

The Ministry and Mission Fund: Principles and Practice

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH FINANCE OFFICE

Last updated January 2009

PRINCIPLES

1. The object of the Fund is to provide in partnership with local churches and Synods, financial resources needed to train, equip and remunerate ministry, to support centralised services, and the world-wide work of the Church.
2. Congregations share in the financial cost of the programmes agreed by Assembly by making an annual commitment to the Ministry and Mission Fund.

Budget preparation and approval

3. The United Reformed Church Trust, the Church Trustee, approves a budget for the subsequent year which is presented to Mission Council for adoption. The Finance Committee prepares a draft budget for the Trustee in consultation with spending committees.

Division of Synod commitments

4. Each Synod has the responsibility for agreeing with its local congregations the share which each will take in meeting the budget commitment. Synods are free to determine in their own way the contributions of each of their local churches.
5. A substantial part of the expenditure of the Ministry and Mission Fund relates to the monthly payment of stipends, salaries and pensions, so it is essential that church contributions are received as evenly as possible throughout the year. To assist this, and to keep costs to a minimum, contributions are normally collected from each congregation by a direct debit of one twelfth of the annual commitment on the twentieth day of each month. Where in exceptional circumstances the payment of twelve equal instalments is not possible then a direct debit for a smaller sum may be agreed with the Finance Office, provided that the full commitment is met before the end of the year.

Any churches unable to enter into a full direct debit commitment should write to the Finance Office, to agree an alternative pattern of payment.

6. All contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund will be recorded in the Finance Office by church, and a schedule of the sums received from each church will be despatched monthly to each Synod. This is the limit of the responsibility of the Finance Office and all initiatives for the alteration of individual church contributions or the collections of arrears of contributions rest with the local church and Synod treasurers.

PRACTICE

Division of Synod commitments

7. The responsibility for dividing Synod commitments between the churches rests at Synod level. It is understood that different Synods may approach the task in different ways, and it is also understood that agreement should be reached between Synods and local churches as to the level of each church's contribution.

Subsequent changes

8. Each spending committee will keep within its budget for the year, but when circumstances change it is inevitable that adjustments will sometimes need to be made. On such occasions, the representative of the spending committee will seek the approval of the Treasurer of the church. The Treasurer is the final arbiter on budget variations and will take such advice as is necessary.

Arrangements with Synods

9. Where a Synod needs to raise finance from its churches to meet costs, a figure agreed by the Synod will be added to its commitment to the Assembly budget. Upon request of Synod officers the Finance Office will remit to Synods this part of the budget.

At the end of the year any sums received in excess of a Synod commitment will be set against the following year's commitment of that Synod.

Collecting local church contributions

10. By the end of October every year, each Synod is expected to advise the Finance Office of the expected amount of each local church's contribution to the Ministry and Mission Fund for the following year.

Operation of the direct debit system

11. The United Reformed Church is authorised by its bank, HSBC, to operate the direct debit system. In the agreement with the bank, the Church has undertaken:-

1. To advise each church of the amount of the direct debit and the date(s) upon which it will be taken.
2. To advise each church of any change in the amount of the direct debit.
3. To cancel the arrangement if the local church so requests.
4. To reimburse immediately any sums of money that are taken inadvertently in contravention of the agreed arrangements.

Any changes will be reported to Synods.

12. Before any sums of money are taken, a mandate has to be signed by the church treasurer. The mandate can be cancelled at any time by the church. If the mandate is cancelled, it cannot be reinstated, but a new mandate needs to be signed. For that reason, if any church does not wish the direct debit to be operated in any particular month, they are requested not to cancel the direct

debit, but to advise the Finance Office by telephone or email. Immediate action will be taken to prevent the direct debit operating. Although normally direct debits operate on the 20th of the month, it is necessary for the Church to advise the bank two working days before the debit day. If the 20th of the month is a Saturday, Sunday or other day upon which a bank is closed, the debit is operated on the first working day after the 20th.

13. The department would emphasise that it may only debit sums approved by the local church, and therefore will amend any instruction following a telephone call or email. Any amendment of instruction will be confirmed by a computer-produced advice.