

**THE VALE OF AYLESBURY
CIRCUIT (23/29)**

Website: www.aylesburyvale.org.uk

**A GUIDE TO THE USE OF THE
CHRESTOS PLAN MAKING TOOLS
FOR THE CREATION OF THE
CIRCUIT PREACHING PLAN
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY IN THIS
CIRCUIT**

These notes are based on those published by ThenMedia and adapted to our style of usage.

I hope they will prove useful to those using the system for the first time and also to those who have an important part to play, your participation is greatly valued.

Roy Collis—Technical Editor February 2024

Vale of Aylesbury Methodist Circuit

The construction of the Preaching Plan is supervised by the Superintendent Minister, (or their Deputy) who is responsible for the contents of the Plan but has the assistance of a Plan Admin Team (For Membership see 'Groups' on the Cloud)
The CHRESTOS TOOLS can only be accessed after logging into the 'Cloud'

Notes on the plan-making process

1 Basics

The key groups in Chrestos plan-making are:

Plan Admin

Available for planning

Church Plan Note Edit

The main planning tools are:

- Periods
- Availability
- Planning Grid
- Plan Notes (see Para 8.)

Group Read & Edit Permissions for the main planning tools are:

Periods: Read/Edit - Plan Admin

Availability: Read/Edit—Plan Admin & Available for planning

Planning Grid: Read/Edit—Plan Admin

Plan Notes: Read/Edit— Church Plan Note Edit & Plan Admin

2 Groups

Members of the **Plan Admin** group oversee the planning process. Plan Admin can create and edit Periods, alter a period's status during the process, enter and edit availability, and do the actual planning. The **Technical Editor** is a member of this group but has no part in planning appointments but will probably set up the Period.

The **Available for planning** group enter the dates when they are available in the 'Availability Form' on screen, they can also state the maximum number of services they are willing take in the quarter and on a Sunday, and where they can preach, within those constraints, dates and **their deployment is entirely at the discretion of the Superintendent Minister.**

When planning is complete, they can re-visit the screen to view their appointments. Those in the Available for Planning group are listed on the website in the 'Available for Planning' group; some **Visiting Preachers** have agreed to be members of this group.

The church **Plan Contact** Group members are appointed by each church, and are **expected** to inform the **Plan Admin** of decisions of their **Church Councils** regarding special services, invited **Visiting Preachers** or anything else that should appear on the Preaching Plan for their church, by adding **Plan Notes** on their respective **CHRESTOS church pages.** Please note that preachers named in **the Available for Planning group should not be 'booked'**, however, **requests** for a certain preacher, to lead a particular service, will be given proper consideration. However, they are not required to plan every service during a quarter.

Anything that limits the flexibility of the Plan Makers e.g. Pre Booking Local Arrangements, may well be disregarded. Clearly stated arrangements for **Alternative Worship** will be respected. Notes on regular patterns of worship can be entered as a permanent reminder, and is recommended.

Notes can be amended **at any time** but there will be times when they will be too late, **but never too early**, for the next Planning Period. These notes are a valuable 'aid memoire' for the Admin Group as plan making proceeds.

4 The status of a planning period

As plan-making proceeds, the status of a period changes.

1 Hidden

A planning period is 'greyed-out' in the list of periods. There can be no Planning activity possible when it is in that mode. All old periods will be put into Hidden mode

2 Awaiting preacher availability

Members of the 'Available for planning' group can leave availability. A planning grid can be generated, services (blue cells) can be created, but not edited.

3 Planning in progress

Work can proceed on the planning grid (i.e. services can be created, deleted & filled). Ministers normally plan in their own areas, but as Plan Admin Group members, they can plan anywhere. Preachers can view their availability, but no longer edit it. Preacher availability can only be edited by Plan Admin.

4 Plan being finalised

As 'Planning in progress'

5 Plan complete

No further planning can be done. Preachers can view their appointments from the Availability screen.

5 Why does the status of a planning period change during the process?

To separate the three main phases of plan-making: the giving of dates; the planning of preachers; the viewing of appointments.

It's messy doing the planning if availability keeps changing; its inappropriate to be viewing appointments if planning is incomplete. The changing status of a planning period keeps the phases separate, while allowing Plan Admin to over-ride where necessary. See note**

(Note**) any member of the Admin Group can edit a Period to change its status; Click on the Period icon then the Status and select the status– **click 'Done'**

Only 1 Period should be in the Planning in Progress mode at any instant, Any change must be reversed before you leave the site.

The system will only make the Planning Grid available for editing when a period when in 'Planning in progress' or 'Plan being finalised.' mode

6 Visiting preachers

There is also a Visiting preachers group. Those in this group appear in the Visiting preachers drop-down in the service dialogue box, allowing regular visitors to be easily selected. Any preacher invited by a church needs to be added to this group for the duration of the plan. As previously stated some regular visiting preachers are also in the 'Available for Planning' group

The CHRESTOS Tools are an integral part of the CIRCUIT WEBSITE site..

The Website and CHRESTOS share a common data base, this is used to create the list of up-coming services that can be viewed by any Website reader if they are searching the information on individual churches. **Those lists are updated automatically from the information put into the Planning Grid.**

For most services it lists the time; Preacher and then the decoded Service Code so what is on the plan may appear as :

11.00am Surname FS will be shown on the Website as:

11.00am Full name Family Service

Any additional Preacher or Service code will be similarly decoded.

There is also provision in the dialogue box for additional information to be put into the **Location Box**, such information will **override** the preacher's name, and is printed **as seen on the Planning Grid**

It is therefore important that no codes are used there

as it must be intelligible to the casual reader of the Website. For the appointment to be seen as filled (turn dark blue) there must be a name in a Preacher slot or a full description of the service in the location box. **NB.** It is possible to 'kid' the system by putting blanks in the Location Box

When the **Planning Grid** has been completed it can be converted to a .pdf document which can be printed off and used as the Preaching Plan but apart from the Service Codes there is no Code Key, other information in the document, it can also be converted to a Excel Spreadsheet which has the same limitations.

Most Circuits will have a familiar format for their plan which will include contact information about the preachers, useful information about Hymn Books used and contact details for each church. It is easier to transfer the Planning Grid details if that plan is based on an Excel Spreadsheet.

The plan can then be produced in the following stages:

STAGE 1.

An Excel Spreadsheet template will have been prepared in advance which will have all the additional data already on it, only the main table of appointments is empty.

STAGE 2.

The Planning Grid is inspected to ensure that it is 'fit for purpose'. That is to say in terms of rows and columns it is the same size as the template appointments area, that all services have been described according to the requirements of the CHRESTOS system (no inappropriate use of the Location Box and **ideally**, all appointments filled.

Make any necessary 'repairs' to the Planning Grid including making use of information supplied (church Plan Notes) and consultation if necessary.

Ensure that there is at least one Blue cell in every line.

At this point there are usually a few unfilled appointments.

STAGE 3.

Open the Period's and export the appropriate Planning Grid as an Excel Spreadsheet which will go into the download file on the editors PC. When setting up the download make sure only **Sundays** are highlighted, (*otherwise it will download a spreadsheet with all weekdays listed*).

STAGE 4.

Open the download file in Excel, Then

1. Turn Off 'Enable editing'
2. Ensure 'Auto Save' is set to OFF.
3. Highlight all the appointment cells.
4. In the tool bar click on 'Wrap Text'
5. **SAVE the file**
6. Highlight the entire file and change the Font to Arial Size 8 and '**Save**'
7. Highlight all the columns containing the appointment, using the 'Format' button change Column width to 13 and Row Height to 12 .
8. Save the file which should now be the correct size to copy and paste the appointments into the prepared Preaching Plan template.

Stage 5

The way the appointments are set out is a matter of personal choice; the current format seems to be well accepted and understood.

Traditionally each appointed has been set out on the Plan in the order of the following example: 10.55 Name C

The Planning Grid prints this as: Name C /10.55 am.

NB: The time is only included if it varies from the time shown in the left hand column and 'am' or 'pm' often has to be assumed because space is limited.

It is also good to be able to leave spaces between the name and the coding.

Options: These editorial changes can be made before or after the appointments are posted to the template.

It is a good idea to save files as you complete each stage.

STAGE 6

When the draft is in a satisfactory state it is sent, as a .pdf document, for comment/ approval to the Plan ADMIN & then the CHURCH PLAN CONTACTS groups and at least 72 hrs is allowed for comments.

STAGE 8.

The 1st Draft is amended if necessary and the name changed to Circuit Preaching Plan and sent for final approval to the Plan Admin team.

Pdf copies are then circulated to all preachers involved, and to Church Plan Contacts, (as confirmation of suggested amendments)

Covering messages giving details as to where any comments should be directed, must accompany the circulated documents.

It is essential that Preachers and Church Contacts review these documents and if possible confirm this has been done to the editor.

STAGE 9.

At some point it has to be assumed that no response indicates approval. When the Plan is considered to be as good as it can be, it will be published on the website, and circulated as a pdf document to Preachers and Plan Contacts.

After a suitable passage of time to allow, to allow Preachers to read the Plan, and assuming there are no last minute changes the files, Plan and Information Sheet, are sent to the AMC Office for printing long with the file containing the information. The final Plan for distribution is a 2 sided A3 document , folded to show the Title and list of Circuit Staff on the front.

The information Sheet

The file is created In Publisher at present and is prepared in 2 formats to make one suitable for printing (and folding), and the for displaying on the Website. This involves moving and inverting files, examples attached.

It can be updated with information as it comes in, or after the Plan is complete, by scrutinising the final Plan for new preacher names. (not a great idea!)

The notes on the Planning grid should give all the necessary on new Visiting Preachers to enable up dating of new Visiting Preachers, details of returning VPs can be found on the Website in the 'Visiting' or 'Invited' groups. Updating during the 'slack' periods when waiting for responses is usually possible, the information should only show Visiting Preachers on the plan for the period. Apart from the date, only the VPs change unless changes in church officers have been notified.

Both files need to be in .pdf format for Printing, and for posting on the Website.

It will then be the Technical Editor's task to ensure the Plan published on the website is kept up to date which means they need to be reasonably proficient in the use of the EXCEL, WORD and PUBLISHER elements of Microsoft Office and familiar with updating procedures on the Circuit Website.

All Library documents are updated by replacement, this means they have to be edited and saved on the Editor's PC.

