

The Church of England

Guild of Vergers



# Hints & Tips for Branch Officers

*Area Leaders, Chairmen,  
Secretaries & Treasurers*



*Leading the way since 1932*

*Presidents: The Archbishops of Canterbury and York*

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of '**Hints & Tips for Branch Officers ~ Area Leaders, Chairmen, Secretaries and Treasurers**' is to identify those aspects which are relative to these roles and to act as a guide, which it is hoped, will simplify and ease those duties which you undertook when accepting one or other of these positions.

The definitions of Membership, Fellows of the Guild, Life Members and Honorary Branch Members are quoted from the National Constitution. (It is possible for a member to belong to a Branch to which all annual subscriptions are paid, and to belong to another Branch where only a branch subscription is paid).

It is your responsibility to maintain accurate records and to submit all details as required by the National Constitution (and where relevant by your Branch's own Constitution) to the General Secretary who passes these on to the Central Council.

Also there are samples of an 'Interim Return' and Membership Forms are included.

There is a Corporate letterhead available, we would ask you to use this for all official matters, please contact the General Secretary's office for supplies.

If you have any queries or you need assistance please do not hesitate to contact the General Secretary or any other relevant National Officer, we are only too happy to be of help.

For contact details of all the National Officers please either visit the Guild Website: [www.cofegv.org.uk](http://www.cofegv.org.uk) or see the back page of *The Virger* .

We know that there is a fair amount of paperwork to attend to, but it all has a purpose, and unless it is dealt with in the manner required, the system becomes inoperative and this reflects on the support offered to the overall membership.

Finally when you relinquish your post could you please pass these notes, and your Branch files and paperwork on to your successor.

## **MEMBERSHIP** *(Clauses 2.1.1 to 2.4 of the National Constitution)*

Membership is open to all Vergers, (salaried, full or part-time, voluntary or retired) of at least 18 years of age, who may apply to become Full Members of the Guild. Any person of any age who is not a Verger but supports the aims and objectives of the Guild may apply to become an Associate Member.

Members may belong to a Branch of their choosing, and pay the national subscriptions to that Branch annually, however a member may choose to belong also to another Branch, paying only the Branch subscription.

### **AREA LEADERS** *(Clauses 3.1.11 to 3.1.11.4 of the National Constitution)*

Area Leaders are elected by the voting members of each Branch from amongst Full members every three years.

From amongst the Area Leaders a Representative from the Canterbury Province and one from the York Province will be elected annually to serve on the Standing Committee.

Area Leaders, (16 in total), are the only Officers entitled to vote at meetings of the Central Council for any resolution proposed. If an Area Leader is also an elected officer, for example General Secretary (who has no vote) he/she retains his/her vote as Area Leader.

It is the Area Leader's job to liaise with the Branch/Branches, attend the AGMs of those in his/her Area and report to them the decisions of the Central Council. He/she is the link and voice between the Members and the Central Council and should be able to speak at the Branch meetings clearly and with authority, and be prepared to represent the wishes or concerns of the Branch/Branches he/she represents at Central Council.

He/she should, ideally, be prepared to attend as many of the Branch meetings as possible within his/her Area, to encourage and support the membership, and to be the public face of Central Council in that Area. The Area Leader should be invited to attend the Branch Committee meetings within his/her area ex-officio. In the event of a dispute arising within the Branch or Committee, the Area Leader should use his/her skills to negotiate a resolution and should, in any case, keep the General Secretary informed. If a situation should arise beyond the capacity of the Branch Committee to resolve, the Area Leader should report the matter accurately and impartially to the General Secretary, or other national Officer as appropriate.

If unable to attend a meeting of the Central Council for any reason, a deputy may be appointed who must be advised to the General Secretary in writing prior to the meeting.

Finally the Area Leader must reside in the Area that he/she represents.

A special leaflet has been prepared for the guidance of those who are contemplating offering themselves for service as Area Leaders, and to those new to the post. Please ask the General Secretary for a copy, or download one from the website.

### **APPENDIX A IN THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION**

This sets out the procedure for electing Area Leaders. Where there is only one Branch in an area nominations are put to the members of that Branch for election.

If there are two or more branches in an Area, the Leadership rotates in alphabetical order to nominate a candidate. Members in each Branch then vote for their chosen representative to hold the post for the next three years.

### **FELLOWSHIP OF THE GUILD**

The Central Council has the privilege of conferring the Fellowship of the Church of England Guild of Vergers (FCEGV) on persons who have shown “exemplary service” to the organization.

This honour is not confined solely to Guild members, and has also been bestowed on individuals who have made a significant contribution to the work of the Guild, notably through the Guild Diploma Course, and the General Synod.

There are no more than twelve Fellows at any one time. Subscriptions are not due from Fellows, although they are able, if they choose, to make a donation to the work of the Guild nationally, and/or to pay towards the running costs of their local Branch.

### **LIFE MEMBERSHIP OF THE GUILD**

Members are also welcome to submit via their Branches or their Area Leaders, names of individual Members who have been faithful servants of their Branch locally and the Guild nationally, for consideration by Central Council for the award of Guild Life Membership. There are no more than twenty-five Life Members at any one time.

This national award, is not to be confused with any Honorary Branch membership. Guild Life Members do not pay any fees although they are able, if they choose, to make a donation to the work of the Guild, and/or to pay towards the running costs of their local Branch.

Based on these principles, it follows, therefore that the award of Guild Life Membership can only be made to existing members, who will already be either full or associate members.

There are, by implication, among the list of Life Members those who are “Life Full Members” and “Life Associate Members”, as determined by the circumstances of the individual when the award was made. Therefore any member who the membership wishes to honour by requesting the Central Council to appoint them to Life Membership, are giving honour and status to that member. This is in recognition of many years’ service to a Branch and to the Guild nationally, so that they can continue their association with the Guild for the rest of their days, free from the need to pay any subscription.

In addition the award grants the right to be invited to Central Council meetings as a non-voting attendee. They are not allowed to change the status of membership, for example an Associate Member granted Life Membership does not take on Full Member status. Life membership in itself does not give any eligibility to stand for office, nor does it confer any voting rights; indeed in council meetings it is expressly forbidden.

Life Membership is therefore an award – for life – of membership at the level which is appropriate to that individual’s circumstances. It is no less an award if conferred on an Associate Member.

**HONORARY BRANCH MEMBERS** *(Clause 2.7 of the National Constitution)*

Any Branch may appoint a member ( Full or Associate ) as an Honorary member of the Branch, Capitation and Magazine subscriptions to be paid by the Branch, again it is not usual to ask for a Branch subscription, but this is left to the individual.

**BRANCH CHAIRMAN** *(Clause 3.8.4 of the National Constitution)*

The Branch Chairman is elected by the members, and is required to Chair all management meetings. If unable to be present at a meeting then the members will vote to appoint another officer to act for him. (Some Branches appoint a Vice-Chairman as one of the officers). The Branch Chairman will liaise with the Area Leader on Branch and Guild matters.

### **BRANCH SECRETARIES** (*Clause 3.8.5 of the National Constitution*)

Branch Secretaries are required to keep accurate Minutes of the Annual General Meeting and to ensure that copies of the examined accounts are sent to the National Treasurer. Copies of the Annual Returns should be sent to the General Secretary and the National Treasurer (along with remittance of the annual subscriptions).

A list of members should be provided by the Branch Secretary to the General Secretary, defining type of membership i.e. Full or Associate, Fellow, Life Member, Honorary Branch Member. Also any transfers in or out of the Branch should be reported defining where the member has moved to or from.

Any deaths during the year should also be reported in order that the member may be added to the *Obit Book*. Changes to Members details are reported via the Amendment form.

### **BRANCH TREASURER** (*Clause 3.8.6 of the National Constitution*)

The Financial Year of the Guild is 1<sup>st</sup> of January - 31<sup>st</sup> of December, it is advisable therefore to hold the Annual General Meeting of the Branch as early as possible in the New Year, preferably before the end of March.

Annual subscriptions should be collected and forwarded to the National Treasurer together with the appropriate annual return.

Accurate accounts must be kept and these should be examined by an independent person before being sent to the National Treasurer.

For members who join between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 30<sup>th</sup> June the full annual subscriptions are charged, and for those who join between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 31<sup>st</sup> December 50% of the annual subscription is charged.

Details of such additional subscriptions should be notified to the General Secretary and the National Treasurer via an Interim Returns Form.

Expenses claimed by Area Leaders/Branch Officials for attending Guild functions vary; advice should be sought from the National Treasurer. See notes on page 11.

## **TIPS FOR TREASURERS**

The task of the Treasurer is to manage the financial affairs of the Branch, ensuring that any monies due to the Branch are collected and banked, that any bills or other obligations are promptly settled, and to maintain such financial records as will enable him/her to know, and be able to demonstrate, at any time, the financial position of the Branch.

As soon as possible after the end of each year, (in the Guild the financial year and calendar year are the same), the Treasurer should produce an account showing the financial activity of the Branch over the previous year and its end of year state.

The Treasurer will normally issue all cheques on behalf of the Branch but there needs to be at least one other signatory on any account (usually the Branch Chairman or Secretary or both) to ensure that all essential business can be carried on in the absence of the Treasurer.

The Branch may also wish to stipulate that all cheques, or cheques over a certain amount, should be double signed. This is quite usual and is a useful protection for Treasurers.

## **FINANCIAL RECORDS**

These do not have to be in any particular format providing they enable you to perform the tasks above. If you are used to keeping accounts and have a system you are familiar with, or you inherit a system you are happy with, there is no reason not to continue it.

What is important is that every transaction is recorded and that you have some documentary explanation for it. For example: dues will come with a membership form, donations will normally be enclosed in a letter and so on.

Similarly money going out should be explained by an invoice or receipt. If you are reimbursing a member of the Branch for expenditure on behalf of the Branch insist on a receipt wherever possible and make sure those likely to make a claim know that they will have to provide one.

There will probably be instances when it is genuinely impossible for someone to provide a receipt (e.g. costs for a car journey) but these should be kept to a minimum. In such cases the claimant should give you a written note recording the journey and the amount claimed.



It is worth establishing a Branch policy for such journeys; for example whether you will reimburse petrol costs or pay a mileage rate, and if so what.

All documents explaining financial transactions need to be kept at least until the final Account for the year (see below) has been accepted.

If you are new to the role a very simple way to keep records is to use an analysed cash book. Each line will record a single transaction, (receipt/ payment), but the page is also divided into columns. Each column will contain the items relating to a particular Category that you will use in the final account. Such a book might like this:

DATE	NAME	PAID IN	PAID OUT	NATIONAL DUES	BRANCH DUES	POSTAGE	TRAVEL	RUNNING BALANCE
								£100.00
01/01/12	J Smith	£22.00		£17.00	£5.00			£122.00
15/01/12	L Green		£16.45			£5.15	£11.30	£105.55

You can put in as many columns as you need and you may find it more convenient to have Income and Expenditure on separate pages. At “Year End” you can simply total the columns and the Accounts are virtually done for you (that, at least, is the theory).

If you have more than one bank account you should keep a cash book for each. If possible all your transactions should be done through a bank as it makes it easier to keep track of things, but if you find you need to have a petty cash box it should be treated as if it were a bank and have its own cash book.

It is good practice to record transactions as soon as possible after the event. This will ensure that if you are asked in the course of the year to advise on the financial position you are able to do so with authority. It will also enable you to check your bank statements easily and this should be done every time they are received.

If there happen to be any discrepancies in your records it is much easier to correct mistakes you may have made sooner rather than later after the event while you may still be able to remember the transaction. But banks make mistakes too (though they often deny it), and if they have - the quicker you draw attention to it and resolve it - the better.

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The end of year accounts need not be elaborate, but should contain enough information to show where the Branch's money came from, what it was spent on and how much money the Branch now has.

There are two main forms of accounts – “Income & Expenditure” and “Receipts & Payments”.

Income and Expenditure accounts are compulsory for all large businesses and charities, but for our purposes Receipts and Payments accounts (which are much simpler) are all that is required. The difference is that Income and Expenditure accounts must show all financial transactions relating to the year whether any money has yet been paid or received (or was paid or received in a previous year) or not. Whereas Receipts and Payments accounts relate only to the movement of cash in the year in question.

The accounts need to show all the receipts and payments under the main headings. If you have maintained a cash book on the lines suggested these figures can be obtained simply by adding up the columns. (It is at this stage that the value of maintaining accurate records as you go along is apparent). Any difference between receipts and payments is added to or subtracted from, as appropriate, the opening balance (which is the closing balance of the previous year's accounts). This new balance must then be tallied with the bank balance(s) of the Branch account(s) as shown in the bank statements.

The accounts must be independently examined and verified. This is a protection both for the Branch as well as the Treasurer. Although this is often referred to as an audit, it is not an audit in the full technical sense and does not require a qualified auditor (not all chartered accountants are qualified as auditors). The examiner may be any reasonably qualified person such as a friendly bank manager, accountant or other financial professional. You could always ask your Church treasurer to do it. If you are your Church treasurer you could ask a colleague from a neighbouring Parish).

The accounts are primarily for your own Branch to accept and there is no set format although the National Treasurer is happy to advise on how they could be presented if asked. A copy of the verified accounts should be sent to the national Treasurer as soon as they have been accepted by the Branch.

## **NATIONAL FESTIVALS**

If your Branch or Area is considering offering to host a National Festival Day, we would be delighted to hear from you. The Branch Secretary or Area Leader should write to the General Secretary with a proposal, which will be taken to the next Central Council Meeting, and then eventually to the National AGM.

There is a separate booklet for organizers setting out the procedures and offering help and advice. Copies are available from the General Secretary or may be downloaded from the website. Please consult this before you begin your detailed planning.

## **TRAVELLING EXPENSES**

- 1) The Central Council of the Guild will pay:
  - a) The travelling expenses of Officers, Officials and Area Leaders to the Central Council and Standing Committee Meetings (except those held during the Annual Conference unless only attending Central Council and not staying for A.G.M and Conference).
  - b) The expenses of the National Chairman and National Chaplain (and/or any nominated representative) to the National Festivals, Conference, and other special occasions such as funerals etc...
- 2) The Branch shall pay:
  - a) The expenses of National Officers invited to Branch Meetings (unless sent by Central Council, in which case Central Council will pay).
  - b) The travelling expenses of those Area Leaders of multi-Branch areas attending AGMs, committee meetings or any other business meetings of the Branches in their Area, with the exception of those of the Branch of which they are a member, (i.e. Area Leaders in Multiple-Branch areas traveling to a neighbouring Branch in their Area.)

Expenses claimed should be either the cost of the public transport used or a set amount per mile if using your own transport. For advice on rates please contact the National Treasurer.

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