

# MINISTERS' HANDBOOK

Edition: October 2025



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## Foreword from the Convener

It was the Greek Philosopher Heraclitus who said - "*The only constant in life is change.*" I'd like to paraphrase his wisdom in this way - '*The only constant in church is change!*' This is what you and I are living out. We live and serve in the context of constant change. A changing church, changing communities, a changing nation and a changing world.

As we look to respond to the constant changes happening all around us, be assured of my prayers with and for you. That you might be given the grace to look to the One who as the hymn Great Is Thy Faithfulness reminds us - '*changest not!*' The One who is '*Jesus Christ- the same yesterday, today, and forever*' (Hebrews 13v8).

Our Ministers Handbook contains lots of information that we hope you will find helpful. As well as answering lots of questions around the practicalities of ministry, it provides info about pastoral support that you can access and options around ongoing professional development. We want the handbook to be a blessing to you as you continue to serve and bless others.

May the certainty of who Christ is, and what He has said and promised, be the foundation upon which we build our lives, our ministries, and our churches. As the world around us wrestles with uncertainty and the rapid pace of change, may others, alongside us, be drawn to trust in the One who is eternal, unchanging, and whose love remains the one constant we can always rely on.

With huge thanks and every blessing for who you are and what you do.

**Tommy MacNeil**

Convener of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team

## 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.

The General Assembly of 2024 approved the Terms of Responsibility for Ministers serving in the Church of Scotland and these appear at the start. They should be read in conjunction with the Code of Professional practice and good conduct which appear in the appendix. Between the two is a wealth of useful information covering many differing aspects of ministry support.

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** and on the **Church of Scotland website**.

# Terms of Responsibility for Ministers serving in the Church of Scotland

## Introduction

These terms are intended to cover the responsibilities and expectations of Ministers serving the Church of Scotland as office holders. They draw on matters referenced in the Acts and Regulations of the General Assembly, and offer a consolidated framework where the office is understood by nature of being set apart for Holy Ministry in the Vows of Ordination and Induction of this Church.

## The Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament

It is recognised that ministry does not offer a “one size fits all” job description that can accurately reflect all ministries, but that there are distinctive aspects which are expected of you as an office holder serving in a charge or appointment.

These include:

- the celebration of the Sacraments - the Lord’s Supper (or Holy Communion) and Baptism;
- preaching and the conduct of worship;
- moderating meetings of the Kirk Session, which has responsibility for the spiritual issues within a congregation, and guiding the Session in its discussions;
- conducting funerals and offering pastoral support to those who are dying and to people who have been bereaved;
- conducting weddings and helping people prepare for marriage;
- providing ministry, including pastoral care, that is not exclusive to membership of the Church;
- providing local leadership while working collaboratively with others;
- offering ministry service in the wider community, relevant to context;
- full-time hours of service across a week, or % of full-time service according to charge/appointment;
- timely reporting of absence from duties for ill health or any other reason, and providing medical fit notes as appropriate;
- taking time off annually for rest and personal wellbeing as allowed for in pulpit supply arrangements.
- displaying an integrity of faith and life, with Christ-like values and attitudes.

## Wider duties

The primary role of ministers is to serve within the charge or appointment. However, you are also required to serve within Presbytery where duties will include membership of Presbytery committees, and serving as Interim Moderator. You may also be appointed to serve on a committee of the General Assembly.

Such responsibilities, along with others, make up the roles and functions of those ordained to serve in the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Church of Scotland.

The responsibilities are rooted in the Vows of Ordination and Induction. A note of these follows with some commentary added, which is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive as to the responsibilities which might be associated with any particular vow.

## Vows of Ordination and Induction and associated Responsibilities

*Do you believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and Lord?*

- To sustain spiritual practices to nurture and shape the personal faith and belief that is the foundation of your calling into ministry

*Do you believe the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the supreme rule of faith and life?*

- To serve in ministry in a way where the rule of life of faith guides behaviours, interactions, relationships and shows forth the revealed nature of God, in Jesus Christ

*Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the Confession of Faith of this Church?*

- To share and shape contextual ministry that is consistent with the Confessions of the Church of Scotland

*Do you acknowledge the Presbyterian government of this Church to be agreeable to the Word of God; and do you promise to be subject in the Lord to this Presbytery and to the General Assembly of this Church, and to take your due part in the administration of its affairs?*

- To share in the life of Presbytery, taking your place alongside others to exercise the shared responsibilities of the Presbytery

*Do you promise to seek the peace and unity of this Church; to uphold its doctrine, worship, government, and to cherish a spirit of love to all your brothers and sisters in Christ?*

- To serve in ministry in collaboration with others, mindful of the ministry of the whole people of God, and in accordance always with the Acts of the Church

*Are not zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire for the salvation of all people, so far as you know your own heart, your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the office of the Holy Ministry?*

- To serve in Holy Ministry, recognising the office is a status within the Church of Scotland, and to be mindful of that privilege and responsibility

*Do you engage in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to live a godly and circumspect life; and faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge the duties of your ministry, seeking in all things the advancement of the kingdom of God?*

- To serve in that strength, and with an attitude of reflective practice, to identify and engage with the support and tools that enable ministry to be fulfilled and fulfilling

*Do you [accept and close with the call to be pastor of this charge], and promise through grace to study to prove yourself a faithful minister of the Gospel among this people?*

- To avail yourself of opportunities for self-development, wellbeing and study, that will equip your ministry in context, as you, the charge and its people are further shaped and changed in God's mission



## Other Responsibilities of the Office

**Capability:** The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team is developing a capability policy for ministers. This will enable support, training, development and other assistance to be provided as required. You will be expected to engage constructively with this process.

**Charity trustee duties:** As a minister in a charge, you are a charity trustee under civil legislation and must adhere to the civil law in this area as well as guidance produced by OSCR.

Each congregation in the Church of Scotland has separate charitable status, with the national Church being the parent charity. As a minister working in a congregation, you will be one of the charity trustees of the congregation and must therefore fulfil the duties incumbent on charity trustees under civil law.

The underpinning duty of charity trustees is to act at all times in the best interests of the charity and consistently with its purpose, ensuring that resources are managed responsibly and showing care and diligence in the management of the charity's affairs.

The sole charitable purpose of the Church of Scotland is 'the advancement of religion' and so everything that the congregation does has to be in furtherance of that purpose. The Church has the status of a 'Designated Religious Charity' (DRC) in terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and this carries certain privileges, as it exempts us from some elements of the compliance regime which applies to all other charities. This is because DRCs are considered by the Charity Regulator (OSCR) to have internal structures which offer an acceptable degree of self-regulation. It is therefore important that you play your part in enabling the Church to demonstrate that this is indeed the case, in particular by ensuring that the congregation complies with all statutory accounting and reporting requirements and also complying with Church and civil law in all respects.

**Church law:** You should be familiar with general principles of Church law. Law in the life of the Church seeks to provide consistency and also clarity about "who may do what and who is answerable to whom, because every Christian has to know how to work out their responsibility to God within the context of the various relationships and obligations they are involved in. Understanding and knowing how to work with [Church law] is a necessary aspect of exercising authority and holding responsibility in the Church" (Lord Rowan Williams). The Acts and Regulations of the Church are accessible on the Church website and advice on Church law is available from your Presbytery Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly. The Law Dept has also produced circulars on many matters of relevance to ministers, which are contained in the resources section of the Church website.

**Code of Conduct:** In your life and work, you should adhere to the Code of Conduct, approved by the General Assembly, set out in the appendix to this handbook. A breach of the requirements of the code will be unbecoming of the office you hold and of the gospel values of the Christian faith we proclaim.

**Collaborative working:** Where a Basis of Team Ministry is in place, you should work collaboratively with the other members of the team and in accordance with the Basis of Team Ministry. Where there is no Basis of Team Ministry but the congregation in which you serve employs someone (such as an MDS worker) for whom you have line management responsibilities, you should work with that person in an open and collaborative way which enables everyone in the team to achieve their fullest potential. Guidance and support are available from the Presbytery and from both the HR team and the staff of FAPLT in the national offices.

**Conflicts of interest:** You must be alert to the possibilities of conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, arising in your interactions. The Law Dept has issued a conflict of interest policy which sets out good practice in this area and you should ensure that it is adopted by your congregation and that you read and adhere to it.

**Contact:** For data security reasons, you must use your Church of Scotland email address for all Church-related communications and should be contactable on a publicly-available telephone number (whether mobile or landline).

**Discipline:** In matters of misconduct, you come under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery to which you belong. You have a duty to engage constructively with the disciplinary procedure of the Church. The detail of the discipline procedure is specified in the Discipline Act (Act I 2019). If you are involved in disciplinary

proceedings, you may be entitled to assistance with legal costs in terms of the Legal Aid Regulations (Regs I 2018).

**Local Church Review:** The Local Church Review Act (Act 1 2011) was repealed. Now provisions are made for five yearly evaluation of action plans for charges (see section 2.4 of the **Presbytery Mission Plan Act VIII 2021**)

**Marriages and funerals:** There are some key points to be aware of:

- You must solemnise marriages in a religious service, not a civil one. It is contrary to Church law for a minister to act as a celebrant of civil marriages and doing so is also a criminal offence in terms of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977.
- You only have a responsibility to conduct 'parish' funerals from within the bounds of your parish and you should not agree to perform marriages in parishes other than your own without seeking the consent of the parish minister or Interim Moderator (IM) of that parish.
- If you receive a private invitation from close family or friends to conduct a wedding, you should only do so with the agreement of the parish minister or IM.
- You should not participate in any wedding service in which a close relative has a business interest, either as a civil celebrant or as a wedding organiser.
- No fee may be charged or received by you for carrying out the functions of ministry, including the conduct of marriage ceremonies or funerals.

**Paid employment and public office:** You should not take on paid employment in addition to your ministerial duties, unless your ministerial role is not full-time and you have first obtained the approval of the Presbytery. If you wish to seek appointment to a public office, you should refer to the Ministers and Deacons in Public Office Act (Act IV 2001), which makes provision for Presbytery's involvement.

**Retirement:** Parish ministers must normally retire at the age of 75, although provision is made in the **Continuing Parish Ministry Beyond the Age of 75 Regulations** (Regs II 2018) for a minister to continue beyond this age in certain circumstances.

**Safeguarding:** You should understand and comply with Safeguarding law (including The Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2025)) and responsibilities. Advice given by the Safeguarding Service, when framed as an instruction, must be followed by all office-holders, staff and volunteers.

## 1. Ascend: Support and Development

Ascend, the Church's Support and Development Services, has been delivering comprehensive support since 2017. This includes the work of the Faith Action Programme's People and Training and Support Teams. The Ascend website is your gateway to a wealth of information about all areas of support and development:  
**[www.ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk)**



**[ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk)**



The Church of Scotland

# ascend

## Core Services

**Study Leave**

**First Five Years Continued Ministerial Development**

**Alexander J MacLeod Gaelic Fund**

**Post Graduate Fund**

**Ministerial Development Conversations (MDC)**

**Leadership Development**

**Training Events**

**Retreats**

**Spiritual Accompaniment**

**Coaching**

**Pastoral Supervision**

**Counselling**

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/ascend](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/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](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk)**

Support is also available locally 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.

## Integrated Support Allowance

From January 2024, a support allowance of £250 per calendar year will enable access to any [or all] of the following 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 used for personal or group pastoral supervision, coaching [either from existing Ascend provision or paid externally], or spiritual accompaniment [all subject to agreed invoicing arrangements and appropriate qualifications/credentials for each support provision].

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 of having the widest choice of support and the pragmatism of expanding resources, knowing people are trained, accredited, able to offer their services, and practicing under the appropriate professional body.

## Pastoral Supervision

Pastoral supervision offers a regular, intentional and boundaried 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 advise you about finding a supervisor or match you with a suitable supervisor. Every eligible minister has an Integrated support allowance allocation of £250 per calendar year. Please visit the Ascend website for more information and our list of recommended supervisors.

## 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](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk)**

## 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. More information about coaching is on the Ascend website.

## Spiritual Accompaniment

Ascend can help you access people specifically trained in the ministry of Spiritual Accompaniment (also called Spiritual Direction). Four sessions per calendar year can be supported for probationers and those

in the first five years of ministry [subject to available budget]. Every eligible minister has an Integrated Support Allowance allocation of £250 per calendar year.

## **The following services are available additionally**

### **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 well-being. 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.

More information about counselling is on the **Ascend website**.

### **Retreats**

Ascend is 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 retreat in Scotland. Funding of up to £250 in a calendar year is available. Applications must be approved before submitting a claim for retreat expenses.

### **Ministerial Development Conversation (MDC)**

MDC is a confidential discussion with a trained facilitator that supports and enables the minister to reflect on their ministry practice 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**.

### **Study Leave**

Study Leave is an opportunity to undertake ministerial development as defined by you. It is available to ministers with five years of service in the Church of Scotland. Changes to Study Leave: From 1 January 2023, Study Leave time and money can be accrued for five years, i.e. 10 weeks (70 days) and £1,375 and must be applied for and taken before the last 12 months of ministry before retirement. 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**

### **Study and Reflection Leave for Ministers in their First Five Years**

The General Assembly 2025 approved that Ministers in the first five years since the date of their ordination, be allowed to apply to the presbyteries for an annual period of two weeks Study and Reflection Leave.

This leave may be taken as two separate one week blocks, or together over two weeks and is separate from any annual or holiday leave. This is an annual allowance given within each calendar year, and therefore is not accumulative from one year to the next.

The permission of their presbytery is required before this can be taken, and they will be presently developing the methodology by which ministers may apply for this leave, and whether powers can be delegated to a particular committee or the Convener of that committee.

Congregations of eligible ministers are expected to cover the costs of pulpit supply, but where there is a financial difficulty within a congregation, then an application should be made to the presbytery to provide pulpit supply free of charge to the congregation.

In providing this time, it is hoped that newly ordained ministers will use it for study, retreat, reading or preparation, allowing them a pause for a short period in the early years of their ministries to think, to pray and to reflect. Ministers may also consider using this time to undertake a MDC or combine it with other allowances that allow for support or retreat.

The Study and Reflection allowance is open to both FTWAS and OLM ministers.

## Place for Hope

Place for Hope partners with the Church of Scotland under the “Living Peace” Programme to provide 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 the **Place for Hope website** - Church of Scotland: Living Peace Programme Place for Hope.

## 2. Useful Information

### Practicalities

#### Reporting illness and leave of Absence

If you are ill and going to be off work, please notify Faith Action's Support Team and your Presbytery Clerk as soon as possible. The Support Team can be notified by an email to

**pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk** 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. If the absence is longer than seven days, a medical certificate must be obtained from your GP or other medical professional. This needs to be sent on to the Support Team, preferably by email. Please let us know when you go back to work after sick leave. It is important for your Long-Term Illness insurance benefits (see below) that we have accurate records of sickness.

#### Compassionate Leave

If you wish to seek compassionate leave please contact the Support Team who will be able to guide you. Contact them at **pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk**

#### 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. A phased return to work, after an extended medical absence, is recommended and the pastoral support team are able to offer advice and guidelines for how to arrange this.

#### Long-term illness and income protection

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 (2019 Act 6) 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**.

#### Health, Safety and Wellbeing 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 you on 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 the risk assessment process. Congregations 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](mailto:safebuildings@churchofscotland.org.uk)

## Manse Handbook

A Manse Handbook has been published by the General Trustees. This document aims to provide a comprehensive guide to manses and is available for download from the General Trustees resource page of the website. The Handbook was produced following consultation with Faith Action, ministers and presbyteries and contains the following

- Policy and guidance relating to the provision of manses
- The Manse Condition Schedule which is to be prepared by the Kirk Session and updated on an annual basis.
- A template memorandum of understanding for completion by the Kirk Session and the Minister which sets out the responsibilities of both parties
- Guidance on buying, selling and letting of manses (not yet available)

In the event of a dispute of difference of opinion between the Kirk Session and the minister which cannot be resolved through negotiations, the matter should be referred to the Presbytery Clerk.

## Social Media Policy

presbyteries are encouraged to have a social media policy in place. Ministers should make themselves aware of and adhere to their Presbytery's policy.

Further comments on social media appear in the appendix to the handbook (**see p39**)

## 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](mailto: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 contact 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.

## 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.

You will normally give at least three months' prior notice in writing and you will need to inform the following:

- Your Presbytery who will make appropriate arrangements regarding the request to demit charge
- Your Kirk Session(s)
- Faith Action (**[faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk)**)
- Faith Action Finance, (**[ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk)**), 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
- Pensions, the Pensions Department, (**[pensions@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pensions@churchofscotland.org.uk)**) and/or Legal & General, (**[employerdedicatedteam@landg.com](mailto:employerdedicatedteam@landg.com)**) to inform of updated personal details for any preserved benefits held.

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 congregational membership.

### Email accounts

You will be able to retain your existing Church of Scotland email address for a period of six months after which it will be closed, unless you continue to serve as an Interim Moderator or are serving on a National nominations committee.

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

### Demitting Status as a Church of Scotland Minister

The Presbytery itself must agree to any request to demit status (see section 33 of the Vacancy Procedure Act (Act VIII, 2003). The Moderator of Presbytery, or a deputy appointed by him or her, shall first endeavour to confer with the minister regarding his or her reasons and shall report to the Presbytery if there appears to be any reason not to grant permission to demit status. Any decision to grant permission to demit status shall be immediately reported to Faith Action.

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 and 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.

# Finance

## 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 Leadership Team, with the National Stipend Scale being published annually in the Report of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team 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 2025

- Point 1      £32,433
- Point 2      £34,554
- Point 3      £36,675
- Point 4      £38,796
- Point 5      £39,856

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. 2024 Act 5 The Church of Scotland General Trustees (Properties Fund and Endowments) Act (Schedule 4 -Manses) provides further clarity about the responsibilities of upkeep of the Manse and the duty of living in the Manse of the charge.

We are required to abide by HMRC regulations and should these change, or further guidance be issued, then the provision of living accommodation to anyone other than Parish Ministers may be treated as a benefit in kind and be subject to tax.

Part-time Parish Ministers who are undertaking full ministerial duties (the only difference being the hours worked) are exempt from a benefit in kind implication under current HMRC regulations, however any change in regulations will be reviewed for all Parish Ministers in living accommodation.

If you would like more information about matters relating to stipend and payroll, please contact the payroll department: **[payroll.dept@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:payroll.dept@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]. There is an

annual increase on the anniversary of the date the award was first due, (Retail Prices Index (RPI) capped at 2.5% p.a.). Please note that anyone who has opted out of making Legal and General pension contributions will not be entitled to receive Income Protection benefit.

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 (DIS) insurance policy in place for ministers in service who are also enrolled in the Legal & General Pension Scheme. Please note that anyone who has opted out of making Legal and General pension contributions will not be entitled to receive Death in Service benefit. DIS Benefit is 5 x stipend [calculated at date of death] for those in service under age 75. Expression of Wish forms 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 form in respect of their pension contributions. A third Expression of Wish form should be completed for those in the main Church of Scotland Pension fund.

Please contact the Support Team for more information [pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@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 1 January 2025, 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 of Scotland website**. All expense claims must be submitted within one 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 (e.g. 50%).
- 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 General Assembly 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 £2,062
- Inner island allowance £811

## Travelling Expenses

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. Please maintain your log in whatever way suits (e.g. paper notebook / excel spreadsheet).

Mileage claims, are submitted to the congregational treasurer for reimbursement. All travel expense claims should be submitted in a timely manner.

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](mailto: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 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. Removal costs on retirement are classed as a taxable benefit and will be reported to HMRC on a form P11D which may then result in a change in the minister's tax code for the following tax year.

Removal costs paid to a minister when leaving a manse, but not moving to a new charge will also be classed as a taxable benefit.

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

## Practical concerns regarding Removal Expenses

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.

When you receive your quotations please contact [ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto: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

Ministers are entitled to claim, as a deduction against income in order to reduce income tax, 25% of expenditure personally incurred on the maintenance, repair, insurance or management of any manse accommodation made available to them.

This can be done by;

Reclaiming the 25% through a self-assessment tax return; or having the full expenses set against taxable



income through payroll to reduce income tax payable but then being subject to a benefit in kind charge to reflect personal use of the manse.

A system has been set up for Church of Scotland in agreement with HM Revenue & Customs which is in a way a mixture of both methods, with tax relief being claimed through the payroll.

Various entries are made on Ministers' payslips to give them tax relief for manse expenses paid, with an adjustment for a benefit in kind representing the personal proportion of the expenses incurred.

The full amount of manse accommodation expenses is deducted from stipends before arriving at taxable earnings. This then results in an associated benefit in kind because these expenses cover an element of personal expenditure (i.e. because we deduct 100% rather than 25%). The benefit in kind is calculated as being the lower of 75% of manse expenses and 10% of 75% of taxable earnings.

The rationale for the current payroll procedures is based on the premise that the remuneration paid to ministers is not a salary but a 'living'. Therefore, the remuneration can be broken down to a taxable earnings element and a manse expenses element which is not taxed. In this way, it is as if the ministers are being reimbursed for the expenses incurred by them, and therefore it is appropriate to bring in a benefit in kind charge for the personal element of these expenses.

The advantage of this system is that ministers receive a cash flow benefit as they receive tax relief for expenditure incurred through the PAYE system rather than putting in a claim for tax relief after the tax year-end. The system is designed specifically to give additional benefit to ministers on lower ends of the stipend scale having to incur very large manse accommodation fees – this is aimed at bringing equality to parish ministers who are all living in very different manses and having very different levels of related expenditure.

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.

## Insolvent Charge

Guidelines from the Assembly Trustees for those ministers who serve in congregations that are being designated as an Insolvent Charge will be available by the start of 2026. These will indicate the process for the ending of ministries including detailing the process for severing the pastoral tie, leaving a manse, discerning the future calling of the minister and pastoral support of the minister and their family. Please contact: **[faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk)** for more information.

# Loans, benefits and tax

## 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 **[ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ministriesfinance@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 Programme 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 installments, 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](mailto: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](mailto: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, including holiday grants

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](mailto: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 paid on retirement.
- Removal costs and the Manse Disturbance Allowance, on moves to a new charge, 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 Support Team. Congregational Treasurers can access the forms for reclaiming Pulpit Supply from

**pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk**

For sickness absence, compassionate leave, maternity/paternity/adoption leave, and administrative suspension, contact **pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk**

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 three 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**

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**

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

## 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 15 weeks prior to that date. You should also enclose a copy of your MatB1 certificate with this form where possible. 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 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 six 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 (i.e. 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 £187.18 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 central payroll.
- You can take up to two weeks paternity leave. You do not have to take your leave in one single period but the leave must be booked in blocks of at least one week. This means that you can take the leave in one single block of one week, one single block of two weeks, or two separate blocks of a week each. You can start your paternity leave on any day from the child's birth, but it must end within 52 weeks of the birth (or the expected week of childbirth if the child is born early).
- You will receive full stipend during Paternity Leave (inclusive of statutory paternity pay).

### 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](mailto: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

Parish Ministers are entitled to Shared Parental Leave and Pay under statutory rights and regulations, 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 the Support Team for more information and details about eligibility: **[pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk)**

## Neonatal Care Leave and Pay

Neonatal Care Leave and pay will be available for eligible employees for babies born on or after 6 April 2025. This new entitlement has been designed to work alongside other family related leave types **Neonatal care leave Policy.pdf** and **Neonatal care leave application.pdf**

If you have any questions about the new policy, please do not hesitate to get in contact with **[hr@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:hr@churchofscotland.org.uk)**

## 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.

# 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](mailto: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, from October 2025 that may be available, 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](mailto:faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk)**
- Faith Action Finance: **[ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk)**
- Payroll: **[payroll.dept@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto: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). Removal costs on retirement are classed as a taxable benefit. For further information or advice, please contact Faith Action Finance: **[ministriesfinance@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto: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 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 Sterling 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 for Work and Pensions

For information about your State Pension visit **www.gov.uk/check-state-pension**

The **Money and Pensions Service** (MaPS) 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 easy way to get clear, free impartial help for all your money and pension choices and is provided by (MaPS). or **0800 011 3797** (overseas **0044 207 932 5780**).

**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 via. To qualify for an appointment, you must be 50 years old or over.

## 3. Other Church Departments and External Agencies

### Housing and Loan Fund

The Church of Scotland Housing and Loan Fund can provide houses for rental or loans to assist with house purchase to:

- retired ministers
- widows, widowers or bereaved civil partners of ministers
- ministers demitting under the Church's Income Protection arrangements
- estranged spouses or civil partners of ministers needing to leave the manse

Financial criteria apply which determine the type and amount of assistance given.

Eligibility for the Fund depends upon a minister retaining their status as a Church of Scotland minister and there is usually a 10-year minimum service period.

Ministers demitting because of ill health and spouses and civil partners of ministers who are forced to leave the manse due to relationship breakdown are referred to the Fund by the Pastoral Support Team in Faith Action in the first instance.

The Fund can be accessed beyond the point of retirement too. People may find that their circumstances have changed and would like to be considered for assistance from the Fund at a later stage. This may be for the first time or because an existing beneficiary now has different needs.

### House to Rent or Loan

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

- the fund will provide a house in Scotland which the beneficiary will rent from the fund. Beneficiaries will be asked to consider empty properties within the fund's existing stock to see if any is suitable. If none are suitable, the beneficiary will be able to hunt for an appropriate property (within specified criteria - including a maximum price) for the fund to buy for rental to them, or
- the fund will give a loan to allow a beneficiary to buy their own house. Loans depend on an applicant's capital and can be no more than 70% of a house purchase price, but with an upper limit.

Short term bridging loans are also available in very limited circumstances.

Leases are normally granted at advantageous rental levels and loans at favourable rates of interest.

Please note that the Trustees will usually only take possession of a property for rental a couple of months before retirement but can provide a house purchase loan up to 12 months prior to an applicant's retirement date.

### Applications

Applications are welcome up to 10 years prior to retirement. A copy of the Guidance Notes and application form can be found on the **Church of Scotland website**.

### Further information

The day-to-day business and correspondence of the Housing and Loan Fund is carried out by the Secretary of the Fund and confidential conversations with the Secretary to explore whether the Fund is able to offer assistance are always welcomed.



The Secretary can be contacted by phone on **0131 240 3002 / 07929 418 762**, by email at **housingandloan@churchofscotland.org.uk** or by correspondence to: **121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN**.

## 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.

## Email accounts security

For data security reasons, you must use your designated @churchofscotland email address exclusively for all work-related purposes. Personal email accounts must not be used to send, receive or store any Church communications or documents. The Church's IT and communications systems are intended to promote effective communication and working practices and you must observe the standards set out in the relevant IT and Communications Systems Policy, found on **Insite - Home**. This outlines expectations regarding appropriate use, security and monitoring.

## Cyber Crime Awareness

As part of our remit we aim to raise awareness, educate and advise 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 falling victim 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 on the **Church of Scotland website**.

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 2025) 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**.

Responsibility for safeguarding in congregations

- As Trustees, the Kirk Session has the responsibility to ensure the implementation of the Safeguarding Act and Guidance. Kirk Sessions delegate this responsibility to the congregational Safeguarding Panel which is led by the Safeguarding Coordinator. Panel members and Coordinators are volunteers who undergo specific training for these roles. The Kirk Session should regularly request a report from the Safeguarding Coordinator to satisfy themselves that their responsibilities are being met.
- By its very nature, safeguarding can involve very sensitive situations and Safeguarding Panels can have access to personally sensitive and privileged information. For this reason, they must sign a confidentiality agreement. Safeguarding information should not be shared with anyone who is not a member of the Panel. This includes members of the Kirk Session and the Minister unless they are also members of the Panel.
- Ministers can be members of the Safeguarding Panel; however, as their daily responsibilities include the provision of pastoral care, they may find this often raises issues of conflict of interests. Should this occur, Ministers must recuse themselves from involvement in the case. Other Panel members must do the same.

## Safer recruitment

Safer 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 Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 has made amendments to this legislation and strengthened the safeguarding legislative framework. 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 roles.

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.

The congregational Safeguarding Coordinator must be consulted prior to the appointment of any new paid or voluntary worker to ascertain if safeguarding recruitment checks are required and what type of checks this should be.

## 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 three years as a matter of good practice. It is a mandatory requirement that refresher training is undertaken within a five-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 important area of work within safeguarding. Where it has been identified that someone may pose a risk to others, the Safeguarding Service and the congregational Safeguarding Coordinator must be informed immediately. The Safeguarding Service will provide advice and guidance and will allocate a Safeguarding Officer to oversee referrals of concern. The Safeguarding Officer will support the Safeguarding Panel to work in partnership with statutory agencies to set up and review Covenants of Responsibility.

The **Church of Scotland website** hosts lots of resources to help you understand the wide-ranging work of the Safeguarding Service. They can be found at the Safeguarding Service section of the 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 whole 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 assist with an agreed comment or spokesperson.

Ministers are encouraged to build relationships with their local press and to use social media to advance their ministry. Guides are available on the Communication Resources page of the **Church of Scotland**

**website.** 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 and online graphics. 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. General Assembly reports and decisions can be found here as well as a livestream during the General Assembly.

The Media Team can be contacted 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. If media advice is required out of hours, use the on-call number for the duty press officer: **07854 783539**.

Email: **mediarelations@churchofscotland.org.uk**

Visit: **www.churchofscotland.org.uk/contact/media-centre**

## 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** 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**.

## Parliamentary Officer

The Church of Scotland's Parliamentary Officer is David Bradwell.

**dbradwel@churchofscotland.org.uk - 0131 376 9104.**

His role involves building and sustaining relationships with the Scottish and UK Parliaments, MSPs and MPs, and to advise the Church on parliamentary and political affairs. The Parliamentary Officer is also the responsible staff member for ensuring the Church of Scotland's compliance with the Scottish Lobbying Register, and advises on issues to do with non-party campaigning regulations in the restricted periods before elections. As Parliamentary Officer, David is happy to offer advice or information on any matter of parliamentary business or relationship.

If you have a question about a piece of legislation, policy consultation or what to know what position the Church of Scotland is taking with regard to a public issue, you are welcome to get in touch.

If you would like help with raising an issue with your MSPs or MP, or if you have arranged a meeting with a politician, and would like some input or advice, the Parliamentary Officer role is there to support you.

**The Scottish Churches Parliamentary** Office produces a range of resources to facilitate constructive and non-party engagement with MSPs and MPs. These include:

- Meet Your MP / Meet Your MSP
- Hustings
- Constituency Action Network

# Appendix

## 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 out with 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 circumstance's 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.

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