



PRESBYTERY OF
NORTHEAST
NEW JERSEY

POLICY ON COMPENSATION / MINIMUM TERMS OF CALL

MINISTERS OF WORD & SACRAMENT

CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

COMMISSIONED PASTORS

Approved by COM at its September 1, 2022 Meeting; Recommended to Presbytery

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I. INTRODUCTION

Congregations provide compensation to their pastors to free them from the need for secular employment, allowing them to devote full time to ministry. In some cases, churches call a pastor on a part-time basis, recognizing that such arrangements may necessitate the pastor's pursuit of additional compensation. (This is sometimes referred to as 'tent-making.')

When a pastor is called, the congregation promises to pay him/her fairly. Thus, the presbytery establishes a fair minimum and recommends regular increases commensurate with the pastor's experience and increases in the cost of living. This document only specifies *minimum* compensation; many churches pay more than minimum.

Serving as a pastor is one of the most stressful occupations. When a congregation calls a pastor, there is a three-way mutually supportive relationship between congregation, pastor and presbytery. All three parties have an interest in seeing pastors succeed. A pastor must find and participate in supportive structures for their own self-care. These may include clergy groups, coaching relationships, mentors or formal programs such as the Early Ministry Institute or CREDO.

A. A WORD ABOUT NEGOTIATION

The purpose of this policy is to set *minimums* for all forms of compensation, including things like time off. Many churches can, and should expect to, pay more than the minimum. It is common for churches to extend an offer and for a pastor to respond with a counter-offer. Often this will represent practices of good stewardship in a capitalist society. We are simply doing what is expected of employers and job seekers in our culture and time.

However, sometimes other factors come into play. Some pastors are timid about asking for more. Some pastors are also in denial about longstanding financial problems. Some churches are in denial too!

If a church is in an area where the cost of living is exceptionally high,¹ they should expect that their pastor will need more compensation simply to afford to live in their community. Another point for consideration: will the pastor making significantly more or less than the average person in a pew?

¹ New Jersey is an expensive state. Jersey City, Union City, Hoboken and West New York may have the highest costs of all NJ towns.

B. NOTES FOR 2022-23

As revisions to this policy are considered, inflation is running at levels not seen in decades. It appears that the general cost of living has gone up 6% since last year and that the cost of consumer goods has gone up 9%. This will adversely affect the economic standing of pastors.

The Board of Pensions is increasing the cost of Pastor's Participation an additional 2% to 39% (the first raise in several years). This will not affect pastors, but will affect churches.

The COM proposes that the presbytery raise the minimum compensation for pastors by 4% for 2023. This is not as much as costs have increased, but will also not put as heavy a burden on struggling churches.

II. MINIMUM TERMS OF CALL FOR FULL TIME MINISTERS OF WORD & SACRAMENT

	Mandatory	Recommended			
YEARS IN THIS OR SIMILAR POSITION	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20+
EFFECTIVE SALARY	62,400	64,480	66,560	69,264	72,696
PASTOR'S PARTICIPATION PLAN BENEFITS ²	24,336	25,147	25,958	27,013	28,351
TRAVEL/PROFESSIONAL REIMBURSEMENT	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
PAID VACATION	1 MONTH	1 MONTH	1 MONTH	1 MONTH	1 MONTH
CONTINUING EDUCATION LEAVE	2 WEEKS	2 WEEKS	2 WEEKS	2 WEEKS	2 WEEKS
CONTINUING EDUCATION ALLOWANCE	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800
TOTAL MINIMUM COST TO CHURCH	91,536	94,427	97,318	101,077	105,847

A. PART-TIME PASTORS

For part-time staff, the effective salary should be pro-rated on the basis of the number of hours per week with 40 hours per week as the basis for full-time. A three-quarter time pastor would work 30 hours per week; half time 20 hours per week; quarter-time, 10 hours per week.

The duration of Vacation, Continuing Education and Birth/Adoption Leave remain unchanged for Part Time Pastors. This is because their time per week is already reduced for being part-time. For example, a half-time pastor taking one week of vacation receives only one half-week of paid time off.

Travel/Professional allowances and Continuing Education Allowance are negotiable, based on the needs and expectations of the particular church and pastor. If a pastor will be driving a lot of miles as part of their work, then this amount should be raised to full cover these expenses while still leaving funds for other needed items.

B. INTERIM PASTORS

There is a special test for minimum terms of call for Interim Pastors. Their terms should be at least 90% of the prior pastor's terms of call provided they have comparable experience, with changes in hours adjusted proportionately. Minimums for interims are the higher of the normal minimums calculated below or this 90% figure.

² Not all clergy will be enrolled in Pastor's Participation. See the section on Benefits, below.

C. *ELEMENTS OF CALL:*

1. EFFECTIVE SALARY/PENSION BASE

Effective Salary (pension base) = cash salary + housing allowance + utilities/furnishings.

The Housing Allowance should be one of the following:

- When there is a church-owned manse, the Housing Allowance should be the fair rental value of that manse + the amount of utilities directly paid by the church.
- When where is no manse, the Housing Allowance should be an estimate of the rent of a space or the costs of home ownership (principle payments, taxes and mortgage interest)

In no case shall the housing allowance be less than 33% of the cash salary.

Utilities/Furnishings Allowance includes the following:

- cost of utilities paid by the pastor
- the purchase of furniture, appliances, dishes and cookware, and decorating items including rugs, pictures, curtains, bedspreads, sheets, towels, etc.
- insurance on the home and contents
- miscellaneous expenses including improvements, repairs and upkeep of the home and its contents, snow removal, lawn mowing, light bulbs, cleaning supplies, etc.

General Principle: It is better for the utilities/furnishings allowance to be a little high. Since setting the Housing and Utilities/Furnishings Allowances is simply a matter of labeling dollars already committed to salary, this is a simple way for a congregation to help a pastor reduce their tax burden at no cost to the church.³

2. BENEFITS

The cost to the church for benefits is a percentage of the Effective Salary described in the last section. Go to the web site for the PCUSA Board of Pensions for details. <https://www.pensions.org/>

In recognition of our theology of benefits, and in the spirit of caring for our clergy, we recognize that there are three main areas where benefits are needed: health insurance, death/disability coverage and retirement income. For installed pastors, the Board of Pensions requires enrollment in the Pastors' Participation Plan (<https://www.pensions.org/what-we-offer/benefits-packages/Pastors-Participation>) which includes medical, pension, death/disability benefits. For non-installed pastors, it is the policy of the Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey, that they shall ordinarily be enrolled in the Pastors' Participation Plan. For dual income families and part time tent making pastors, it is the expectation of the Presbytery of Northeastern New Jersey that all of the identified benefit needs will be accommodated either by the church or another employer.

³ When the time comes for the clergy to calculate their taxes, they can designate any amount of furnishing allowance not actually used for housing-related expenses as regular income—so if the figure too high that doesn't create any problems with the IRS.

The Board of Pensions offers an alternate set of benefits which includes pensions, death and disability. It is called Minister's Choice. It is available for pastors who work at least 20 hours/week. The cost is 10% of effective salary. <https://www.pensions.org/what-we-offer/benefits-packages/Ministers-Choice>

In addition to the basic medical, pension, death/disability benefits, the Board of Pensions offers optional benefits, including: dental, vision, supplemental death and disability, along with medical and dependent care spending accounts. Churches can elect to offer these benefits during the annual employer agreement process with the Board of Pensions. The pastor then selects among optional benefits.

3. SOCIAL SECURITY OFFSET (SECA)

Pastors are required to pay self-employment tax. This tax is assessed at a rate of 15.3% of their ministerial income including utilities and the cash housing allowance or fair rental value of a manse. To assist the pastor in paying this substantial tax many churches include in the terms of call a Social Security Offset. This is generally calculated as 7.65% of the pastor's cash salary, utilities and cash housing allowance or fair rental value of a manse. The social security offset is NOT included in the Effective Salary (pension dues calculation) but it IS included on the pastor's annual Form W-2. See the appendix for guidance on filling out the pastor's annual Form W-2.

4. TRAVEL/PROFESSIONAL REIMBURSEMENT

The Travel/Professional Reimbursement covers professional expenses paid by the church. Churches should adopt an Accountable Reimbursement Plan⁴ whereby the pastor is reimbursed for properly documented professional expenses. An Accountable Reimbursement Plan describes a plan that reimburses the employee (pastor) for expenses incurred in the performance of his/her duties. This plan must be administered by the church. The pastor should submit receipts and/or contemporaneous records (mileage log) to the church's treasurer/bookkeeper for reimbursement. Professional travel (air/train fare, hotel and meals when out of town overnight) should be documented and reimbursed in a similar manner. IRS guidelines must be complied with. Items purchased with professional expense dollars are those determined by the pastor to be relevant to their work and professional development. Items such as books, robes & stoles, cell phones, computer hardware & software purchased in this way are the property of the pastor. Cell phone bills may also be reimbursed.

Reimbursement to the pastor for business use of a personal vehicle can be done by using the IRS standard mileage rate or by reimbursing actual vehicle expenses. In the Accountable Reimbursement Plan it is best to refer to the "standard IRS mileage rate" as this rate is changed periodically. If the church chooses to reimburse based on actual expenses they should consult a professional as substantial additional record keeping is required.

An income tax deduction may be possible for any documented unreimbursed travel/professional expenses incurred by the pastor. In this circumstance the pastor should consult their own tax advisor.

⁴ If the church does not adopt an *Accountable Reimbursement Plan* and chooses to instead pay the pastor a set agreed allowance and does not require the pastor to provide documentation to the church, by default, has adopted an *Unaccountable Plan* and must include these payments on the pastor's annual Form W-2.

5. PAID VACATION

One month vacation consists of four weeks + two work days, and may include up to five Sundays.

Pastors are allowed to carry over one week of vacation from one year to the next.⁵ Additional vacation may be carried over at the discretion of the session.

6. CONTINUING EDUCATION LEAVE & ALLOWANCE

The two weeks Continuing Education Leave may include two Sundays. It is the general intent that Continuing Education time should be used regularly and steadily. However, with the approval of the session, Continuing Education Leave and Continuing Education Allowance may be accumulated for later use.

The Continuing Education Allowance should be paid by the church in compliance with an adopted Accountable Reimbursement Plan. Reimbursable expenses incurred by the pastor include tuition and fees for relevant continuing professional education, air/train/auto costs, lodging and meals when necessarily away from home overnight.

If a pastor leaves a position, accrued Continuing Education Leave does not extend the duration of employment (and benefits) in the same way accrued vacation does. When a pastorate is ending, it is hoped that sessions will work with pastors to provide accrued Continuing Education Allowance to a departing pastor who wishes to take Continuing Education Leave within a reasonable time after employment is ended. Such funds are paid according to the congregation's Accountable Reimbursement Plan.

7. RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN (a 403(b) plan offered by the Board of Pensions)

Pastors may voluntarily defer a portion of their salary to the Retirement Savings Plan on a pre-tax basis.⁶ Such deferment is entirely at the pastor's option and the amount may be changed at any time. Voluntary salary deferment does not alter Effective Salary, does not change terms of call or require approval by the congregation (for installed pastors) or the session (for contracted pastoral services).

Alternately or additionally, a church may make an employer contribution to the Retirement Savings Plan. This amount is not included in the calculation for Effective Salary (and therefore does not affect the cost of benefits). The pastor may not change this number without renegotiating the terms of call.

8. BIRTH/ADOPTION LEAVE

Leave around the birth or adoption of a child may be up to eight (8) weeks in length, during which time the pastor shall receive full effective salary and full pension dues shall be paid. Upon completion of the leave, the personnel will be entitled to return their position. The position will not be filled during the leave period except on a temporary basis. This leave is available to parents of any gender.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, a request for parental leave shall be made not later than a month before the requested leave is to begin.

⁵ This provision puts PCUSA churches into compliance with New Jersey's Earned Sick Leave Law (2018).

⁶ NOTE: Unlike most states, pretax contributions to 403b plans are subject to New Jersey state income tax.

9. DAY OFF AND HOLIDAYS

Since pastors work on Sundays, it is expected that the pastor will set aside another day of the week as their day off. If the pastor's day off happens to be on Monday, the pastor should not be deprived of the many Monday holidays and may take another day as their holiday ('comp time'). If the pastor needs to work on a day an employer would ordinarily consider a holiday, such as Christmas or Easter, the pastor should receive another day as holiday time.

D. LESS COMMON ITEMS IN TERMS OF CALL

1. DEBT ASSISTANCE – BOARD OF PENSIONS

Minister Educational Debt Assistance is available for up to \$5,000 per year, for up to five years. Total awards may not exceed \$25,000 over five years. Pastors must have completed a CREDO conference and have an effective salary below \$80,000. The Board considers financial means, the nature and amount of your debt, and other factors, as appropriate. The funds available and number of grants awarded each year are limited. Awards are at the discretion of the Board of Pensions. Details can be found at <https://www.pensions.org/your-path-to-wholeness/assistance-program/receiving-assistance/minister-educational-debt-assistance-grants>.

2. SUPPLEMENTAL MEDICAL COVERAGE

Several options are available to provide a pastor with supplemental medical coverage to cover expenses not paid by the medical plan. The Board of Pensions makes available a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) which is recommended. Health Savings Accounts, Cafeteria Plans, and Section 125 Plans may be available to certain individuals not in the Pastor Participation Plan. Each of these possibilities has tax implications, may impact other church staff and must be implemented in compliance with regulations that are often complex. A professional should be consulted when implementing any of these plans.

3. DEPENDENT CARE BENEFITS

A pastor can elect to withhold funds from their cash salary to pay for dependent care expenses. The Board of Pensions offers such a Dependent Care Account Plan. Churches can elect to offer these benefits during the annual employer agreement process.

4. SABBATICAL LEAVE

Some churches offer a pastor a sabbatical leave. A Sabbatical Leave is separate and distinct from paid vacation or continuing education leave. It is a time of study, renewal and prayer for the pastor, an extended time away from church responsibilities to reflect and recharge. Sabbaticals are usually offered after an extended time in a pastorate, typically 7 years. Some churches include the promise of a sabbatical in an initial offer to a pastor as an incentive for consistent service.

Though a Sabbatical Leave is separate from paid vacation or continuing education leave, they may be combined. Travel/Professional expense allowance and Continuing Education may be used by the pastor during Sabbatical Leave. A church may offer additional funds for this purpose. The Board of Pensions offers a grant, as do some other organizations.

III. MINIMUM COMPENSATION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE NOT MINISTERS OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

A. COMMISSIONED PASTORS

A Ruling Elder who has undergone special training may be commissioned by the presbytery to serve in a pastoral capacity. Such persons are referred to as Commissioned Pastors (CP).⁷ Minimum compensation for Commissioned Pastors is 75% of the minimums for Ministers of Word and Sacrament. This includes consideration of years worked in this or a similar position.

1. IS THE COMMISSIONED PASTOR DEEMED CLERGY FOR TAX PURPOSES?

If a Ruling Elder is commissioned by the presbytery to serve as a Commissioned Pastor, then that CP may be considered clergy for employment and tax purposes. The rule of thumb is this: if they are allowed to administer the sacraments, then they may be deemed clergy. This means they can benefit from the Housing Allowance. The SECA allowance can apply to them. They will also need to make quarterly estimated tax payments to the IRS like any other self-employed person.

However, if the CP is not functioning as clergy (or does not want to be classified this way for IRS/employment purposes), then they can be a regular employee of the church for whom Withholding/FICA is done. Their Cash Salary will equal their Effective Salary.

2. STEPS FOR DETERMINING MINIMUM COMMISSIONED PASTOR (CP) COMPENSATION

- Determine how many years of experience the CP has in similar work.
- Using that number of years, look up the minimum Effective Salary in the chart for Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Multiply that number by 0.75 (75%).
 - If the CP is deemed clergy, then designate some of the Effective Salary as Housing Allowance.
- The church should remember to budget money for Withholding/FICA.
 - If the CP is deemed clergy, then the church will NOT do ordinary Withholding/FICA. The church may consider adding a SECA allowance.
- Look up the minimum amount of TRAVEL/PROFESSIONAL REIMBURSEMENT on that same chart. Multiply that number by 0.75 (75%).
- Look up the minimum amount of CONTINUING EDUCATION ALLOWANCE. Multiply that number by 0.75 (75%).
- The CP and congregation must negotiate and agree on benefits to be offered.
- Vacation, Continuing Education Leave, Birth/Adoption Leave and Day Off must be available.

⁷ In addition to **COMMISSIONED PASTORS**, The Book of Order term also uses the term **COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS (CRE)**. There is also an older term, **COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR (CLP)**. Feedback from people doing this work is that since they are doing the work of a pastor, they really need the word 'PASTOR' in their job title.

3. PART-TIME COMMISSIONED PASTORS

Compensation for part time Commissioned Pastors is pro-rated in the same way as pastoral compensation. Example: For a half-time position, take all the numbers determined in the previous list and multiply by 0.5 (50%).

Hypothetical Example: If the minimum Effective Salary for a Minister of Word and Sacrament was \$60,000, then the minimum Effective Salary for a CP would be $\$60,000 \times 0.75 = \$45,000$. If the CP position was half time, then the minimum Effective Salary would be $\$45,000 \times 0.5 = \$22,500$.

The duration of Vacation, Continuing Education and Birth/Adoption Leave remain unchanged for Part Time CPs. This is because their time per week is already reduced for being part-time. For example, a half-time pastor taking one week of vacation receives only one half-week off.

B. CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Many persons engage in a ministry of Christian Education in churches, but some have undergone a rigorous training and certification process. This policy only applies to Certified Christian Educators, not other educators employed by churches.

“Certified Christian educators are persons certified and called to service in the ministry of education in congregations or councils. They shall have skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, worship and sacraments, human development, faith development, religious educational theory and practice, and the polity, programs, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). ... The presbytery shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators...” (from the Book of Order, G-2.1103)

Minimum compensation for Certified Christian Educators is based on the minimums for Ministers of Word and Sacrament. This includes consideration of years worked in this or a similar position.

The Effective Salary total is identical (100%) to that of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.⁸ Social Security Offset does not apply, but Withholding/FICA must be done. Travel/Professional Expenses, Paid Vacation and Continuing Education Leave & Allowance are all identical to those of pastors. Benefits are negotiable. Birth/Adoption Leave and Day Off must be available.

The PCUSA has an excellent document: “Suggested Compensation Guidelines for Establishing a PC(USA) Educator’s Salary” <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/suggested-compensation-guidelines-establishing-edu/>

PART-TIME: Compensation for part-time Certified Christian Educators is pro-rated in the same way as pastoral compensation.

C. ALL OTHER CHURCH EMPLOYEES

BENEFITS: The PCUSA Board of Pensions allows your church to offer various kinds of benefits to musicians, educators and other staff. There are options for health insurance (minimum 20 hours per week). There are no hour minimums for the Retirement Savings Plan, Dental, Vision or Flexible Spending Accounts. Offering these benefits as options to your employees generally costs the church nothing. Get the details at <https://www.pensions.org/>

⁸ By the tax code, Only clergy may benefit from a Housing, Utilities/Furnishing Allowances, so the Effective Salary = Cash Salary.

WITHOLDING: While clergy are deemed self-employed by the IRS for many purposes, other church employees are not. Since they are regular employees, Withholding/FICA must be done for all positions not filled by Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Commissioned Pastors functioning as clergy.⁹

IV. THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY (COM) AND TERMS OF CALL

Ultimately all terms of call for Ministers must be approved by the COM. This policy document is offered in hopes of providing clarity so that such approvals are smooth and routine.

A. SITUATIONS WHERE MINIMUM COMPENSATION IS NOT MET

The COM recognizes that each church represents a unique set of circumstances. It is possible that a church may want to request an exemption to the policy on minimum compensation. When this is the case, the session must appoint one of its members (not the pastor, certified educator or commissioned pastor) to contact a COM liaison to explain the request and the reasons for it. The terms of call are not finalized until COM approves the exemption. (The Book of Order does not permit the presbytery to grant an exemption to the minimum for installed Ministers of Word and Sacrament, G-2.0804)

V. PULPIT SUPPLY/MODERATOR FEES

For pulpit supply the minimum fee is \$225 + \$75 for each additional worship service in the same church on the same day. To moderate a regular/notable meeting of the session or the congregation the minimum fee is \$125. Additional funds for mileage are *not* expected.

NOTE ON FORM 1099-MISC: IRS regulations require a payer to issue a Form 1099-MISC to report payments in excess of \$600 in a calendar year to non-corporate payees. That sum would include pulpit supply and moderation fees.

INFORMATIONAL NOTE FOR DRAFTS of this document...

Newark pulpit supply was \$165. Palisades was \$200 + mileage. Elizabeth was \$200 + \$50/additional service.

Newark meeting moderation was \$65. Palisades was \$100 + mileage. Elizabeth was \$100.

⁹ Some kinds of positions may be filled by ‘independent contractors’ who are paid with a 1099 rather than a W-2. Withholding is not needed for these positions. This part of employment law is tricky; consult a professional about when this is appropriate and when it is not.

VI. APPENDIX - GUIDANCE IN FILLING OUT FORM W-2 FOR CLERGY

- A. Generally ministers are an employee of the church and their compensation is properly reported to tax authorities on a Form W-2.
- B. Withholding of Social Security Taxes and Medicare Taxes from a minister's salary is prohibited.
- C. Ministers are NOT subject to NJ unemployment taxes or disability taxes and these should not be withheld from a minister's salary.
- D. Federal and NJ Income Taxes may be withheld from a minister's salary but is not required. It is the minister's option to have taxes withheld from their paycheck or to be personally responsible for making estimated tax payments. If the minister chooses to have the taxes withheld they may want to consult with a professional to determine the appropriate amount to withhold. Reliance on the charts in IRS Circular E will almost always result in under withholding.
- E. FORM W-2 (Note that this is the 2017 form. Boxes on more recent forms are similar)

Box 1 – include cash salary + social security offset + any payments paid under an unaccountable plan less any amount withheld in accordance with a 403B plan.

Box 2 – Federal income taxes withheld if any. If no taxes were withheld, leave blank.

Box 3 – leave blank

Box 4 – leave blank

Box 5 – leave blank

Box 6 – leave blank

Box 7 – leave blank

Box 8 – leave blank

Box 9 – leave blank

Box 10 – include any dependent care benefits withheld from the cash salary

Box 11 – leave blank

Box 12a – code C – value of term life insurance > \$50,000. This number can be obtained from the Board of Pensions.

Box 12b – code E – amount withheld in accordance with a 403B plan

Box 12c – code DD – cost of employer sponsored health coverage (the medical portion of the pension dues)

Box 12d – leave blank

Box 13 – check “Retirement Plan” box

Box 14 – include when applicable

Fair rental value of the manse

Cash housing allowance

Cash utility allowance

Actual amount paid for the minister's utilities

Box 16 – include cash salary + social security offset + any payments paid under an unaccountable plan.
Do NOT subtract 403B contributions withheld.

Box 17 – NJ income taxes withheld if any. If no NJ taxes were withheld, leave blank.

Box 18 – leave blank

Box 19 – leave blank

Box 20 – leave blank

22222		a Employee's social security number		OMB No. 1545-0008	
b Employer identification number (EIN)			1 Wages, tips, other compensation		2 Federal income tax withheld
c Employer's name, address, and ZIP code			3 Social security wages		4 Social security tax withheld
			5 Medicare wages and tips		6 Medicare tax withheld
			7 Social security tips		8 Allocated tips
d Control number			9 Verification code		10 Dependent care benefits
e Employee's first name and initial Last name Suff.			11 Nonqualified plans		12a
			13 Statutory employee Retirement plan Third-party sick pay		12b
			14 Other		12c
					12d
f Employee's address and ZIP code					
15 State	Employer's state ID number	16 State wages, tips, etc.	17 State income tax	18 Local wages, tips, etc.	19 Local income tax
					20 Locality name

Form **W-2** Wage and Tax Statement
Copy 1—For State, City, or Local Tax Department

2017

Department of the Treasury—Internal Revenue Service

The above guidance is general and should not be considered applicable to every church's particular circumstances. Professional guidance should be sought when appropriate.