

Paper V1

Resource sharing task group

Raising the ministry and mission fund

United Church 2017
Church 2018
Reformed Church 2018
Church 2018

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Raising the ministry and mission fund

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Paul Whittle moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	None
Draft resolution(s)	None

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To respond to a Mission Council request to explore and compare the different ways in which the synods approach raising the Ministry and Mission fund.
Main points	This paper compares approaches to raising the Ministry and Mission Fund across the synods and offers the conclusion that the majority of synods would not favour a common approach at this stage as they each have good, if different, systems in place.
Previous relevant documents	None of direct relevance.
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod Treasurers and Finance Officers.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	No direct immediate impact.

Raising the ministry and mission fund

1. The October 2016 meeting of Mission Council passed the following resolution “recognising that synods are raising M&M contributions and assessing need and local church resources in different ways, Mission Council asks the resource sharing task group to identify the formulae used in each synod and report to Mission Council regarding the commonalities and differences” (Minute 16/54).
2. In response to this the resource sharing task group, in combination with the Synod Treasurers, engaged in an extensive piece of research. This concluded that the principle of covenant remains important and that there is a clear commitment to sustain the giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund. It further concluded that changing circumstances, especially church closures and reduced membership, may take us to the point where this becomes increasingly difficult. Almost inevitably, the synods have their own ways of responding to the challenge. Indeed, it would not be easy to present a comparison of formulae to Mission Council as there are many relevant elements.
3. However, we happily share the main points identified in the research. A tabulated summary of the results can be obtained from Paul Whittle, Convenor of the resource sharing task group on request.
4. In most instances the previous year’s figure provides the starting point for identifying an initial offer, in some cases treating that as a flat figure, in others seeking an increase. On the whole, synods set requests centrally, but then are ready to negotiate with individual churches.
5. The synod ‘offer’ needs to be made, in the first instance, before the response from the churches has been received. The majority of synods can generally stay close to their original offer, though some report that there can be variance.
6. Most synods do not take account of the actual provision of ministry, following the principle of ‘ability to pay’ as the determining factor. However, ecumenical changes can provide an unexpected challenge. Most, though not all, synods include a small buffer in order to cope with unanticipated changes.
7. A number of synods use membership as a basis for the calculation, and a majority include it in part. However, there is no commonality on this. Other main factors used in the calculation are ability to pay and turnover.
8. Synods use a range of formulae to calculate appropriate targets. We have not received detailed data on these, but note three common threads: firstly, it is usual to take account of individual circumstances; secondly, it is usual to place some limit on the increase or decrease from one year to the next; thirdly, Local Ecumenical Partnerships frequently cause complicating variations.
9. Most synods allow for negotiation and most experience some appeals against the level that is suggested but, on the whole, most churches seem to be realistic about costs. Some, though not all, synods raise an additional levy as a contribution to running the synod.

10. The majority of synods did not favour a centralised system of giving to replace the current situation where each synod places its own interpretation on how best to address this issue. Some agreed it could be possible, but none were advocating such a change.
11. The feeling was that each synod knows its churches and is best placed to enable them to respond well. Some could see that their system might benefit from minor tweaks, but none wanted a wholesale change. There was a feeling that it is working, and is best left to continue working.
12. The general feeling was that things can continue as they are for the foreseeable future, but some expressed concern as to how quickly we might turn an unknown corner and find the current system unsustainable.
13. It was appreciated that there are regular attempts to communicate how the Ministry and Mission Fund works and how the money is spent. However, there was concern that many seem not to really understand and the need for continuing advocacy and education was stressed.
14. In short, we have not exactly answered the question, but hope we have provided some insight as to how the synods respond to the challenge and opportunity of the covenant that produces the Ministry and Mission Fund.