

## Memorial M23 (2013) Condition of Manses

### 1. Introduction

The 2013 Conference accepted Memorial 23 from the Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod:

#### **M23 Condition of manses**

The Newcastle upon Tyne District Synod (R) (Present: 183; Voting: 176 for, 1 against) is grateful for the hard work put in by Circuits to keep manses in good order. We recognise that this is a partnership and acknowledge the part that ministers play in making sure that the manse is an appropriate home for them and their successor.

Aware, however, that a small number of ministers leave the manse in a condition which requires the Circuit to spend considerable money on cleaning and making good where the property has been abused, it requests the Conference to address this issue and devise ways in which the financial burden does not fall upon the Circuits concerned.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Newcastle upon Tyne Synod for highlighting this issue and joins it in thanking all those who work hard in Circuits to keep manses in good order.

Book VII of *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD)* 'Guidance relating to Ministers' confirms the partnership referred to in the memorial as follows: "In this partnership it is the responsibility of the Circuit (as set out in Standing Orders 533, 803 and 954) to provide a suitable manse, to decorate it and to furnish it with carpets, curtains, a cooker, office furniture and a lawnmower. It is the clear responsibility of the occupants, on the other hand, to keep the manse clean and presentable and at a changeover to make sure that the manse and its circuit furnishings are left clean and tidy. Exceptional circumstances will occasionally arise in which, for various reasons, occupants are unable to fulfil this basic obligation – in which case arrangements should be negotiated with the circuit stewards. Normally, however, incoming ministers can expect to find that their predecessors have left the manse clean and habitable in the ways indicated above."

This places a clear responsibility on ministers when vacating manses, and makes it clear that any arrangements made in response to exceptional circumstances should be by negotiation. It is possible that such arrangements may include ministers being required to meet the costs of any rectification work.

The Conference acknowledges that, although these responsibilities are described clearly in the Standing Orders and guidelines, it can be hard to implement this procedure in practice. It therefore refers this issue to the Ministries Committee to report back to the Conference no later than 2015.

2. The Ministries Committee was charged with bringing a further reply to M23 (2013) to the Conference at a date no later than 2015. The Ministries Committee presented a report to the April 2015 meeting of the Council; the Council requested further work, and the Committee now presents the report below which has been amended in the light of the discussion at the Council (the changes are indicated using strikethrough, and bold italics for new text). The Committee proposes revised guidance (shown below) to replace the current Charter for Incoming Ministers

(printed in the guidance section of the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*). In the case of the Charter, changes to the current wording is shown using strikethrough and bold italics.

3. The covenant relationship between the Conference and ministers includes the provision of a manse (as a base for the work of ministry as well as a home), for those in the active work who serve in appoints within the control of the church. For those ministers, the care of the manse and garden is part of their responsibility as Methodist ministers. ~~The manse includes garden, fences, boundaries, sheds and equipment provided by the circuit.~~
4. The provision and maintenance of a manse requires that there is frequent communication between ministers and those responsible for the manse. This begins following the minister's initial visit to the new appointment, with a letter of understanding which includes a schedule of the work that is intended to be done prior to the minister's arrival in the circuit. The expectation is that the minister would be involved where there are choices to be made about any work to be done on the manse.
5. If it is felt to be appropriate, the circuit manse steward (or district or connexional manse trustee or their representative) will greet the minister (and family) on their arrival and welcome them into their new home. The steward should visit before the welcome service to share a list of contacts in case of a gas, electric or plumbing emergency. The steward should also inform the minister how to report any repairs which need to be undertaken.
6. It is the responsibility of the minister to report any work that needs to be done on the manse to the circuit manse stewards (or district or connexional manse trustees) as soon as it becomes apparent. The manse steward is responsible for logging this and drawing up a schedule of work to be done.
7. Each June or July, there should be a visit to the manse by the circuit manse steward (or district or connexional manse trustee) where a discussion can take place about any work that needs to be done and when such work may be done within a planned maintenance programme (SO 954(i)).
8. It is the responsibility of the occupants to ensure that the manse is kept clean and presentable. Failure to keep the manse clean and presentable should be reported to the responsible person who will contact the district manses committee. Failure by the circuit to keep the manse in a good repair should be reported by the responsible person to the district manses committee. The district manses committee will act as arbiter in dealing with any matters which cannot be resolved locally.
9. In the last year of an appointment, there should also be a visit 2 or 3 months before the outgoing minister moves to assess what additional help may be required to ensure that the garden, hedges etc are left tidy and to ensure that there is a smooth removal of all property including anything in the loft. In the event of failure to leave the manse in a reasonable condition, the outgoing minister will be charged for remedial work caused by misuse or damage, professional cleaning, removal of unwanted belongings or garden rubbish.
10. The Methodist Council is asked to note this additional reply to M23 (2013) and the revised guidance outlined below and to commend it to the ~~2015~~ 2016 Conference.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**92/1. The Council commends the additional reply to M23 (2013) and the revised Charter to the 2016 Conference.**

## A GUIDANCE RELATING TO MINISTERS

### Part 1 *Revised* Charter for *Outgoing & Incoming* Ministers

The Conference of 2000 (Agenda pp. 216–218), in response to a Memorial to the Conference of 1999, adopted a proposal that, to encourage good practice and to increase awareness, the following Charter be printed in this volume. It was re-phrased to reflect the inclusive usage of 'minister' in 2012.

1. In the study/office **incoming** ministers can expect to find:

- all the information they need to begin their ministry in their new place
- complete and up-to-date membership lists and pastoral rolls with a list of changes since November 1st last
- complete and up-to-date committee lists
- all files tidied with old material either deposited with the County Records Office or filed neatly and separately
- the legal formalities about Authorised Persons for marriages completed
- a list of work currently in hand giving whatever details are needed for them to take up that work
- a pastoral list of those who are currently ill, recently bereaved or in need of a priority visit
- **safeguarding records including any Covenants of Care**
- a list of diary dates
- a minimum of outstanding work

2. In the house **outgoing** ministers **should ensure that:** ~~can expect to find:~~

- all carpets **are** cleaned **and vacuumed (the circuit should ensure that they are shampooed if necessary)** ~~(shampooed if necessary) and finally vacuumed before the minister leaves the property~~
- all curtains **are** cleaned **(if dry clean only, the Circuit should bear the cost)** and re-hung
- all interior paintwork **is** washed down
- **tiled floors are left clean**
- **light fittings are clean**
- all cupboards **are emptied** ~~empty,~~ cleaned and washed **(inside and out)** so that all shelves are usable immediately
- ~~a clean cooker~~ **the cooker is cleaned**
- **sinks and any built in appliances (such as fridges, freezers, washing machine, dishwasher) are cleaned**
- **bathrooms (floors, tiles, bath/shower, toilets and cupboards) are washed down and cleaned**
- ~~that~~ all domestic refuse has been removed from the premises **and that household bins are emptied (if possible) or left out for collection**
- ~~that anything which had been disarranged by the previous occupants has been put back, rearranged and made good by those occupants~~ **any furnishings which are the property of the Circuit are checked so that they can be disposed of (if damaged) or are put back, rearranged and made good**
- a list of useful information such as the name and address of doctor and dentist, the day for collection of refuse, details of local emergency contacts, etc
- **no furniture is left behind unless provided by the Circuit or by arrangement with the incoming minister**

- *any personal arrangements for telephone or internet have been discontinued and the manse telephone and broadband connection are ready for the new minister*
- *the gas/electric meters have been read and readings sent to the supplier.*

*The following additional information should be provided:*

- *the alarm code if present*
- *details of the broadband provider including wireless password*
- *details of the final gas/electric readings and a note of the current suppliers*
- *a note of where to find the water stopcock and the main/off switch for electricity and gas*
- *a current energy performance certificate*
- *the latest Health and Safety and Fire Risk assessments*
- *the updated manse (property) 'log book' including remedial work carried out etc.*
- *information regarding the day and frequency of refuse and recycling collection*
- *a list of local doctors and dentists*
- *bus/train timetables if appropriate*
- *local information (eg shops) if appropriate.*

3. In the garden ministers can expect to find:

- that all hedges and shrubs have been trimmed or pruned at the appropriate time
- all lawns cut
- all beds weeded
- all garden rubbish removed from the premises
- all greenhouses and sheds emptied and swept out
- the garage emptied and swept out – ***anything left must be in agreement with the Circuit Stewards (eg equipment or tins of paint)***
- ***that the lawn mower provided by the Circuit, adequate to the needs of the garden, is clean and in working order.***

The care of manses is at all times a matter of partnership and co-operation between the occupants and the circuit stewards. To carry out their responsibilities, circuit stewards, for example, whilst respecting the privacy of the manse, must have whatever access is necessary to ensure that the property is kept in good repair and that an annual and ongoing programme of maintenance and redecoration is sustained. Such things should not be left to the few days when a manse may be vacant at a changeover. In this partnership it is the responsibility of the Circuit (as set out in Standing Orders 533, 803 and 954) to provide a suitable manse, to decorate it and to furnish it with carpets, curtains, a cooker, office furniture and a lawnmower. It is the clear responsibility of the occupants, on the other hand, to keep the manse clean and presentable and at a changeover to make sure that the manse and its circuit furnishings are left clean and tidy. Exceptional circumstances will occasionally arise in which, for various reasons, occupants are unable to fulfil this basic obligation – in which case arrangements should be negotiated with the circuit stewards. Normally, however, incoming ministers can expect to find that their predecessors have left the manse clean and habitable in the ways indicated above.