

Ministers' Handbook

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Introduction

As part of the United Reformed Church's commitment to supporting all Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers, hereinafter known as ministers, we are pleased to provide for you the Ministers' Handbook. You will find in this Handbook a range of policies and provisions which offer support to you in your role.

Should you require more detailed information or advice, contact details are included throughout the Handbook. Please note that for further information, you can contact the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) at ministries@urc.org.uk

This Handbook will be reviewed annually. The latest version can be found in the Ministries section of the website <https://urcresourcehub.org.uk/a-handbook-for-ministers/>

Part One – Flourishing in Ministry

1 Wellbeing

Ministry is not, and has never been, easy. The pressures of ministry can creep up on any of us, even for those of us who are flourishing. Most ministers are self-directed: we are in control of our own diary and enjoy a valued and valuable sense of autonomy. However, when the 'workplace' is also the home and in the blurring of boundaries between ministerial life and personal life, ministers need to make time for their own self-care and ensure a healthy work/life balance.

The care and wellbeing of ministers is crucial to the health of the mission of the church. Healthy, fulfilled, maturing, joyful ministers who feel valued and supported are an enormous gift to God's Church. A sense of being cared for and loved will give energy and vigour when they face ministerial or pastoral challenges.

The wellbeing of ministers has been high on the church's agenda for many years. Well-being is more

than just 'feeling good'. A positive well-being involves the interplay of physical, emotional, and spiritual health, together with the availability and quality of personal and professional relationships, within the wider context of vocation, all contribute to an overall sense of well-being.

2 Pastoral Support

Pastoral Support in the first instance is available at a local level from your Synod, usually through your Synod Moderator (or someone designated to deputise for them). This provision varies from Synod to Synod.

3 Pastoral Supervision

Pastoral Supervision offers a regular, intentional space with boundaries in which a practitioner skilled in supervision (the supervisor) meets with a Minister to look together at the Minister's professional practice. It is a relationship characterised by trust, confidentiality, support and openness that offers you the safety to explore issues arising in your ministry. The Ministries Office can give you advice about finding a supervisor. This includes URC trained supervisors. Every eligible minister should have 6 x 1 hour sessions minimum per annum although it is recognised that some may require more or longer sessions. Ministers claim the fee for Pastoral Supervision along with their other expenses; the central URC reimburses whoever pays those expenses 50% of the cost. The pastorate or post can claim back the cost from the Ministries Office in the December of each year. Ministers should sign a covenant with their supervisor normally on an annual basis and send a copy to the Synod Moderator for the Minister's file.

For more information, please see <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/pastoral-supervision-policy-for-ministers/>

4 Education for Ministry

All ministers in the United Reformed Church are encouraged to engage in continuing ministerial development, in ways that are relevant to the ministries to which they are called at particular times and in particular contexts. This is to ensure that people in public ministry are engaged in continuous development, so that they are refreshed and equipped for the constantly changing demands of 21st century ministry.

The EM2 phase normally begins at ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament or commissioning to Church Related Community Work and ends with a certificate of completion of EM2, issued by the Synod in which training has been completed. This process normally takes at least three years. More fundamentally, the EM2 period is focussed on moving from content focussed learning to context focussed learning where responsibility for learning moves away from the Resource Centre for Learning becoming the prime responsibility of the Minister or CRCW. EM2 is about context and development, putting theology and faith in real places with the minister holding real responsibility. Experience shows that the first public period of ministry can be a time of isolation, where there is little line management, few colleagues and few, if any, staff for whom the EM2 minister is responsible. For many, this is a significant change from a prior employment experience. The EM2 period is a time to learn how to work in new circumstances, to share that learning with

others in the same situation and to reflect in dedicated learning events.

For more information see <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/em2-assembly-element-information-for-ministers/>

Education for Ministry 3 is an opportunity to undertake self-defined ministerial development and lasts until ministers finish their URC recognised ministry, including active retirement. EM3 is fairly unstructured and offers many opportunities for development. Fundamentally, the URC believes that continuing professional development is part of being a reflective, resilient, and effective minister.

EM3 grant requests are considered seen within an 'application to ministry' context to discern if a proposed learning or resource is appropriate. Sometimes a request is more properly a cost of ministry which would more appropriately be reimbursed by a pastorate. EM3 funded learning events and resources are authorised by Synod Training and Development (or other relevant) officers.

Active ministers in EM3 are able to apply for a grant of up to £700 per year to use on EM3 events, excluding Sabbatical years. In Sabbatical years, the grant rises to £1200 for the Sabbatical but does not include the non-sabbatical year £700 unless this is agreed with the Synod Training and Development Officer. It is only the grant that is received and not two weeks extra study. If EM3 ministers substantially change their type of ministry, a Transitional Training grant offers a further two weeks' time allowance and an additional £350 grant funding. If the £700 limit may not be enough for a significant training event, the Rollover Funding Scheme may be used to borrow up to two year's funding from following years. A minister of another denomination in an ecumenical post is able to apply for 50% of EM3 grant funds as they will still have access to their own denomination's professional development funds.

After completion of a standard application form and authorisation by the relevant Synod Training and Development Officer or equivalent, funding can be paid in arrears based on a claim and/or paid in advance directly to a learning provider. There may be additional funding available if engaging in a Belonging to the World Church opportunity or engaging in a higher degree such as a Masters' or PhD/DPhil/professional doctorate.

There are a variety of URC organised learning opportunities:

Synod Schools	Synod Schools are organised by individual or joint Synods, usually cover a four-day period and may be offered every year offering a chance for fellowship, learning and reflection.
Sabbaticals	Sabbaticals are organised in dialogue with Synod Training and Development Officers (or equivalent), usually last three months and are offered to ministers every seven years of their ministry from the last sabbatical taken. Sabbaticals must begin before a minister reaches retirement age.
	The Church Leadership Programme (CLP) is offered to ministers ideally

Church Leadership Programmes	in years five to nine of their ministry. The CLP includes lay leaders and consists of two residential weeks, six months apart in separate calendar years with non-residential learning and activity between the residential weeks.
Belonging to the World Church	Belonging to the World Church visits and exchanges are organised in conjunction with the Head of Global & Intercultural Church. Funding is normally available for one visit every five years with applications being made through Synod Training and Development Officers or equivalent.

There are other opportunities

Further degrees	Further degrees are organised in dialogue with Synod Training and Development Officers and relevant learning providers.
Conferences	Conferences may be regular conferences associated with particular types of ministry or events around particular issues. If the 'application to ministry' criteria apply, these may be funded within EM3
Transitional Training	When a minister substantially changes their type of ministry (eg chaplaincy to pastorate, pastorate to leadership) then further training time and funding is offered. The first stop for discussion is the relevant Synod Training and Development Officer or equivalent.
Other events or support	Many other kinds of support or physical resource may be considered within EM3. The first stop for discussion is the relevant Synod Training and Development Officer or equivalent.

For more information see <https://urcresourcehub.org.uk/education-for-ministry-phase-3/>

Information on the Interfaith Fund and the Continuing Studies Fund can be found at <https://urc.org.uk/grants-funding-opportunities/>

5 Sabbaticals

Ministers on the United Reformed Church payroll may apply for a sabbatical term of up to three months every seven years. Ministers from other denominations, who serve in the United Reformed Church by virtue of a Certificate of Eligibility, are not eligible for a first sabbatical until they have completed at least five years' service as ministers of the United Reformed Church, after which, service in their previous denomination may be 'credited' for sabbatical purposes. (For example, a minister who has served their denomination for six years and the United Reformed Church for five is eligible to apply for a sabbatical).

Sabbatical grants are available to:

- Ministers receiving a stipend by the URC.
- Ministers who are in active ministry after retirement as recorded on the database.
- United Reformed Church ministers serving in ecumenical posts and paid ecumenically, where the comparable Sabbatical is not available. (In this eventuality, permission to take sabbatical leave would need to be approved by the partner denomination.
- Non-Stipendiary ministers in appointments recognised by the Synod.

It is recognised that there will be people who are not included in the above list. Such people will receive grants at the discretion of the Synod Officer responsible for EM3 in consultation with the Ministries Office.

Grants can only be given for educational/vocational purposes. The purpose of EM3 is to develop ministry through ministry related practical training, educational, spiritual, and professional development. Grants, therefore, can only be given for these purposes. It is also important that sabbaticals retain an appropriate balance between these aspects.

Sabbatical programmes must be approved by the Synod Officer responsible for EM3 and accepted by Synod, after consultation with the local church. In the case of Assembly appointed staff, approval should be sought from the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) after endorsement by the Deputy General Secretary.

Ministers may claim the full cost of a sabbatical, including travel, books and equipment up to £1,200. Sabbaticals of less than three months' duration will receive a proportionately lower grant (eg for a two-month sabbatical, the maximum grant will be £800).

Other sources of support for sabbaticals may be available and should be applied for before making an application to the United Reformed Church EM3 Fund. Provision is made for ministers taking sabbaticals at Westminster College, Cambridge, by the Cheshunt Foundation. Other trusts are the Coward Trust, and for sabbaticals involving travel outside Britain, the United Reformed Church's Mission department administers the Belonging to the World Church Programme.

Details of other support may be available from the Synod officer responsible for EM3.

Grants authorised by the Synod officer responsible for EM3 are paid by the Synod in two different ways. Either a) directly upon presentation of invoices (for example a bill from a training institution

or from a travel agent) or b) by reimbursement to the minister upon presentation of proof of payment relating to expenditure made. Sometimes you may not be able to get evidence, such as a receipt or invoice, for cash expenses, especially where the amounts are small. If this happens, make a brief note as soon as you can of the amount you spent, when you spent it and what it was for. HMRC have agreed that receipts for expenditure will not be necessary for train travel of under £20 on any one journey or out of pocket expenses such as car parking or subsistence of under £10.

The Assembly element may then be claimed back by the Synod from the Ministries Committee through the Ministries Office at Church House.

Applications should normally be made six months before the beginning of the sabbatical.

Applications should be made on the G2 form and sent to the Synod Officer responsible for EM3.

The completion of a sabbatical report will be expected when the sabbatical is completed. It should be made according to the guidelines laid out by the Ministries Committee and should be sent in the first instance to the Synod Officer responsible for EM3 and the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries), who will send the report to the URC Research Network via Northern College where it will be uploaded onto their webpage. (It may not be appropriate for some reports to be uploaded onto the webpage and individual permission will be sought before this is done.) If the report is not completed, no EM3 grant will be made in the following year. The Synod Officer responsible for EM3 will keep a record of the training and education of each minister and the Ministries office will monitor the grants.

If the sabbatical is for a period of more than 4 weeks, local churches are entitled to have pulpit fees reimbursed from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund. Claim forms can be obtained by the church treasurer from the MoM Office at United Reformed Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.

6 Training to Enrich Your Wellbeing

In order to enhance the wellbeing of its ministers, General Assembly has required all ministers to undertake both Safer Sacred Space and Safeguarding Training. These offer the skills, knowledge and attitudes which are an essential part of what is expected of people in public ministry.

Safer Sacred Space Boundary training arose from the work undertaken by the Sexual Ethics Steering Group (SESG 2006) with a remit to oversee the implementation of recommendations passed at Mission Council and published in *Preserving the Integrity of the Body: Sexual Ethics within the United Reformed Church* (May 2006). Mission Council in May 2013 accepted the final report of Sexual Ethics Advisory Group (SEAG), setting out that each minister within the URC shall be made aware of safe sexual boundaries and should pursue best practice.

The name given to the overall issue is Safer Sacred Space, indicating a desire that all sacred space becomes safer sacred space. The requirement is that EM3 ministers should receive training and updates at 4 yearly intervals.

The outcomes of such training are intended for the EM3 minister to gain:

- A better understanding of safe boundaries including sexual boundaries and potential changes in personal behaviour;
- An increased understanding of URC and non-URC support for safe boundaries;
- Strategies to manage safe boundaries within the local pastorate, within the wider URC and, where possible, within the wider community;
- Strategies to manage safe boundaries within the URC procedures;
- Important professional development

7 The Churches Ministerial Counselling Service (CMCS)

Ministry can bring its own stresses and ministers are not exempt from the other problems of everyday life arising from family and personal circumstances. It is not always appropriate to seek support from a colleague or senior person in the denomination or the organisation, so the CMCS was established to provide confidential independent help

CMCS provides a non-directive, safe and confidential space to talk about your life and anything that may be painful and uncomfortable. It allows you to share with someone who is trained to listen attentively so that they can make their own decisions about improving your wellbeing and living more effectively.

CMCS cannot offer long-term therapy, and normally counselling is concluded within a maximum of twelve sessions, usually of one hour per week. Only in exceptional circumstances can counselling be extended beyond twelve sessions. The sessions are free to ministers and their immediate family. Contact the CMCS for further information. <https://www.cmins.net>

8 Place for Hope

Place for Hope work in partnership with the United Reformed Church to provide a range of training, facilitation and support to enable, equip conflict transformation and reconciliation. The expertise of Place for Hope is offered to ministers, congregations and Synods through mediation, facilitation and coaching in times of change and conflict. More information can be found at <https://www.placeforhope.org.uk>

Part Two – Ministry, Accountability and Professional Standards

9 Active Ministers Policy – What Every Active Minister Needs to Know

Being recognised as an active minister is more than holding office; it is the Church's continuing affirmation that you are authorised to exercise ministry on its behalf. That authorisation carries both privilege and responsibility. It is an expression of the mutual trust that exists between the minister and the Church, rooted in our understanding that ministry is always exercised within the accountability of the whole people of God.

Who is considered an Active Minister?

For the purposes of this policy, active ministers fall into one of three broad categories:

Category	Who this includes
Category 1	Stipendiary Ministers of the Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Workers serving in an authorised post.
Category 2	Non-stipendiary ministers serving in a recognised ministry post authorised by the Church.
Category 3	Ministers exercising recognised occasional ministry on behalf of the URC at the invitation of the councils of the Church. This includes, for example, serving as an Interim Moderator, serving on Synod or General Assembly committees, representing the URC on external bodies, or leading worship, weddings and funerals. This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Retired ministers may also hold active status where they have been authorised by the Church to continue exercising ministry.

Remain engaged with the life of the Church

Active ministers remain under the pastoral oversight of the councils of the Church and are expected to participate fully in the conciliar life of the denomination. This includes engaging positively with ministerial reviews, pastoral supervision, safeguarding requirements, mandatory training and the wider responsibilities of ministry within the United Reformed Church.

Your authorisation is ongoing

Ordination or commissioning is lifelong, but active status is not something that is simply assumed forever. The Church will write to you each year to confirm your ministerial status, and it is your responsibility to respond. Maintaining accurate records is an important part of ministerial accountability.

Fitness to Practise is about faithful ministry

Fitness to Practise is not a test to be passed. It is an ongoing process of discernment that asks whether a minister is able to exercise ministry safely, faithfully and fruitfully. It includes theological integrity, appropriate pastoral boundaries, safeguarding, emotional maturity, collaboration, honesty, willingness to learn, and engagement with supervision and reflective practice.

Where concerns arise, the Church seeks wherever possible to respond early, pastorally and supportively. Not every concern is disciplinary. Sometimes ministers need additional support, training, adjustments or time to recover. The aim is always restoration and good order wherever possible.

Safeguarding is fundamental

Every active minister must maintain current DBS (or PVG) clearance, keep safeguarding training up to date and follow the Church's safeguarding policies at all times. Ministers should not exercise ministry if their safeguarding training has lapsed.

Continue to grow

The Church expects every active minister to remain committed to lifelong learning through Education for Ministry, continuing professional development, theological reflection, spiritual discipline and pastoral supervision. Ministry is never static; we continue to grow throughout our vocation.

Care for yourself

Faithful ministry also requires ministers to care for their own wellbeing. The Church encourages regular rest, retreat, pastoral supervision and sabbaticals, recognising that healthy ministers are better able to sustain healthy ministry over the long term.

At the heart of the policy

This policy is ultimately about trust. The United Reformed Church authorises ministers to exercise public ministry in Christ's name, and in return ministers commit themselves to serving with integrity, remaining accountable to the councils of the Church, safeguarding those in their care, continuing to grow in ministry, and exercising their calling in ways that are faithful, sustainable and life-giving for both themselves and those they serve.

For the full policy please see: <https://urcresourcehub.org.uk/active-ministers-policy-fitness-to-practice/>

For the implications of Inactive status please see: <https://urcresourcehub.org.uk/inactive-ministers-policy/>

10 Marks of Ministry for a URC Minister of Word and Sacraments

- **A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ:** caught up in the joy and wonder of God's will and work; seeking always to live a holy life in public and in private; sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible reading and worship so that they might model and encourage such life-long patterns in others with integrity; open to learning discipleship from others.
- **A person of integrity and resilience:** self-aware and committed to their own lifelong learning (especially through the URC's provision for ministers); aware of their own limitations and thus willing to seek support; ready to deal with situations of conflict; balancing ministry's joys and pains with the fostering of right relationships with family and friends.
- **A contextual theologian:** delighting in Scripture, rooted in the Reformed tradition, able to communicate their own faith and its implications within and beyond congregations; encouraging others to discover how these rich resources inspire and sustain faithfulness.
- **A worship leader and preacher:** able to craft and lead worship that shows appreciation for the

Sacraments and the resources of many traditions and styles yet unafraid to create and advocate new forms as appropriate; passionate and effective in breaking open God's Word in preaching; ready and able to foster skills, techniques and experience in others so that they might lead worship and preach well.

- **A pastor:** sharing with others, especially Elders, in sustaining care; making time to walk in love alongside people; rejoicing and grieving with others through listening deeply and offering prayerful support; wise in knowing their limits and boundaries when more specialised help is needed; reliably dealing with issues of safeguarding and confidentiality.
- **A leader and collaborator:** identifying, developing, and enabling leadership in others, particularly Elders; capable of working in, and leading, teams through collaborative and shared leadership; aware of their own leadership style and open to learning with and from others, when necessary acknowledging their own mistakes and seeking restoration; committed and equipped to building up others in faith and witness so that the gifts and callings of all might flourish; demonstrating love for God's people.
- **A missionary and evangelist:** passionate about and active in sharing the love of God for the world; alive to the significance of contexts and cultures in shaping mission and creative in discovering missional opportunities; empowering and equipping God's people in mission to share the Gospel and live God's Kingdom of justice and peace to the full.
- **A public figure:** reliable and effective in representing the Church in ecumenical, community and wider settings; committed to and equipped in speaking truth to power and challenging injustice and marginalisation wherever they may be found.
- **A communicator:** who uses written, spoken and other modes with clarity and grace to share faith and build up relationships and communities; helping others to find their voice.
- **A committed participant in the councils of the Church:** responsive to God's call as gift and blessing to be lived out within the discipline and accountability of the denomination which trains, ordains and inducts them and the pastorates and ministries within which they serve.
- **A reformer:** wise in the dynamics and challenges of change; bold yet humble in helping individuals and congregations to discern and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit as new chapters open in the life of the Church and others close.

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11 Marks of Ministry for a URC Church Related Community Worker

- **A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ:** caught up in the joy and wonder of God's will and work; seeking always to live a holy life in public and in private; sustained by their own rhythm of prayer, Bible reading and worship so that they might model and encourage such life-long patterns in others with integrity; open to learning discipleship from others.
- **A practical theologian:** Someone who has a growing familiarity with and understanding of the Bible enriched by a study which neither evades the critical questions nor allows them to silence

the central message. Someone who has a grasp of the history of the Church's world- wide mission, particularly as it relates to the ecumenical search for its unity and a grasp of Christian thinking concerned with personal and social ethical issues. Also, a concern of the application of critical faculties and the ability to reflect theologically on present Christian debate and other world views.

- **An agent of local church formation & transformation:** Someone who is a Christian disciple, pathfinder, boundary walker, mission enabler, social entrepreneur, missionary in a plural world. Engaged with the formation of the local church as a distinctive and inclusive community, courageous in sustaining its own habits and traditions, open to sometimes radical critique as a consequence of being open to the gift of the outsider. Someone who has a total commitment to God: Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, and a growing experience of God, through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit, so that the worship, mission and service of God is the central and controlling passion.
- **A community development worker:** Someone who works collectively to bring about social change and justice, by working with communities to:
 - a) identify their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities
 - b) plan, organise and take action
 - c) evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the action

all in ways which challenge oppression and tackle inequalities. Someone who works with the local congregation and church members to enable them to be more involved as agents for change in the wider community

- **A social analyst and cultural researcher**
- **An interpreter of power relationships:** Someone who is a believer in the value of all people; a bridge builder; someone who has a righteous anger about the injustices in society and a determination to work for peace, justice and wholeness in the world. Someone who recognises and has a deep awareness of the influence of race and gender on individual, corporate and institutional life and positive commitment to opposing and overcoming racist, sexist and other oppressive forces wherever they are found.
- **An effective manager:** Someone who has a self- discipline in the use of resources, personnel, time and ordering of priorities which sets aside time with God, for others, for family, for self
- **An educator & storyteller:** Someone who is a "reflective practitioner" who takes the time to listen, interpret, and remember the stories that are derived from projects and new ventures that the local church is participating in. Being an imaginative storyteller who is able to bring these stories and interpreted experiences into the conversation and life of the rest of the local congregation.
- **A facilitator of and participant in worship:** Someone who is open to and comfortable with different traditions, styles and expressions of spirituality, prayer and worship

- **A collaborator:** Someone who has a willingness to deal constructively with personal and interpersonal conflict, & with conflict between individuals and groups and who has a real desire to recognise with thankfulness the gifts of others, a readiness to receive from those gifts & to co-operate with them for the good of the Church's mission and ministry.
- **A companion and listener:** Someone who is empathetic & compassionate and has a willingness to live with questions and uncertainties, to deal with them honestly and faithfully, and to support others as they do the same. Someone who has a measure of the simplicity and humility required to be available to others, and the ability to maintain confidentiality. Someone who has a realistic knowledge and acceptance of self, an awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, & the desire to grow through interaction with new events & people.
- **An effective communicator:** Someone who can use a variety of methods & media to effectively communicate about the processes and products of church related community development work.

12 Ministerial Hours

Custom and practice means that those in ministry have for some years been encouraged to have a day a week 'off' and congregations are instructed to check that this is happening. However, this suggests that ministers have a six day working week and begs the question: 'Is there any common agreement about the length of the ministerial working day?'

In 2010 General Assembly recognised the need for ministers to be encouraged and allowed to establish and work within a proper relationship between living and working, doing and being. The biblical witness on this is rooted in the story of creation. God's period of work is followed by the Sabbath, and this is presented as example and injunction to build into a faith-based lifestyle a creative balance of activity and rest. This guidance is intended to give ministers the challenge and permission to reflect on such balance as they build their own working style, and as they consider the example that their pattern of working offers to all members of the church community.

Any guidance on the working week, arising from a wholly admirable desire to care for the minister and their family, is set within the context of ministerial status being that of office holder with all the flexibility and autonomy that implies.

Such guidance must also take account of the unpredictability of ministerial life in which some weeks are filled with crises and others are as eventful as the minister cares to make them.

The guidance takes note of the vocational life, which leads individuals to respond instinctively to the needs of others, whenever that need arises. However, such an instinct needs to be treated with immense care to safeguard the health and well-being of individual ministers and their families. Ministry is not only a series of tasks (e.g. writing the sermon; arranging community events) which can be finished; but is focused on the life of the congregation and/or community and therefore, in a very real sense, can never be finished or quantified.

Rather than talk of 'days off', it might be more appropriate to talk in terms of hours over and above which ministers should view themselves as within their own time, time to be used as they want

without any sense of guilt. Because ministry does not fit easily into a routine working week, the hours should be treated with flexibility, dealt with in four-weekly blocks and managed by the minister who alone will know the complexity of their ministry.

The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration Section 7 defines the working week, translated into hours in a four week period, should be not less than 160 hours and not more than 192.

13 Local Mission & Ministry Review

When the Local Mission & Ministry Review (LMMR) was introduced into the URC in 2008, it was envisaged as a tool to be used for support and accountability for ministers within the church. This support is built on the foundation of the covenant relationship between pastorate/post and minister as agreed in the Terms of Settlement. This relationship shapes ordained ministry within the United Reformed Church along with Education for Ministry 2, Education for Ministry 3, Synod staff support, the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service, Occupational Health and, of course, Pastoral Supervision.

However, when the General Assembly adopted the URC Policy for Pastoral Supervision, the Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal component of LMMR was dropped as it was felt Pastoral supervision should become the principal way of ensuring ministers reflect on their practice and identify appropriate actions to develop and find support. It therefore replaced the Minister's Accompanied Self Appraisal and any similar requirements.

It is now clear that removing the Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal component of LMMR may not have been helpful as this removed a useful tool for ministers to reflect on the pastorate's Living Document (pastorate profile) thus removing the 360° review in a local setting.

General Assembly 2024 agreed a revised LMMR process that requires the minister, on an annual basis, to reflect, as part of their self-care and well-being, on their ministry within the context of what has been written by the church as it review of its life (the Living Document). They may wish to share this with their pastoral supervisor. They should send their reflection to the Synod Office for their file or, for Assembly appointed ministers, to the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) for their file.

At 5 yearly intervals the Synod, through its appropriate committee. will engage with the church and minister in reflecting on the Living Document.

For more information: <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Local-Mission-and-Ministry-Review-H5-GA-2024.pdf>

May 2009

14 Expectations for the Behaviour & Conduct of Ministers and CRCWs

Ministry is both a privilege and a responsibility and those involved in ministry need to establish boundaries that enable trust and safeguard ethical relationships with those to whom they minister. All who serve in ministry should be bound by the ordination/commissioning vows taken and the Gospel values of the Christian faith we proclaim.

The church is concerned with the spiritual care, nurture and wellbeing of all, whether within or outwith the membership of the United Reformed Church. Ministers have ethical obligations in the way they carry out their ministry. These obligations prohibit harm and promote the good of the person. The context of ministry is one in which people are often vulnerable and in need of support, and in which ministerial office is seen by society at large as a marker of integrity. Establishing appropriate boundaries fosters trust, helps to clarify ethical actions and enables the relationships involved in ministry to function effectively.

Ministry usually proceeds without any explicit agreement. It takes place wherever there is need and it is often unplanned. Even in a caring relationship, however, there is also a possibility that attempting to do good may result in a degree of harm, and that in helping others, those involved in ministry may be fulfilling a personal need. Therefore, in deciding what to do in any particular situation, those involved in ministry need to be able to exercise ethical reasoning and deliberation in order to justify their actions.

If your circumstances change in a way that could affect your ministry, you must inform your Synod Moderator as soon as reasonably practicable. This includes significant changes to your personal circumstances, as well as any arrest, criminal charge, conviction, caution, or disqualification which may have a bearing on your ministry.

The guidelines set down what the URC expects of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers in terms of behaviour towards others whether ministerial colleagues, Elders, members or others as well as the councils of the church.

The foundation for the behaviour and conduct of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments can be found in the Basis of Union, summarised in Schedule E paragraph 2:

'Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.'

The relevant promises in Schedule C are:

- a) to live a holy life and to maintain the truth of the Gospel whatever trouble or persecution may arise;
- b) to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world; and
- c) as a Minister of the United Reformed Church 'to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The foundation for the behaviour and conduct of CRCWs can be

found in the Basis of Union, Paragraph 22,

'Some are called to the ministry of Church Related Community Work. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be Church Related Community Workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, are then commissioned and inducted to their office to serve for a designated period. This commissioning and induction shall be in accord with Schedules D and F. Church Related Community Workers are commissioned to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the well-being of the community, and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world.'

The relevant promises in Schedule F are:

- a) to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise;
- b) to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the well-being of the community, to take your part in the councils of the Church and to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world; and
- c) as a Church Related Community Worker to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

For the full policy for Ministers of the Word and Sacraments please see:

<https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/2026-ministers-expected-standards/>

For CRCWs please see below [add in link when agreed]:

Standards of professional behaviour

Personal integrity and health

- To live a Christian life as a person of prayer and integrity.
- To recognise the need for and have concern for a healthy lifestyle, to balance availability and accessibility to ministry demands with time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared with them in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise eg when children or adults are experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse, harm or neglect, or when there is a safety issue affecting the whole congregation.
- To safeguard people and protect the more vulnerable by attending and refreshing mandatory URC Safeguarding training (basic and intermediate) and having a working knowledge of the URC's Safeguarding Policy and Guidance (Good Practice 6 and its code of conduct in working with children and adults at risk page 94).
- To be aware of and maintain appropriate boundaries by undertaking mandatory URC Safer Sacred Space Boundaries training and promoting safe and healthy relationships with those

they come in contact with.

- To exercise care and sensitivity in seeking counsel from colleagues and to protect the identity of third parties unless permission has been granted.
- To attend meetings, respond to correspondence and keep appropriate records efficiently and effectively, having regard to the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations requirements (GDPR).
- To observe the URC's Gift Policy for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and to account carefully for expenses and any funds held on behalf of others.
- Not to undertake duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to do so.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material (Good Practice 6 page 58).
- Not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.

Relationships with ministerial colleagues

All Ministers:

- To strive to protect colleagues from prejudicial discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another Minister and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.
- To respect the work of predecessors and successors and deal honourably with their record.
- To consider carefully the location of retirement housing and try to avoid living in the immediate area of past pastorates.

Ministers in pastoral charge:

- To support the ministry of other Ministers and not interfere with the conduct of ministry or the direction of church life of other pastorates.
- To sever all professional ties with a previous pastorate and refer any requests or enquires of previous pastorates to the Interim Moderator or new Minister.
- To welcome retired colleagues and those Ministers serving the wider church as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

Relationship with elders, members and others

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To uphold values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- Not to seek to influence inappropriately a pastorate in the call of a new minister.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another CRCW or a Minister of Word and Sacrament and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.
- To work collaboratively and value the contribution of the whole church in decision-making

processes.

- To seek advice from colleagues or other professionals who may offer specialist advice if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consult and liaise with the church Safeguarding Coordinator (or the Synod Safeguarding Officer if a coordinator has not been appointed or been available) when a safeguarding concern, allegation or incident arises.
- To consult with colleagues, Elders and others as appropriate when considering taking on extra work.
- To observe proper boundaries in relationships and not to enter into a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.
- Not to meet alone with a child, a young person, children or young people under the age of 18. If a child or young person wants to discuss a personal matter, follow Good Practice 6 Guidance on Lone Working.

Relationship with Councils of the Church

- To be active in the councils of the Church.
- To accept the oversight of synod and the pastoral care of Synod Moderators.
- To submit to disciplinary procedures when initiated by the councils of the church and to inform as soon as possible the Synod Clerk and Synod Moderator, or where appropriate the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries), when involved in legal proceedings (civil or criminal).
- To undertake mandatory training including Safer Sacred Space Boundaries training, Safeguarding Training at an appropriate level, Pastoral Supervision and any other mandatory training deemed appropriate.
- To work to the agreed Terms of Settlement.
- To be aware of the guidelines for on-going ministerial training issued by the Ministries Committee.

Mission Council 2020

15 Reasonable Adjustments Policy - What every Minister needs to know

The United Reformed Church believes that every minister is called by God to exercise ministry according to their gifts and abilities. Sometimes disability, long-term health conditions or temporary illness create barriers to that ministry. This policy exists to help remove those barriers so that ministers can continue to serve faithfully, safely and sustainably. It reflects not only our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 but also our theological commitment to justice, compassion and mutual care.

Who does this policy apply to? The policy applies to:

- Ministers of the Word and Sacraments
- Church Related Community Workers
- Students in training

It covers both permanent and temporary disabilities or health conditions where reasonable adjustments may enable ministry to continue.

What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are practical changes which remove unnecessary barriers to ministry. They are not about lowering standards or changing the essential nature of ministry, but about enabling ministers to exercise their calling as fully as possible.

Adjustments might include:

- adapting church or manse buildings for accessibility where costs are reasonable;
- providing specialist equipment or assistive technology;
- adjusting working patterns or meeting times;
- temporarily reshaping particular responsibilities;
- providing additional support with travel, mobility or communication;
- allowing time for medical appointments, treatment or rehabilitation;
- agreeing a phased return following illness.

Requesting support is a sign of responsible ministry

Needing reasonable adjustments does not mean that your ministry is less valuable or that you are somehow failing in your vocation. Seeking support is recognised by the Church as an expression of wise, healthy and responsible ministry.

How do I request an adjustment?

If you believe an adjustment would help you exercise your ministry more effectively, speak with your Synod Moderator.

The Church also recognises that ministers do not always find it easy to ask for help. Where a Synod Moderator or the Ministries Office becomes aware that a minister may be experiencing difficulties, they also have a responsibility to begin a supportive conversation about whether adjustments may be appropriate.

How are decisions made?

Reasonable adjustments are considered case by case. Decisions are made collaboratively between the minister, Synod, local church (where appropriate) and the Ministries Office.

Professional advice, including Occupational Health or medical evidence, may be sought to help determine what adjustments are appropriate, proportionate and sustainable. Any agreed adjustments will be recorded in writing and reviewed regularly.

What the policy does not mean

The Church has a legal and pastoral duty to make reasonable adjustments, but it is not expected to:

- create an entirely different ministry role;
- remove the essential responsibilities of ministry;
- lower the standards expected of ministers;
- put in place arrangements that are not workable or sustainable.

The question is always: what adjustments will enable this minister to exercise the essential functions of ministry faithfully and safely?

For the full policy, please see: <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments-policy/>

16 Illness and Sickness Absence Policy

The URC aims to support ministers during periods of sickness absence, and to provide help and guidance towards returning to work.

Responsibility for carrying out these procedures is divided between the individual minister, their Synod Moderator (who may delegate some aspects of the Synod role) and the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee (MoM) through the MoM officer. In some situations, input will be sought from others, for example in relation to potential ill-health retirement. Where ministers are not deployed within a synod their line manager will fulfil the role ascribed to the Synod Moderator. A copy of the full procedures is available to ministers/~~CRCWs~~ upon request.

Sickness Absence Policy – Principles

The policy aims to ensure that during the course of an illness there is:

- Good pastoral and practical support
- Respect for an individual's privacy
- Use of professional medical advice at an appropriate time
- Clarity about the financial implications of extended absence

While individual needs and circumstances differ, the policy aims to ensure that ministers can and do take sufficient time off to recover from illness. For this reason, ministers should not carry out any of their normal duties while they are advised by their doctor that they are not fit for work. Where the doctor advises that an individual may benefit from a phased return to work this should be discussed with the Synod moderator who will normally agree the details of a phased return to work, building up to a full workload over a planned period.

If You Become Unwell

Ministers are often the last people to admit that they are ill. We are accustomed to carrying responsibility, putting others first and believing that, if we do not do something, no one else will. Yet caring for your own health is not separate from your calling; it is part of your faithful stewardship of the ministry entrusted to you.

If you become too unwell to undertake your duties, the most important thing is to follow the advice of your doctor. If you are certified as unfit for work, you should not continue carrying out ministerial duties. Taking time to recover is not a failure in ministry but an essential part of enabling a healthy and sustainable return to it.

Please let your Synod Office and the Ministries Office know on the first day of your sickness absence. This is not simply an administrative requirement. It enables the Church to put

appropriate pastoral support in place, to ensure that your churches continue to receive ministry, and to begin the practical arrangements that may be needed during your absence. If your illness continues beyond seven days, you will need to provide a current fit note and keep this updated while you remain absent.

During your absence **your Synod Moderator or their deputy will remain in contact with you**. These conversations are intended to be pastoral rather than intrusive. They provide an opportunity to offer support, understand how you are recovering, and ensure that both you and your congregation are being cared for appropriately.

Under the current Plan for Partnership, ministers normally continue to receive **full stipend for up to six months** (subject to the provisions of the policy). If your illness extends beyond this period, the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee will consider what ongoing financial support should be provided, taking account of occupational health advice and your individual circumstances. You will be informed of any decision before the end of the fifth month of absence.

If your illness is prolonged, you will normally be asked to attend an **Occupational Health assessment**. This should not be seen as a test or an expression of doubt about your ministry. Rather, it provides independent professional advice to help the Church understand what support may be appropriate, whether reasonable adjustments are needed, and when a safe return to ministry might be possible. Ministers are expected to engage fully with this process and to consent to the report being shared with the Church so that informed decisions can be made.

When you are ready to return, this will usually be through **a planned phased return to ministry**, agreed between you, your Synod Moderator and your pastorate. The aim is not to return immediately to full responsibilities, but to rebuild your ministry gradually in a way that is healthy, sustainable and realistic.

Throughout the policy, the Church seeks to hold together compassion, accountability and good pastoral care. The aim is always restoration wherever possible: supporting ministers through periods of illness with dignity, ensuring congregations continue to be cared for, and enabling a return to ministry that is both faithful and sustainable.

For the full policy please see: <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/urc-sickness-and-ill-health-policy/>

17 Competency

Ministers work in a variety of roles for the church – most in local pastorates or church in-community projects, some in special category posts, some for the wider Synod (often alongside local roles), and some in General Assembly posts. Regardless of role, the church has reasonable expectations of satisfactory ministerial performance and maintenance of professional standards. Both the Marks of Ministry for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and for Church Related Community Workers outline the expected professional standards. Whilst these are detailed documents, it is accepted that no minister is expected to exhibit exceptional gifting in every area. The United Reformed Church has, however, discerned the framework of gifts and graces described in these documents to be that which forms the basis of discernment in both training and assessment.

The Church will undertake the ministry of discernment around performance and standards in two

stages – the first under the oversight of the Synod (or by the General Assembly for ministers in Assembly roles); the second under the oversight of the General Assembly's Assessment Board. The primary aim of this process is to provide a pastoral framework to maintain, and where necessary restore, satisfactory performance and professional standards.

In the event that a Ministers' competency is called into question, the Competency Process is not a quick fix remedy to address issues of underperformance; it is in place to be used as a tool for working collaboratively with local churches, minister, Synod, and Assembly, where possible, to an agreed process to achieve the best outcome for all concerned.

If managed correctly, underperformance issues may take between three and 12 months to resolve. This is not to put an unnecessary burden on the minister, or those with whom the minister works, but to demonstrate that the United Reformed Church is committed to addressing competency issues within a system that promotes consistency, impartiality, equality and fairness.

At all times throughout the process those charged with overseeing ministry are reminded to respond sensitively respecting the privacy and confidentiality of the minister in question.

When ministers enter into this process, they shall be given a copy of this policy and a full description, in writing, of the concerns that have been identified.

For the full process please see: <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/urc-competency-process/>

18 Confidentiality

The United Reformed Church affirms that the church should be a place of trust and safety for everyone, whether they are church members or not.

The United Reformed Church keeps and uses personal data for the purpose of general church administration e.g. pastoral care and oversight including calls and visits, ministry to children and young people, preparation of rotas, maintaining financial records, safeguarding vulnerable groups, training and to contact people to communicate church news, events and activities.

This data may be held by the United Reformed Church at local church, Synod and General Assembly levels. It can be held in paper filing systems and in computer databases. Data is kept by the United Reformed Church under the Data Privacy Notice and disclosed to other church leaders, administrators, Synod Officers and pastoral visitors as necessary to facilitate the administration and ministry of the church activities whether at local church, Synod or General Assembly.

The confidentiality policy asks everyone to be aware of the information they hold about other people and explains the expectations of the denomination in relation to confidentiality. The policy provides guidance notes to those who will be receiving, handling and storing personal, criminal convictions data and "special category" (formerly termed "sensitive") data.

When offering prayer support to congregations, whether vocalised prayers during a church service, prayers written in books, hung on prayer trees, and passed on to prayer chain networks, it is important to consider the sensitivity of the information and the impact of what is shared on the

member and their family. In other words, whether you are breaching their data. It may be advisable to pray for the member by mentioning their name only, and nothing else (on the basis they might reasonably expect and welcome prayers); or to pray about the illness, without making mention of the member (i.e., anonymisation); or try to obtain expressed consent from the member, as health information is sensitive personal. Where the member is unable to give expressed consent, consent can be sought from family members, as they will be able to decide on behalf of the member.

For more information: <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/urc-confidentiality-policy/>

19 When Things Go Wrong

From time to time there may be concerns about a minister's behaviour. When such concerns are raised the URC must proceed to investigate in terms of its Disciplinary process. For more information: <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Section-O-February-2024.pdf>

20 Exit interviews

GA Resolution 25 on Ministerial Changes 2006 agreed that, whenever a minister leaves a pastorate either by moving to a new pastorate or resigning, they should be asked to write a statement giving the reasons for their course of action. A copy of this statement should be sent by the Synod Moderator to the Secretary of Ministries.

NOTE: Ministers who are retiring are asked to write a statement summarising their ministry and giving a general outline of their future plans.

When a minister is leaving active ministry for another post consideration will be given to whether such a minister should remain on the Roll of Ministers by the Accreditations Sub Committee. The minister shall produce a written document which should include:

- A reflection on reasons for leaving
- reflections on things achieved in current post or, if retiring, in the whole ministry
- regrets (and lessons taken from them).
- what can be shared with the pastorate(s) from the first three bullet points
 - need to know
 - should be encouraged to resolve
 - should be encouraged by
- exit strategy/laying down work and passing on responsibilities
- family/future plans: how relationships are affected by the move
- practicalities: timing of move, resettlement grant, is the manse OK etc.
- other things
- how the minister discerns that God has been active in and through you throughout you're their ministry?

Therefore, the Synod Moderator shall meet with the minister to discuss the written document which they shall forward to the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) for a decision to be made at the Accreditations Sub-Committee.

21 Gift policy

The Bible is rich in its encouragement of generosity: the command to give freely in Matthew 10:8, the cheerful generosity of the Macedonian church in 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, sacrificial giving in 1 John 3:16-18. It is a biblical imperative.

Gifts may be given to ministers for all sorts of reasons and can come in all shapes and sizes; from the gift for speaking at a church event other than a normal preaching engagement through to a gift from a member of the congregation to express thanks for a 'job well done', or to help out at a difficult time. This policy is written according to UK legislation and is about protecting the reputations of ministers and the church ensuring good practice and expectations of ministry.

The Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour include the following for Ministers:

3a Personal integrity and health

- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.

This policy refers to gifts from individuals rather than leaving gifts from local pastorates or other posts and gifts received from speaking engagements. Neither does it apply to wedding or funeral fees which are received as part of general ministerial duties.

Keeping the above in mind

1. Gifts and hospitality, within certain limits, remain a legitimate means of fostering good relationships.
2. Gifts and hospitality can, when excessive, constitute a bribe and/or a conflict of interest. Care and due diligence should always be exercised when giving or receiving any form of gift or hospitality on behalf of the Church.
3. The following factors should be considered to test whether gifts, hospitality or expenses are made for the right reason:
 - if a gift or hospitality, it should be given clearly as an act of appreciation;
 - if an expense then for a bona fide business purpose;
 - no obligation – the gift, hospitality or expense should not place the recipient under any obligation;
 - no expectation – expectations are not created in the giver or an associate of the giver;
 - made openly – if made in secret and undocumented then the purpose will be open to question;
 - reasonable value – the size of the gift is small and the value of the hospitality or expense accords with general business practice. Cash should be neither given nor received as a gift under any circumstances;
 - appropriate – the nature of the gift, hospitality or expense is appropriate to the relationship and accords with general business practice;
 - legal – the gift or hospitality is compliant with relevant laws;
 - reported and documented - the gift, hospitality or expense should be recorded and

reported to the Synod Moderator and a note placed on the minister's/CRCWs file;

4. All gifts and hospitality offered, unless of a nominal value (under £100) will be recorded and documented as above, whether accepted or not.

<https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/gift-policy-for-ministers-of-word-and-sacraments-and-crcws/>

Part Three – Practical Information

22 Death in Service

There is a Death in Service insurance policy in place for ministers in service who are also enrolled in the AON Pension Scheme. DIS Benefit is 8 x stipend [calculated at date of death] for those in service under age 68. An Expression of Wish form should be completed in regard to this benefit.

23 Health and Safety in Ministry

Ministers should be able to carry out the functions of their role without being exposed to unavoidable risk to health, safety, welfare or wellbeing.

It is particularly important for ministers to be aware of any risks associated with lone working and to make appropriate judgements relevant to the situation. While there will undoubtedly be pastoral situations that may invite lone working, it is good practice to arrange to meet in a public space/café if there is any concern around the situation, or if any individual is unknown to you. It is also good practice to inform others of any lone working, and where you will be and when you expect to return. It can also be advisable to ask for an Elder or congregational member to accompany in any visits that may have any perceived risk.

24 Maternity, Adoption/Paternity and Shared Parental Leave

Maternity/Adoption/Paternity provisions: ministers are entitled to statutory pay and leave and full details of the arrangements can be obtained from the MoM Office. Although office holders are not entitled to additional maternity/adoption/shared parental leave, and Keeping in Touch (KIT) days, the General Assembly has agreed that these provisions should be extended to ministers. For more information contact the Ministries Office ministries@urc.org.uk

25 Ordination/Commissioning Loan

Those to be ordained or commissioned can apply for an Ordination/Commissioning Loan from the Payroll Office.

For more information: <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/the-plan-for-partnership-2026-revised->

edition/

26 Removal Expenses and Resettlement Grant

Removal

The receiving local church is responsible for paying the costs of removal (see para 6.3.3 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration). Where the removal is within the United Kingdom reimbursement of up to 50% of the cost incurred (subject to a maximum reimbursement shown in Appendix A) is available from the Ministry and Mission Fund and application should be made via the MoM Office. Where special circumstances mean that 50% of the sum paid by the church is significantly more than this maximum, the MoM Sub-Committee shall have discretion to exceed the maximum (currently £2200). Where a minister is called from abroad reimbursement from that Fund to the local church will be based on the removal costs from the port of entry. This applies to stipendiary minister moves only.

Resettlement Grant

Every stipendiary minister, whether full-time or part-time, shall be entitled to a resettlement grant (see Appendix A) upon settling into their first pastorate and each subsequent pastorate or into an appointment paid under the terms of the Plan and upon final retirement; always provided that the settlement involves a change in the place of residence and that the grant shall not be payable more than once in any period of three years.

Except at the time of a minister's initial induction (when a full resettlement grant is payable) where the pastorate is part-time the grant shall be pro rata according to the scoping of the pastorate to be served. Upon retirement the resettlement grant shall be calculated based on the last ten years of service up to age 68 or earlier retirement. The grant will be reduced pro rata where the minister has not been in the stipendiary service of the Church for all of those ten years' or those years of service have not all been full-time.

In the case of a minister who dies before retirement the spouse shall be entitled to the equivalent of a resettlement grant upon the first change of residence. If the death occurs after final retirement but before the first change of residence, then the spouse shall be entitled to the equivalent of a resettlement grant.

Where the minister approaches planned retirement and, with the approval of the pastorate and the Synod, moves into property designated as a retirement home, retirement resettlement and removal grants shall be paid. Retirement removal and resettlement grants shall only be paid once during the ministry of a minister, or ministerial married couple.

If a minister does not receive a resettlement grant upon removal into a property which, at a later date, becomes the retirement home, a retirement resettlement grant will be made available. This will be a taxable emolument.

Where a minister has not received a retirement resettlement grant at the time of retirement, they shall be entitled to a resettlement grant upon the first change of residence (subject to the three

years' restriction in para 10.1.1).

27 Pensions and Planning for Retirement

Age to retire

Planning for later life and retirement is important part of a minister's calling. As life expectancy increase the options are more varied and retirement offers a time for reflection and renewal as well as a time for relation and leisure.

If you are in stipendiary service, you will be aware there have been changes to your pension. Your old style URC pension will be paid at x/80ths of the stipend at the date of your retirement where x is the number of years' service you had up to March 2023 when that pension scheme closed for further contributions. Your new pension fund can be used in a variety of ways which will be explained by AON.

For more about pensions please see: <https://urc.org.uk/urc-ministries/urc-ministers-pension-fund/> Planning for retirement will involve lots of decisions which should include where to live, how to relate to a congregation, how to settle into a new community without a specific role, developing the freedom to saying 'yes' and not feeling guilty about saying 'no', and for some to begin to think what future service might be appropriate if any. Boundaries can also be set as to relationship with former pastorates, especially the last one, and at this stage ministers should be aware of ~~that it says in~~ Guidelines for the Conduct and Behaviour for Ministers (updated) GA 2020 and Guidelines for the Conduct and Behaviour of CRCWs.

Where will I live?

You are expected, and it's good for your own sake too, to move an appropriate distance from the last pastorate or post upon your retirement. This is to enable your church members to establish a relationship with their new minister and their new minister to develop their new ministry without feeling inhibited. This clearly has implications for your spouse, especially if they have been involved in the life of a congregation in your pastorate. We appreciate this is not so easy for you if you are non-stipendiary as you will have your own house, but consideration should be given to how you will leave space to allow the congregation to grieve your retiring and for you to let go of your ministry there.

If you are a stipendiary minister and think you might need assistance with housing in retirement, then you should contact Ministries Office to check your eligibility as you will need to have completed 15 years unbroken or 25 years broken service before eligibility can be considered. You will also need to start conversations at least five years before retirement so that the Retired Minister's Housing Society (RMHS) can plan and match its supply of housing to the likely needs of its ministers. You will have some choice as to location but the maximum amount the Society will invest in a property is limited to the relevant county ceilings, which are reviewed annually. The provision of retired housing is means tested. Savings worth three times the annual stipend are disregarded. You need to have, after this disregard, funding for 25% of a property if you are wanting to have a shared ownership arrangement.

The Society recognises service outside the URC in some instances. However, the criteria are clear and, in some cases, up to 10 years' service will be counted.

Being in RMHS housing, unlike being in a manse, means ministers are responsible council tax and water rates. Rent is below market costs and covers repairs and decoration and the ongoing support the Society offers. This might seem like a lot to take in but, at the Pre-retirement course to which you will be invited, there are opportunities to talk on a one-to-one basis with RMHS to look at your housing needs in retirement.

If you require RMHS housing and wish to remain in the vicinity of a previous pastorate, the Synod Moderator shall be consulted by RMHS.

How do I lay down work?

At most departures from a particular ministry there is a sense of loss or bereavement. This needs to be acknowledged. In addition to these a minister may also feel a certain loss of status, responsibility, isolation (from having been at the 'centre' of things). In some instances, the label 'retired minister' brings with it the perception of a ministry no longer useful. In a similar way, you may have the sense of being de-skilled or undervalued and your knowledge and experience are not needed. These and other feelings need to be dealt with. You should address them in pastoral supervision before retirement and we will pay for three sessions of pastoral supervision over the first 6 months of retirement to help this transition.

From having served in a ministry very different from the one you knew when first ordained/commissioned with many different demands, a minister may also feel a sense of relief and liberation. This must also be acknowledged.

The farewell process can be extremely protracted. This can be exhausting and exasperating as for some considerable time it is public knowledge that the period of service is coming to an end. There will be many questions about 'what are you going to do next'. The farewell process can begin with 'last services' at congregations, as well as at Synod meetings and even special occasions. These are potentially supportive and affirming as well as potentially draining.

You will need, at the same time as reflecting on the past, to reflect on the future. To have the spiritual, physical and emotional energy and time to explore what the future will bring as you call into retirement is crucial but may not be easy. It is for this reason that Ministries advises a minister moving into retirement that they should take six months before taking on any new pieces of work. If married, you should not underestimate the effect this all may have on your spouse. The new routine may take some getting used to.

Pre-retirement Course

More details and further information will be given at the pre-retirement course to which every minister is invited and which is held 5-3 years before retirement.

Retired Minister's Housing

For more information about Retired Ministers' Housing please see: <https://rmhs.org.uk//>

28 Extension of Ministry beyond the normal retirement age

The URC have a normal retirement age of 68 years for stipendiary Ministers. We consider that there are the following legitimate strategic social policy objectives and denominational reasons for this normal retirement age and that these aims cannot reasonably be met by other means. These include the promotion of intergenerational fairness and dignity and the management of the number of serving Ministers in a shrinking denomination.

If you would like to continue in Ministry beyond the retirement age, in either a full or part time capacity, you may raise this with your Moderator and the Ministries Committee, and we will consider your request in the light of our social policy objectives and denominational reasons for having a normal retirement age. The circumstances of each request will be considered individually and in a consistent way. Any decision to allow one Minister to continue in Ministry beyond the retirement age does not mean it will be possible for another to do the same.

In reaching a decision over whether to grant an extension, the Accreditations Sub-Committee needs to also take into consideration the deployment strategy across the whole denomination as well as whether the extension will have serious budgetary effects.

For more information see: <https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/extension-to-stipendiary-service-beyond-the-retirement-age/>

29 Retired Ministers' Benevolent Fund

All retired ministers should be treated fairly and equally wherever they live in the UK, and as far as possible, Synods should act similarly. The retired ministers' benevolent fund seeks to give a compassionate response to cases of need, within the constraints of available resources. If you are experiencing financial hardship you should speak with your Synod Moderator.

30 Other Useful Policies, Papers and Contacts

The Manual

<https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-assembly-executive-assembly-committees/general-assembly/the-manual/>

Basis of Union

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/The-Basis-of-the-Union.pdf>

Data Privacy policy

<https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/urc-data-protection-policy-and-procedure/>

Plan for Partnership

<https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/the-plan-for-partnership-2026-revised-edition/>

NSM Expenses Policy

<https://urcresourceshub.org.uk/nsm-expenses-policy/>