



Guidelines on Manses

Guidelines agreed by the General Assembly
between 1980 – 2007

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Union Commission Guidelines

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(2001 General Assembly Reports p67)

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Guidelines on Redundant Manses

(1980 General Assembly Reports p25)

(1992 General Assembly Reports p55)

(1994 General Assembly Reports p39)

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(2007 General Assembly Reports p96)

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Arising from a request by the Presbytery of Templepatrick, the Manses Committee drew up General Guidelines on Manses. It was recognised that Guidelines already existed with regard to **redundant** Manses (Assembly Reports 1980, 1992, 1994) and that there were also separate Guidelines in place, under the aegis of the General Assembly's Architecture Committee, relating to the provision of a new Manse. However, it was also recognised that, apart from these situations, the generally accepted 'Guidelines' had developed by way of 'custom and practice', and that it was necessary for both Ministers and Congregations to have such Guidelines in written form.

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 Union Commission.

The Following Guidelines were adopted:

a. 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 that will not be immediately obvious to others.
3. Vacancy Commissions should remain in place until any recommendations with regard to the manse are implemented. It is further recommended that a representative of the Presbytery's Architecture Committee (or the Architecture Convener) should sit on the Vacancy Commission. And it is strongly recommended that the new minister should refrain from involving himself/herself in any discussions and decisions.
4. Where permission to Call is sought it is important that a detailed report on the condition of the Manse be available in order that, permission having been given, it is not subsequently discovered that major work needs to be undertaken or even that the Manse needs replacing! Consequently the Questionnaire as set out in Paragraph (c) (below) with regard to Visitations should be submitted through the Presbytery to the Union Commission, in order that all will be clearly seen to be in order. It is important to understand that the state of the manse will be definitely taken into account before Permission to Call is granted (Code: Paragraph 274 (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.), 'public areas' should be furnished 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 have floor covering and a cooker provided. The provision of bookshelves would be helpful.
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 permission to call is being sought.
7. Whereas a congregation is obliged to provide a Manse for the Minister and he/she is obliged to live in it, in accordance with the Terms of Call, nevertheless the relationship of a congregation to the Minister is not that of landlord to tenant. As a general principle, a Minister is not responsible for interior Manse decoration as is the case with a tenant.
8. If permission has been sought and obtained from the Presbytery and the Union Commission for the short-term rental of a vacant Manse:
 - 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 Union Commission;
 - b. the Convener of the Vacancy Commission 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 the Convener of the Vacancy Commission should be satisfied with this agreement in order to avoid unforeseen difficulties at a later stage.
9. 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 Union Commission when seeking Permission to Call.

b. In a Settled Situation

1. If a Minister has 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 Union Commission should 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, their

Manse being unavailable. A departure from the provision of a Manse is in fact a departure from the Terms of 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 them 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 (eg a certified medical condition).
6. In a situation where extensive renovations are being undertaken, or in other circumstances deemed necessary, it is recommended that consideration be given to installing an Intruder Alarm system in the Manse.

c. In Visitations by Presbytery

In each 10 year Visitation by Presbytery it is important that the condition of the Manse be monitored. Suggested questions could include:

1. Has a professional survey been undertaken of all aspects of the Manse property?
2. When was the manse constructed?
3. Are there any repairs of a serious nature that need to be undertaken with a degree of urgency?
4. Is there double glazing, central heating? Is there wall (cavity) insulation, if appropriate?
5. What is the Church Committee's policy on internal redecoration? How often is external redecoration of the Manse undertaken?
6. Is there an Intruder alarm system fitted?

By ensuring that maintenance of the Manse is undertaken in a routine manner it is to be hoped that, should a vacancy occur, the state of the Manse would not be a contributory factor in delaying Leave to Call. Presbyteries should ensure, as is the present case, that any recommendations are put into effect within a reasonable period of time (Code Paragraph 251).

General

When a congregation requests permission from the Union Commission to sell their Manse they 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 Union);
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 in exceptional circumstances permission has been received from the Union Commission to vary this arrangement.
4. Rental from a redundant Manse should normally be used in accordance with the General Assembly's Guidelines, unless in exceptional circumstances permission has been received from the Union Commission to vary this arrangement.

Assembly Guidelines on Redundant Manses

Annual Reports: Belfast 1980 Page 25, paragraph 12.

12. Redundant Manses

- (i) **Where redundant manses are sold**, the assets should be disbursed according to Union Commission guidelines, which are generally as follows:
 - (a) If there is no Retired Minister: 40% to Capital and 20% each to Minister's Stipend, Minister's Expenses, and to upkeep of other Manse.
 - (b) If there is a Retired Minister, with entitlement to Manse: 40% to Capital, 40% to Retired Minister and 20% to upkeep of other Manse.
- (ii) **Where redundant manses are let** the Trustees are under obligation to ensure that a realistic rent is charged, with can be reviewed at least annually and where the tenant is responsible for the payment of rates.
- (iii) Disbursement of proceeds from a manse letting should be in accordance with the Union Commission guidelines indicated above, omitting the percentage to Capital.

The Guidelines were updated by the Assembly in 1992, as follows:

Annual Reports: Belfast, 1992 Page 55 paragraph 8.

- 8. The Commission have approved the following explanatory note to be appended to the 1980 Guidelines on Redundant Manses:
 - (i) Where redundant manses are SOLD the (annual sum from invested income) should be disbursed according to Union Commission guidelines, which are generally as follows:
 - (a) If there is no retired minister with entitlement to manse: 40% to capital, 20% each to minister's stipend, minister's expenses and to upkeep of other manse.
 - (b) If there is a retired minister with entitlement to manse: 40% to capital, 40% to retired minister and 20% to upkeep of other manse.
 - (ii) 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.
 - (iii) Disbursement of proceeds from a manse letting should be in accordance with the Union Commission guidelines indicated above omitting the percentage to capital.

(Please refer to 1994 reports for updated proportions)

Explanatory notes (1992)

- A. 'A retired minister with entitlement to manse' (see (i)(a) and (b) above) is a minister ordained before 1935.
- B. In (i)(a) and (i)(b) the sums paid to minister's stipend and expenses are over and above any sums agreed with the Union Commission, unless permission has been received from the Union Commission to treat such sums as forming part of the agreed stipend and expenses, because the resultant sums are clearly unreasonable, or because of some other special and compelling reason.
- C. In (i)(a) and (i)(b) reference is made to a 20% sum for use in upkeep of the 'other manse' i.e. the manse in which the minister of the united charge resides. This money should be held in a separate account by the congregation administering the fund and income, and drawn on where necessary to meet shared maintenance expenses in the manse where the minister resides, in the proportions laid down in the 'Terms of Union'.
- D. In (iii) since there is a manse, the annual income is divided equally in the three proportions listed, i.e. 1/3rd each to stipend, expenses and upkeep of other manse.

(please refer to changes in 1994 Annual Reports)

Annual Reports: Belfast 1994 Page 39 paragraph 4

Manses

- 4. During the year the Commission agreed to change the proportions under which rental from redundant manses is disbursed from 3 portions of 33.3% to 4 portions of 25% for each of the following, stipend, ministerial expenses, upkeep of other manse in the union, and maintenance of the fabric of the redundant manse.

Guidelines for New Manses

Annual Reports: Belfast, 2007, Page 96.

1. The Church Architecture Committee discussed the *Guidelines for New Manses 1994* and realised that things have changed over the years.
2. Many churches provide an office but the minister needs a study at the manse of sufficient dimensions to accommodate appropriate furniture and storage for books.
3. 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 around a family unit which is somewhat larger than average, it is also short-sighted to simply provide accommodation for a minimal family unit.
4. Generally this could be achieved by providing:
 - (a) Study, ideally located convenient to the entrance of the manse.
 - (b) Ground floor WC.
 - (c) Family room which could be integrated into the kitchen area.
 - (d) Kitchen fitted to modern standard.
 - (e) Adequate dining facilities.
 - (f) Lounge of sufficient size to permit comfortable social and official entertainment.
 - (g) Preferably four good sized bedrooms one with en-suite.
 - (h) Bathroom fitted to modern standard.
 - (i) Adequate garage, storage and utility facilities.
 - (j) Mechanical and electrical services should meet appropriate standards including alarm systems and environmental consideration.
6. In church planting and other situations these guidelines may not be feasible and flexibility can be used with the permission of the relevant bodies.
7. A manse of lesser size or specifications, if suitable, may require to be extended or replaced at a later date.
8. 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 are with the Church Architecture Committee.

