

Guidelines for circuits making use of the ministry of supernumeraries

Introduction

These Guidelines replace the 'Working Agreement' document recently introduced. Where a supernumerary minister is to have responsibilities beyond the conduct of worship (i.e. to exercise pastoral responsibility) it is important that all parties are quite clear on all the points that follow.

The term 'appointment' is used in what follows, but it must be understood that this is not an appointment in the technical sense of being appointed to the staff of the circuit (and therefore counted in the establishment figure). Supernumeraries are not listed on the staff of the circuit unless they have officially returned to the active work (see section 4 below).

1) Approval of appointment

The appointment must first be approved by the Circuit Meeting, and the District Policy Committee must then be consulted.

2) Location and scope of appointment

It must be made clear (a) in what circuit(s) the person is to serve (b) what their specific responsibilities will be, both in terms of responsibility for local churches and other specific tasks associated with the appointment (e.g. local preacher tutoring) as far as can be foreseen at this stage. Given that things under this heading may emerge later, care must be taken about the time-limits specified in section 5.

The extent of commitment to offering appointments to the plan must be made clear, in terms both of (a) number of appointments per quarter and any special provisions about their distribution (b) specific commitments to particular churches etc.

Arrangements for weddings and funerals should be made clear.

3) Duration of appointment

The length of time for which this appointment should last must be clearly defined, together with any arrangements for review and/or extension.

4) Accountability

There must be clarity about the ways in which the minister (a) will be accountable for her/his work, and (b) will be accounted for by being supported.

Standing Orders (SO 792(3)) do not permit a supernumerary minister to have pastoral charge of a local church (unless they apply to the Stationing Advisory Committee for permission to return to the active work). This is so that proper accountability (through the obligation to attend staff meetings, circuit meetings and representative sessions of Synod) can be maintained. It is however appropriate for a member of the circuit staff to have formal pastoral charge (as in the case of a probationer) although the supernumerary has the hands-on pastoral responsibility. A supernumerary minister stationed in the circuit is permitted by SO 502(1)(a)(ii) to chair a Church Council 'as and when requested by the Superintendent'.

It is important to specify the means by which the supernumerary minister will be able to 'give an account' of their work so as to receive proper collegiality. Expectations about attendance at meetings should be very clearly spelled out.

5) 'Size' of appointment

There must be a clear statement of the number of sessions (and on which days) per week the appointment is to consist of. This time is to include meetings and the preparation time required for preaching, preparing and leading services. (A session

is, broadly, a morning, an afternoon or an evening. A day is assumed to consist of two sessions devoted to the work of ministry.) The times when the minister will not be available to be contacted must be clearly specified and widely publicised.

Arrangements for cover outside these hours for weddings and funerals and pastoral emergencies must be specified.

6) Obligatory reimbursement

Expenses incurred in the performance of ministerial duties must be reimbursed on a monthly basis. Mileage should be paid on the same basis as for ministers in the active work. The proportion of telephone and broadband charges and call costs to be reimbursed by the circuit must be agreed. Fees for weddings and funerals are to be offered on the same basis as to other ministers in the circuit.

7) Discretionary reimbursement

If the work of ministry is to be carried out from the minister's home, the circuit may offer to reimburse a proportion of heating and lighting costs. A book/resources grant may be offered.

8) Housing, allowances and pension

In some situations a circuit may wish to offer payments, allowances or accommodation as additional support for the ministry of a supernumerary. If such arrangements are envisaged, they need to be set up with careful negotiation and safeguards for the circuit and the minister concerned. The explicit consent of the District Policy Committee will be required and, since there will be implications in tax or employment law, proper professional advice must be taken.

If a stipend (full or part time) is paid to a supernumerary for ministerial duties previously carried out by an active minister, the Circuit pension contribution is payable. This applies whether or not the supernumerary returns to the active work or opts not to contribute to the Ministers' Pension Scheme (supernumeraries may however opt to contribute and accrue entitlement to pension).

The following may help to determine an appropriate level of part-stipend:

1. The first step is to decide what proportion of the week is to be devoted to the work of ministry. Although the 2007 report Policy on Part-time Appointments calls for appointments to be defined as x sessions week (a day consisting of three sessions, two of which are devoted to the work of ministry), most people naturally begin by thinking in terms of x days. The importance of the 'sessions' method is to emphasise that there must be time in the minister's 'working' day for the activities of normal life and for relaxation. This is as true for those in part-time appointments as for anyone else. Defining the appointment as e.g. 'three days' or 'six sessions' a week including Sundays equates to 'half-time'. 'Half-time could also be defined as 'two days or four sessions a week and Sundays in proportion'. Common sense must be applied in the interpretation of these principles – but it is important to note that the 2007 report includes Sundays in the days that define the size of the appointment.
2. This definition then gives the proportion of stipend that is payable.