



# Stipends Committee Report

## 1. Introduction

The Stipends Committee has responsibility for proposing the level of minimum stipend and allowances to apply to ministerial placements. This generally requires an annual process of review and as appropriate proposes adjustments. This Committee comprises ministers, members of local congregations, local church treasurers and persons with employment, and financial management expertise.

The Committee stresses that these proposals are the Minimum Stipends and Allowances.

The Committee is acutely aware of the difficulty that some congregations experience in meeting costs of ministry and the pressures facing some stipended families in meeting their financial needs.

In bringing the proposed adjustments to stipends and allowances the Committee considers a wide range of relevant aspects.

The Committee investigates the level of stipends and allowances being paid in other Synods, and is informed by other information including policies and By-laws, impacting internal and external factors. Local economic data, community wage movements including average weekly earnings, CPI figures and trends in cost of housing in recommending changes to the SA Synod Stipends and allowances are contemplated. In addition, the Committee considers the deliberations and outcomes of the Annual Wage Review conducted by the Fair work Commission.

In addition to stipend related issues there have been deliberations with subsequent recommendations relating to clergy couples and the accommodation allowance, and the national conversation about stipends and an encouragement for the SA Synod to affirm the Assembly's Theology of Stipends document.

## 2. Membership

The Stipends Committee is currently comprised of:

Mr Brian Hern (Chairperson)  
Rev Felicity Amery (General Secretary)  
Mr Peter Battersby (EO Resources)  
Rev Sue Page (Associate General Secretary)  
Mr Peter Hampton  
Mrs Margaret Davidson  
Rev Sandy Boyce  
Ms Karen Granger  
Mr Peter Hollister

### 3. Setting the 2021 Minimum Stipend and Allowances

Due to the change in the timing of our Synod meeting from 2020, that is, no longer having a June (mid-year) meeting at which to approve the minimum stipend and allowances for the following year, the Synod Standing Committee will approve the change in rates, with the decision reported to the meeting of the Synod at its annual meeting. In 2020, the annual meeting has been postponed until February 2021.

The challenge for setting the 2021 stipend and allowances is that 2020 has not been a normal year. The COVID-19 global pandemic has changed the fundamental operation of our economy. This means we need to be careful about relying on historical metrics. We have seen panic buying, under and unemployment. This has impacted the capacity of some members to contribute and hence, has impacted churches financial position. The Synod and many Congregations have been the recipient of the government's JobKeeper support for some of the year.

The Fair Work Commission, in its Annual Wage Review awarded an increase of 1.75% - an historically low figure. The wage increase is to be spread out across the next 6 months, with 3 tranches of change, at different times for different sectors.

A review of existing (2020) stipends and allowances from other synods was undertaken.

South Australia's total package of stipend and allowances is about \$3,500 less (before tax) than the national average. In assessing the stipend package relative to other Synods, it should be appreciated that the package includes accommodation related matters. As a general rule, the cost of housing in South Australia may be less than in many of the other States and Territories, particularly in the major cities and regional locations. Furthermore, South Australia has adopted a more "flexible" approach to the use of stipend packaging for tax purposes in that we allow up to **50% of the minimum stipend** plus 100% of allowances to be paid into a Minister's Fringe Benefit Account (FBA). This can mean that Minister's filling placements of up to .5FTE stipend can have the entire stipend they receive plus 100% of all allowances paid into an FBA. As a result for both full and part-time placements, the real difference in "usable" (post-tax) stipend and allowances between the SA Synod and others is much less. It should be noted that this is based upon existing FBT laws and the practices adopted in other Synods. These may change and caution should be exercised in placing longer term reliance upon the FBT arrangements in this context.

The Stipends Committee wrestled with the challenge of the current uncertain economic climate, weighing up a number of factors, seeking to discern whether to recommend an increase, and if so, at what time and how much. It was noted that a challenge in not granting an increase is that the gap can never be caught up.

**In accordance and with consideration of both internal and external factors it was recommended (and approved by Synod Standing Committee at its meeting on 27 November) that there be no increase to the ministerial stipend at 1 January 2021. An increase of 1.25% is recommended from 1 July 2021 (in**

**line with the RBA forecast trimmed mean CPI). This proposed increase is to be reviewed and/or affirmed in early 2021. Schedule A for January to June 2021 is found in ATTACHMENT A.**

## **4. Accommodation Allowance**

The ABS and other reliable sources of statistics indicate that housing costs to the March quarter 2020 were flat. In order to reflect this trend, and noting that the stipend is a living allowance, it is recommended that the accommodation allowance remain unchanged.

## **5. Ministers Benefit Fund**

The Ministers Benefit Fund continues to provide assistance to Ministers, congregations and other appointing bodies for Ministers impacted by sickness, work place injury and/or compassionate grounds. The contribution has for the past several years remained constant at 4% of the minimum stipend. An actuarial review of the fund is currently being undertaken. A review of the contribution rate will be undertaken in 2021. No change is recommended at this time.

## **6. Motor Vehicle Allowances**

The Motor Vehicle allowances, including fuel prices and travel, were considered by Stipends Committee in November. The Stipends Committee noted that even though petrol prices have gone down, there is no desire to suggest decreasing the rates associated with motor vehicle allowances at this stage (as would normally be the case) due to the unusual economic circumstances the world is in due to COVID 19. Therefore no change is recommended at this time.

## **7. Professional Development Allowance**

To assist the Stipends Committee in setting the Professional Development Allowance, a review of how the ministers are undertaking Professional Development was undertaken by the Pastoral Relations and Mission Planning (now the Placements and Safe Church) Team in the second half 2019 and early 2020. A working group will be undertaking further investigations around the use the Professional Development Allowance early in 2021. No change is recommended at this time.

## **8. Other Associated Allowances and Preaching Fees**

Long Service Leave allowance, and Remote area allowances increase in line with the increase in the minimum stipend, thus it is recommended that no increase occur at 1 January 2021, and a 1.25% increase be implemented on 1 July 2021. This will be confirmed by Synod Standing Committee early in 2021.

It is recommended that there be no change to Preaching Fees.

## 9. Notional Stipend

As advised at the 2015 annual meeting the Notional Stipend will now be declared to align with the fiscal year. The SA Synod meeting approved that the Notional Stipend and accompanying Beneficiary Fund contribution levels declared by 1 July each year not be applied until 1 January the following year.

The Notional stipend effective 1 July 2020 is \$59,729pa.

The only change in Schedule A for January to June 2021 is for Beneficiary Fund/ Superannuation payments, which increase in line with the increase in the notional stipend.

## 10. Clergy Couples and the Accommodation Allowance

A matter which has been before Stipends Committee for some time is the matter of clergy couples and the accommodation allowance (See ATTACHMENT B). After much discussion and debate, Stipends Committee propose that the Stipends Handbook be changed so that members of clergy couples are treated as individuals regardless of whether they are living in their own homes (currently each member of the clergy couple receives the housing allowances in accordance with their FTE), or if they are living in a manse (currently for those couples, the member of the couple whose placement is not providing the manse does not receive a housing allowance, it is paid to the placement of the member who is providing the manse. It was agreed that this is seen as an inequitable arrangement.

## 11. Theology of Stipend

Recently, a national conversation about matters relating to Stipends and in particular, the theology of stipends, has begun. The Assembly's Theology of Stipends paper was written in 2009. (ATTACHMENT C). This document expresses the church's understanding of the nature of the stipend as a living allowance, as distinct from a salary. A stipend is paid to ministry agents to cover their needs to enable them to fulfil their calling acknowledged by the church. This expresses the covenantal relationship between minister and the church.

Ministry agents who are paid a stipend, and whose position descriptions meet the definition of a religious practitioner according to the Australian Taxation Office may receive a portion of the stipend and allowances paid to them exempt from taxation.

There is ongoing concern regarding the possibility that sometime in the future, the Australian Tax Office will change the status of ministers and remove the religious practitioner exemption. This has potential financial, human resources and industrial relations impacts, as well as impact on the disciplinary processes of the church. Behind this conversation is the understanding of the theology of ministry as well as the theology of stipends. Some Synods have moved their General Secretary and Associate General Secretary roles out of the placements category and into salaried positions based on legal advice they have received.

The issue raised by some Synods is that because the roles of General Secretary and Associate General Secretary are largely administrative, they may not meet the ATO definition of religious practitioner. Other Synods view the matter differently and maintain that these roles meet the requirements of the ATO ruling on religious practitioners. It is the view of the SA Stipends Committee that those roles do meet the ATO definition of a religious practitioner which refers to pastoral duties (including supervision of those engaged in pastoral duties) or other duties directly related to the practice, study, teaching or propagation of religious belief, which may include activities of a secular nature provided there is a direct link between the conduct of those activities and the religious beliefs of the participants. Both the position descriptions of the General Secretary and the Associate General Secretary have as major responsibilities to provide high level pastoral support and leadership to the Synod. It seems appropriate to ensure these roles remain in the religious practitioner category by paying particular attention to the duties and responsibilities listed in position descriptions.

The SA Synod Stipends Committee is requesting the Synod to affirm the Assembly's Theology of Stipends as the basis on which all our ministry placements are made, including the positions of General Secretary and Associate General Secretary, and to advocate for this in the national conversation.

**Brian Hern**

Chairperson, on behalf of  
SA Synod Stipends Committee

## **PROPOSALS**

### **1. That the Synod:**

**APPROVE the amendment of Section 5 of the Ministerial Stipends and Related Conditions of Placement Handbook as follows (changes highlighted):**

#### **5. ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCE AND ARRANGEMENTS**

**All ministers in placement are entitled to provision of accommodation, whether by provision of an appropriate manse an accommodation allowance**

##### **Schedule A.2**

#### **5.3 Clergy Couples**

**The entitlement to provision of accommodation, whether by provision of an appropriate manse or an accommodation allowance applies equally to all ministers in placement, irrespective of their marital status or living arrangements.**

**Clergy couples who live in their own home, and do so with the approval of the Congregation(s)and Presbytery PRC, will receive a full accommodation allowance each or pro rata if working part time.**

**In relation to clergy couples who live in a manse, whether both are in placement in the same congregation, or in different congregations, one minister is entitled to receive a full accommodation allowance or pro rata if working part time.**

**The change to the current arrangements for clergy couples is to be implemented at change of placement.**

**Any variation to these arrangements is to be determined by Synod Placements Committee in consultation with Presbytery PRC.**

2. That the Synod:

- a) **ENDORSE** the Assembly's Theology of Stipends document as the basis of understanding for all ministry placements including General Secretary and Associate General Secretary, and
- b) **ENCOURAGE** members of the SA Synod Stipends Committee to advocate for this position in the national conversation and
- c) **ENCOURAGE** language in position descriptions that clearly place these roles within the religious practitioner category.

## Ministers Stipend, Allowances & Charges

### SCHEDULE A for 1 January to 30 June 2021

*\*Please note the only change from 2020 is the Beneficiary Fund contributions*

	<i>Item</i>	<i>\$ per year</i>	<i>\$ per quarter</i>	<i>\$ per month</i>	<i>\$ per f/night</i>	<i>\$ per week</i>
	<b>Contributions</b>					
A.1	Minimum Stipend	\$59,778.00	\$14,944.50	\$4,981.50	\$2,299.15	\$1,149.58
A.2	Accommodation Allowance	\$17,293.00	\$4,323.25	\$1,441.08	\$665.12	\$332.56
A.3	Professional Development	\$1,965.00	\$491.25	\$163.75	\$75.58	\$37.79
A.4	Candidates Resources Allowance	\$2,280.00	\$570.00	\$190.00	\$87.69	\$43.85
A.5	Beneficiary Fund or Superannuation	\$8,964.00	\$2,241.00	\$747.00	\$344.77	\$172.38
A.6	MV Depreciation	\$6,260.00	\$1,565.00	\$521.67	\$240.77	\$120.38
A.7	MV Standing Charges	\$3,256.00	\$814.00	\$271.33	\$125.23	\$62.61
A.8	MV Leasing Charges	As specified - depending on vehicle choice etc.				
A.9	Travelling Own vehicle	19.40 cents per kilometre				
A.10	Travelling Leased Vehicle	12.1 cents per kilometre				
A.11	Travelling Retired Ministers / Part Time / Lay Persons / Lay Preachers	49 cents per kilometre				
A.12	Set Minimum Retail Petrol Price	\$1.45 per litre				
A.13	Preaching Fees One Service	\$85.00				
A.14	Preaching Fees two or more services	\$140.00				
A.15	MV Travel Equalisation	\$127.00	\$31.75	\$10.58	\$4.88	\$2.44
A.16	Ministers Benefit Fund	\$2,391.00	\$597.75	\$199.25	\$91.96	\$45.98
A.17	Long Service Leave	\$1,959.00	\$489.75	\$163.25	\$75.35	\$37.67
A.18	Remote Allowance / Moderately Accessible	\$1,648.00	\$412.00	\$137.33	\$63.38	\$31.69
A.19	Remote Allowance/Remote	\$2,472.00	\$618.00	\$206.00	\$95.08	\$47.54
A.20	Remote Allowance/Very Remote	\$3,298.00	\$824.50	\$274.83	\$126.85	\$63.42
	<b>Ministers Contributions</b>					
A.21	MV Leasing Charges	As specified - depending on vehicle choice etc.				
A.22	Beneficiary Fund / Superannuation	\$3,588.00	\$897.00	\$299.00	\$138.00	\$69.00

*Travel adjustment of 0.12 cents per km for every 1 cent variation in fuel price.*

The fortnightly rates are based on 26 pays per year. If there are 27 pays in the year, revised pay rates will need to be calculated.

## STIPENDS COMMITTEE

### Clergy Couples & Accommodation Allowance Where Living in a Manse

(updated 23 October 2020)

#### CURRENT SA POLICY TAKEN FROM THE MINISTERIAL STIPENDS AND CONDITIONS OF PLACEMENT HANDBOOK

##### 5.3 Clergy couples

Clergy couples who live in their own home, and do so with the approval of the Congregation(s) and Presbytery PRC, will receive a full accommodation allowance each or pro rata if working part time.

In relation to clergy couples who live in a manse, each Congregation or other Appointing Body involved in the placements is responsible for appropriate cost sharing. Because the clergy couple have the benefit of the manse, they do not receive an accommodation allowance. The accommodation allowance that a minister in this situation might receive from a Congregation or Appointing Body that is not providing the manse, will be paid to the Congregation that is providing the manse. This is to help offset the costs of providing the manse. Negotiations need to take place between the couple and each Congregation or other Appointing Body in order to identify additional facilities that may be required and appropriate cost sharing of housing a clergy couple.

#### POLICIES OF OTHER SYNODS ARE

##### VICTORIA / TASMANIA: UCA HANDBOOK OF MINISTERIAL PROVISIONS AND CHARGES

##### Clergy Couples

All ministers in placement are entitled to the value of a manse whether by the provision of an appropriate residence or a manse allowance. This entitlement applies, notwithstanding the minister's accommodation arrangements. It can happen that a clergy couple lives in the manse where one of the ministers is in placement. The minister's clergy spouse working in a different placement is entitled to receive a manse allowance from that other placement.

##### QLD SYNOD MINISTRY AGENTS HOUSING POLICY (POL-MAO-02)

8. Ministerial Housing
  - c. Shared Manse: Where the cost of the manse will be shared between two or more congregations or bodies, the contributions towards the cost (eg maintenance, rental, lease) will be negotiated and shared between the bodies.

## 9. GNRC resolution

Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee resolution of 13.111 of 11 December 2013 approved, irrespective of marital status and or living arrangements, all ministers in receipt of a stipend who are entitled to the provision of a manse and are not provided with a manse, are entitled to the provision of the housing allowance equal to their pro-rata stipend.

**NSW/ACT GUIDELINES FOR THE REMUNERATION OF ORDAINED MINISTERS IN SPECIFIED MINISTRIES**

## 6. Residence Benefit

In shared ministries between Appointing Bodies or ministry partners, the shared cost of housing should be negotiated between Appointing Bodies.

**WA – EMAIL FROM MICHAEL PATCHELL (CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER WA SYNOD)**

Couple Clergy Accommodation Policy - Both Ministers would be entitled to the Housing Allowance.

The challenge is the balance of the theology of stipends with the justice issue for clergy couples. It is true that if a manse is provided, then the 'living allowance' aspect is met for a clergy couple; i.e. you can't live in two manses, so if one is provided, why should an accommodation allowance be paid.

But it seems punitive for a clergy person who happens to be married to another clergy person. If one person was not a Minister, then the accommodation allowance would be paid (unless they live in the manse). But in this case, no payment would be made by the employer of the non-clergy person to the church whose manse is being lived in by the non-clergy person. Congregations who have clergy couples living in their manse are receiving a 'bonus' payment that they would not receive if their minister was not married to another minister. In the case of Brougham Place, currently they are, in a sense receiving a discount by not being required to pay one of their ministers an accommodation allowance. When circumstances change and placements change, congregations would have to adjust their budgets to allow for this change.

It seems more just that the accommodation allowance be paid to the minister rather than the congregation. In this way congregations also meet the budgetary requirements according to their placement FTE, rather than the particular circumstance of having a clergy couple living in a manse.

## BACKGROUND

### Current Clergy Couples' Arrangements in Synod of SA (23 October 2020)

#### Clergy couples in own home

Currently there are nine clergy couples in SA who are living in their own home. In all of these cases, both ministers are paid HA in accordance with their %FTE.

#### Clergy couples in manses

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Both ministers in part time placements  | Manse – one placement provides, the other<br>Contributes                        |
| 2. | Both ministers in full time placements  | Manse – one placement provides, the other pays<br>HA to the providing placement |
| 3. | One minister full time, the other in 2 part<br>time placements in the same location | Manse provided  |

Clergy couples in their own home are treated as individuals, but clergy couples in manses are not. This is an issue of equity – treating ministers differently because of their living arrangements.

The question: do we adhere to the theology of stipends, or do we treat ministers as individuals so that all are treated equitably?

#### **Options:**

1. We could suggest that clergy couples in their own home are only entitled to one HA between them (adhering to theology of stipends).
2. As the preceding paper suggests, each minister is treated individually, and so if a clergy couple is living in the manse, the non-manse providing placement pays the HA to their minister.
3. If living in a manse, the non-manse providing placement could pay a portion of the HA to the manse providing placement, and the remaining portion to the minister.

#### **Another possible scenario:**

If Minister A is 0.8FTE and Minister B is 1.0FTE - could be Minister A in a congregation and Minister B in Synod Office:

If Minister A is living in their congregation's manse – do we treat Ministers A and B separately (as per the notion of equity) or should Minister B forego 0.2FTE of HA to pay for the less than 1.0FTE of their spouse. If Minister A happens to be even less than 0.8FTE, then Minister A's gap in "entitlement" of a manse is even greater.

Another possible option is that the clergy couple live in a rental property – expectation of shared rental costs between placements, or both ministers are paid HA in line with their %FTE.

So – do we follow Theology of stipends or is it an equity issue (treating ministry agents differently depending on their marital arrangements), or .....?

It is likely to be difficult to implement a change to own home HA payments. Perhaps the best course is to address the equity issue, and determine that each minister be treated individually regardless of their marital status/ living arrangement. Due to the impact on congregations/ placements, implementation could be grandfathered, so that it comes into effect when one member of the couple has a change of placement. This would be when the impact would be felt anyway.

## PROPOSAL

**That the Section 5 of the Ministerial Stipends and Related Conditions of Placement Handbook be changed as follows (changes highlighted):**

### 5. ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCE AND ARRANGEMENTS

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#### Schedule A.2

#### 5.3 Clergy Couples

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In relation to clergy couples who live in a manse, whether both are in placement in the same congregation, or in different congregations, one minister is entitled to receive a full accommodation allowance or pro rata if working part time.

The change to the current arrangements for clergy couples is to be implemented at change of placement.

Any variation to these arrangements is to be determined by Synod Placements Committee in consultation with Presbytery PRC.

# Theology of Stipends

*Prepared by Rev Dr Chris Walker National Consultant Theology and Discipleship  
Received by the ASC in November 2009 (Minute 09.59)*

1. The idea of a stipend arises from a theology of ministry, and in particular ordained ministry. The word 'stipend' comes from Middle English: from Old French or Latin, from *stips* 'wages' and *pendere* 'to pay.' It is regular sum paid to ministers. The church has traditionally spoken of it as a 'living allowance' paid to ministers to cover their needs as they exercise their ministry rather than a salary. There is a mutual relationship between the church and the minister, a covenant relationship, in which the church provides for ministers so they may fulfil their calling acknowledged by the church. In what follows this will be more fully explained.

## **The nature of stipend**

2. In the church a stipend is a form of payment provided to ministers to permit them to devote themselves to ministry. Normally the ministry will be full time. The stipend is given to enable the person to be free of avoidable anxiety about having to obtain food, clothing, shelter and other necessities. The stipend is a 'monetary allowance' rather than a salary or fee for services rendered.
3. There is an important difference between the terms 'stipend' and 'salary'. A salary is remuneration for work carried out, usually on the basis of an assessment of the value of the kind of work in question. A stipend, while paid to ministers in a general way for their ministerial work, is not to be construed as a payment for particular work. It is not paid for particular duties or hours of work. The relationship between an employer and a salary earner is contractual. There are contractual obligations on the part of each which are enforceable in law. The relationship between a congregation, or other responsible body for a placement, and a minister is covenantal. A congregation, or other body, covenants to pay a stipend to a minister but that minister is, strictly speaking, not accountable to that congregation, or body, but to the presbytery or other council of oversight. This, of course, is not to suggest that there is no sense in which a minister is accountable to the congregation or body in which he or she exercises ministry. The covenant between the responsible body and minister, involving concern for justice and care, means that the stipend will always be the first charge on any church budget.
4. Underlying the difference between a stipend and a salary is the distinctive nature of the ordained ministries of the church (Minister of the Word and Deacon). Although ministers may describe the Uniting Church, or their congregation or other responsible body, as their 'employer', their ministry is not simply a form of employment. It is grounded in a call from God to ministry, confirmed by the church. Although in a general sense ministers serve their congregation, or the particular group or community of people to whom they minister, and are responsive to it, they are not 'paid' or 'remunerated' for particular services to the congregation or other group involved. There is always a broader vision and a broader range of needs to be considered, and their calling makes them responsible to God and the whole church for their choices. They are ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ serving God's reign not simply carrying out prescribed responsibilities. Congregations and ministers negotiating for a call share their expectations and the presbytery or other council of oversight has the responsibility to deal with issues or problems.
5. There are some pressures on the notion of stipend, such as the acceptance of part time ministries (see below) and the professionalization of ministry. Ministry does require high levels of competence and conduct, high personal and 'professional' standards. However the idea that this should mean a highly remunerated ministry stands in tension with the basic understanding of ministry as grounded in God's call to serve through the church by the proclamation of the gospel in word and deed. It is a mistake to treat the stipend like a salary package. Ministers themselves need to

appreciate this difference concerning their remuneration especially in an aggressive capitalist culture.

### **Ordination and stipend**

6. While every member of the Uniting Church is “to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant” (Basis of Union par 13) and will provide “for the exercise by men and women of the gifts God bestows upon them, and will order its life in response to God’s call to enter more fully into mission” (BU par 13) ordained ministers have a particular responsibility to do so. The Uniting Church “will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise among its members women and men called of God to preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in government and to serve those in need in the world” (BU par 14). It is assured that God “will, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, call and set apart members of the Church to be ministers of the Word” (BU par 14a). Ordained ministers will “preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments and exercise pastoral care so that all may be equipped for their particular ministries, thus maintaining the apostolic witness to Christ in the Church” (BU par 14a).
7. The ecumenical World Council of Churches document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* says that in order to fulfil its mission, “the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity” (BEM p.21). Such persons since very early times have been ordained. “The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry” (BEM p.22). It goes on to say that the authority of the ordained minister derives from Jesus Christ, who has received it from the Father and who confers it by the Holy Spirit through the act of ordination. It points out: “the authority of the ordained ministry is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person but as a gift for the continuing edification of the body in and for which the minister has been ordained” (BEM p.22).
8. The payment of a stipend, rather than a wage or salary, reflects this special relationship between ordained ministers and the church. In the Uniting Church the call to ministry experienced by a person is confirmed by the church and, following satisfactory completion of theological education and ministerial formation and acceptance of a call to an approved placement, the church sets the person apart as a Minister of the Word or Deacon through ordination. This is carried out by a presbytery by prayer and the laying on of hands in the presence of a worshipping congregation.
9. Thereafter the church undertakes to provide such ministers with a stipend so that they are able to exercise the ministry to which God has called them and to which the church has set them apart without being preoccupied with having to provide their own financial support for that ministry. Those who are ordained are not employed by the church and hence are not paid a salary or wage. Rather the church orders its life so that the person whom God has called and the church has set apart for ministry is able to exercise that ministry in an approved placement and is provided with a living allowance in order to carry out that ministry.

### **Biblical background**

10. In looking to references in the Bible that relate to ministry maintenance, it is important to keep in mind the needs of the whole community and the justice that God calls for. There is also the biblical bias to the poor and marginalised, such as the passages about the sabbatical year and the year of jubilee (Deut. 15:1-8, Leviticus 25).

11. The key Old Testament passage that relates to ministerial support is Numbers 18. It deals with the provision made for the priests. God provided land for the people who in response and gratitude were expected to tithe to the Lord. From these tithes the priests were provided for well for their services. In the New Testament there are the words of Jesus to the seventy as they go on mission which includes the statement "the labourer deserves to be paid" (Luke 10:7). This was interpreted by the Apostolic Church to mean that religious leaders were entitled to be provided for adequately by the people they served.
12. Paul drew on both the Old Testament precedent and Jesus' saying in writing to the Corinthians: "Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is sacrificed on the altar? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:13-14). Similarly in Timothy there are the quotes "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading the grain" and "The labourer deserves to be paid" (1 Timothy 5:18).
13. Paul therefore held that he and others had a right to be paid for their services for the gospel. He also believed he was free to waive that right when he thought that it would get in the way of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:1-18, 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:8). He sometimes supported himself by tentmaking (Acts 18:1-3). Although he was not dependent on the church for a living, at times he did receive support (2 Cor. 11:9, Phil. 4:18).
14. Hence there is strong biblical evidence that it is appropriate for leaders to be maintained from the people's gifts to God. Jesus does teach that we are not to be anxious about food and clothing but to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness (Matthew 6:25-33). Jesus' cautionary statements concerning serving God or wealth still apply as well (Luke 16:13). In Peter there is the warning to elders "to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it – not for sordid gain but eagerly" (1 Peter 5:2). So while preoccupation with material things is inappropriate, this is not an objection to the principle of an adequately paid ministry.

### **Developments in Church History**

15. Throughout the centuries the provision of support for those in ministry has varied greatly. Generally it has been modest and has been related to the community standards in which the minister, cleric or bishop served.
16. Each of the three church traditions that came into the Uniting Church had provided a stipend to those who were ordained to ministry. The provision of a minimum stipend was taken into the Uniting Church at the time of Union and has subsequently continued in all synods.
17. Historically ministers have been provided with housing (a manse) or an allowance in lieu of a manse. Many ministers, especially those getting closer to retirement age, are living in their own homes. Most ministers are married so provision for the minister and his or her family is required. The needs of single ministers and ministers at different stages of family responsibility, varies greatly which impacts on the provision of suitable housing.

### **Ordained versus Lay Ministry**

18. As indicated above the word stipend relates to ordained ministry. This is not to downplay the value of lay ministry but there is a difference between ministry that comes from a call of God to be a Minister of the Word or Deacon, a call which is acknowledged by the church, including the act of setting apart by ordination, and is life long, and other forms of ministry that are to be exercised in a particular time and place.

19. Nevertheless, even though there is a difference, the Uniting Church strongly recognises lay ministry. The Basis of Union clearly states this recognition: "The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ" (BU par 13). All members have a role to play. Nevertheless, those members of the church who are set apart to be Ministers of the Word or Deacons have a particular responsibility for preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, exercising pastoral care, equipping people for ministry, thus maintaining the apostolic witness to Christ in the church (BU par 14a). The training for ordained ministry is not simply to be able to fulfil certain tasks but to be formed for leadership in the Christian community with the responsibility to be faithful to the apostolic tradition.
20. In the Uniting Church ordination service the person to be ordained as a Minister of the Word is given a charge which includes the following. "Taking Christ the Good Shepherd as your example, you are called to lead God's people in worship, witness and service; to equip them for their ministry and mission; and to work with them in building up the body of Christ. You are called to strive for peace and unity among all Christian people, especially among those with whom you serve." The words for a person becoming ordained as a Deacon are similar but speak of 'Christ the Servant' and being 'a faithful pastor of God's people'.
21. The questions are introduced with the following. "In this ordination the Uniting Church in Australia acts and speaks within the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. God in Christ acts and speaks through all that the Church does and in obedience to God's will. God gives you grace and authority for this ministry." The questions include, "Do you believe you are truly called by God and the Church to the office and work of a Minister of the Word/Deacon?"
22. Ordination then is not just a local matter but links the ordained person with the church universal. There is an authority given for ministry that is to be accepted with both appropriate humility and appreciation for its significance. Providing a stipend has to do with the church recognising ordained ministry as having a particular role and authority and enabling it to be carried out.

### **Full time and part time**

23. There are now many ministries that are part time rather than full time. This includes ordained ministries as well as many paid lay ministries. This makes it look as though a part time stipend is payment for hours worked. The part time minister may or may not gain income in some other way. Nevertheless, the idea of ordained ministry is grounded in a call from God recognised by the church. The resultant relationship between ministers and those among whom they minister remains fundamental. To move from the concept of a stipend to the notion of a salary package for part time ministries would adversely affect both the relationship between ministers and their people and the approach of ministers to their work.

### **Stipend and other ministries**

24. Stipend relates to ordained ministry. Other ministries do not have the same relationship to the church. While the Uniting Church gives emphasis to the ministry of the whole people of God, that does not mean there is no difference between the ordained and lay people in ministry. Lay ministry positions are appropriately more defined in terms of role and payment and the word wage or salary does apply. This is not to reduce the significance of lay ministry but to acknowledge that it does not have the same relationship to the church catholic as that of ordained ministry. This also means that payment for lay ministry can appropriately vary from that of the stipend

depending on the nature of the work expected and the skills of the person. Remuneration for those in lay ministry is guided by awards and is determined in relation to the particular responsibilities and experience required for that ministry.

### **Guidelines**

25. The Synod of NSW and the ACT sets its stipend with reference to the following principle: "The stipend of a minister of the Uniting Church shall be such that it will provide the support necessary to allow ministers to devote their whole time and talents to the service of God, and that the income thus provided will enable them to live with a proper sense of economic independence and Christian stewardship, and so reflect through their ministry and family life true Christian participation in the riches, joys, benefits and service of God's creation."
26. The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania makes use of the following principle: "The traditions from which we come expect a great deal of ministers. They are to become and remain Biblical scholars, articulate interpreters of current events, pastors with competence in the professional skills of psychology and human relations, as well as developing a quality of spirituality which 'both by life and doctrine sets forth God's true and living word.' It is unreasonable to expect this order of contribution to the life of the church if ministers are preoccupied and anxious about money, or are spending their time in an effort to save or earn money."
27. The principles for setting the minimum stipend stem from the biblical concept of **justice** which is covenantal. It is concerned with the right relationship of people with God and with one another. Micah says that what the Lord requires is that people do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). God's goodness and justice means fair dealing with people in daily life and treating those who are poor and needy with justice and compassion.
28. This biblical concept of justice requires that the stipend should be fair and reasonable. A fair stipend should relate to the economy of the nation and to the national wage level and reflect the national economy. Without implying that the ministry should be recompensed as a profession, the qualifications and competencies expected of the ordained ministry should be given some consideration in setting a fair stipend.
29. The stipend should be adequate. The stipend paid should be sufficient to cover the living expenses of a minister and his or her family living and sharing in the life of the community. While ministers are in active ministry their remuneration includes not only stipend but also travel, housing or residence benefit. It should be recognised that ministers do have to provide their own housing for retirement.
30. The stipend should be appropriate. The stipend is intended to cover the minister's needs and responsibilities common to all church families. When the work of a minister has particular expenses and obligations which are undertaken on behalf of the church, it is appropriate that consideration be given to meeting these in the shared fellowship of the church.
31. Judgments therefore have to be made by the appropriate council of the church, the synod in the case of the Uniting Church, about a fair and reasonable minimum stipend and allowances for those in the area for which it has responsibility.

### **Contextual considerations**

32. From the beginning of the church it has been a fellowship that has been committed to sharing its poverty and wealth. One factor in determining the level of stipend is the ability of the church to pay. For particular reasons the minimum stipend may be beyond the means of a local congregation. However the determining factor is not only the ability of a congregation to pay but the capacity of the synod as a whole to

meet the cost of the stipend. The synod and presbyteries have responsibilities to ensure that ministers are provided for as per their terms of placement. Ministers should not be expected to bear the shortfall in particular situations.

33. The level of stipend is related to the community in which the minister lives. It should be at a level that would meet the costs of living in that community and fulfilling the ministerial responsibilities. This involves the church in making judgments as to what is fair and reasonable, adequate and appropriate for ministers and their families.
34. The attitudes of Christian people to possessions and wealth are not limited to the community standards in which they live. The Christian standard of living is also to take into account the world situation which includes being conscious of the needs and poverty of people in other countries. As the church decides upon appropriate levels for the stipend this broader perspective is to be taken into consideration.
35. If ministers are in part time placements, the proportion of the working week to be devoted to ministry needs to be agreed upon and reflected in the proportion of the full time stipend to be paid. This should not mean any departure from the essential notion of the stipend.
36. The family situation of ministers varies greatly including whether or not the spouse earns an income. If a family has particular needs then other ways of addressing them should be provided and not through the stipend. Ministers whose family income is greater than their needs have the responsibility of exercising stewardship concerning their income.
37. There is no national stipend. Nevertheless, the Uniting Church has seen fit to write into its regulations certain provisions regarding ministerial entitlements. Regulation 2.4.20 (a) states, "A Minister called to serve in an approved placement under the jurisdiction of the Church shall be paid a stipend: (i) if full time, not less than the minimum rate determined by the Synod; (ii) if part-time, calculated on a proportionate basis of the minimum rate determined by the Synod." There is a regulation that allows less than the minimum stipend to be paid as agreed upon in exceptional circumstances (2.4.20 (b)). There are also regulations concerning such matters as housing and retirement. The Beneficiary Fund functions according to a theology of stipends.
38. Each synod sets its own level of minimum stipend taking into consideration community standards and also with reference to the decisions of the other synods. There are some differences between what is paid and provided by 'wealthy congregations' compared with other congregations. There are loadings in some placements, especially non congregational ones. The Victorian synod has a 30% limit on this. Complete parity is unrealistic as there are contextual reasons for providing loadings due to the nature of particular ministries. Nevertheless, ordained ministers should not commence a placement on the basis of its financial rewards but out of a sense of call. The church promises to provide for their living needs.

## **Conclusion**

39. The Uniting Church, like other denominations, uses the word 'stipend' to describe the remuneration provided to ordained ministers. The notion of stipend arises out of a theology of ministry in which the idea of a covenantal relationship between ministers and those among whom they minister is central. Ministers are given a 'living allowance' in order to carry out their call to serve God through the church. This distinguishes it from views about remuneration which are appropriate in a contractual relationship. Salary and wage earners are paid for what they do and the amount reflects some independent assessment of the value of their work.
40. The stipend paid to ministers is related to the particular ministry exercised but is not to be construed as remuneration for services rendered. An ordained minister is paid

a stipend in order to exercise a ministry to which he or she is called by God and the church. Ministers are accountable to the presbytery, to the church as a whole and finally to God in carrying out their ministry of serving the gospel in word and deed.

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This paper has drawn on papers prepared for the Synod of South Australia 1984, the Queensland Synod 1998, the Synod of Victoria 1999, and the Assembly 2009.