

## 17. Connexional Allowances Committee

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<b>Resolutions</b>	<p>17/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>17/2. The Conference adopts the Report and the recommendations in sections 1, 2 and 3.</p> <p>17/3. The Conference amends SO 804(2) as follows: (2) Ministers and probationers on being appointed for the first time to a station in the home work within the control of the Church shall be eligible to receive financial assistance according to need from the Methodist Church Fund. Assistance may be given by way of grant or loan or a combination of both, according to criteria approved by the Methodist Council. Payment shall be made by the Connexional Team which shall also deal with any related administrative matters which may arise. <del>This clause shall not apply to any such person aged 55 or more (taking age as at 31st August next following acceptance as a candidate) unless the Methodist Council judges it necessary to give assistance in the light of special circumstances.</del></p> <p>17/4. The Conference adopts the Report in section 4 and the recommendations in paragraph 4.21.</p>

### Summary of content

<b>Subject and aims</b>	<p>The Report covers the Committee's customary portfolio of topics related to stipends, allowances and other financial provisions, grants made and its other activities.</p> <p>It also reports on and makes recommendations in respect of the preaching fee review recently undertaken as detailed below.</p>
<b>Main points</b>	<p>Section 1 covers stipends, allowances above stipend and other allowances, fees, rates and expenses for 2019/2020.</p> <p>Section 2 reports on the funds and trusts managed by the Committee.</p> <p>Section 3 summarises other work and activities in which the Committee has been and will be involved.</p> <p>Section 4 presents the promised report on the review of the preaching fees.</p>
<b>Background context and relevant documents</b>	The Committee's report to the 2018 Conference (Agenda p. 102) on preaching fees and (Agenda p. 124-6) on allowances above stipend.

## Summary of impact

<b>Standing Orders</b>	As a result of paragraph 1.22, the last sentence in SO 804(2) is to be revoked.
<b>Financial</b>	<p>Paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4, on stipends and allowances above stipend, impact Circuits and other employing bodies, though the figures have been published in advance for budget purposes.</p> <p>Paragraphs 1.17 and 1.19 on sabbaticals and computers in ministry impact Circuits and other employing bodies and again the figures have already been published.</p> <p>Paragraph 1.22, removing the age limit of ministers eligible to receive initial financial support, has a minor impact on the Methodist Church Fund.</p> <p>Paragraph 1.28 on the Living Wage impacts any body within the Church which employs lay people.</p> <p>Paragraph 4.21 on preaching fees has no financial impact in 2019/2020.</p>

The Connexional Allowances Committee's report to the 2019 Conference covers the customary update on stipends and allowances, includes progress reports on other work and activities in which the Committee has engaged, and is presented with the approval of the Methodist Council.

The report is divided into four sections, as follows:

1. Recommendations for stipends and allowances 2019/2020.
2. Report on Funds and Trusts within the Committee's remit.
3. Other matters of report from the Committee.
4. Report and recommendations relating to preaching fees paid to supernumerary presbyters.

The Committee's new recommendations this year are **highlighted** in the text.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STIPENDS AND ALLOWANCES 2019/2020**

- 1.1 The Committee makes the following recommendations, taking into account past resolutions of the Conference on stipends and allowances and data available from HM Government.

#### **Standard stipend**

- 1.2 The resolutions of the 2012 Conference fixed the stipend increase formula for the period until 31 August 2015 and were renewed for periods of three further years by the Conferences of 2015 and 2018. The formula will be used until 31 August 2021 and reviewed in the year 2020/2021.
- 1.3 Using the index numbers published in October 2018, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) movement for the period September 2017 to September 2018 was +2.4% and the Average Weekly Earnings Index (AWEI) movement for the period July 2017 to July 2018 was +3.2%: the average of these is 2.8%. **In accordance with the decision on the stipend review formula by the 2018 Conference (as in paragraph 1.2), the annual standard stipend for the year**

**beginning 1 September 2019 is therefore increased by 2.8% to £24,852** (rounding up to the next highest figure divisible by 12, to give a monthly stipend of exactly £2,071).

#### **Additional allowances**

- 1.4 **The following allowances are applied for ministers for 2019/2020, in the light of the decisions taken by the 2018 Conference. Whilst it is anticipated that the percentages will apply for the foreseeable future, the amounts are for 2019/2020, based the standard stipend in paragraph 1.3.** The implementation timescale will be as follows: where the new scale of allowances gives a postholder an increase it is applied from 1 September 2019; existing postholders whose allowances decrease retain the present percentage until the term of their appointment ends; those newly appointed from 1 September 2019 receive the new allowances, whether greater or less than or equal to the percentage until 31 August.

<b>Role, post or office held</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>£</b>
The President of the Conference	30	7456
The Secretary of the Conference	30	7456
Connexional Secretary (see paragraph 1.5)	25	6213
Separated District Chair	25	6213
Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order	25	6213
Superintendent	10	2485
Synod Secretary (see paragraph 1.6)	5	1243
Principal of Training Institution <sup>1</sup>	25	6213
All other ministers in appointments as defined in paragraph 1.7	0, 10 or 20	0, 2485 or 4970

- 1.5 This category includes the Assistant Secretary of the Conference and, when the posts are held by ministers, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice.
- 1.6 The 2016 Conference agreed that the Synod Secretary's allowance be gradually withdrawn. It is retained by existing incumbents until their appointment ceases but does not apply to new appointments.
- 1.7 This category includes ministers serving in the Connexional Team or stationed to appointments within the control of the Methodist Council; staff members of Training Institutions and the Deputy Warden of the MDO. As per the decision of the 2018 Conference, these allowances will be set by the Methodist Council Remuneration Committee, having regard to the lay salary structure for such (or comparable) posts.
- 1.8 In addition to the above allowances related to roles, the Committee affirms that the allowances and other financial provisions agreed by the 2016 Conference based on location continue to apply. These include an additional allowance of 16% of stipend for all ministers stationed in the Shetland Islands, the Scilly Isles, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Also, the short-term provisions for financially supporting ministers stationed in the Channel Islands and Isle of Man who have children at university, agreed by the 2018 Conference, were

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<sup>1</sup> There are two posts at present held by ministers, viz. the Director of Methodist Formation at the Queen's Foundation and the Principal of Cliff College.

implemented. The Connexional Team agreed to take on board the longer-term issues – financial and otherwise – related to ministers being stationed in non-UK territories<sup>2</sup>.

- 1.9 The Committee advises that the provision made in its report to the 2016 Conference (page 50, paragraph 20) in respect of the Malta appointment which was invoked during the year 2016/2017, following the Brexit referendum and consequent fall in the pound sterling against the euro, remains in place. The same arrangement has been applied to the Rome appointment, for the same reason, as from 1 September 2017. These situations will continue to be kept under review.

### **Relocation allowance**

- 1.10 The Committee recommends that the maximum allowance payable by the receiving Circuit (or other responsible body) to ministers upon moving manse remains at £600 and, in the case of two ministers sharing the same manse, it is one payment of £800. It is clarified that this payment is in addition to the full cost of travel and removals, as defined in SO 528.
- 1.11 The Committee affirms the decision of the 2015 Conference that this relocation allowance shall also apply to ministers (in appointments in the control of the Church) upon becoming supernumeraries. The costs shall be met from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD), as are their removal costs already. It is affirmed that this provision made be invoked once only, in situations (increasingly) where supernumerary ministers move and continue in active work before final retirement.
- 1.12 The Committee affirms that this provision applies to the widows or widowers of ministers who die in service upon their removal to their new home, in addition to the payment of their removal costs.

### **Travel allowances**

- 1.13 The Committee continues to recommend that the maximum rates as prescribed by HMRC's 'approved mileage allowance payment scheme' (AMAP) be observed. If alternative mileage rates exceeding those allowed by the appropriate tax authority are paid locally then it is necessary for this income to be declared to the tax authority and it will give rise to a tax liability on the individual concerned. It is emphasised that this should be regarded as a personal liability – involving the individual and HMRC – and not require handling by the Church's officers, centrally or locally. Any changes to HMRC approved rates will be considered by the Committee and presented to the Conference for approval before implementation, so as to avoid unexpected cost increases mid-year.
- 1.14 The Committee continues to remind the Methodist Church of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, and wishes to encourage people to use public transport and share cars wherever possible.
- 1.15 The following travel expense rates will apply to ministers, supernumeraries, lay employees in churches, Circuits and Districts and lay volunteers:

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<sup>2</sup> It is noted that this work is being progressed as reported to the April 2019 meeting of the Methodist Council in paper MC/19/59.

Car: up to 10,000 miles	45p per mile
over 10,000 miles	25p per mile
Motorcycle	24p per mile
Bicycle	20p per mile
Additional passenger rate	5p per mile

- 1.16 The Committee recommends that the travel allowance (taxable) for ministers during a time of sickness remains at £315 for each complete period of three months. It is further clarified that this grant applies during periods of recuperation from ill health for up to one year.

### **Sabbatical expenses and levy**

- 1.17 **The Committee affirms that the sabbaticals annual levy is increased to £100 as from September 2019, and the maximum expense level retained at £1,000, following the decisions of the 2018 Conference.** It is envisaged that both levy and expense levels will be sustained until 2021/2022, unless the Conference’s adoption of the Ministries Committee’s recommendations in 2018 requires earlier adjustment in the light of their uncertain financial demands.
- 1.18 The Connexional Allowances Committee will continue to monitor the financial position of the Sabbaticals Fund.

### **Computers in Ministry scheme**

- 1.19 Following the adoption by the 2017 Conference<sup>3</sup> of a revised Computers in Ministry scheme offering financial support to ministers, **the Committee recommends that the allowance be increased to £165 for the year 2019/2020, ie by the same CPI % used in the stipend adjustment.**
- 1.20 Student ministers beginning training, or, if they choose to wait, probationer ministers at the start of their first appointment receive an additional allowance of four times the annual amount. The first annual payment (as per paragraph 1.19) is made in the month of October at the start of ministry. Provision has been made for the implementation and financing of the new scheme agreed by the 2017 Conference and amended in 2018.

### **Initial grants and loans to ministers**

- 1.21 In accordance with SO 804(2) in respect of loans and grants to ministers appointed “for the first time to a station in the home work” the Committee recommends that the maximum loan available amount continues to be set at £6,000, interest-free, repayable over a maximum of 5 years (ie £100 per month).
- 1.22 The 2015 Conference agreed to the Committee’s recommendation that, as from September 2016, a maximum flat-rate means-tested initial grant be set at the level of £3,000, **and the**

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<sup>3</sup> See 2017 Conference Agenda section 14, pages 106-107, paragraphs 1.17 to 1.21 and Notice of Motion 2017/101 which amended the resolutions.

**Committee clarifies that this now applies irrespective of the age of the minister<sup>4</sup>** as the circumstances in which the age limit was originally set have changed significantly. It is further clarified that this is instead of, and not additional to, the relocation allowance which applies to subsequent moves (as per paragraph 1.10). Therefore, receiving Circuits do not pay the relocation allowance to ministers in their initial appointment (though they do pay the travel and removal costs as per SO 528(2)).

1.23 During their active ministry, loans may be made to ministers but only in the most extreme and exceptional personal and financial circumstances. It is recommended that the same policy is used, ie a maximum of £6,000 repayable interest-free over a maximum of 5 years, unless there are specific reasons to offer a greater amount for a short period of time.

1.24 All loans and grants under this heading are made from the Methodist Church Fund and loan repayments are deducted from monthly stipend at source.

### **Preaching fees and expenses for supernumerary presbyters**

1.25 Circuits are reminded that it is their responsibility to pay preaching fees and expenses, even if and when churches assist with the preaching plan preparation: the church is only responsible for payment when the supernumerary presbyter preaches at the church by specific invitation, typically for a special occasion.

1.26 The Committee presents its review of and recommendations relating to preaching fees in section 4.

### **Marriage registration fees**

1.27 The Committee reported to the 2011 Conference that there are moves in Marriage Registration Districts to reduce the administrative costs of paying fees to ministers conducting marriages<sup>5</sup>. Currently all ministers who do so receive a fee of £2 per marriage and thousands of cheques for very small amounts of money (all for £2 or multiples thereof) are prepared and posted. In the event that Registration Districts request the churches to nominate a central point for collection of payments, the Committee continues to recommend that (1) all local marriage fees be increased by a modest amount to cover the £2 payment to the minister and (2) that the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD) be the nominated recipient of the aggregated fee payments from the Registration Districts.

### **Lay employees recommended hourly rates**

1.28 The Committee advises that the latest Living Wage rates, published in November 2018 by the Living Wage Foundation (LWF), are **£10.55 per hour for London and £9.00 for all other regions**. The LWF figures, applicable to employees aged 18 years and over, will always be

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<sup>4</sup> Until 2017/2018, ministers who were aged 55 years or more being first appointed to a station as probationers or transferring in from other Churches and Conferences did not normally receive such financial assistance. The Committee has agreed that if a minister is accepted for stationing in the British Methodist Church, then the initial grant should be paid irrespective of age. This requires the deletion of the last sentence in SO 804(2).

<sup>5</sup> It is understood that this arrangement does not apply in Scotland, but the substance of the proposal is not thereby invalidated.

adopted as the Methodist Church's recommendations. Methodist employing bodies are reminded of the resolutions of the 2010 Conference (Agenda pp 153-154) regarding the mandatory implementation of these rates.

- 1.29 The Committee reminds the whole Church of the resolution of the 2015 Conference that the implementation of the Living Wage is now mandatory in all but the most extreme and exceptional circumstances, and that all outstanding exceptions must continue to be reviewed by the appropriate District Policy Committee.
- 1.30 Further updated figures, expected to be announced by LWF in November 2019, will be published on the Methodist Church website, and can also be accessed on the LWF website which gives further relevant details: guidance on implementation timing was given in the Committee's Report to the 2012 Conference (Agenda p 130).

## **2. REPORT ON FUNDS AND TRUSTS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S REMIT**

- 2.1 The Committee acts as the Trustees for seven funds or trusts which are available to ministers, and may, in some cases, be used to give financial assistance to dependent close family members as well as themselves. The seven funds and trusts are:
  - The Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons (FSPD), previously known as the Auxiliary Fund (of the Ministers' Retirement Fund)
  - The Methodist Ministers' Children's Relief Association (MMCRA)
  - The Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund (MMCF, otherwise known as the Trinity Hall Trust – THT)
  - The Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF)
  - The Benevolent Fund – Deaconesses (BFD)
  - The Aspinall Robinson Trust (ART)
  - The Auxiliary (Special Purposes) Fund (ASPF)

### **The Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons**

- 2.2 The objects of the FSPD, ie the purposes for which its resources may be used, were widened by the decision of the 2011 Conference to amend SO 364(1). This has continued to prove a helpful move in enabling the Committee to offer financial support to those in need in a variety of circumstances.
- 2.3 While the Church continues to be immensely grateful for the generosity of donations to the FSPD, for some years there has been less emphasis on advocacy as its resources were regarded as more than adequate for its purposes. However, in the light of demands and the widening of its objects, the Committee continues the active advocacy of the fund within the Church and is always grateful to receive donations.

### **Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund (Trinity Hall Trust)**

- 2.4 Agreed as from September 2016, the maximum annual grant is £300 per child per year. In view of the positive annual balance of income over expenditure in the Fund, the Committee increased the maximum qualifying household income level from 1.5 to 2 times standard stipend as from September 2018. This particularly benefits households in which both parents are ministers.

## Analysis of grants from funds and trusts

- 2.5 The Committee promised, in response to a question at the 2010 Conference, to give summary information on the pattern of grant-making in its report to the Conference each year. We are pleased to do this, as below, for 2017/2018<sup>6</sup>.

### Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons

- 2.6 The FSPD is by far the largest of the funds and receives substantial income from donations and legacies as well as investments. It is used in a wide variety of ways in pursuit of its objects and in 2017/2018 made grants amounting to £542,297. In summary, these were distributed as follows, giving the number of grants in each category in brackets:

Nature of grants	Total amount (£)
<b>Grants to active ministers and following death in service</b>	
Grants to enable ministers to continue in ministry and manse adaptations (20)	118,730
Grants to ministers for acute financial emergencies (29)	48,071
Grants to widows and widowers following a minister's death in service (0)	nil
<b>Grants to retired ministers, widows and widowers</b>	
Grants for nursing and residential care (11)	48,460
Removal costs and relocation grants on retirement	150,605
Christmas gifts to widows and widowers (700+) and other small grants	38,863
Grants for own property expenses and general financial support (45)	69,645
Grants to MMHS <sup>7</sup> for property acquisitions and special adaptations	67,923
<b>Total</b>	<b>542,297</b>

It should be noted that the amounts related to ministers with impairment (which can involve major alterations to manses), emergency requests and property can vary significantly from year to year. The increase in the amount of grants to active ministers reflects the widened scope of the FSPD's remit, as in SO 364(1), and mentioned above.

### Trinity Hall Trust

- 2.7 In 2017/2018, £22,348 was paid in grants to ministers to help fund costs of educational activities for their children. However, this amount includes £7,629 claimed during 2016/2017 but not charged to the account until 2017/2018: the grant amount paid in 2017/2018 was thus £14,719. The table below shows the pattern of grant amounts to ministers in 2017/2018, noting that most were for £600 or less.

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<sup>6</sup> Any differences between the grant expenditure totals given in this Report and the audited accounts of the funds arise from exceptional cases when grants are refunded, when they are no longer needed or payments are incorrectly allocated between funds or accounts or retrospective transfers are made between funds when grants are incorrectly allocated.

<sup>7</sup> This amount includes expenditure on properties owned by the FSPD and occupied by retired ministers and their dependants which MMHS manages on the Committee's behalf.



Grant amount in £s	No. of ministers
300 or less	8
301-600	11
601-900	2
901+	3
Total	24

### **Methodist Ministers Children's Relief Association (MMCRA)**

2.8 In 2017/2018 the MMCRA made grants amounting to £9,000 to 18 ministers and dependants to give financial help mainly to support the care of adult dependent children. This fund provides limited support from its income which relies wholly on the collections made at District Synods and the Committee continues to encourage Synods to remember the fund's need and to be generous. The Committee advises that the income from 20 District Synods of £7,569 in 2017/2018 was rather less than the £8,024 from 23 Synods in 2016/2017.

### **Methodist Medical Benevolent Fund (MMBF)**

2.9 In 2017/2018, the MMBF made 21 grants of varying amounts totalling £19,850 to 18 ministers and paid a further £18,031 to the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service and other service providers to offer 79 ministers support through various forms of counselling in 634 sessions. Again, this fund provides support from within its income, derived mainly from investment, and it is used wherever the need is related to physical and mental health conditions. The Committee wishes the Conference to note again the sustained level of expenditure on counselling and related support for ministers, including while they are students and probationers.

### **Benevolent Fund – Deaconesses**

2.10 In 2017/2018, 2 grants were made for benevolent purposes, amounting to £5,100 in total.

### **Aspinall Robinson Trust**

2.11 In 2017/2018, 9 grants were made, for various purposes, amounting to £10,300 in total. The Committee asks the Conference to note that the Benevolent Fund – Deaconesses and the Aspinall Robinson Trust are always used when the beneficiary is a deacon or the dependant of a deacon, as their objects and purposes mirror those of the FSPD.

### **Auxiliary (Special Purposes) Fund**

2.12 In 2017/2018, 2 grants were made amounting to £23,806 in total. This fund provides for up to 50% of annual stipend to be paid to the spouse when a minister's marriage breaks down or for specific expenditure to be reimbursed if the part-stipend is not requested. The Fund is well-endowed to cater for all probable needs.

## **3. OTHER MATTERS OF REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE**

3.1 The Committee continues to engage in reviews of several topics for which it has responsibility and is grateful for the support of the Connexional Team staff, especially in the Finance,

Development and Personnel, Discipleship and Ministries and Conference offices, in all that they do.

- 3.2 As a result of discussions held during the year 2016/2017 with HMRC and the Church's advisors on taxation the Committee and Finance officers are ensuring that policies and procedures related to allowances and grants are properly aligned with current HMRC regulations and guidelines. It is imperative that the Church is fully compliant in these matters and that their implementation is consistently achieved throughout the Connexion. The changes and clarifications required were communicated through the Quarterly Letter to ministers and circuit stewards and the standard grant application forms were amended as necessary. It is noted that this does not affect decisions to offer allowances or grants but applies only to their treatment for tax purposes.
- 3.3 The Committee keeps a record, for its own guidance and purposes, setting out the policies and precedents for dealing with the wide variety of these special requests for financial assistance. This enables the Committee always to be consistent and fair in the application of criteria for assessing need. The Committee is also called upon from time to time to advise on the interpretation of Standing Orders related to Circuits' financial obligations and provisions for ministers in a rich variety of circumstances.
- 3.4 During the year, the Committee has reviewed the reserves positions on the funds for which it is responsible and confirmed that they comply with the guidance and policy set out by the Connexion.
- 3.5 The Committee gratefully acknowledges a grant of £30,000 from a trust managed by TMCP to cover the Christmas gifts to ministers' widows and widowers.
- 3.6 The Committee expresses its gratitude to various members of the Connexional Team who have served on it and moved to pastures new in the last year or so and we have duly welcomed their successors.
- 3.7 The Chair of the Committee wishes to record his immense gratitude to its members, past and present, who have given their unfailing support and attention to the Committee's work at all times. They bring a rich variety of experience and expertise as well as representing different constituencies within the Church. With the presentation of the review of preaching fees, the Committee has completed a thorough programme of reforming the financial remuneration of ministers over several years and, unless prompted otherwise by external events or stimulus, now anticipates having a period of stability.

#### **4 REVIEW OF PREACHING FEES FOR SUPERNUMERARY PRESBYTERS**

##### **The preaching fee on the agenda**

- 4.1 The preaching fee has been a feature of the Committee's agenda, on and off, since 2009 when the question of its application to supernumerary deacons was raised<sup>8</sup>, and, separately, the (then) Pensions Manager asked whether it was still necessary and therefore might it be phased out. In response to a request from the Methodist Council at the time to "have another

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<sup>8</sup> As will become evident, not for the last time.

look at preaching fees for [supernumerary] deacons” the Committee suggested that this was not a financial issue as such and therefore it was not for it to decide.

- 4.2 Replying to a question at the Methodist Council in April 2010, the clear statement was made that the preaching fee for supernumerary ministers applies to presbyters and not to deacons. When asked, the Committee has given this advice ever since.
- 4.3 Between 2011 and 2018 the Committee engaged in an extensive process of consultation and review of allowances above stipend and other payments to ministers (such as fees for funerals and weddings and chaplaincy and other remuneration), not without its controversies and revealing a spectrum of opinion, which initially included the preaching fee.
- 4.4 In its report to the 2015 Conference, following its recommendation that the preaching fee level remain the same for 2015/2016, the Committee promised to make recommendations about the future of the fee to the 2016 Conference<sup>9</sup>. This commitment was overtaken by other events, outlined below.
- 4.5 In 2015/2016, the Ministries Committee established an extensive review of the role and ministry of supernumerary ministers, which included wide consultation in the Districts and Circuits, and the Committee (CAC) decided, not only to defer consideration of the preaching fee until the Ministries Committee’s review was completed, but to ask that the preaching fee be included in it and feedback sought. The Committee provided the review project with a position paper which was used in preparation of the consultation document ‘To serve and to be served: the Role and Ministry of Supernumeraries. A Guidance Note for Chairs and Superintendents’. The document commented that the preaching fee “appears to many to be anachronistic”.
- 4.6 A summary of the outcome of the Ministries Committee’s review was given to the 2018 Conference<sup>10</sup>, noting “overwhelmingly, those consulted were resistant to the withdrawal of the supernumerary’s preaching fee”, though perhaps the words “supernumerary presbyter’s” would have been more appropriate. The Committee became aware of this view from other feedback received.
- 4.7 The Committee promised to bring recommendations to the 2019 Conference in the light of the issues raised and the evidence gathered. As will be shown, the retention of the preaching fee at £25 for several years is not an implicit indication of its imminent discontinuation on the part of the Committee but a sound and fair reflection of its economic value compared with stipend increases over the period since its introduction as a connexional policy adopted by the Conference.

## **History and evolution of the preaching fee**

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<sup>9</sup> Conference Agenda 2016 section 46, paragraph 1.16, page 440.

<sup>10</sup> Conference Agenda 2018 section 21, paragraph 2.1, page 206.

- 4.8 Preaching fees were often offered to 'special preachers' in earlier days, sometimes proportional to the perceived 'big name' of the preacher in the pecking order<sup>11</sup>. This applied to those still in active ministry, hence leading to the enquiry attributed to one such when accepting a special invitation, "do you want a one-guinea, two-guinea or five-guinea sermon?"
- 4.9 At some point – there seems to be no reliable recollection as to when – the practice of offering supernumerary presbyters a preaching fee on a local (circuit) basis began to creep in, not for special occasions, but as an acknowledgement for services rendered quarter by quarter. Like many innovations, what began in one Circuit soon spread to others until it became relatively common. Presumably the amounts of such fees were whatever Circuits thought appropriate. It may also be that this coincided with the first signs of the challenge to meet demands for services of Holy Communion as available active ministers began to decrease: did supernumerary presbyters begin to be indispensable and were grateful Circuits more willing to recompense them for their continued ministry of word and sacrament?
- 4.10 It seems that the preaching fee also came to be regarded as a supplement to the minister's (presbyter's) pension at a time when the value of the pension in terms of purchasing power was lower than it is now. Perhaps this too influenced Circuits to act generously towards supernumerary presbyters.
- 4.11 Not until 1998 did the Conference agree on a Connexion-wide preaching fee. Prior to that (and without digging into archives of Methodist Council and General Purposes Committee papers to ascertain the detail), it appears that guidance was offered informally through District Chairs to Circuits as to what an appropriate preaching fee should be.
- 4.12 The 1998 Conference adopted a Memorial from the Leeds District (1) suggesting that the then commonly agreed preaching fee of £13 was inadequate and (2) requesting that it be increased to £14 from September 1999, thus establishing a Connexion-wide figure which has been reviewed by the Committee ever since and published in its annual Conference reports.
- 4.13 To keep the sums simple, increases have always been in rounded £1s, as follows (from September each year): 1999 from £13 to £14, 2001 to £15, 2003 to £16, 2004 to £20, then £1 each year until reaching £25 in 2009. The Conference has agreed to the Committee's recommendation to retain the £25 each year since then.
- 4.14 It is important to note that between 1998/1999 and 2018/2019 the increase in the preaching fee has been 92.3%: the comparable stipend increase (from £13,932 to £24,168) has been 73.5%. Thus, the preaching fee increase has outstripped the stipend increase by nearly 20%. As commented in paragraph 4.7 the Committee has regarded this comparison as sound and fair and the Conference has so far concurred.
- 4.15 The 2017 Conference declined (by an overwhelming majority) a Notice of Motion<sup>12</sup> proposing an increase in the preaching fee to £30, based on the stipend increase between 2009 and 2017. In opposing this, it was suggested that any adjustment await the outcome of the

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<sup>11</sup> There is anecdotal evidence that this practice survives today, albeit on a limited basis.

<sup>12</sup> Notice of Motion 2017/102.

present review and that a longer view of comparable preaching fee and stipend increases gives a fairer picture, as explained above.

- 4.16 In addition to the preaching fee which Circuits are obliged to pay supernumerary presbyters<sup>13</sup>, travel expenses may also be claimed at the rates agreed by the Conference. Anecdotal evidence indicates that some supernumerary presbyters waive the fee and that others accept it and donate it back to the Church. The mileage rate was increased in stages between 2008 and 2011 from 25p to 45p for supernumerary ministers (and others) to ensure that car expenses were properly reimbursed.
- 4.17 An earlier version of the above paragraphs 4.1 to 4.16 with a more extensive summary of the issues raised was presented to and discussed with the District Chairs at their meeting in September 2018 in order to ascertain one final round of feedback on the general view of the Church, ministerial and lay, on the topic of the preaching fee. The Committee is grateful to the Chairs for their full, frank and varied responses. In the light of those and all that has gone before, the Committee now briefly summarises the key issues and brings its recommendations.

### **Key issues**

- 4.18 The Committee does not underestimate the financial benefit to supernumerary presbyters who continue to lead worship and receive the fee (even if it is a nominal amount when compared with time and energy expended) but draws attention to the inequalities and challenges which surround it, such as (1) the uneven distribution of available preaching appointments between Circuits across the Connexion, (2) the financial stringency of some Circuits which need the appointments (not least to offer the celebration of Holy Communion) but struggle to afford the fees, (3) the loss of the fee when presbyters are no longer able to lead worship, but as their financial needs often increase and (4) those other aspects of a presbyter's continued ministry which are financially unrewarded but greatly valued by the Church.
- 4.19 The Committee acknowledges that being a local preacher is not required of deacons, though some are, and that this can lead to a sense of injustice that, in retirement, deacons who preach are not entitled to receive the fee<sup>14</sup> as paragraph 4.2 stated. If they did, then those deacons who are not preachers may feel denied. The Church and the Methodist Diaconal Order lives with this ambiguity.

### **Recommendations**

- 4.20 In coming to recommendations, the Committee simply reiterates that there is a wide spectrum of views amongst ministers – presbyters and deacons – and lay people on the topic of the preaching fee and observes that any proposal to withdraw it might be difficult to

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<sup>13</sup> This applies when Circuits plan supernumerary presbyters as part of the normal quarterly process. Churches are responsible for paying the fee when they request the preacher for a special occasion.

<sup>14</sup> It is noted that there is anecdotal evidence that some Circuits do pay supernumerary deacons the preaching fee in appreciation of their services.

enforce and lead to unintended consequences. If it did not exist, it seems unlikely that it would now be invented, but that is not the same as proposing to stop it.

**4.21 On balance, taking into account the various issues and arguments summarised in this section, the Committee recommends (1) that the principle of the supernumerary presbyters' preaching fee be retained for the foreseeable future, (2) that the amount remain at £25 for two years until 31 August 2021, ie the end of the year 2020/2021 and (3) that (assuming the stipend increase since 1998/1999 has caught up with the preaching fee increase by about 2021) the preaching fee amount be reviewed thereafter. In the light of the adoption of resolution 25/5, the Committee further recommends that the preaching fee also be paid to supernumerary deacons as from September 2020, thereby then applying to all supernumerary ministers.**

4.21 The Committee reflects that a considerable amount of time and energy has been committed to achieve this outcome, which is more or less the status quo, but at least the arguments have been thoroughly heard and discussed. It appears that the process has acted as a catalyst for identifying the matters of most concern to the community of supernumerary ministers which reach far beyond the preaching fee itself. They are (1) how the whole Church enables their ministry – both presbyteral and diaconal – to continue to be valued and sustained in retirement, (2) how the Church visibly expresses its appreciation for their continued ministry, embracing preaching and other ways of serving and (3) how the Church makes appropriate financial provision for the (increasingly long) period of their retirement. Whilst the Committee is always willing to participate in any future reviews which may address these matters, they are major challenges outside its remit.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**17/1. The Conference received the Report.**

**17/2. The Conference adopted the Report and the recommendations in sections 1, 2 and 3.**

**17/3. The Conference amended S0 804(2) as follows:**

(2) Ministers and probationers on being appointed for the first time to a station in the home work within the control of the Church shall be eligible to receive financial assistance according to need from the Methodist Church Fund. Assistance may be given by way of grant or loan or a combination of both, according to criteria approved by the Methodist Council. Payment shall be made by the Connexional Team which shall also deal with any related administrative matters which may arise. ~~This clause shall not apply to any such person aged 55 or more (taking age as at 31st August next following acceptance as a candidate) unless the Methodist Council judges it necessary to give assistance in the light of special circumstances.~~

**17/4. The Conference adopted the Report in section 4 and the recommendations in paragraph 4.21.**