

Paper K1

General Report

Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The Revd David Grosch-Miller david.grosch-miller@urc.org.uk
Action required	For information only.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To report the work of the committee and its oversight of welfare funds.
Main points	The work of the committee is necessarily confidential but the report draws attention to matters of general concern.
Previous relevant documents	Paper I1 Report to Mission Council November 2020 .
Consultation has taken place with...	Finance Committee, Synod Moderators and the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	No proposed changes to existing provision.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

Introduction

This committee considers the cases of ministers who are referred to it, usually by synods, often at times of difficulty. It also deals with welfare and emergency matters including the use of welfare funds. Because of the confidential nature of its work the report is in general terms only.

Committee members: Convenor: the Revd David Grosch-Miller (from July 2018), the Revd Bridget Powell (from July 2019), Professor Malcolm Johnson (from July 2018), the Revd Brian Jolly (from July 2020), the Revd Dr Irene John (from July 2020), ex officio: URC Treasurer (or Deputy Treasurer) and the General Secretary.

The committee has met via Zoom throughout the pandemic and while there are some limitations this has enabled the committee to make decisions in a timely fashion. Urgent requests are occasionally dealt with via email.

1. Pastoral reference work

- 1.1 The committee responds to requests to support ministers and their families that are received from Synod Moderators and Assembly Officers. In the last year requests have included the need to support ministers because of delays in appointments resulting from Covid-19 restrictions.
- 1.2 There has been an increase in the number of requests for help with housing costs from retired ministers and those about to retire that lie beyond the scope of the Retired Ministers Housing Society.
- 1.3 The committee has expressed concern that the need for careful financial planning by ministers for retirement should be recognised early in ministry.
- 1.4 The churches' ministerial counselling service is a confidential support available to all ministers and their immediate family. The service has been appreciated by a number of ministers and was supported by grants of £11,648 in 2020

2. Welfare grants

- 2.1 PRWC has oversight of historic funds that are held for designated purposes and available to stipendiary ministers of the United Reformed Church. The level of grants available is set from time to time by the committee, and these are paid on application for the following purposes: education fees for children in URC affiliated independent schools, musical instruments for children, school uniform and equipment, public transport travel costs for school attendance. Further grants are paid at bereavement, as a Christmas gift to widows and widowers, and as a contribution to the housing costs of a minister's spouse following divorce or separation. The committee also receives requests for financial assistance to ministers for purposes not covered by the historic funds.
- 2.2 Welfare grants totaling £54,417.86 were paid in 2020. The income from historic funds was supplemented by grants from the Assembly budget of £17,000 in 2020.

3. With thanks

- 3.1 We have welcomed Irene John and Brian Jolly to the committee. We have appreciated the attendance of the General Secretary pending the appointment of a Deputy General Secretary, Discipleship. Camilla Veitch has completed her term of service and we have valued her insights and wisdom as we have wrestled some difficult issues. John Piper, in his capacity as URC Deputy Treasurer, has been a highly valued member of the committee, and we express our thanks as he comes to the end of his term of service. Samantha Bircham is the vital administrative cord that holds all our work together and her commitment and attention to detail are greatly appreciated.