

MINUTES OF STIPEND REVIEW COMMITTEE

20th FEBRUARY 2024 via Zoom

Attendance

Simon Bland (Admin), Liz Slade (Chief Officer), Rev Sarah Tinker, Anne Mills, John Bates, Vince McCully (GA President), Rev John Carter (MF Rep)

Apologies

Jenny Jacobs (EC Representative), David Brown

Recommendations to come into effect from January 2025

We recommend a 5% increase in Ministers' Stipend, as shown in Table 1, below.

We recommend an increase in the Pulpit Fee paid to visiting preachers / worship leaders to a range of £65-£125 per service, plus expenses.

Background, Views and Comments

Received from Ministerial Fellowship Jan 24

I need to highlight some concerns from the Ministers, that have at least come to me...

- 1) We find that the current or historic division between London and the Rest of the UK to be biased to London and discriminatory to the rest of the UK. Housing rates have gone up higher than the traditional system recognises... as example where I minister, the need for University housing has created a shortage for professionals who need rental agreements over home ownership. When I began here a studio apartment was £800 to £1000 per month. Having a regular apartment, with utilities and other fees goes much higher than that.... My current expenses place me at £1100 to £1300 per month. Housing needs to be addressed.
- 2) Second to this is that many of our ministers now are in non-traditional ways of ministering. We either serve as 1/2 time, some less, some a bit more... or serve more than one parish. Those who are half time are spending the majority of their pay on housing, as the housing allowance doesn't cover the basic housing needs, which include utilities such as water, gas/oil, and electric. This does not include council tax, nor I suspect do we include the cost of internet and phone in these considerations, I would encourage that we start reflecting on the amount of individual ministry that does occur via internet/media sources. I am not sure how we deal with council tax, but wonder if those congregations that still provide a manse pay the council tax?

- 3) In the conversation that the Ministry Fellowship had on stipend, it was pointed out that *“the Stipend Review report is clear that when a minister is living in rented accommodation, the congregation should be funding this (providing the accommodation is reasonable for the minister and their family s needs), and that this remains the case if the cost of rent is higher than the manse allowance”*. It also was mentioned that many congregations as well as ministers have not been aware of this recommendation.
- 4) This was the focus, basically with stipend the housing situation has been an ongoing concern, that this past year has become a focused concern.

Discussion

The meeting was primarily a discussion on the financial challenges faced by ministers and the sustainability of proposed stipend increases. From the congregational side, there were expressions on the concerns about the potential financial impact of increased stipends. The group emphasized the need to balance paying ministers well without causing financial strains that could impact other congregational expenses or make it difficult to establish new ministries.

The discussion also highlighted the difficulties faced by congregations considering new ministries due to lack of confidence around available financial resources and the particular hardships faced due to the cost of living crisis and post-covid exhaustion. The group also discussed the complexity of housing provision and the challenges faced by ministers in affluent urban areas.

Background

Inflation

The latest available figures from the Office of National Statistics for December 2023 (released Jan 2024) were:

CPIH	+4.2%	(+9.2% in 2023)
Retail Prices Index (RPI) All items	+5.2%	(+13.4% in 2023)
Inflation Figure	+4.0%	(+10.5% in 2023)

(CPIH is now the main UK measure of consumer domestic price inflation. The Retail Prices Index is a longstanding measure.)

In its **November 2023 Monetary Policy Committee report**, the Bank of England stated – “We expect inflation to fall further this year and continue to fall towards our 2% target next year.”

Other denominations

United Reformed Church: from 1 January 2024

£32,532 (5% increase) £30,984 (2023)

Congregational Federation: from 1 January 2024

£34,596 (6.7% increase) £32,424 (2023)

Baptist Union Home Mission stipend: from 1 January 2024

£28,600 (7.93% increase) £26,500 (2023)

Church of England (National Average Stipend)

£28,670 (7% increase) from April £26,134 (2023)

Office Holders

We recommend that, if possible, a congregation will pay **as a minimum** Statutory Sick Pay and family allowances (maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental) if the minister meets the qualifying criteria for them and grant their ministers a length of notice of termination based upon their service and pay redundancy pay according to the statutory norm at the time of their leaving.

Manse Allowance

This is still an area of great misunderstanding. The key purpose of the manse allowance figures below, which had remained relatively unchanged for many years, is to create a figure to use to calculate the additional pension payments to be made. It is **not** the maximum a congregation pay towards rent. The GA will, during 2025, review the issues around housing for ministers.

Where a congregation does not provide accommodation for a minister, it is recommended that **they pay the actual housing costs if these exceed the recommended manse allowances** below. It is clear that the current manse allowance may not now cover actual housing costs in all areas.

Provincial	£ 7,500
LDPA area	£11,000
London postcodes	£11,000 minimum

Resettlement Grants and Removal Costs

Currently £3,700 is payable in addition to removal contractors' charges. The resettlement grant is taxable and subject to NIC unless it is payable against actual bills provided by the Minister. For further information consult HM Revenue & Customs booklet 480.

Where a personal vehicle is used for removals, mileage allowances should be claimed at General Assembly rate. If a removal contractor is used, the claim must be substantiated by receipts and the charge be the lowest of three quotations.

Mileage Allowance

Mileage allowance is in line with HMRC rules.

Cars: 45p/mile

Motorcycles: 24p/mile.

Pedal cycles: 20p/mile

Public Transport rate 30p/mile (Reimbursed at actual cost)

Pulpit Supply

After over a decade at a relatively low level, the review committee wanted to better reflect the practice and sums currently paid across the movement. The recommended rate is now a range of between £65- £125 plus expenses, which is still a minimum rate. If congregations are able to pay more, they are encouraged to do so. It is recommended that special fees should be negotiated for special occasions as Anniversary Services, where additional preparation is required. Fees should always be offered and claimed in full.

Table 1: Current scales (payable from 1 January 2024) with 5% increase for 2025

	Current 1/1/24	From 1/1/25	Increase of
Ministers			
Yrs 1-5	£29,392	£30,861	£1,469
Yrs 6-10	£30,302	£31,817	£1,515
Yrs 10 plus	£31,621	£33,202	£1,581
Lay Pastors			
Yrs 1-5	£25,775	£27,063	£1,288
Yrs 6-10	£26,575	£27,903	£1,328
Yrs 10 plus	£27,736	£29,122	£1,386

Other Business

There was no other business

Date of Next Meeting

To be arranged prior to the Executive Committee meeting in January 2025.

Request for Views, Recommendations and Comments:

In advance of next year's review, the Committee invites and encourages congregations and Ministers to submit views and recommendations regarding the matters covered in this report. The committee plans to review both the manse allowance and preaching fees at its next meeting.

In order that such submissions may be reviewed before the next meeting, please send any such communications to the Chief Officer to arrive **by 30 November 2024**.