

# Paper K1

## General report

### Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

#### Basic information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	The Revd David Grosch-Miller david.grosch-miller@urc.org.uk The Revd Adrian Bulley adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	For information only.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report the work of the committee and its oversight of welfare funds.
<b>Main points</b>	The work of the committee is necessarily confidential, but the report draws attention to matters of general concern.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Report to General Assembly 2021.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Finance Committee, Secretary to Ministries and Synod Moderators as appropriate.

#### Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	No proposed changes to existing provision.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

#### Introduction

This pastoral reference and welfare committee (PRWC) 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 - July 2022)  
The Revd Bridget Banks (from November 2021)  
The Revd Dr Irene John (from July 2020)  
Mrs Hilary Miles (from July 2022)

Ex-officio: Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), URC Treasurer (or Deputy Treasurer) and the General Secretary.

In attendance: Secretary for Ministries

The committee has continued to meet via Zoom and 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 when appointments end and there is a delay in identifying the appropriate next step.
- 1.2 There has been an increase in the number of requests for help with housing costs not covered by the Plan for Partnership.
- 1.3 The committee continues to express concern that the need for careful financial planning by ministers for retirement should be recognised early in ministry. The committee has contributed to the continuing discussion about financial concerns for ministers arising from the changes to the URC pension scheme.
- 1.4 The churches' ministerial counselling service offers confidential support to all ministers and their immediate family. The service has been appreciated by several ministers and was supported by grants of £15,895.50 in 2022.

## **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 £56,302.29 were paid in 2022. The income from historic funds was supplemented by grants from General Funds of £22,000.

## **3. With thanks**

- 3.1 We have welcomed Bridget Banks, Adrian Bulley (DGS Discipleship), Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer), Hilary Miles and Elizabeth Welch (Convenor-elect). We have appreciated the attendance of the Secretary for Ministries, Nicola Furley-Smith. Malcolm Johnson and Bridget Powell have completed their terms of service and we have valued their insights and wisdom as we have wrestled with some difficult issues. Izumi Nishizono is the administrative cog that helps us to operate efficiently. Mary Steele continues to be the sympathetic voice, whose knowledge and experience are invaluable. And, finally, our thanks go to David Grosch-Miller whose wisdom, insight and care has more than ably guided the committee.