

Paying for ministry in the South Western Synod

The principle underlying the Ministry and Mission [M&M] fund is that each church contributes according to its ability and churches receive ministry according to needs. There is no connection between the amount contributed to the M&M fund by a church and the Ministry it receives (except in LEPs).

On a macro scale covering the entire United Reformed Church there is a link set by General Assembly where the level of M&M contributions sets the maximum number of stipendiary ministers that the Church can afford. At present the number of ministers available to the United Reformed Church is significantly fewer than the number the URC can afford. This is because insufficient suitable candidates for ministry are coming forward for training and ordination.

The Ministry and Mission Fund

This is something of a misnomer, for there is no fund. All of the costs of paying for ministry by Stipendiary ministers is met from the central funds of the URC.

The funds provided by local churches, and by some Synods, provides most of the funds of the URC. In 2020 local churches provided almost £18 million of the total income of £19.4 million.

Most of the spending of the church is stipends of ministers & moderators, together with training and development costs. This consumed around £15.9 million of a total spend of £19.3 million **in 2020**.

Guided Contributions

In this Synod we have a guided contribution scheme whereby we use the information coming from the accounts of local churches to determine the level of contribution that a church could make. Churches can appeal against their assessment if they believe there is a reason why it is unfair.

If you want more details of how guided contributions are calculated see the web page and the FAQ document at the foot of the web page:

<https://www.urcsouthwest.org.uk/finance-resources/>

The cost of a minister

London calculates the true cost of ministry at £38,000 in 2020. This includes stipend, pension costs, training costs and government taxes. Full time ministers received in 2020 a stipend of £27,600. Pension costs in 2020 were 7.5% for ministers and around 32% for the URC. You will be hearing a great deal more about pensions in the next few months, as the URC is considering whether it can offer better value with a Defined Contribution scheme than the current Defined Benefit scheme. Any decision on change will be made by General Assembly.

How is ministry provided?

The South Western Synod has been active in seeking to provide ministry to churches unable to call a minister and have enabled several churches to have a local church leader. The Synod has in some cases contributed to the costs of such a leader by means of grants.

A fair share system for deployment of ministers

As the URC has fewer ministers than it could afford, and many fewer than the churches would like, the Synod Moderators have agreed to work on a scheme of fair shares for each Synod, based upon the number of members in each of the Synods. Thus, by the end of 2021 the Southwestern Synod has been allocated a total of 21 full time equivalent ministers. We currently have more than the allowed number and so are unable to add new vacancies to the list at this time.