



# Guidelines on Manses

Guidelines agreed by the  
2016 General Assembly



## Guidelines on Manses

*The term “Guidelines” has been used rather than “Laws” or “Rules” as it is sometimes necessary to have a degree of flexibility. However, Guidelines are more than mere suggestions. When approved by the General Assembly they carry a definite authority and should only be departed from where there is good and sufficient reason approved by Presbytery and the Linkage Commission.*

The following Guidelines were adopted by the 2016 General Assembly:–

### **In a Vacancy Situation**

1. Major manse problems are better resolved before a new Minister is called, let alone installed.
2. It is recommended that the outgoing minister and his/her family be consulted by the Convener of the Vacancy before they leave the manse, as they may be aware of problems and faults which will not be immediately obvious to others.
3. Following an installation a Vacancy Commission should remain in place until any recommendations with regard to the manse are implemented. It is strongly recommended that the new minister should refrain from involving himself/herself in any substantial discussions and decisions concerning the manse. The Vacancy Convener should chair any meetings of Committee concerning work on the manse until it is complete.
4. Where Leave to Call is sought the Linkage Commission will require a survey, carried out by a suitably qualified person, together with gas and electric reports and a copy Minute of the Congregational Committee meeting, detailing what it is prepared to do. This is in order that permission having been given, it is not subsequently discovered that major work needs to be undertaken or even the manse needs replacing! It is important to understand that the state of the manse will definitely be taken into account before Leave to Call is granted. (Code Par 273(4)).
5. Recognising that a manse, in addition to being a family home, has on occasion a wider use (e.g. meetings of organisational committees etc.) as a minimum ‘public’ rooms should be furnished, decorated and maintained by the congregation i.e. carpeting provided for Hall, Stairs and Landing; carpet and curtains provided in the ‘public rooms’ (Study, Drawing Room, Dining Room). The kitchen should be

fitted to a contemporary standard.

6. Reasonable removal expenses should be paid. It is recognised that these are bound to vary depending on the distance involved and other circumstances. A sensible figure should be agreed by the Presbytery in which the vacancy occurs and submitted along with the other specified information when Leave to Call is being sought.
7. If it is wished to provide for the short-term rental of a vacant manse the authorisation of the congregation must be obtained first (Code Par 57(2)). Permission must then be sought and obtained from the Presbytery and the Linkage Commission (Code Pars 57(4) and 82(4)):
  - (a) Permission for letting should be given for a specified period of time and then, if necessary, be subject to further permission from the Presbytery and Linkage Commission.
  - (b) The Convener of the Vacancy should have the opportunity to inspect the property between rentals.
  - (c) A proper legal leasing agreement should be drawn up by the Congregational Committee and approved by the Congregation and Presbytery. The Convener of the Vacancy Commission should be satisfied with this agreement in order to avoid unforeseen difficulties at a later stage.
  - (d) Where for any reason it is necessary for the minister to continue living in the manse, after ceasing to be the minister of that Congregation, a legally binding “Caretaker’s Agreement” must be drawn up before he/she ceases to be the minister of the congregation.
8. If there is an exceptionally large manse garden or a manse farm, the respective responsibilities of the minister and Church Committee, with regard to maintenance and upkeep, should be determined by the Vacancy Commission and the Congregation and the arrangements submitted to the Linkage Commission when seeking Leave to Call.

## **In a Settled Situation**

1. If a minister is to leave the manse temporarily on account of major renovation or the unavoidable necessity of replacing the manse, the permission of both the Presbytery and the Linkage Commission must be sought before the Minister vacates the premises.
2. It is the responsibility of the Congregation, acting through its Committee, to make the necessary provision for suitable alternative accommodation, its manse being unavailable. A departure from the provision of a manse is in fact a departure from the Terms of the Call and it is therefore not the responsibility of the minister to endeavour to find his/her own accommodation. Such ‘temporary’ accommodation

should conform, as far as is possible, to the Assembly's Guidelines and have the approval of the overseeing Presbytery. In these circumstances acceptable provision should also be made by the Committee, if necessary, for the storage of furniture temporarily 'surplus to requirements'.

3. The minister should not be responsible for the removal costs in a situation such as that envisaged, where such a move has been necessitated by circumstances not of his/her own making.
4. It is important to understand that permission to vacate the manse is given for a limited period of time. Immediately the renovations have been completed arrangements should be set in hand by the Committee, guided by Presbytery, for the return of the minister to the manse.
5. If a minister is within one year of his/her definite date of retirement, or over the normal age of retirement, it is probable that permission will be given to vacate the manse, if he/she so requests and with the agreement of the congregation, in order to facilitate the congregation in undertaking any necessary repairs or renovations to the manse property in anticipation of a vacancy. In other circumstances a request by a minister to vacate the manse should only be considered where there are compelling reasons (e.g. a certified medical condition).

## **Consultations**

The Commission understand that a professional survey of the manse will be carried out in Consultation. This will not do away with the need, however, for a survey to be carried out prior to granting Leave to Call, as it is necessary for this to be done on a vacant manse.

## **General**

When a congregation requests permission from the Linkage Commission to sell its manse it should ascertain the following:

1. That the deeds of the property have been inspected and that there are no restrictive clauses.
2. That a new manse will be built or bought, conforming to the Assembly's Guidelines (unless the manse is redundant on account of a linkage).
3. That if there is any surplus of money after a manse has been sold and a replacement provided, it will normally be placed in a Manse Fund Account, to be used for repairs and maintenance of the manse unless permission has been received from the Linkage Commission to vary this arrangement.
4. Where redundant manses are let, the trustees are under obligation to ensure that

a realistic rent is charged, which can be reviewed at least annually and where the tenant is responsible for the payment of rates. If the Union Commission previously laid down stipulations as to the use of income from a redundant manse, any request to vary these should be made to the Linkage Commission through the Church Architecture and Manses Panel.

## **Accommodation**

In view of the fact that new manses may need to be obtained for many different situations - (rural, suburban, inner city, church planting) the Linkage Commission will receive sympathetically requests for variation from the following Guidelines which should be read in that light.

1. A manse in its lifetime will be required to serve several family groups of different sizes and demands. While it could be considered extravagant to centre the design on a family unit which is somewhat larger than average, it is also short-sighted to simply provide accommodation for a minimal family unit.
2. Generally this could be achieved by providing:
  - Study ideally located convenient to the entrance of the manse. Where a properly specified office exists for the sole use of the minister on the church premises, a study will still need to be provided in the manse, scaled back in size, but able to accommodate appropriate furniture and storage for books.
  - Ground floor WC
  - Family room which may be an integral part of the kitchen area
  - Kitchen fitted to a contemporary standard
  - Adequate dining facilities
  - Lounge of sufficient size to permit comfortable social and official entertainment
  - Preferably four good sized bedrooms, one with en-suite
  - Bathroom fitted to a contemporary standard. Either the en-suite or the bathroom should include a stand- alone shower
  - Adequate garage, storage and utility facilities
  - Mechanical and electrical services should meet appropriate standards including alarm systems and environmental considerations
  - Consideration should be given to the thermal efficiency of the property
3. In church planting and other situations these guidelines may not be feasible and flexibility can be used with the permission of the relevant bodies.

4. A manse of lesser size or specifications, if suitable, may require to be extended or replaced at a later date.
5. The advice of the Presbytery Architecture Committee should be sought and the proper procedures adhered to. It is inadvisable to seek full planning approval before the plans have been recommended by the Linkage Commission's Church Architecture and Manses Panel and approved by the Linkage Commission.



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