

The Church of England
Guild of Vergers



Organising a Festival

A guide to host Branches



Leading the way since 1932

Presidents: The Archbishops of Canterbury and York

A Guide to 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/Region

The Guild encourages an active involvement of members in your Branch/Region where possible. Please include them in the planning process and share the load !

Previous Festivals have been enhanced by the presence, on the day, of members of the local Branch/Region acting as hosts to "sign-in" members on 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 very important that you 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 to be used on the day. They must be consulted over anything that may have Health & Safety and/or insurance implications, i.e. 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 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 from the host church's community taking part in the day, (e.g. as servers, choristers etc.) should be supervised under that church's usual arrangements to comply with the local Child Protection Policy. Any attendees attending as members of the Guild who are under 18 years of age will need the consent of, and 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. The person 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 DBS checked, the Guild cannot take responsibility for un-chaperoned minors attending, nor can they guarantee that all attendees have a valid DBS 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, administration costs are on the increase. With this in mind, the host Branch/Region need to be aware of 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 and 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 subsidise 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 local or national businesses that would wish to support the Festival in exchange for suitable advertising. The nature of the businesses to be approached should 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 a surplus after all obligations are met, it will be for the Branch or Region hosting the event to decide how that is used. The National Treasurer will gladly advise!

Rather than utilise 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 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 and a booking form to the Media Officer for inclusion in the Guild website and publication in the appropriate editions of *The Virger* magazine as soon as you have the outline. They will be happy to advise on "house style" and formats. 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 would be helpful to include details of the local Tourist Information Centre. This will enable those attending and needing to stay over 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 very 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 satellite-navigation aids. If possible, a contact phone number and/or email address in the pack for use on the day would be helpful, 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 and this is always appreciated. Please check with your church authorities that this will be acceptable, and check with the Shop Manager if they are free to attend. If not, they 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 less than 1m wide each, and stand 2m 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 is taken at an appropriate time during the day, usually after a service at which members are robed. The Guild would be delighted if your 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'd 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 feature of the Festival is our fellowship together, which centers on an act (or acts) of worship. There has often been an Eucharist in the morning and evensong to conclude the day, but we are happy to fit in with whatever suits your Festival best. However, it should be borne in mind that during the course of the service (or services) there will need to be an opportunity for new members to be admitted (by the National Chaplain if 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. At an Eucharist, for example, 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 would be hoped that the National Chaplain would be invited to robe, and it would be very welcome if they could have a role at some point in the liturgy. When choosing the rite, please use the format most familiar to the host church. As said above, if there is to be the admission of new members at 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 intercessions and assist with the administration of communion if appropriate. **Please liaise in good time 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, they will need to be advised what they are expected to wear,

i.e. for the Eucharist

surplice and stole or
alb and stole, or
stole and the Guild cope ?

for evensong

choir habit or Guild Cope ?

Admitting New Members

When 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 by the Guild. This form is also available in larger formats from the General Secretary, 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 Back Page – it must be remembered that the Executive Committee (comprising regional Representative Area Leaders, Guild Fellows and National Officers) must be seated in front of Guild members, and that the national three principal officers – National Chairman, General Secretary and National Treasurer, need to be seated in front of the Council. Guests and non-robing members are invited to join the congregation, and 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 the General Secretary to make the necessary arrangements. It may be possible to borrow the Guild's communion plate if required. Please ask if you'd like to arrange that.

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 any 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.

FESTIVAL LITE

The reason behind a Festival Lite is to enable the Guild to meet in either Province once or twice a year purely as a social event, where a Full Festival is not possible. There would be little organisation involved and the event should be as simple with minimum fuss.

There should be no robed service with procession so that attendees can travel with minimum luggage.

Where possible, a simple said service could be undertaken in a church at some point during the day, either Matins or Evensong with the either the approval of the local vicar, or to join in an existing planned service.

Lunch is the responsibility of the attendee. No formal organised arrangements will be made. Suggestions of venues can be offered.

Tours can be organised, but the cost must met by all attendees. There should be no burden on any branch.

The organiser of the Festival should be the focal point of contact, organise a booking from and any tours that they wish to arrange.

The Guild should not bear the cost of underwriting any part of the Festival without prior arrangement of the Executive Group.

The Festival should be arranged around a known Church with some association with the organiser and the local area.

The key to this type of Festival is its simplicity. It is designed to maintain a social gathering on a bi-annual basis for Guild members.

Any cost to the attendees should be kept to a minimum, to cover only the essentials (for instance if a coach is used to travel between venues), and additional costings per person for any tours that they choose to embark on.

Order of Procession

The Executive Committee 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 National 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

Regional Representative

Max 4

Guild Fellows

Guild Officers

Liaison Officer, Overseas Liaison Officer,

Media 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 they will take her rightful place within the Guild at this point.

Everyone processes in their most senior position by right.

The Church of England Guild of Vergers is committed to providing a safe environment for all, and promotes Safeguarding. If you would like to talk about Safeguarding issues please contact the Chaplain or the Welfare Officer.