-tier price arrangement be put in place, so that as many members as possible could attend, and not be put-off if they could not manage the whole package.

We would suggest:

- ◆ All inclusive, to include all coffee/refreshments on arrival, lunch and tea, any administrative costs and contribution to room hire etc...
- ◆ Coffee & afternoon tea only, plus the same element of admin and room hire contribution as above.

This may assist those who would like to attend, but wish to make their own luncheon arrangements.

ADVERTISING

You are encouraged to advertise the Festival free in *The Virger Magazine* and on the Guild’s website. Please send details of the programme and a booking form to the Communications Officer for inclusion in the Guild website and for publication in the appropriate editions of *The Virger Magazine* as soon as you have the outline. The Communications Officer is happy to advise on “house style” and formats for these. You may also wish to provide separate flyers for distribution at other national or local events; please liaise with your Area Leader.

ACCOMMODATION

In the information made available to Festival enquirers, it is always helpful to include details of the local Tourist Information Centre.

This will enable those attending and needing to stay overnight because of travel arrangements, or those planning to extend their visit into a mini-break, to make their own direct arrangements and thus save you from having to deal with numerous enquiries.

MAPS, LOCATION DETAILS AND A CONTACT NUMBER

It is helpful to include a local map in any booking pack sent out, including local car parks, and the location or distance from railway stations. For those traveling by car, an exact location of the church or street, or the postcode of the church or adjacent building will be very helpful for those using satellite navigation aids. If possible, it is helpful to include a contact phone number and/or email address in the pack for use on the day, should any attendees or national officers be delayed on their journey and need to contact the organizer.

THE GUILD SHOP

In the past it has often been possible to accommodate the Guild Shop during the Festival, this is always greatly appreciated. Please check with your Church authorities that this will be acceptable, and check with the Shop Manager if he/she is free to attend. If not, he/she may wish to send you some mail-order forms to have available on the day.

GUILD PUBLICITY BANNERS

The Guild has two new banners explaining our work, and the Festival days are often good occasions to have these on display. They are both less than one metre wide, and stand two metres tall, and we would value the opportunity to have them on display near our activities, to inform visitors and others about the Guild. They are usually obtainable via the Liaison Officer.

GROUP PHOTOGRAPH.

There is traditionally a group photograph taken on the day, as a souvenir for those who attended and for the Guild archives. It should be taken at an appropriate time during the day, usually after a service for which the members were robed. The Guild would be delighted if your own clergy and other participants would join us for the photograph. Please ask them before the day on our behalf. You will need to arrange a photographer, and liaise with him about the size of group and intended location. You may need a wet-weather plan if you propose to have the photo taken outside. Again, in your pack to attendees you will need to include a form to purchase a photo after the event. Please send a photo and any other details you would like to record to the Guild Chronicler after the event. Non-robed members are welcome to join the photograph if they wish.

WORSHIP.

The format of the day is at the discretion of the organizing Branch/Church and various formats have been used successfully over the years.

A primary element of any Festival is the fellowship we share together, which centres on an act (or acts) of worship.

Generally there has often been a Eucharist in the morning and Evensong to conclude the day, but we are happy to fit in with whatever best suits your Festival.

However, it should be borne in mind during the course of the service/services there will need to be an opportunity for any new members to be admitted (by the National Chaplain if he/she is present), and possibly the presentation of awards. If there are to be two services, members need only robe for one, but this should be the one at which admissions or presentations are conducted.

It is always good if members and officers can be involved in the liturgy. For example, at a Eucharist, it would be usual for the “home team” clergy to take the lead, preside and preach as appropriate, although on some previous occasions the National Chaplain has been honoured to be invited to preside or preach at a Festival service.

In any case, it is to be hoped that the National Chaplain would be invited to robe, and it would be very welcome if he/she could have a role at some point in the liturgy.

When choosing the rite, please use the format that is most familiar to the host Church.

As said above, if there is to be the admission of new members during the Eucharist, this would normally be presided over by the National Chaplain. Members or Officers would be delighted to read lessons and/or the Gospel, lead the intercessions and assist with the administration of the communion if appropriate.

Please liaise in good time before the day, as appropriate, so that everybody knows what is expected of them.

ROBING

As mentioned above, it has become traditional for members to be asked to bring their robes, and this should be made clear on the booking form or any subsequent joining instructions.

If there is to be more than one service, then members would usually be asked to robe for only one, and that usually the office rather than the Eucharist, unless they are involved in the altar party or a ceremonial role in the liturgy. It is the Guild's tradition, as in many Churches, not to wear academic hoods at the Eucharist.

OFFICERS DUTIES AND DRESS

The National Chaplain and other National Guild Officers taking part in the day will need to know what you are expecting them to do well in advance.

Please contact them individually in good time; up-to-date contact details will be found in *The Virger Magazine*, or on the website. In the case of the Chaplain, he/she will need to be advised what he/she is expected to wear.

For example - For a Eucharist: cassock, surplice and stole,
or cassock, alb and stole,
or cassock, alb, stole & the Guild cope.

For Evensong: choir habit or Guild cope.

ADMITTING NEW MEMBERS

If any new members are to be admitted, they should be presented to the National Chaplain, at an agreed point in the service, by a National or Branch Officer, using the form provided in the National Constitution.

This form is also available in larger formats from the Communications Officer, for inclusion in your order of service if appropriate. The General Secretary should be informed well in advance so that the appropriate paperwork can be prepared, and a certificate made ready.

The presenting branch should ensure that they have the appropriate badge and constitution booklet available.

SEATING

When seating the Guild procession – see *the order on page 10* – it should be remembered that the Central Council (comprising of Area Leaders, Fellows of the Guild and National Officers) must be seated in front of Guild members, and that the three principal National Officers – National Chairman, General Secretary and National Treasurer, need to be seated in front of the Council. Guests and non-robing members of the Guild are invited to join the congregation, they need to be seated prior to the commencement of the service.

THE MILLENNIUM VIRGE AND GUILD PROCESSIONAL BANNER

Both of these items will usually be available for the Festivals; please liaise with either the National Chairman or the General Secretary to make the necessary arrangements. It may also be possible to borrow the Guild's communion plate if required. Please ask if you would like to arrange this.

RESUME OF WHAT TO INCLUDE FOR MEMBERS

- ◆ Name of the Festival
- ◆ Time and date of Festival
- ◆ Location, street name, post code
- ◆ Contact phone number and/or email address on the day
- ◆ “By kind permission of...” acknowledgements
- ◆ Name and details of any sponsors
- ◆ Format of the day
- ◆ Any choices of menu for meals, if appropriate
- ◆ Costs of the day (a) with main meal and (b) without
- ◆ Payee details for bookings
- ◆ Invitation to bring robes and place to store them during the day
- ◆ Request for named chaperone for any under-18s attending
- ◆ Check if new members are to be admitted and/or awards presented
- ◆ How to order a photograph after the event
- ◆ Details of Tourist Office for accommodation enquiries
- ◆ Local map etc...

HELP

If you need a little more help, do please ask. The National Officers are only too willing to assist you in any way possible; do not feel you are out there alone. May we wish you every success in this venture.

ORDER OF PROCESSION

The Central Council of the Guild has agreed the following 'Order of Procession' to be strictly adhered to on all National occasions. Only when local custom dictates otherwise (or at the discretion of the Guild Chairman or General Secretary) should this order be amended.

GUILD VERGE

Another Verge may be used and carried by a member of the host branch

New Members to be admitted, and any other award recipients

GUILD MEMBERS

*Including **Guild Life Members** at the rear of this group*

BRANCH CHAPLAINS

THE GUILD MILLENNIUM VERGE

Carried by a member of the Host Branch

AREA LEADERS

Maximum 16

GUILD FELLOWS

GUILD OFFICERS

*Liaison Officer, Overseas Liaison Officer,
Communications Officer,
Welfare Officer, Training Officer*

NATIONAL OFFICERS

*National Treasurer and General Secretary
National Chairman*

GUILD CHAPLAIN

*If the Guild Chaplain does not process with the host clergy
He/she will take his/her rightful place within the Guild at this point*

Everyone processes in his/her most senior position by right

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