

MINISTERS' HANDBOOK

Edition: September 2023

ministry

discover · follow · serve



Contents

Introduction	4
1. Ascend: Support and Development	5
Key services offered through Ascend	7
Pastoral Support	7
Ministerial Development Conversation (MDC)	7
Pastoral Supervision	7
Study Leave.....	7
Counselling.....	7
Coaching.....	7
Spiritual Accompaniment	8
Retreats	8
Place For Hope	8
Integrated Support Allowance from 2024	8
2. Useful Information	9
Illness, Leave of Absence and Income Protection.....	9
Reporting illness and absence.....	9
During a leave of absence.....	9
Long-term illness	9
Support.....	9
Income Protection.....	9
Death in Service Benefit.....	9
Health and Safety while working	10
Guidelines on alcohol and drug abuse.....	10
Stipend.....	10
Stipend scale for 2023.....	10
Allowances and Expenses, Loans and Grants	11
Summary of expenses to be paid by the congregation on behalf of the minister.....	11
Discretionary Expenses.....	11
Island allowances.....	12
Travelling Expenses.....	12
Removal Expenses and Disturbance Allowance	13
Practical concerns.....	13
Manse accommodation expenses	13
New Ministers' Furnishing Loan (NMFL)	14
Stipend Loan.....	14
Application Process	14
Car Loans	14
Cyclescheme.....	15
Benevolence Funds and Financial Hardship	15
Tax.....	15
Benefits in kind.....	15
Pulpit Supply	15
Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave and Adoption Leave.....	16
Locum Cover for Maternity/Adoption/Shared Parental Leave	16
Maternity Leave.....	16
Maternity Pay	17
Adoption Leave and Pay	17
Paternity Leave and Pay	17
Eligibility for Paternity Leave.....	17
Shared Parental Leave and Pay	18
Pensions and Planning for Retirement	18
Pre-Retirement Conference.....	18
Notifying People about Retirement.....	18

Removal Expenses at retirement	18
Pensions	18
Useful contact details	19
The Church of Scotland Pensions Department	19
Legal and General	19
Wren Stirling Financial Planning Ltd	19
Department of Work and Pensions	19
Other advisory agencies	19
Demission of Charge in circumstances other than retirement	19
Demitting Status as a Church of Scotland Minister	20
Housing and Loan Fund	21
Applications	21
Further information	21
Cyber Crime Awareness	22
Safeguarding	22
The Safeguarding Service	23
Safeguarding Act and Guidance	23
Safe recruitment	23
Training	23
Managing those who pose a risk	23
The Communications Department	23
Law Dept	24
Further Information	24
Code of professional practice and good conduct for the ministries of the Church of Scotland	25
Introduction	25
Applicability of the Code	25
Scope of the Code	25
An ethical basis for the Code	25
General Conduct	25
Relationships between those in ministry and those to whom they minister	26
Maintaining Trust	26
Respecting Confidentiality	26
Abuse	27
The Use of Touch	27
Working with Colleagues	27
Communications, Media and Social Media	28
Probity in Practice	28
Discipline	29
Contracted working for other employers	29

Introduction

As part of the Faith Action Programme's commitment to supporting all those involved in the ministries of the Church, we are pleased to provide for you the Minister's 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 to contact any person, team or department based at the Church Offices in Edinburgh, you can phone 0131 225 5722 and ask to be put through to the relevant place. This phone number and the Offices' address, along with key websites and the central Faith Action email address are on the back cover of this handbook.

This handbook will be reviewed annually. The latest version can be found in the Resources section of the [**Ascend website**](#).

1. Ascend: Support and Development

Since 2017, the Church's Support and Development Services have been delivered through Ascend. This encompasses the work of the Faith Action Programme's People and Training, and Support Teams. The Ascend website gives comprehensive information about all areas of support and development: ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk

The logo features the word 'ascend' in a bold, dark blue, lowercase sans-serif font. It is centered within a graphic composed of four thick lines forming a rectangular frame. The top line is blue, the bottom line is teal, the left line is purple, and the right line is yellow. Each line has a slight diagonal cut at its ends.

ascend

ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk

CORE SERVICES

Ministerial Development Conversation

Training Events

Pastoral Supervision

Coaching

Study Leave

ascend | **centre for support & development**

Retreats

Counselling

Postgraduate Fund

First Five Years in Ministry

Spiritual Accompaniment

Leadership Development

Key services offered through Ascend

Pastoral Support

The Support Team is available for direct pastoral consultation in confidence. The Team works to develop and deliver support services for those in ministry, and can advise about support options and make referrals for you. To contact the Support Team, email:

pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk or phone **0131 225 5722**.

Support is also available at a local level from your Presbytery, usually through Presbytery chaplains or pastoral advisers. This provision varies from Presbytery to Presbytery; you can contact your local Presbytery office to find out what is available. The Faith Action Programme's Support Team continues to work with Presbyteries to build effective local support.

Ministerial Development Conversation (MDC)

MDC is a confidential discussion with a trained facilitator that supports and enables the minister to reflect on their practice of ministry in their context. It is offered free of charge by trained facilitators. For more information, to read the facilitators' profiles or to book an MDC, please visit the **[Ascend website](#)**.

Pastoral Supervision

Pastoral Supervision offers a regular, intentional and bounded space in which a practitioner skilled in supervision (the supervisor) meets with one or more supervisees to look together at the supervisee's practice. It is a relationship characterised by trust, confidentiality, support and openness that offers you freedom and safety to explore issues arising in your work. The Pastoral Support Team can give advice about finding a supervisor, or match you with a suitable supervisor. Every eligible minister has an allocation of £240 per calendar year towards supervision. [changing in Jan 2024 to a £250 integrated Support Allowance] For more information and to see our list of recommended supervisors, please visit the **[Ascend website](#)**.

Study Leave

Study Leave is an opportunity to undertake ministerial development as defined by you. It is available to ministers with five years' service in the Church of Scotland.

Changes to Study Leave: Please note that from 1 January 2023, Study Leave time and money can be accrued for five years ie 10 weeks (70 days) and £1375

For full details of the scheme, including how to apply and copies of reporting and expense forms, please visit the Ascend website or contact **studyleave@churchofscotland.org.uk**

Counselling

Counselling offers you a safe, confidential place to talk about your life and anything that may be confusing, painful or uncomfortable. It allows you to share with someone who is trained to listen attentively and to help you work towards improving your wellbeing. If you think you would benefit from counselling, please contact the Support Team. They can offer guidance on finding a counsellor and discuss funding options. There is more information about counselling on the **[Ascend website](#)**.

Coaching

There are two key distinctions between coaching and other professional relationships such as therapy or counselling: In coaching, the focus is firmly on the here and now, and the premise is that the client is the expert in their own context. The coaching conversation starts with the assertion that the client is 'creative, resourceful and whole' and as such holds the answers to any questions they might care to pose. The Support Team can advise you about coaching and help you to find a suitable coach.

The Church has a small team of coaches who offer their services free of charge to ministers. The Support Team can put you in touch with one of the coaches, subject to their availability. There is more information about coaching on the **[Ascend website](#)**.

Spiritual Accompaniment

Ascend can help you access people specifically trained in the ministry of Spiritual Accompaniment (also called Spiritual Direction). For probationers and those in First Five Years of ministry, four sessions per calendar year can be supported [subject to available budget.] From Jan 2024 the Integrated Support Allowance of £250 applies.

Retreats

Ascend is now pleased to offer the opportunity to benefit from retreat funding, for Ministers and Deacons who have more than two years' service in ministry, and for the purposes of Retreat in Scotland. Funding of up to £250 in a calendar year is now available. Applications must be approved in advance of submitting a claim for retreat expenses.

Place For Hope

Place for Hope work in partnership with the Church of Scotland under the "Living Peace" Programme to provide a range of training, facilitation and support to enable and equip conflict transformation and reconciliation. The expertise of Place for Hope is offered to ministers, congregations, and Presbyteries through mediation, facilitation and coaching in times of change and conflict. The Living Peace Programme funds this work and more information is available at [Place for Hope website](#).

Integrated Support Allowance from 2024

From January 2024 a support allowance of £250 per calendar year will enable access to any [or all] of the above services, as best fits the individual's support needs at any one time. The support allowance will be available to full-time stipendiary ministers, probationers, those in familiarisation, and Ordained Deacons [in Deacon specified MDS posts].

The allowance will be able to be used for personal or group pastoral supervision, for coaching [either from existing ascend provision or paid externally], or for spiritual accompaniment [all subject to agreed invoicing arrangements and appropriate qualifications/credentials for each support provision]. The Ascend website will be updated to reflect these changes from 2024 in due course.

The changes are being brought forward, out of the learning of the last years, to enable the fullest benefit to be received. We understand the value in having the widest choice of support, as well as the pragmatism of expanding resource, knowing people are trained, accredited and able to offer their services, practicing under the appropriate professional body.

2. Useful Information

Illness, Leave of Absence and Income Protection

Reporting illness and absence

If you are ill and going to be off work, please notify Faith Action's Support Team and Presbytery Clerk as soon as possible. The Support Team can be notified by an email to pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk or a phone call to **0131 225 5722**. Absence can be "self-certified" for the first seven days, using a form that can be obtained from the Support Team via the above email address or phone number. If the absence is longer than seven days, a medical certificate must be obtained from your GP or other medical professional. This can be sent in to the Support Team by email preferably. Please let us know when you go back to work after sick leave. It is important for your insurance benefits (see below) that we have accurate records of sickness.

During a leave of absence

If you are on leave due to ill health you must not undertake any ministerial function or duty, except with the express permission of the Presbytery or appropriate health advisers. You are not responsible for obtaining pulpit supply; the responsibility for obtaining pulpit supply when a minister becomes ill rests with the Session Clerk or Presbytery.

Long-term illness

If you experience long term illness and have a prolonged absence from ministry you will come under the terms of the Income Protection and Ill Health Act for Ministers. The Act can be found in the Acts of the General Assembly Acts section of the [Church of Scotland website](#).

In cases of long-term absence, a locum might be appointed to work alongside the Interim Moderator. Arranging this is not your responsibility. More information, including the relevant forms and contact details, can be found on the [Church of Scotland website](#).

Support

The Support Team is here to advise and support you, so please do not hesitate to get in touch. The Team advises both ministers and Presbyteries in all matters relating to absence, illness and support, including phased returns to work. Email: pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk

Income Protection

Occasionally, a minister's medical condition will mean that they are no longer well enough to continue in ministry at a particular time. In these rare and serious cases an income protection policy is in place with Unum Ltd. Eligibility for this benefit is by medical assessment, up to an individual's state retirement age, and is not guaranteed. For those in receipt of income protection benefit, the policy pays one third of stipend [calculated at the date of first absence] and a pension contribution [11.5% of full stipend]. Receipt of benefit

will be monitored and re-assessed at intervals agreed by Unum due to the hope that an individual may regain sufficient health to return to work.

The Support Team will refer individuals to Unum for assessment when absence continues over a period of time, and in conjunction with the terms of the Income Protection and Ill Health Act. Unum can be asked to give an indicative decision regarding potential receipt of income protection benefit, but this is only confirmed at the date of final assessment. The current policy has a deferred period of 78 weeks for final assessment.

Death in Service Benefit

There is a Death in Service insurance policy in place for ministers in service who are also enrolled in the Legal & General Pension Scheme. DIS Benefit is 5 x stipend [calculated at date of death] for those in service under age 75. An Expression of Wish form should be completed in regard to this benefit. In addition, ministers are also asked to refer to the Legal & General website for a separate Expression of Wish in respect of their pension contributions.

Please contact the Support Team for more information pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk

Health and Safety while working

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.

The **Law Department** provides guidance for congregations on safety matters and who is responsible, and you should refer to the **General Trustees Health and Safety toolkit** for more detailed information on risk assessment process. They must make a balanced decision about the hazard and the likely severity of risk and the consequences or outcome of doing nothing against the time, inconvenience and financial costs of controlling or removing the risk. The decision taken can be demonstrated by the office bearers (as Charity Trustees) undertaking a risk assessment. You can find more information from the **UK Government's Health and Safety Executive**. Guidance can be obtained from the General Trustees Safety Team safebuildings@churchofscotland.org.uk

Guidelines on alcohol and drug abuse

Faith Action recognises alcohol and drug abuse as primarily a health problem requiring treatment and assistance. Alcohol and drug abuse are defined as drinking or the use of other drugs, intermittently or continually, so as to interfere with a person's health and social functioning and/or work capability or conduct. The Church, through the Support Team, seeks to secure the best possible help, treatment, sympathy, understanding and encouragement for any minister suffering from this problem, so that you can be restored to good health.

If you recognise this problem in yourself, please contact your GP or another relevant health professional in the first instance. You can also contact the Support Team (pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk) for confidential advice or guidance. If you are going to be off work, please follow the guidelines above about leave of absence.

If you recognise this problem in another, such as a spouse, friend or colleague, we recommend that you make contact with our Support Team for confidential advice.

We encourage Presbyteries to grant medical leave of absence for treatment under a Fit Note, to provide individual pastoral support to the minister, and where applicable to their family, and to arrange for an Interim Moderator to cover the minister's duties during the period of absence and recuperation.

Stipend

Ministers are entitled to a stipend to release them to discharge the duties of their calling to Parish Ministry. The stipend rate is set annually by the Assembly Trustees on the recommendation of the Faith Action Programme, with the National Stipend Scale being published annually in the Report of the Faith Action Programme to the General Assembly.

The National Stipend Scale is a five-point scale. Parish Ministers move up one point on the scale after each of the first five years of their ministry and then remain on point 5 of the scale.

Stipend scale for 2023

Point 1 £30,135

Point 2 £32,106

Point 3 £34,076

Point 4 £36,048

Point 5 £37,032

Part-time Parish Ministers are entitled to a stipend calculated pro rata according to the percentage of post in the Presbytery Plan (e.g. 50%), using the rates published annually on the National Stipend Scale.

Parish Ministers are Office Holders rather than employees. Part-time working does not alter the status of the Parish Minister as Office Holder.

Beyond the stipend paid to them through Faith Action payroll, ministers may not receive any other form of remuneration from their congregation relating to the discharge of their ministerial duties. For further details, please refer to the Regulations for Remuneration and Reimbursement of Parish Ministers (Regulations I 2015, amended by Regulations VI 2016) on the [Church of Scotland website](#).

In relation to Parish Ministers offering pastoral cover or pulpit supply in support of colleagues during absence (on leave or through illness), no pulpit supply fee or pastoral cover payment is payable. Similarly, in the conduct of funerals, no Parish Minister may charge a fee to conduct a funeral or related visit either in their own Parish or that of another minister.

Ministers have the right to be provided with a manse and have a duty to live in it and discharge the duties of their office from it, whether they hold office on a full-time or part-time basis. Regulations VII, 2007 (Manse) and III, 2013 (Manse Adjudication Committee) provide further clarity about the responsibilities of upkeep of the Manse and the duty of living in the Manse of the charge.

If you would like more information about matters relating to stipend and payroll, please contact the payroll department: payroll.dept@churchofscotland.org.uk

Allowances and Expenses, Loans and Grants

Details of current allowances and expenses are included in the Faith Action Programme Report to the General Assembly each year. The costs below are correct as of 1st January 2023, and are subject to change by the General Assembly. Please refer to the Finance section of the latest Faith Action Programme Report for the most recent figures, which can be found on the [Church website](#).

All expense claims must be submitted within 1 month of the cost being incurred.

Summary of expenses to be paid by the congregation on behalf of the minister

- Communion expenses incurred.
- Pulpit Supply on seven Sundays in any calendar year, and supply during the minister's attendance at the General Assembly as a commissioner (see Pulpit Supply section below).
- The costs of providing Pastoral Cover (should such payment be necessary) for six weeks in any calendar year, or in the case of part-time Parish Ministers, pro rata according to the percentage of post in the Presbytery Plan (eg 50%).
- Pulpit supply for one additional Sunday and the costs of providing pastoral cover for an additional week when the minister is a Commissioner at the General Assembly.
- Telephone line rental and calls incurred in the performance of ministerial duties including, where agreed in advance, for a mobile phone.
- The cost of internet access at a level required for the performance of ministerial duties.
- Computer hardware, software and consumables necessary for the performance of ministerial duties.
- Stationery and postage stamps for use in relation to work.
- Travelling expenses (see below).

The above expenses may be paid directly by the congregation or may be reclaimed by the minister from the congregation.

For both telephone and internet expenses, the Church of Scotland should be the subscribers and the account should be paid directly by the congregational treasurer with a contribution towards costs being made by the minister in respect of all non-church use.

Discretionary Expenses

In addition to the reimbursable expenses listed above and the essential ongoing care and maintenance of the manse, Kirk Sessions may decide from time to time to cover some fabric related costs relating to the running of the manse. Such costs are discretionary, but it is good practice to assist with costs which maintain the Church's property in good order.

Any expenses to be claimed by the minister must be agreed by or on behalf of the Kirk Session in advance and the claim must be accompanied by appropriate receipts. Examples of possible costs are gardening materials and help where the garden is larger than the domestic norm, or help and materials for cleaning of public areas.

No reimbursement can be made to the minister with respect to the cost of heating and lighting the manse. In order to effectively discharge their ministerial duties, ministers may also, from time to time, purchase clerical garments or theological books, subscribe to journals, arrange for some form of Spiritual Direction or Professional / Pastoral Supervision, or attend courses and training events. Congregations may choose to contribute to some or all of the cost of these.

In relation to reimbursement, ministers should distinguish between items expended in the course of daily duty (e.g. travel costs, telephone usage, or stamps), which are reclaimed from the congregation, and items which become the property of the minister (e.g. books or vestments). In some circumstances, a proportion of the cost of these latter expenses may be reclaimable against the minister's personal tax allowance (receipts for which should be retained by the minister).

Beyond those items listed in the Regulations, no other expenses or remuneration may be paid by congregations or claimed by ministers.

Faith Action provides study opportunities for ministers through its Study Leave Scheme and a planned programme of Continuing Ministerial Development, both of which may also contribute towards some of the expenses noted above.

Island allowances

The Outer and Inner Island allowances are now:

- Outer island allowance £1,964
- Inner island allowance £772 if a charge has an average income base' to the following

Travelling Expenses

All travel expense claims should be submitted within 3 months and will only be reimbursed beyond that timeframe in exceptional circumstances.

In relation to travelling expenses, ministers are required to keep an up-to-date log listing actual mileage covered in the discharge of ministerial duties, against which expenses are reclaimed.

Paper log books will no longer be provided so please maintain your own log in whatever way suits (e.g. paper notebook / excel spreadsheet).

Mileage claims must be submitted to Ministries Finance by the 10th of the month at the latest to be included in that month's payroll, with the exception of December when they have to be submitted by the 5th. You do not need to submit the detailed log with your claim, only the total number of miles being claimed for the month.

The claim must include the following details; payroll number, full name, note of which month the claim relates to, details of the charge, and in which presbytery, to which the mileage relates (and where the mileage will be recharged), total mileage in the period. Mileage being claimed in relation to Interim Moderator duties should be noted separately on the claim, again with details of the congregation to which the mileage should be recharged, and the total Interim Moderator mileage. A template claim form can be emailed to you from Ministries Finance upon request.

For the purpose of confidentiality in relation to a minister's work, neither Kirk Sessions nor congregational auditors have the right to examine a minister's mileage log. For audit purposes the total monthly mileage submitted to Ministries Finance is sufficient. However, for tax purposes HM Revenue & Customs do have the right to call for the examination of a minister's detailed mileage log, as does the Presbytery Clerk.

Alternatively, congregations can make other provisions for their minister's travelling arrangements by providing a car and meeting all of the actual expenses involved (and not the laid down motor mileage rates). The treasurer must ensure that the resultant benefit in kind is properly accounted for to HM Revenue and Customs by notifying our payroll department who will complete a form P11D.

For further information or advice, please contact Faith Action Finance:

ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk

Removal Expenses and Disturbance Allowance

When a minister is called to a charge, the congregation(s) to which the minister is called will pay the removal costs incurred in transporting the minister's personal effects into the manse. In addition, the congregation will also pay the minister, upon production of appropriate receipts, a Manse Disturbance Allowance of up to £1,740.

The Manse Disturbance Allowance is intended to be used for providing or altering curtains, carpets and furnishings in the public rooms and study in the manse. This allowance could be extended to cover the cost of altering or refitting curtains, carpets and other furnishings in rooms in the manse which are only used by the minister and his or her family. If a minister moves into their own house, rather than a manse (with appropriate approvals), then the payment of a manse disturbance allowance would not be appropriate and no payments should be made by congregation(s) in respect of new curtains, carpets and furniture.

Application may be made to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team for assistance in meeting these costs. Application should be made in writing to the Faith Action Finance Manager and a copy of the latest congregational accounts enclosed. Any information relevant to the application should be set out in the letter of application. In all other cases the manse disturbance allowance shall be paid directly to the minister by the congregation.

When a minister retires on account of age or ill health, Faith Action will meet the cost of removal expenses.

Should a minister be required to move to a different manse during their incumbency, the congregation will pay the removal costs and Manse Disturbance Allowance. If the congregation is not able to fund these costs, they should contact Ministries Finance in the first instance. If the congregation is still not able to find the required funds, Faith Action will fund the payments to make sure the minister is not personally responsible. Faith Action will seek to recoup these payments from the congregation at the earliest opportunity.

For further information or advice, please contact Faith Action Finance: ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk

Practical concerns

Whether your move is being paid for by the congregation or Faith Action, the arrangements for removal are made through Faith Action. You need to obtain three quotes for removal costs. You should indicate that the Church of Scotland's Faith Action Programme, is paying for the move and you will be required to give details of the move. You do not need a definite date for your move, but you should always try to give as much notice as possible since requirements for a move arranged at short notice cannot always be guaranteed.

There are several removal companies that are recommended however there is no obligation to use them.

A&M Removals, Bishop's Move, Border Removals, Britania, Clockwork, Crown Relocations, Forfar Removals, G.B. Liners Limited, Hoult's Removals, Kilmarnock Removals, McLeod Removals Ltd, White & Company. When you receive your quotations please contact ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk and together a decision will be made.

If the quotation is acceptable then, after contacting the Faith Action for approval, you should sign and return the acceptance portion to the appropriate office and they will book the move. Please note that the above procedures should be followed even where the removal cost is to be met by a congregation.

Manse accommodation expenses

HM Revenue & Customs recognises that a stipend is a living and not a salary. They have therefore agreed a process with the Church of Scotland whereby, for tax purposes, manse accommodation expenses can be deducted from stipend before arriving at taxable earnings. In order to benefit from this arrangement, you need to complete an annual return of expenses incurred. This return should be made to the Faith Action Finance Team by scan/email if at all possible: ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk.

A number of ministers employ someone to clean their manse, which can have tax implications for the person so employed. Ignorance of that individual's PAYE position is not a defence and it would be

recommended that a P46 be obtained by the minister when employing an individual. In the case of such payments to an individual for work done, the expenses should be for the tax year to 5 April.

The appropriate provisional entries are processed through the monthly payroll during the tax year (from April to the following March). A reconciliation between the provisional and actual figures is carried out following 31 March each year.

New Ministers' Furnishing Loan (NMFL)

Faith Action can offer a loan of up to £1,000 to help newly ordained ministers in their first charge. Loans are interest free and repayable over three years in monthly instalments. The repayments are deducted from stipend at source.

If the borrower ceases to hold a Church of Scotland charge, or leaves Church employment, they are to repay the outstanding balance of the loan.

Stipend Loan

Ministers and Ministries Development Staff of charges of the Church of Scotland in Scotland or England are entitled to apply for a loan against stipend.

Conditions

- The maximum loan available is £5,000.
- Ministers or Ministries Development Staff in receipt of a Stipend/Salary in excess of the Ministers 5 Point Stipend Scale Point 2 at the time the loan is paid out will incur an interest charge at the current rate of 6%.
- The loan shall be repaid over three years (or less) in monthly instalments, commencing on the last day of the month following payment of the loan.
- Loan repayments shall be taken by deductions from stipend/salary paid through the Centralised Payment system.
- In the event of the borrower ceasing to hold a pastoral charge of the Church of Scotland, any outstanding amount will be deducted from the employee's final pay. Where this is not possible, the minister/MDS will be required to repay the outstanding balance directly to the Church of Scotland.

Application Process

The Minister/MDS must complete an application form and submit it to the Finance section of Faith Action. Please email minstriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk for an application form.

Once approved, payment will be made by direct bank transfer to the bank account details completed on the application form.

You will receive confirmation (via email) that your loan has been successful within fourteen days of receipt of your application.

The Faith Action Programme will review this policy on an ongoing basis.

Car Loans

A minister in their first charge cannot take out an NMFL and the maximum car loan (£5,000) in the same year. The Faith Action has a Car Loan Fund which can be used to give loans to ministers in charges in Scotland and England, to help them to buy a car. The amount of each loan is decided by Faith Action; the current maximum is £5,000. Car loans are available interest free to ministers on years 1 and 2 of the National Stipend Scale. Where the stipend/salary is in excess of year 2, the loan will incur an interest charge at the current rate of 6%.

Loans are repaid over three years in monthly instalments, starting on the last day of the month following payment of the loan. Loan repayments are deducted from stipend/salary at source. The borrower is responsible for paying the insurance, road tax and all running and maintenance for the vehicle, and it must be insured under a fully comprehensive policy for as long as any part of the loan remains unpaid.

If the borrower ceases to hold a Church of Scotland charge, or leaves Church employment, they are to repay the outstanding balance of the loan. Likewise, in the event of the borrower's death, the loan is due for

immediate repayment and forms a debt against the estate of the deceased. In either of these cases, if the borrower or the estate of the deceased is owed money from another fund or source held by the Church or the General Treasurer of the Church of Scotland, the Church can offset these sums against the car loan to reduce the borrower's or the estate's indebtedness to the car loan fund.

For more information about the Fund including how to apply, please contact: ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk

Cyclescheme

The Church of Scotland has arrangements with Cyclescheme to provide a Cycle to Work scheme to its employees and paid office holders. This scheme allows qualifying individuals to make savings on the cost of a cycle and related safety equipment through a hire agreement.

The scheme allows employees / office holders to choose a bicycle and related safety equipment, and payments are taken from gross stipend, through payroll, over a 12-month period.

Please contact ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk for more details or visit the [Cyclescheme website](#). Bicycle mileage for pastoral duties can be claimed in the usual way at 20p per mile.

Benevolence Funds and Financial Hardship

Faith Action has a small number of Benevolence Funds that can be applied to if there is a particular pastoral need, or if financial hardship is being experienced. An application form can be provided by contacting pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk which outlines the different Funds available and their criteria as well as the policy around making discretionary grants. Applications are confidential and the Support Team can offer advice.

Tax

Ministers as 'Holders of an Office' are entitled to certain tax allowances on aspects of expenses incurred in fulfilling that office. It is however worth noting that arrangements have been made with HM Revenue and Customs regarding the following:

- Travelling Expenses.
- Manse Accommodation Expenses.
- Listed Expenses.

Ministers paid through payroll should complete the [Ministers of Religion pages of the tax return](#) for HM Revenue and Customs.

If you have not received a tax return please contact HMRC.

Ministers are responsible for probity in relation to their own tax affairs.

Benefits in kind

The following are considered benefits in kind for tax purposes. The implications of each are explained in the relevant sections above.

- Removal costs and the Manse Disturbance Allowance, should the total exceed £8,000.
- Manse Accommodation Expenses, since these expenses must invariably cover an element of expenditure which is of a personal nature. However, because ministers are considered as occupying the manse on a representative basis, the Benefit in Kind associated with the Manse Accommodation is limited to either 75% of Manse Accommodation Expenses, or 10% of 75% of Taxable Earnings, whichever is lower
- Loans where they are above £10,000 and given with less than commercial interest.

For more information about benefits in kind, please contact Ministries Finance: ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pulpit Supply

A minister is entitled annually to seven Sundays' Pulpit Supply which should be taken within a calendar

year. Any unused pulpit supply is not carried forward into the next year. Ministers are encouraged to take the Pulpit Supply across the year for their own health and wellbeing.

Additionally, one Sunday's pulpit supply is granted when a minister is fulfilling duties as a Commissioner to the General Assembly. These costs are to be met by the congregation.

Pulpit Supply during a minister's absence due to illness, compassionate leave, administrative suspension or Study Leave is first paid for by the congregation and then reclaimed from the Faith Action. Congregational Treasurers can access the forms for reclaiming Pulpit Supply from the following places:

For sickness absence, compassionate leave, maternity/paternity/adoption leave, and administrative suspension, contact

You can find more about Study Leave on the [**Ascend website**](#).

While ministers usually make Pulpit Supply arrangements in respect of holidays it is the responsibility of the Session Clerk and/or Presbytery to make arrangements in other circumstances. Pulpit supply claims should always be made as soon as is practicable and normally within 3 months

Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave and Adoption Leave

For further information about any of the information in this section, please contact the Faith Action's Support Team: [**pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk**](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Please note that the Faith Action reimburses your congregation for all Pulpit Supply costs relating to Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave and Adoption Leave when a Locum is not appointed to provide cover. When a Locum is provided [see below] no further Pulpit Supply costs are able to be reclaimed. For information about how these costs can be reclaimed, please contact:

[**ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk**](mailto:ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk).

FAQ documents for Maternity Leave provisions are available by request and these provide advice for Ministers, for Presbytery Clerks and Session Clerks.

Locum Cover for Maternity/Adoption/Shared Parental Leave

A Locum will normally be appointed for Maternity/Adoption Leave and for the length of the expected Leave. It may also be possible for Shared Parental Leave. The appointment is made using the regular Locum appointment form authorised by the Presbytery/Congregational Treasurer(s), with the expectation that the Minister will be suitably consulted/involved in the process of appointment. Costs of the Locum during the Maternity Leave will be met by Faith Action, while travel expenses will require to be met locally. No other Pulpit Supply costs can be reclaimed when a Locum is appointed.

Maternity Leave

Eligibility for Maternity Leave:

- Maternity Leave is available to female ministers in recognised Church of Scotland appointments where stipend or salary is paid through the centralised Payment of Stipend Scheme.
- Ministers, regardless of service, are entitled to 26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) and 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave (AML).
- You can start your OML any time after the 11th week before your Expected Week of Childbirth [EWC], right up until the EWC.
- Holiday entitlement is not accrued during Maternity Leave but normal Pulpit Supply provisions can be taken before/after Maternity Leave

Notification:

You must notify your Presbytery and Faith Action, in writing, of the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC), at least fifteen weeks prior to that date. You should also enclose your MatB1 certificate with this form where possible. This needs to be the original certificate, not a copy. Your GP or Midwife will typically provide you with a MatB1 certificate around the 20th week of your pregnancy. Please send your certificate to:

Faith Action, Church of Scotland Offices, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN.

A risk assessment should be undertaken to ensure you and your child are healthy and safe during your

pregnancy, and on your return from maternity leave. Further information on this can be found on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#).

Faith Action can arrange for the Health and Safety Manager to discuss this with you.

You must also inform your Presbytery and Faith Action, in writing, of the date at which you wish your Maternity Leave to start. The earliest that you may start your Maternity Leave is 11 weeks before your Expected Week of Childbirth. Your Maternity Leave can start on any day of the week. Once Faith Action has received this information from you, you will receive a letter from the Payroll Department setting out the date on which you are expected to return to work, if you take your full entitlement to maternity leave.

If you wish to change the return to work date, you need to give your Presbytery, Faith Action and Payroll at least eight weeks' notice, in writing, of your new return to work date. Your return to work may be delayed where the eight weeks' notice is not provided. It may not however be delayed beyond the end of your 52 weeks maternity leave.

If your baby is born early i.e. before your Maternity Leave is due to start, you should inform Faith Action as soon as possible. Your Maternity Leave will then start from the day after your baby is born. You should continue to carry out ministerial duties up to the agreed start date of your Maternity Leave, then cease to undertake all ministerial duties during the period of Maternity Leave. You are entitled, but not obliged, to work 10 KIT (Keep in Touch) days during Maternity Leave. These might be used to attend, for example, meetings or training. Maternity Pay.

Maternity Pay

- Maternity Pay starts on the same date as Maternity Leave.
- The period of Ordinary Maternity Leave (i.e. the first 26 weeks of Maternity Leave) are payable at full stipend.
- The Maternity Pay you receive during Ordinary Maternity Leave is (subject to meeting the entitlement criteria) inclusive of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) - payable to all "employees" with at least 26 weeks service at the qualifying week (being the 15th week before the Expected Week of Confinement.) SMP is payable for a maximum period 39 weeks – the first 6 weeks "Higher Rate" at 9/10ths of average weekly earnings and the remaining (up to) 33 weeks "Lower Rate" at a fixed weekly sum.
- If you choose to take Additional Maternity Leave (ie any or all of the further 26 weeks available to those meeting the aforementioned length of service criteria) you will receive SMP for a maximum of 13 weeks at the Lower Rate (currently £172.48 or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower) during this period.

Adoption Leave and Pay

- Adoption Leave and Pay is the same as Maternity Leave and Pay, with the following provisos:
- To qualify for Adoption Leave and Pay, you must have been matched with a child for placement by a UK adoption agency.
- You must notify your Presbytery and Faith Action, in writing, of your intention to take Adoption Leave within seven days of being notified by your adoption agency that you have been matched with a child for adoption.
- In order to qualify for Adoption Pay, you need to send in to Faith Action a matching certificate from the adoption agency.
- Only one member of a ministry couple adopting a child is entitled to Adoption Leave and Pay. The other may be entitled to Paternity Leave and Pay.

Paternity Leave and Pay

Eligibility for Paternity Leave

- Paternity Leave is available to eligible ministers in recognised Church of Scotland appointments where stipend or salary is paid through the centralised Payment of Stipend Scheme.
- Paternity leave can be taken for one or two consecutive weeks.
- You will receive full stipend during Paternity Leave. The stipend you receive during Paternity Leave is (subject to meeting the entitlement criteria) inclusive of Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) - payable to

all “employees” with at least 26 weeks service at the qualifying week (being the 15th week before the Expected Week of Confinement.) SPP is payable for either 1 or 2 weeks (you can elect either) at a fixed weekly sum (currently £172.48 or 90% of the employee’s average weekly earnings, whichever is lower) during this period.

Notification:

- You need to inform your Presbytery and Faith Action of your intention to take Paternity Leave at least eight weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth or placement. You can do this using a self-certification form which is available from the Ministries Finance Team: ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk. Please contact the team in good time as a delay in returning your Paternity Leave form might result in you not being paid.

Shared Parental Leave and Pay

You may also be entitled to, under statutory rights and regulations, Shared Parental Leave and Pay, which gives those with caring responsibilities for babies or newly adopted children the opportunity to share up to 52 weeks’ leave should they wish to do so. Please contact Faith Action for more information:

faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pensions and Planning for Retirement

Pre-Retirement Conference

The Church runs an annual Pre-Retirement Conference, and invites those who will turn 64 in that year to attend. If you feel it would be personally beneficial to attend at an earlier age, please contact pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk

The Conference provides information and support for all considerations relevant to retirement - pensions, housing, finance, legal, wellbeing and lifestyle.

We also have a recording of a previous [Planning for Your Future Webinar](#).

It is important to begin planning for retirement well in advance of the date that you intend to retire. You need to think about three key areas: finance, housing and lifestyle. There is information in the following sections about the Housing and Loan Fund, which can help to provide housing for retired ministers, as well as widows and widowers of ministers.

Notifying People about Retirement

There is not a set notice period for retirement, but we advise that you give your Presbytery as much notice as possible. When you know that date at which you intend to retire, you need to inform the following people/ departments:

- Your Presbytery and Kirk Session
- Faith Action : faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Faith Action Finance: ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Payroll: payroll.dept@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Your pension providers (see below)

Removal Expenses at retirement

When a minister retires on account of age or infirmity, and in the case of a widow(er) of a minister who dies in service, Faith Action will meet the cost of removal expenses to your new home (or to port of departure for someone going abroad). For further information or advice, please contact Ministries Finance: ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pensions

Ministers are currently covered by one or both of the following pension schemes unless they have opted out: the Church of Scotland Pension Scheme for Ministers and Overseas Missionaries (a defined benefit scheme closed to future accrual and new members in 2013), and the Church of Scotland Pension Plan from

Legal and General (a defined contribution scheme in operation since 2014). You might also have your own private pension plan(s) or a pension from a former employer. You need to plan in advance how you wish to use these pension funds. Please bear in mind that pension payments do not start automatically; both the Church pension scheme and the Legal & General scheme require that you notify them of when you wish to start drawing your pension.

It can be helpful to consult an Independent Financial Adviser in order to ensure you make the most of your personal tax allowances and potential pension income under the current access rules.

Useful contact details

The Church of Scotland Pensions Department

The Church of Scotland Pensions Department

The Pensions Department will provide information relating to the Church of Scotland pension scheme. They cannot advise about Legal and General pensions.

pensions@churchofscotland.org.uk 0131 240 2255

Legal and General

You are able to manage your L&G pension scheme online by individual registration.

employerdedicatedteam@landg.com 0345 070 2628

www.legalandgeneral.com/churchofscotland

Wren Stirling Financial Planning Ltd

Independent Financial Advisers who have worked closely with Church of Scotland ministers for a number of years.

www.wrensterling.com 0330 123 1848

We provide these details only for information and not for recommendation. You should consult an Independent Financial Advisor of your own choice.

Department of Work and Pensions

For information about your State Pension visit the **[Department of Work and Pensions website](#)**.

Other advisory agencies

Unbiased (for help finding regulated independent financial advisers): **0800 023 6868**. **www.unbiased.co.uk**

The Money and Pensions Service is sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions and engages with HM Treasury on policy matters relating to financial capability and debt advice. MoneyHelper is the new, easy way to get clear, free impartial help for all your pension choices and is provided by. **0800 138 7777** or **www.moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk**

Pensionwise (for free and impartial government guidance about your defined contribution pension options): **0800 138 3944** (overseas **0044 203 733 3495**) between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday or you can book an appointment online at MoneyHelper on the **[Department of Work and Pensions website](#)**.

Demission of Charge in circumstances other than retirement

Where a Minister is seeking to demit Charge to take up an employed role or for other personal reasons, there are a number of things to do.

- Your Presbytery who will make appropriate arrangements regarding the request to Demit Charge, and your Kirk Session
- Faith Action and Ministries Finance, giving details of your last intended working day in the Charge, information about any new appointment, and your contact details and address beyond the Demission date

- faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Pensions [the Pensions Department and/or Legal & General to inform of updated personal details for any preserved benefits held]
- Giving as much notice as possible, you will need to inform the following:

Removal expenses are not provided at Demission by Faith Action and personal arrangements should be made.

In demitting Charge, you remain under the oversight of the relevant Presbytery, and your Presbytery may change depending on any new appointment/location of residence. You should clarify this with your existing Presbytery, and in reference to Registration of Ministry categorisation.

Retention of your existing Church of Scotland email address can be requested if there is ongoing participation in the life of the Presbytery/Church of Scotland.

Demitting Charge does not otherwise impact on your status as a Church of Scotland minister.

Demitting Status as a Church of Scotland Minister

If you are moving to take up an appointment as a minister in another denomination you will be required to demit your status as a Church of Scotland minister at appointment, and will come under the oversight of the receiving denomination.

If at any time you are minded to demit your status as a Church of Scotland Minister for other reasons, you should take time to consider this decision fully and understand there are significant implications.

Former ministers of the Church of Scotland who have demitted status, if seeking to return to service, must make application in accordance with the Admission and Re-admission of Ministers Act (Act XIII 2022).

Demission of Status means a number of things practically speaking. You would not normally be entitled to conduct services by invitation, participate in the life of a Presbytery, take up Locum appointments, or apply to the Housing & Loan Fund for consideration under their current Constitution.

A minister who voluntarily demits their status as Church of Scotland minister is recorded as Category G under the Registration of Ministries Act.

3. Other Church Department and External Agencies

Housing and Loan Fund

Are you concerned about where you will live when you retire? The Housing and Loan Fund may be able to help.

The Church of Scotland Housing and Loan Fund for Retired Ministers and Widows and Widowers of Ministers, to give the full title, can help provide houses for retired ministers and widows, widowers or bereaved civil partners of ministers.

PLEASE NOTE that eligibility for the fund depends upon a minister retaining their status as a Church of Scotland minister in terms of the Fund's current Constitution.

The Trustees of the Fund will also consider providing assistance to:

- Spouses and civil partners of ministers who are forced to leave the manse due to relationship breakdown. (In these circumstances, please contact Faith Action's Pastoral Support Team in the first instance for further guidance: pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk)
- Those who have managed to house themselves, but are now seeking to move to more suitable accommodation;
- Those who might wish to investigate replacing a mortgage obtained prior to or during their ministry with a loan from the Fund as they approach retirement.

Please note that the Fund can be of assistance beyond the point of retirement too.

After (perhaps many years of) retirement, people may find that their circumstances have changed and would like to be considered for assistance from the Fund. This may be for the first time or because an existing beneficiary needs further assistance.

The Secretary of the Fund welcomes contact from people wanting to explore whether the Fund is able to offer assistance.

If an application to the Fund is successful, help may be given in one of two ways, depending on an individual's financial circumstances:

- either the Fund will give a loan to allow a beneficiary to buy his/her own house. Loans are up to 70% of a house purchase price, but with an upper limit; or
- the Fund will provide a house in Scotland which the beneficiary will rent from the Fund. In that case, the beneficiary will be asked to consider empty properties within the Fund's existing stock to see if any is suitable. If none fits the bill, an appropriate house (up to a set maximum price) of the beneficiary's choosing will be bought for rental.

Short term bridging loans are also available in very limited circumstances. These take a few weeks to process and anyone wishing to investigate this should speak to the Secretary at the earliest opportunity.

For loans, favourable rates of interest are normally charged, and leases are normally granted at advantageous rental levels.

Please note that the Trustees are not able to help with a house purchase loan to a minister more than 12 months prior to their retirement date and will usually only take possession of a property for rental a couple of months before the retirement date.

Applications

The procedure for processing applications varies and depends upon whether the applicant is within one year, one to five years, or ten years of retirement.

Further information

The day-to-day business and correspondence of the Housing and Loan Fund is carried out by the Secretary

of the Fund who has wide ranging experience of the issues facing ministers and their families in the run up to retirement or as a result of changes in their circumstances. Confidential conversations with the Secretary on matters relating to housing in retirement or otherwise are always welcomed.

The Secretary can be contacted by phone **07929 418 762**, by email at housingandloan@churchofscotland.org.uk or by correspondence to **121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN**.

A copy of the Guidance Notes and application form can also be downloaded from the [Church of Scotland website](#).

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) department is the main and direct provider of IT services for the Church of Scotland and will co-ordinate with external service providers to fulfil the IT needs of the church by providing proven, resilient, high-quality and future proof services for day-to-day operations.

Cyber Crime Awareness

As part of our remit we aim to raise awareness, educate and advice on cyber security threats including email, phone and online fraudulent activities. To remain vigilant and keep safe we are recommending 'Take Five'. Take Five is a national campaign that offers straight-forward and impartial advice to help protect individuals from fallen victims to financial fraud.

- **STOP:** Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.
- **CHALLENGE:** Could it be fake? It's ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests you don't feel comfortable with or have any doubts. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you
- **PROTECT:** Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam and report it to Police Scotland

More information can be found on the ['Take Five'](#) website.

For IT support in relation to church services we support, contact itsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk

Safeguarding

'Jesus had a very clear message about the most vulnerable people. It is a theme which is replicated throughout the whole Bible, with God portrayed in the 121st psalm as the keeper of Israel. This Hebrew word can be translated as Safeguard, which is God's need and wish for the Church, not only that we are safe, but we all work for the safety of all people' The Theology of Safeguarding. (www.churchofscotland.org.uk).

Safeguarding underpins the theological imperative to care for the most vulnerable people that we engage with in our life and work. It is a permanent and necessary part of Church life. Everyone has the right to feel safe and cared for in the Church and it is also the responsibility of everyone in the Church. The Church of Scotland's Safeguarding framework seeks to adopt a preventive approach to safeguarding through:

- Policy and procedures
- Clear lines of accountability/responsibility
- Safer Recruitment practices
- Safeguarding training and awareness raising
- Whistleblowing and Complaints Procedures
- Managing the safe inclusion of those who pose a risk and
- Audit and Review of safeguarding practice

Ministers will be provided with safeguarding training which will equip them to be:

- conversant with safeguarding policy and procedure
- clear about measures to be implemented by Kirk Sessions
- clear about action to be taken in the event of an allegation of harm or abuse
- aware of good child and adult protection practice in their pastoral work

Ministers, Kirk Sessions and Congregational Boards have a pivotal role in creating a culture where the safety and wellbeing of all individuals is promoted.

The Safeguarding Service

The Safeguarding Service provides a professional advisory service to presbyteries and congregations, CrossReach Services, departments of the national office and other bodies e.g. Boys'/Girls' Brigade. It also provides safeguarding training to everyone working with vulnerable groups across the Church, processes criminal records checks, carries out risk assessments of conviction and vetting information and manages those who pose a risk in church communities. The service is committed to supporting the equality, diversity and inclusion of everyone it comes into contact with by treating them with fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy.

Safeguarding Act and Guidance

The Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018) (As amended by Acts XVIII 2020 AND VII 2021) outlines the responsibilities of those working with vulnerable groups in the Church. More information about the Act can be found at Safeguarding publications on The Church of Scotland website. [Church of Scotland website](#).

Safe recruitment

Safe recruitment is a crucial aspect of keeping children and protected adults safe. The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 introduced the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme in Scotland in 2011. The scheme aims to ensure that those who have regular contact with vulnerable groups through the workplace (in paid and unpaid positions), are suitable to undertake regulated work.

All Ministers of Word and Sacrament are required to have a PVG Scheme Membership and are also required to complete a Faith Action Self-Declaration form.

Training

The General Assembly of 2022 agreed to the introduction of a safeguarding learning pathway for ministers. The learning pathway is designed to include safeguarding training for Candidates, Parish Ministers, Interim Ministers, Transition Ministers, Associate Ministers, Auxiliary Ministers, Probationers, Readers, Locums and Armed Forces Chaplains and is a mandatory requirement for the roles outlined.

More information about the learning pathway and available training courses can be found on the [Church of Scotland website](#) or please be in contact with your Presbytery Safeguarding Contact.

Ministers are encouraged to attend refresher safeguarding training every 3 years as a matter of good practice. 19 It is a mandatory requirement that refresher training is undertaken within a 5-year period.

If Ministers have any questions in relation to Safeguarding Training, they should contact the Safeguarding Training Officer by emailing safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk or calling **0131 240 2256**.

Managing those who pose a risk

Public protection and the management of those who pose a risk, is an area of work within safeguarding. The safeguarding service has a dedicated member of staff who can advise and support you in situations where it has been identified that someone may pose a risk to others. The member of staff can help you with referrals of concern and with setting up and reviewing Covenants of Responsibility.

The Church of Scotland website hosts a range of Safeguarding materials covering the wide range of work covered by the Safeguarding Service. They can be found at Safeguarding publications on the [Church of Scotland website](#).

All members of the safeguarding team can be contacted by email at safeguarding@churchofscotland.org.uk or by phone on **0131 240 2256**

The Communications Department

The Church of Scotland's Communications Department is responsible for carrying out communications activities on behalf of the Church, liaising with the media, delivering design services, managing the Church's social media and website and supporting people across the Church with media and communications issues.

The Media Team facilitates quick and effective liaison between the Church and the print and broadcast media. The team responds to journalists and others looking for information or comments about Church-

related subjects and matters of national or international importance. The Media Team also issues news releases, manages the Church of Scotland's social media accounts and provides briefings, media training, guidance and support to ministers and Church officials.

Ministers are often asked to speak or comment for news stories and on topical matters. Rightly or wrongly the public views ministers as representatives of the Church. The General Assembly has agreed that presbyteries and churches are welcome to speak independently on matters of local interest. On matters of national interest or whenever there is potential for discord, ministers are asked to contact the Media Team, who can then offer an appropriate spokesperson.

Ministers are encouraged to build relationships with their local press and to use social media to advance their ministry. We also encourage you to contact the Media Team with any media-related questions or concerns. If contacted by press for any reason you are always free to refer journalists to the Media Team.

The Design Team provides professional design, layout and print management services, producing many of the Church's publications, leaflets and magazines. The church logo as well as further communications resources and advice for local churches is available on the Church of Scotland website (Communications resources).

The Web Team is responsible for maintaining and developing the Church of Scotland website in coordination with Church staff and office holders.

The Media Team can be contacted 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on **0131 225 5722**. Out of hours: **07854 783539**. Email: [**mediarelations@churchofscotland.org.uk**](mailto:mediarelations@churchofscotland.org.uk)

You can find additional contact details, resources and guidance for local churches on the [**Church of Scotland website**](#).

Law Dept

The Church of Scotland's Law Department acts in legal matters for the organisation and all of its courts, Forums, committees, the General Trustees, the Church of Scotland Trust and the Investors Trust. The department also acts for individual congregations and is available to give advice on any legal matter arising. The Law Department cannot advise or act for ministers as individuals, but they can give advice relating to congregations or trusts where you are a trustee by virtue of your office as minister.

To contact the **Law Department**, please email [**lawdept@churchofscotland.org.uk**](mailto:lawdept@churchofscotland.org.uk) or phone **0131 225 5722**. You can also visit the Law Department pages on the [**Church of Scotland website**](#) or on the Resources page of the [**Ascend website**](#).

Further Information

The Ascend website provides more information about Church of Scotland policies, and departments, as well as about key external agencies and partners. Please see the [**resources pages of the Ascend website**](#).

If you can't find what you're looking for or are not sure where to look, please contact us: [**ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk**](mailto:ascend@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Code of professional practice and good conduct for the ministries of the Church of Scotland

Introduction

Applicability of the Code

The Code applies to all those serving in the recognised ministries of the Church of Scotland. Throughout the Code, the terms 'ministry' and 'recognised ministries' shall include ordained ministers, deacons and readers, and all paid employees in parish appointments, as defined in section 16(1) and 16(1)(a) of Act VIII 2021.

Scope of the Code

The Code sets out the standards of conduct expected by the General Assembly. The Code is not intended to be an expansion or amplification of the Discipline Act (Act 1 2019) and should not be regarded as containing an authoritative or exhaustive list of disciplinary offences but Presbyteries, and Assessors and Discipline Tribunals operating in terms of the Discipline Act, shall have regard to the terms of the Code in making their assessment of the character of conduct. The Code complements the policies and rules set out in the Ministers' and Employees Handbooks which cover such matters as balance of duties, absence, maternity and paternity leave, holiday arrangements, health and safety, discrimination, bullying and harassment. In addition, the Code can be used:

- as a basis for education programmes to support good practice
- as a document to reassure the public that all those serving in recognised ministries of the Church of Scotland are provided with a framework of standards and accountability
- as a framework for analysing concerns and defining problems about conduct in all aspects of church life and work.

The Code is not a substitute for reflective and ethically disciplined practice, continuing learning and development, and regular supervision. Equally the Code is not to be used as a measure of ministerial capability.

An ethical basis for the Code

All who serve in ministry should be bound by the ordination vows taken (where applicable) 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 without the membership of the Church of Scotland. Those engaged in the ministries of the Church of Scotland (as defined above) 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.

General Conduct

Those serving in the recognised ministries of the Church of Scotland are responsible for their personal and ministerial conduct and must be able to justify their actions and practice towards those in their care, to colleagues and to all those with whom they come into contact. In particular they should:

- act at all times in ways that promote trust and confidence in their profession
- act at all times to promote and safeguard the interests and wellbeing of others
- affirm the equal dignity and worth of others

- act with integrity and with due respect for diversity and differences including, but not limited to, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age and disability
- maintain good standing in the Church of Scotland
- ensure that their conduct is consistent with their profession and appropriate to the setting in which they work.

Relationships between those in ministry and those to whom they minister

Those involved in ministry must at all times be conversant with, and advocates for, the Church's policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding of children and protected adults.

Relationships have the capacity to be nurturing and healing, but they also have the potential to be damaging and destructive. An important reason for this is the intrinsic imbalance of power in the relationship. Those involved in ministry, therefore, should be aware of issues of power and should exercise any influence they may have with sensitivity, discernment and within ethical boundaries.

Those involved in ministry should seek to develop appropriate pastoral and supportive relationships within the whole people of God. The primary focus will be meeting the needs of those being ministered to; in this it may be appropriate to express our own vulnerability; but it would be an abuse of a pastoral relationship for those in ministry to use it to meet their own needs.

Those involved in ministry should recognise the limits of their competence and should take care to direct those to whom they minister to the help available from other suitably qualified professionals where appropriate.

Maintaining Trust

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. In particular those involved in ministry should:

- behave in ways that honour the dignity and value of others
- ensure as far as possible that no action or omission on their part and within their sphere of responsibility could be detrimental to the wellbeing of others
- respect the trust established with others, while understanding the limits of confidentiality
- respect the autonomy of others
- recognise and act within the limits of their competence
- maintain clear boundaries in the areas of self-disclosure, intimacy and sexuality
- avoid any conflicts of interest; but in the event that the person involved in ministry has to withdraw on the grounds of conscience or ethical principles, endeavour to refer to someone else who can facilitate the transfer and continuity of ministry.

Respecting Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a condition of trust that enables people to seek help at a time of need and to talk about personal and private matters relevant to their spiritual health and wellbeing. Ministry often involves access to confidential information. Those engaged in ministry, therefore, must respect confidences, and in particular they should:

- respect the right of individuals to control access to their own personal information and to limit its disclosure
- establish the boundaries of confidentiality with others and respect as far as possible the limitations of disclosure that an individual can reasonably expect or request
- treat information about those to whom they minister, and others, as confidential and use it only for the purposes for which it was given
- guard against breaches of confidentiality by protecting information from improper disclosure at all times
- Ensure that confidential information is only shared with a third party where the individual consents to the disclosure, where it can be justified in the public interest or where there is lawful authority such as a court order or statute. A disclosure in the public interest is likely to be justified where it is

necessary to prevent a serious and imminent risk to public health, in the interests of national security, to protect children and adults from risks of serious harm or death, or to prevent or detect serious crime. If a person says or does something that leads you to think they or another person are at risk you have a duty to pass this on to the appropriate person or authority. You should always refer to the Safeguarding Service staff for advice in particular cases.

- discuss with those to whom they minister reasons why disclosing confidential information to other persons might be of benefit to the provision of good care

Abuse

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and legal rights by any other person or persons. It is behaviour that is a clear departure from the ethical conduct required of us all. It can result from a misuse of power or a betrayal of trust, respect or intimacy which causes harm or exploitation. It can be caused by purposeful or negligent actions as well as a failure to act where a duty exists. The main forms of abuse include spiritual, physical, psychological, domestic, sexual, and financial, and are defined here in the context of Christian ministry:

- Spiritual abuse is the imposition of values and beliefs on others; and while mission is part of the work of ministry, it is an abuse to fail to respect the freedom of others to make choices for themselves;
- Physical abuse is any form of physical contact which is likely to cause distress, pain or bodily harm
- Psychological/emotional abuse is behaviour by a person in ministry which is exploitative, manipulative, coercive or intimidating
- Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, with a spouse, partner or family member
- Sexual abuse is forcing, coercing or inducing any person to whom you minister or to whom you stand in a position of trust, whether because of your office or for any other reason, to establish or pursue a sexual or improper emotional relationship and also the passing of hurtful remarks of a sexual nature
- Financial or material abuse is the misappropriation of a person's money or assets by those involved in ministry through fraud or deception; or through negligence or misuse of a person's assets or money while having a legitimate access to them.

The Use of Touch

People use touch informally as a gesture of care and formally within rituals to signify beliefs and theological actions. However, because the use of touch can be misunderstood or misinterpreted, or it may be unwanted, particular sensitivity should be exercised and assumptions about gender and personal space carefully considered. If in any doubt as to whether touch may be acceptable, permission should be obtained. The use of ritual that involves touch should be carefully explained and permission obtained. Parental or guardian consent may also be necessary where children are too young to give their own consent or an adult is without capacity to consent.

Touch is a basic human gesture and physical contact is an integral part of wellbeing. Touch conveys to many people reassurance, care and concern and it can be a valuable expression of a supportive or therapeutic relationship. But touch is not value-free, it is conditioned by social and cultural norms and it can convey powerful signals. Therefore, touch may be perceived as threatening or manipulative, it could be physically painful and it can be a form of abuse.

Working with Colleagues

Working in ministry often depends on collaboration with colleagues both in other ministries and in other disciplines. In particular those in ministry should:

- respect the skills, contributions and integrity of colleagues;
- work in a collaborative and co-operative manner with colleagues and communicate effectively with them within the limits of confidentiality;
- honour their commitments and at all times be reliable, dependable and trustworthy, and willing to play a full part in the life and worship of the Church within their Presbytery;
- respect the boundaries of other parishes, and take care not to undertake pastoral or sacramental duties within another parish for anyone other than a member of the congregation in which they

minister. The recognised exceptions are (1) the conduct of a marriage or a funeral by private invitation and (2) circumstances in which the express permission of the minister of the other parish has been secured.

- participate in the work of multidisciplinary teams they are members of and respect their confidentiality;
- challenge colleagues who appear to have behaved unethically or in contravention of this Code and be prepared to bring concerns of misconduct to those charged with responsibility for colleagues.

Communications, Media and Social Media

Upholding high standards in all communications is important for the exercise of ministry. Communication is a powerful tool that can be used to benefit the work of ministry, but if used carelessly can reflect badly on an individual and the wider Church.

Communication and involvement with the media can:

- spread good news stories to inspire others
- reach those who may not be able to attend church or who may not be sure about attending church in person
- engage in topical conversations and respond to enquiries on behalf of the Church
- encourage involvement, collaboration and learning
- resolve misunderstandings and correct inaccuracies
- establish and strengthen relationships locally, nationally and internationally

When using Social Media there is a responsibility to:

- respect and model positive behaviours and language
- be transparent, relevant and kind
- be careful when sharing content, ensuring it is accurate and relevant
- consider the safety of yourself and others
- refrain from sharing any confidential information
- avoid any communications that might damage the reputation of the Church

Those serving in ministry should take care to observe appropriate boundaries between their work and their personal life just as much in the use of social media as in “real life” encounters. They should recognise the importance of knowing themselves and their own emotional needs. Working with a spiritual accompanier or pastoral supervisor can greatly help the development of this insight, which is difficult to achieve when working alone.

Ministers should not expose themselves or others to material which is sexually explicit, profane, obscene, harassing, fraudulent, racially offensive, politically inflammatory, defamatory or in violation of any British, European or international law.

Ministers must remember that they are public figures whose opinions when proffered have weight and significance. In using social media ministers should always assume that anything they post or contribute is in the public domain and will be shared. The power of the internet for doing harm as well as good must always be borne carefully in mind and weighed before saying anything which may prove be damaging to oneself as well as to others.

If contacted by the media for any reason those in ministry should before making any response contact the Church communications team. They should not speak to journalists “off the record”.

Ministers should familiarise themselves with the established policies and procedures and guidance for all communications.

Probity in Practice

The office of a recognised ministry in the Church of Scotland requires the highest standards of moral integrity and honesty. In particular those involved in ministry must:

- be honest and accurate in representing their professional affiliations, qualifications, and experience, and not make unjustifiable claims about their competence
- keep their knowledge and skills up to date, taking part in regular learning and development activities in order to maintain and develop competence
- distinguish between pastoral care and formal counselling and ensure that those to whom they minister understand the form of support being offered
- not charge individuals personal fees for baptisms, weddings or funerals - in all circumstances ministers should follow the guidelines contained in the Year Book in respect of charging for weddings and funerals
- refrain from encouraging those to whom they minister to give, lend or bequeath money or gifts which will be of a direct or indirect benefit to themselves, or put pressure on those to whom they minister to make donations
- refuse all but trivial gifts and never accept any offers of loans, bequests or benefits of any kind from anyone to whom they minister (or anyone close to them)
- manage any finances for which they are responsible with diligence and for the purpose for which they are intended
- declare any involvement that might cause a conflict of interest
- demonstrate honesty and objectivity when providing references for colleagues or completing and signing forms. Reasonable steps must be taken to verify any statement before they sign a document, and they must not write or sign documents which are false or misleading.

Discipline

Where allegations involving issues of professional conduct are raised, Presbytery must proceed to investigate in terms of the Discipline Act (Act I 2019) for all subject to its terms. Paid employees in parish appointments are also subject to the relevant disciplinary policy of the Church entity which employs them. Where an investigation establishes a suspected criminal action this must be reported to the police.

Contracted working for other employers

Office holders of the Church of Scotland who are contractually employed outwith the Church of Scotland are bound by the declared policies and procedures of their employing body. However, they remain subject to the Code of Conduct in regard to the holding of their designated Office.

Tel: **0131 225 5722**

Email: faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk

Faith Action
121 George Street
Edinburgh, EH2 4YN

 facebook.com/churchofscotland

 [@churchscotland](https://twitter.com/churchscotland)

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend