

Ministries Committee

Gift Policy

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Paul Whittle: moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 23 General Assembly adopts the policy contained in this paper.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Ministers will sometimes be given and/or offered personal gifts from individuals or families. This policy safeguards ministers against any allegation of malpractice by establishing a procedure for registering such gifts.
Main points	a) A minister may appropriately be offered a gift. b) It is good practice for that to be appropriately known and recorded.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Partner denominations.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None

1. Generosity is one of the marks of our faith. As part of that, ministers will sometimes be offered personal gifts by individuals or families.
2. Sadly, there have been cases in other contexts where an individual has used their position to attract such benefits from vulnerable individuals. The URC wants to safeguard its ministers from any accusation of such malpractice.
3. The appended gift policy provides an appropriate opportunity for registering such gifts, whether accepted or not.

Appendix 1

Gift Policy for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers

The Bible is rich in its encouragement of generosity: the command to give freely in Matthew 10:8; the cheerful generosity of the Macedonian church in 2 Corinthians 8:1-2; sacrificial giving in 1 John 3:16-18. It is a biblical imperative.

Gifts may be given to Ministers of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs (hereafter referred to as 'ministers') for all sorts of reasons, and can come in all shapes and sizes, from the gift for speaking at a church event other than a normal preaching engagement through to a gift from a member of the congregation to express thanks for a 'job well done', or to help out at a difficult time. This policy is written according to UK legislation, and is about protecting the reputations of ministers and the church, ensuring good practice and expectations of ministry.

The Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour include the following for ministers:

3a Personal integrity and health

- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.

This policy refers to gifts from individuals rather than leaving gifts from local pastorates or other posts, and gifts received from speaking engagements. Neither does it apply to wedding or funeral fees, which are received as part of general ministerial duties.

Keeping the above in mind:

1. Gifts and hospitality, within certain limits, remain a legitimate means of fostering good relationships.
2. Gifts and hospitality can, when excessive, constitute a bribe and/or a conflict of interest. Care and due diligence should always be exercised when giving or receiving any form of gift or hospitality on behalf of the Church.
3. The following factors should be considered to test whether gifts, hospitality or expenses are made for the right reason
 - if a gift or hospitality, it should be given clearly as an act of appreciation;
 - if an expense, then for a *bona fide* business purpose;
 - no obligation – the gift, hospitality or expense should not place the recipient under any obligation;
 - no expectation – expectations are not created in the giver or an associate of the giver;

- made openly – if made in secret and undocumented, then the purpose will be open to question;
 - reasonable value – the size of the gift is small and the value of the hospitality or expense accords with general business practice. Cash should be neither given nor received as a gift under any circumstances;
 - appropriate – the nature of the gift, hospitality or expense is appropriate to the relationship and accords with general business practice;
 - legal – the gift or hospitality is compliant with relevant laws;
 - reported and documented – the gift, hospitality or expense should be recorded and reported to the Synod Moderator, and a note placed on the minister's/CRCW's file.
4. All gifts and hospitality offered, unless of a nominal value (under £100), will be recorded and documented as above, whether accepted or not.