

Methodist Church House  
25 Marylebone Road  
London  
NW1 5JR

21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

**To:** All Ministers and Probationers Stationed in the Active Work and All District  
and Circuit Treasurers

**WELCOME TO OUR AUGUST 2020 NEWSLETTER**

Dear Friends,

We are distributing this newsletter by e-mail to all Ministers, Probationers, Circuit and District Treasurers. Please feel free to forward to others who you think may find it useful, in particular church treasurers.

We have been busy checking church treasurer details in the Connexional database so that we are in a position to contact church treasurers directly. Consequently, this newsletter is also being sent to all church treasurers in the Wales, Birmingham, Bolton and Rochdale and Bristol districts. Whilst the content of the newsletter will be of more relevance to circuits and districts, we hope that it is of some interest to you. Should you wish to be removed from our circulation list please contact [RobertsL@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:RobertsL@methodistchurch.org.uk). We will continue to check church treasurer details in all the other districts and include them in future communications.

Despite Methodist Church House currently being closed, we are still contactable by email and our usual telephone numbers. We are now receiving post on an infrequent basis, however, we encourage the use of email and phone as much as possible.

Yours faithfully,



Matt Tattersall  
Director of Finance & Resources

### **Coronavirus Update**

The pandemic continues to have a major impact on the finances of the church. The issues were discussed at this year's Conference and a resolution was agreed that the Connexional Budget for 2020/21 would need to be reviewed in the light of the reduced funding available. This new budget will be presented for approval at the Methodist Council in October.

The guidance for individual churches, circuits and districts in respect of financial pressures caused by the pandemic remains as previously notified, please see the website for the details <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/official-guidance/#b>. We are aware of an increasing number of examples where churches and circuits that are more fortunate are coming to the financial aid of those less fortunate. It is great to see this connexionalism in action, but we are very aware that the resources of the church are not evenly distributed and these solutions are not always easy to deliver. The Conference also agreed a resolution that there should be a review of the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Church to enable financial resilience and support future financial planning.

The Connexional Team are in discussions with suppliers of Contactless and On-line giving technology as these may well be important tools for us as churches reopen. If treasurers have experience of implementing such solutions in their own setting we would like to hear from you, please contact [tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk).

Many of the treasurers who use the Payroll Bureau have been making use of the government's 'furlough' scheme. Despite the significant frustration experienced by the bureau team in using the government's website, and I am pleased to report that to date we have submitted claims for over £420k. Thanks to the treasurers who have shown great patience as we have navigated this complex issue and processed your claims.

### **Debit Statements**

We are sorry that we were unable to issue debit statements from Payroll and Stipends during the early part of the Coronavirus lockdown. However, you should now have received your missing statements by encrypted email.

### **September 2020 Stipend Costs**

Circuits are currently receiving draft debit statements for the month of September 2020, which incorporate all the amendments we have received to date.

### **Can you please check the following?**

- the persons listed in your debit statements
- amounts paid to each person
- relevant circuit CFB/bank account details for collection of the costs.  
(PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT WHERE CIRCUITS HAVE CHANGED THEIR IDENTITY.)

**If you identify any amendments, please e-mail Payroll Office on**

[Stipends@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:Stipends@methodistchurch.org.uk) . We require your amendments by 24<sup>th</sup> August if we are to reflect these in the September pay run. If you would like to speak to a member of the payroll team, please call **020 7467 3764** or **020 7467 3780**. We would still require your instructions by email for us to process them.

### **Computers for Ministry**

The Computers in Ministry Allowance for 2020/21 is £169. This will be paid with the October 2020 stipend. It is payable to all ministers except for those whose computing facilities are provided at their place of work. The allowance is non-pensionable and subject to tax and National Insurance. (The annual allowance is now a cost to the circuits and this amount will be included in the October invoice).

### **Circuit Mergers and Updates to Treasurers contact details**

If your circuit has merged with another from 1st September 2020 we need the details of the Treasurer of the combined Circuit and the nominated CFB or bank account for cash collections as soon as possible.

Changes to other treasurers' contact details should be made through the annual return in the usual way. However, as described above, we are currently doing a complete check of all treasurer details held in the Connexional database and any changes can be notified directly to [RobertsL@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:RobertsL@methodistchurch.org.uk) to ensure you are kept up to date with all relevant communications (via email).

### **Gift Aid**

In April 2020 we launched a new gift aid portal that has helped us to improve the speed at which we process the gift aid claims before sending them to HMRC. As the table below indicates, by mid-August, we have been able to make more payments to churches this year than the year before.

As at 15 <sup>th</sup> August	2019	2020
Number of churches whose gift aid claims were processed and paid	1744	1938
Total payments made to churches	£5.7m	£7.7m

Despite this successful outcome, we are aware that the new system has not worked seamlessly for everyone and we will use the lessons learned this year to see how the system can be improved for next year. We are also aware that for those gift aid secretaries still

making submissions on paper forms the difficulties with the post during the pandemic has led to delays to the processing of their claims.

If we have sent you an email notification that we have paid gift aid and GASDS during the last 2 months, we will send payment remittance advices to Gift Aid Secretaries that should be with them within 2 weeks. Thank you for your understanding.

### **Association of Church Accountants & Treasurers**

All churches, circuits and districts are members of the Association of Church Accountants & Treasurers through the Methodist Church's block membership paid for from Connexional funds. This gives you access to their website, online resources and training events. They are launching their "Being a Treasurer" course over three on-line sessions. Details can be found at <https://www.acat.uk.com/training-events>.

### **Ministerial Grants**

The ministerial grant application forms have been reviewed and updated and can be found at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/finance/stipends-and-payroll/ministerial-grants/>. Please ensure the forms are counter signed where this is asked for. We are happy to receive an email from the relevant approvers in lieu of a physical signature.

Changes made include:

- The Trinity Hall grant that supports the educational needs of ministers' children has been amended to specifically include computer equipment and the grant limit has increased from £300 to £600 per child per annum.
- The standard gardening grant for supernumeraries has been raised from £100 to £250 per annum.
- Recuperative break grants have increased to £600.

### **Personal Travel Claims – Ministers stationed in the 'Islands'**

Ministers stationed in the 'Islands' are entitled to reimbursement of two private trips per year to mainland Britain for them and their dependent family (normally up to the age of 18 years), by the most economic reasonable means possible. The Connexional Allowance Committee has agreed to fund one additional visit to the mainland in 2020/21 due to the restrictions that have impacted their visits during 2019/20. Ministers should make their claims in the usual way.

### **Standard Form of Accounts**

The account templates for 2019/20 have been uploaded to the website along with the usual guidance notes. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/finance/standard-form-of-accounts/>

Now for some important information from the Legal and Constitutional Practice Team

### **Annual Charity Returns**

All registered charities are required to provide an annual return to the Charity Commission and keep their registered details up to date. Failing to do so would be in breach of charity law and damaging for the reputation of an individual charity and any wider association.

The Charity Commission has recently issued guidance reminding charities of their obligations and stating that the Commission intends to get tough with those who have repeatedly fail to fulfil these:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-inquiry-double-defaulter-charities-between-april-2019-and-march-2020/charity-inquiry-double-defaulter-charities-between-april-2019-and-march-2020>

Accordingly, please can we ask that every church that is a registered charity takes heed of the Charity Commission's advice and ensures that they are submitting their annual returns promptly.

Please note that if you are currently struggling to sign-off and complete your annual accounts or charity return due to coronavirus restrictions and the inability to hold physical meetings, there is currently a facility to apply for a 6-month deadline extension. To apply for an extension, please email the Commission at [filingextension@charitycommission.gov.uk](mailto:filingextension@charitycommission.gov.uk).

Further guidance on charity law and registration requirements is available from the Legal & Constitutional Practice Team at [LCP@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:LCP@methodistchurch.org.uk)

### **CONTACTING THE FINANCE TEAM**

Please do not hesitate to contact the Payroll Team with any payroll related queries:  
For the Ministers payroll and benefits please e-mail [stipends@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:stipends@methodistchurch.org.uk)  
For the lay payroll please e-mail [payrollbureau@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:payrollbureau@methodistchurch.org.uk)

For ministerial grants please email [ministerial.grants@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:ministerial.grants@methodistchurch.org.uk)  
For the Gift Aid bureau please email [giftaid@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:giftaid@methodistchurch.org.uk)

Additionally, the contact details for individual members of the Finance team can be found on the Finance page of the Methodist Church website at:  
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/finance/contact-the-finance-office/>

If you don't know who you need to speak to then please contact Lesley Roberts our Senior Administrator on 0207 467 5264 or [RobertsL@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:RobertsL@methodistchurch.org.uk)