

The Church of England
Guild of Vergers



Information for Members



Leading the way since 1932
Presidents: The Archbishops of Canterbury and York

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GUILD

The Vergers of the Southwark Diocese had been meeting socially since the turn of the 20th century, and although there was an association of London Vergers formed in 1909, there was not a provincial or national organisation until 1932 when Vic Buck, Head Verger of Leeds Parish Church called a meeting of Cathedral Vergers of the York province with a view to forming an association.

He was encouraged by Laurence Farrington, Head Verger of Bradford Cathedral; Stephen Pentecost, Head Verger of Sheffield Cathedral and Dr William Temple, Archbishop of York.

A committee was formed and publicised an event which became the *inaugural service of the Guild on 15th September 1932*, amidst the splendour of York Minster, attended by 365 Vergers. Soon Branches were being formed in Deaneries and Dioceses throughout the country, which have since become the backbone of the organisation of the Guild.

In 1945 the separate committees of the Canterbury and York Provinces met together for the first time and formed the Central Council (now the Executive Committee), and it was then that the *Church of England Guild of Vergers* as we recognise it today first appeared.

LOCAL

The country is served by a network of *Branches* that meet locally. Each Branch is responsible for appointing its own Officers and Committee and is encouraged to have its own Branch Constitution to regulate its business.

Each Branch is also responsible for arranging its own programme of business meetings, worship, training, visits, speakers and other events to suit their local needs and geographical situation.

Each Branch in turn belongs to a *Region* and has a share in electing a representative from that region to the national governing body of the Guild – the *Executive Committee*.

NATIONAL

The *Executive Committee* meets at least twice each year, and consists of a representative – *Regional Representatives* from each of the 4 Regions, together with the National Officers.

The *National Chairman* is elected by the Executive Committee from amongst the Membership and is joined by the *General Secretary, National Treasurer, National Chaplain, Training Officer, Media Officer, Liaison Officer, Welfare Officer, and Conference Secretary*.

The *National Constitution of the Guild* regulates the business of the Guild and sets out the various sub-committees who meet to look after the work of their various departments within the Guild. Each new member is presented with a copy of the National Constitution on admission to the Guild.

The Guild holds a *National AGM* every year to which all members are welcome (usually held during the *Training Conference* – see *Training Conference*).

In addition the Guild holds national one-day gatherings – *Festivals* – usually one in the Canterbury Province and one in the York Province each year – hosted and organised by the local Branch who have offered the venue. All members and their families are encouraged to attend these happy occasions, with the opportunity to meet fellow Vergers from across the country.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to ‘all who serve in the office of a Verger... whether wholly or partially employed, or as a volunteer who performs similar duties. The Guild welcomes all who give their services and talents in the ordering of worship and care of Church buildings. Membership is open to members of all denominations.’

Applicants may be *Full* or *Associate Members* as explained in the Constitution. Members are formally admitted to the Guild at a Branch service or national gathering. The form of service can be found in the Constitution. In addition, Branches may choose to honour any of its members locally by appointing them *Honorary Branch Members*. The Executive Committee may choose to honour members nationally by appointing them as *Life Members of the Guild*, usually following a recommendation from their Branch Committee. The *Fellowship of the Guild (FCEGV)* may be bestowed by the Committee on any person who has served the Guild significantly in any capacity. Current members include Vergers from Cathedral, Abbey and Priory Churches; Royal Chapels, School and College Chapels; Garrison Churches and of course Vergers from hundreds of Parish Churches.

FINANCE

In order to finance its work, the Guild asks members for a Subscription each year, part of which is retained by the Branch for local administration; part is paid to the Executive Committee – *Capitation* – for national administration, and part is used to cover the cost of *The Virger Magazine*. Ask your local Branch Treasurer for details.

COMMUNICATIONS – THE VIRGER MAGAZINE

The Media Committee works hard to keep members, across not only this country but across the world, in touch with the Guild and each other via *The Virger Magazine*, which is published quarterly.

The magazine is published by the Executive Committee. The Editor is always pleased to receive articles and news for inclusion, both from this country and from our overseas members.

COMMUNICATIONS – THE GUILD WEBSITE

The Church of England Guild of Vergers also has a website – www.cofegv.org.uk. Log on and have a look around. There are links to other useful sites as well. The Guild also has a members only Facebook Group.

GUILD PUBLICATIONS

The Guild publishes occasional papers and leaflets on a variety of subjects which are of interest to Vergers. Please refer to the *Publications Leaflet* for details.

THE TRAINING CONFERENCE

The Training Conference was inaugurated in 1974 and is now a popular and instructional part of the Guild's calendar. It is a residential conference that takes place over four days, usually sometime in the summer and held at a central location in the country. All members are encouraged to attend for all or part of the time, and many return year-after-year for the fellowship and space that such an event creates away from the members' own Churches and responsibilities.

Bursaries help to subsidise the cost of the Conference, and can assist individual members who might not otherwise be able to attend, particularly in cases where their Church authorities do not contribute to the cost. The *Bursary Fund* is generously supported by the Bishops and Dioceses of the Church of England.

THE DIPLOMA COURSE

The Diploma Course (formerly the *Training Course*) was initiated in 1986 and is now a well-established tool of the Vergers' 'trade'.

The course was designed for busy Vergers, with a year being allowed for the completion of each section (called *Units*), supported by *tutors/mentors* of the student's own choosing.

The scheme is administered by the *Training Committee*, and assessed by a combination of internal and external qualified *Assessors*, which can result in the award of a *Foundation Unit Certificate* on the successful completion of the first Unit.

If the other three Units, *the Verger as Pastor, Historian, and Administrator*, are completed successfully, a *Diploma* is awarded, allowing students to use the post-nominal letters *Dip GV*.

LOCAL TRAINING INITIATIVES

Many Branches operate local training days, either on their own or with neighbouring Branches, or via their Diocesan Training or Resources Department. Please ask your local Branch for details of their next such event. If they haven't any planned – ask them why not!

Some Churches and Cathedrals are often able to offer one-to-one training or 'work experience' days for fellow members – please ask your local Branch for more information.

WELFARE

The Guild offers fellowship to members via the local and national meetings and has a network of *Branch Chaplains* in place who can offer spiritual advice or a listening ear, which can be a valuable asset when members wish to discuss matters that might be sensitive or difficult with their own clergy.

In addition the *National Chaplain* of the Guild is always prepared to assist members and is 'only a phone call or e-mail away'.

To compliment this, the *Welfare Officer* is available for any matters relating to terms and conditions of service, contracts of employment, and general welfare matters. Please ask for details.

THE GUILD SHOP

Members are encouraged to use the Guild's shop to purchase gown badges, ties, lapel badges and many other items to publicise the Guild.

The profits from sales are used to benefit the work of the Guild. Individual name badges with the Guild logo are very useful. A mail order service is available.

LIAISON

The Guild is honoured to have the Archbishops of Canterbury and York as *Joint Presidents*, with whom we consult when appropriate. The Guild is associated with the *Dean's Vergers Conference* (English Cathedral Head Vergers); and has links with other Guilds and Vergers around the world via the *Overseas Liaison Officer*.

HONOURS

Full Members and Associates of the Guild are not entitled to use post-nominal letters. However, those who complete the Guild Diploma Course or others the Guild wishes to honour may do so as follows:

- Those who awarded an Honorary Diploma: **Hon Dip GV**
- Those who graduate from the Diploma Course: **Dip GV**
- Those who graduate with honours: **Dip GV (Hons)**
- Those awarded Fellowship of the Guild: **FCEGV**

Certificates for all categories of Membership and Awards are available from the Communications Committee.

The Guild Crest

The Guild Crest or Logo consists of a *pair of crossed virges*, representing the two Provinces of Canterbury and York; *CEGV* for the Church of England Guild of Vergers; *Cantuar and Ebor* = Latin titles of the Sees of Canterbury and York – our *Joint Presidents*.

The Guild Archive

The Guild has archives of meetings and events, as well as photographs and memorabilia going back many years. The long term archives are presently in the care of the *Guild Chronicler*, this Official records the national events, festivals and conferences, and is always happy to receive and record details of local and national events to build up the picture of verging across the country. Please ask for details.

