

LINKAGE COMMISSION

Convener: Rev WJ HENRY
Secretary: TJ LIVINGSTONE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report summarises the work of the Linkage Commission from April 2016-Mar 2017. Matters dealt with include: the terms of leaves to call granted to 26 charges, reviews of the financial terms in various leaves to call, and reports on the work of the internal Panels of the Commission.

The Very Rev Dr Donald Patton

2. Having completed two years as Chairman of the Commission, the Very Rev Dr Donald Patton retires at this Assembly. Dr Patton brought a wealth of insight from a practical knowledge of the denomination and a wisdom gleaned from many years dealing with practical matters of church life and witness. He chaired meetings of the Linkage Commission and Business Panel with fairness and determination and will be missed.

Creating sustainable ministry arrangements

3. A brief encounter with the monthly workload of the Commission makes it very apparent that the religious landscape of Ireland has changed and that this change impacts the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The Commission continues its role in the stewardship of resources with which God has blessed his church. The Scriptures challenge the church to use these resources wisely and not to waste them (Mt 25:14-30; John 6:12; 1 Peter 4:10).

4. It is part of Presbyterian DNA that the strong support the weak and increasingly the Commission is conscious that it needs to target the spend of Central Ministry Fund resources. The factors that influence the final decision of the Commission centre around the mission of the church – encouraging small but vibrant communities of faith in a particular location where there is vast potential; or where due to sheer isolation no other option for linkage or partnership is an option.

5. There is a limit however, to how much can be provided in any situation, and new options for the future provision of ministry must be explored, such as part time ministry arrangements, or in a linkage, or even possibly a still larger linkage with the help of Auxiliary Ministers.

Presbytery Strategy

6. The Commission expresses heartfelt appreciation to many Presbyteries which have faced up to the changing circumstances and have attempted to lead congregations along new paths. Over the past year there have been at least 5 significant discussions with different Presbyteries – the work involved has been considerable and the Commission thanks its members who have given much time to this, as well as members of the individual Presbyteries involved.

7. The Commission is conscious that such processes are not without pain and indeed call many to make new sacrifices or witness in changed arrangements. Smaller congregations should take note of the changes in terms of linkages and ministry provision that many much larger congregations are presently considering. Presbyteries are encouraged to take the long term view about how they might redistribute ministry within their bounds or, with the assistance of the Commission, beyond their bounds to ensure sustainable ministry.

8. The Church must reflect deeply on how to proceed in all these situations and to that end the Linkage Commission asks for the prayers of the denomination as it seeks, not to set out change for change's sake, but to create a viable and sustainable vision of ministry for the contemporary context in which the church exists.

Effective Contemporary Ministry Task Group

9. One practical outworking of this new reflection upon strategy is evidenced in the work of Effective Contemporary Ministry Task Group.

10. The Task Group is comprised of representatives from the Council for Mission in Ireland, Council for Training in Ministry and Linkage Commission. A strong desire has been expressed that the Linkage Commission in arriving at its decisions, should bear in mind missional opportunities and resource these accordingly. The downside to such action of course is that everywhere cannot be a priority and hard decisions must be made.

Guidance for Interviews

11. Two options for interviews at vacancies had been presented by the Commission to the General Assembly of 2016 - one which permitted only interview by Kirk Session and the second which permitted interview also by Hearing Committees. It was the second option of the Guidelines for Interviews which were adopted, allowing for interviews by Hearing Committee. However, the Commission was asked to reconsider Par 3(f) of these guidelines.

12. Par 3(f) reads as follows: "The Chairman must ensure that the Hearing Committee does not discuss matters with candidates which are specific to Kirk Session. This means that it is inappropriate to ask questions concerning matters listed under 2e." In effect this required reconsideration of Pars 1(d), 2(e) and 3(f).

13. Pars 1(d), 2(e) and 3(f), as presented last year, read as follows:

1(d) The same basic questions for each candidate shall be agreed at a meeting convened by the Vacancy Convener or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission.

2(e) It may be appropriate to ask questions concerning matters that are specific to Kirk Session under Code Pars 35ff. These include: sacramental discipline; times of service or number of services on a Sunday; the merits or demerits of a particular type of organisation or group that the Kirk Session would be responsible for, BB, GB, Bowling Club, Choir, Praise Group, House Groups; attitude towards services in connection with the Loyal Orders or the Masonic Order, including what may be carried/worn into church; the delivery of pastoral care; inter-church worship and relationships.

3(f) *The Chairman must ensure that the Hearing Committee does not discuss matters with candidates which are specific to Kirk Session. This means that it is inappropriate to ask questions concerning matters listed above under 2e.*

14. The Commission recommends rephrasing points 3(f) and 2(e) respectively and proposes an addition to point 1(d) (highlighted in bold).

1(d) *The same basic questions for each candidate shall be agreed at a meeting convened by the Vacancy Convener or another ministerial member of the Vacancy Commission. **Attention should be given to the importance of weighting of questions and wise use made of the interview time to ensure that the established priorities of the Kirk Session and congregation are explored through the questioning.***

2(e) *All matters concerning the life of the congregation are under the authority of the Kirk Session under Code Pars 35ff; Recognising the general advice in 1(d) above, it may be appropriate for Kirk Sessions to ask questions about some specific matters where clarity may be important. These may include questions on: sacramental discipline; the delivery of pastoral care; times of services or number of services on a Sunday; the merits or demerits of a particular type of organisation or group that the Kirk Session would be responsible for, BB, GB, Bowling Club, Choir, Praise Group, House Groups; attitude towards services in connection with the Loyal Orders or the Masonic Order, including what may be carried/worn into church; inter-church worship and relationships.*

3(f) *All matters concerning the life of the congregation are under the authority of the Kirk Session; but it may be appropriate for the Hearing Committee to ask questions which are of general concern to the Congregation. However, the Hearing Committee should not ask questions which are specific to Kirk Session: matters of sacramental discipline or attitudes to special church services. For example while it may be appropriate for a Hearing Committee to enquire about community relationships it would not be appropriate to question about formal involvement in inter-church services which is a Kirk Session (and minister's) prerogative.*

Auxiliary Ministry Scheme

15. A number of Auxiliary Ministers have already been trained and are eligible to serve alongside, and under the supervision of, a full Minister of Word and Sacrament, including a Vacancy Convener. Auxiliary Ministers may serve in a large congregation, a linkage, or a group of congregations on either an expenses only or remunerated basis. Some pastoral duties may be associated with a post, but it is primarily a Ministry of the Word. Since the initiative to create such a post normally comes from a Kirk Session, Sessions are encouraged to give thought to whether such a post would be helpful in their context and to bring proposals to the Linkage Commission through the local Presbytery.

Leave to Call a Minister

16. This is only a summary- there may well be conditions attached to the Leave to Call, which are not recorded here. These might include Part-time, Reviewable Tenure, Restricted List, additional income for Minister etc. When a figure is set the year denotes when Leave to Call was granted. This figure will increase automatically under the annual Stipend Review. Expenses are “initial ministerial expenses” which were set in respect to all Leave to Call figures issued up and until March 2017.

Congregation	Stipend	Expenses
Irvinestown	50% £A.M.M. (2016)	£3,750
Tempo	20% £A.M.M. (2016)	£1,500
Pettigo	30% £A.M.M. (2016)	£2,250
Sinclair Seamen's	50% £A.M.M. (2016)	£3,750
Hollywood	£25,500 (2016)	£7,500
Bellaghy	£15,168 (2016)	£4,500
Knockloughrim	£10,112 (2016)	£3,000
Ahorey	2/3rd £A.M.M. (2016)	£5,000
Clare	1/3rd £A.M.M. (2016)	£2,500
1st Broughshane	£32,000 (2016)	£8,500
Tandragee	£27,000 (2016)	£7,500
Groomspart	£36,000 (2016)	£7,500
1st Ballybay	35% €A.M.M. (2016)	35% €12,500
2nd Ballybay	35% €A.M.M. (2016)	35% €12,500
Rockcorry	18% €A.M.M. (2016)	18% €12,500
Drumkeen	12% €A.M.M. (2016)	12% €12,500
Great Victoria Street	£12,500 (2016)	£3,000
Dunmurry	£27,050 (2016)	£7,500
Regent Street, Newtownards	£36,000 (2016)	£7,500
Movilla, Newtownards	£A.M.M. (2016)	£7,500
Drogheda	€30,000 (2016)	€12,500
Connor	£37,705 (2016)	£7,500
Kilmakee	£24,000 (2016)	£7,000
Portaferry	50% £A.M.M. (2017)	£3,750
Buckna	£33,500 (2017)	£7,500
Moy	2/3rds £A.M.M (2017)	£5,000
Benburb	1/3rd £A.M.M. (2017)	£2,500
Richview	60% £A.M.M. (2017)	£3,750
Trinity, Bangor	£35,000 (2017)	£7,500
Ray	2/3rds € A.M.M. (2017)	2/3rds €12,500
Newtowncunningham	1/3rd €A.M.M.(2017)	1/3rd €12,500
1st Antrim	£39,000 (2017)	£7,500
1st Stewartstown	40% £A.M.M.(2017)	40% £7,500
Brigh	45% £A.M.M. (2017)	45%£7,500
Albany	15% £A.M.M. (2017)	15% £7,500
Woodvale	£A.M.M. (2017)	£7,500
Sligo	40% €A.M.M. (2017)	€10,000

Extension of Reviewable Tenure Ministries

17. Tenure of Ministry in Castlewellan and Leitrim was extended for five years with effect from 22nd November 2016 or until the date of the retirement of the Minister whichever event occurs soonest.

18. Tenure of the Part-time Ministry in Crumlin was extended for a further 7 years from 1st March 2017.

19. Reviewable Tenure Ministry in Caledon and Minterburn was extended for seven years from 28th March 2017.

CONGREGATIONS LINKED

20. During the year two linkages were agreed.

Leckpatrick and Donagheady**Terms of Linkage**

- (a) That the congregations of Leckpatrick and Donagheady be linked as from 1st March 2017 or some other appropriate date.
- (b) Each congregation shall maintain its separate identity with its own Kirk Session, Congregational Committee and Finances.
- (c) Each congregation shall have the right to appoint representatives to the Superior Courts of the Church.
- (d) In the choice of a Minister the two congregations shall act as one congregation and the two Kirk Sessions as one Kirk Session.
- (e) There shall be stated services each Sunday as follows: Leckpatrick at 11.30am and Donagheady at 10.00am or at such other times as the two Kirk Sessions acting together shall determine.
- (f) That the Stipends (2017) be: Leckpatrick £18,300 and Donagheady £13,700; and initial ministerial expenses: Leckpatrick £4,800 and Donagheady £3,640.
- (g) That Holiday Supplies, and other shared expenses not included in (f) be borne in the proportions 4/7 Leckpatrick and 3/7 Donagheady.
- (h) That Rent, Rates, Taxes and Maintenance of the Manse (or residence for the minister) be borne in the proportions 4/7 Leckpatrick and 3/7 Donagheady.
- (i) That the minister shall reside in Leckpatrick Manse.
- (j) That the directions of the Linkage Commission be observed in respect of the Manse and Manse property at Donagheady.

The congregations are strongly encouraged to ensure that extra personnel are employed to assist in and further the ministry and mission as envisioned by the Kirk Sessions. The Linkage Commission would direct that income from the redundant manse at Donagheady property be apportioned 25% maintenance and 75% to be used for the payment of additional personnel.

Strabane and Sion**Terms of Linkage**

- (a) That the congregations of Strabane and Sion be linked as from 1st January 2017 or some other appropriate date.

- (b) Each congregation shall maintain its separate identity with its own Kirk Session, Congregational Committee and Finances.
- (c) Each congregation shall have the right to appoint representatives to the Superior Courts of the Church.
- (d) In the choice of a Minister the two congregations shall act as one congregation and the two Kirk Sessions as one Kirk Session.
- (e) There shall be stated services each Sunday as follows: Strabane at 11.30am and Sion at 10.00 am or at such other times as the two Kirk Sessions acting together shall determine.
- (f) That the Stipends (2017) be: Strabane £20,000 and Sion £12,000; and initial ministerial expenses: Strabane £4,688 and Sion £2,812.
- (g) That Holiday Supplies, and other shared expenses not included in (f) be borne in the proportions 5/8th Strabane and 3/8th Sion.
- (h) That Rent, Rates, Taxes and Maintenance of the Manse (or residence for the minister) be borne in the proportions 5/8th Strabane and 3/8th Sion.
- (i) That the minister shall reside in Strabane Manse.
- (j) That the directions of the Linkage Commission be observed in respect of the Manse and Manse property at Sion.

CONGREGATIONS AMALGAMATED

Lowe Memorial and Berry Street

21. The 2016 General Assembly resolved as follows: That the congregation of Berry Street be amalgamated with the congregation of Lowe Memorial, the date of amalgamation to be no later than 31st December 2016, on terms set by the Linkage Commission (Minutes, page 50, resolution 3).

Terms of Amalgamation

- (a) That the congregation of Berry St be amalgamated with the congregation of Lowe Memorial at a date agreed by Presbytery under the name Lowe Memorial.
- (b) That the two Kirk Sessions become one Kirk Session and the two Congregational Committees become one Congregational Committee until new Committee elections are held.
- (c) The assets (to be dispersed) are defined as Berry St Church building, Halls and surrounding ground, any investments and bank accounts in the name of Berry St Congregation.

With respect to these assets:

- 25% (by monetary value) of the remainder is to be transferred to the Council for Mission in Ireland as a direct contribution for assisting in capital projects connected with church planting;
- 65% (by monetary value) of the remainder is to be transferred to a special account in the name of the South Belfast Presbytery Mission Support Fund (or its successors) for the purpose of Missional funding determined by the Presbytery in partnership with CMI;

- 10% (by monetary value) of the remainder is to be held by the Presbytery for continuing expenses (e.g.insurance/maintenance/legal and advertising fees). Any surplus from the 10% following the disposal of the assets to be transferred to the amalgamated congregation.
- (d) that all future assets including legacies and bequests subsequent to the amalgamation become the property of the amalgamated congregation.
- (e) that the amalgamated congregation will remain responsible for any Berry St liabilities following dispersal of the assets.
- (f) as the assets will not be in place for dispersal prior to the amalgamation, on the date of the amalgamation those assets will be transferred to the ownership of the Presbytery, who will be responsible for any liabilities up to the point of the dispersal of assets in(c) is complete. The Amalgamation Commission appointed by Presbytery will be responsible for the sale of the assets and the distribution as in clause (c).
- (g) that the Stipend of the new congregation is unaffected.

Potential Amalgamation

22. At the time of writing this report, there have been extensive conversations held with another Presbytery about a potential amalgamation. If there is the necessary agreement on this matter by the May meeting of the Commission the details of the proposed amalgamation will appear in the Daily Minutes of the 2017 General Assembly.

REVIEWS, EXPENSES AND FEES PANEL

Mr James Livingstone reports:

REVIEWS

23. In accordance with Par 236(2) of the Code and arising out of other circumstances the Reviews, Expenses and Fees Panel reviewed the stipend of the following Congregations:

Congregation	Stipend
ARDS PRESBYTERY	
Ballygilbert	No Change
Hamilton Road, Bangor	No Change
Lisnabreen	No Change
Movilla	Increase by £750 per year for next 2 years.
Trinity, Bangor	No Change
ARMAGH PRESBYTERY	
1st Armagh	Increase by £1,000

BALLYMENA PRESBYTERY

Ballee	No Change
Buckna	No Change

NORTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY

Abbot's Cross	No Change
Ballygomartin	No Change
Ballyhenry	Increase by £1,000
New Mossley	No Change
Whitehouse	No Change

SOUTH BELFAST PRESBYTERY

Saintfield Road	Increase by £1,500
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EAST BELFAST PRESBYTERY

McQuiston Memorial	No Change
Stormont	No Change
Tullycarnet	No Change
Westbourne	Increase by £1,000

CARRICKFERGUS PRESBYTERY

Balllycarry	No Change
1st Carrickfergus	No Change
Downshire	No Change
2nd Islandmagee	No Change

COLERAINE AND LIMAVADY PRESBYTERY

Ballysally	Implement Increase of £1,000 (as agreed in 2015)
Balteaghand	No Change
Bovevagh	No Change
Hazelbank	No Change
1st Limavady and	No Change
Magilligan	No Change
Macosquin	No Change

DERRY AND DONEGAL PRESBYTERY

Ballylennon and	No Change
St. Johnston	No Change
Kilfennan	Increase by £1,000
Raphoeand	No Change
Ballindrait	No Change

DOWN PRESBYTERY

Ardglass and	No Change
Downpatrick	Increase by £500 per year for next 2 years.
Edengrove	No Change

DROMORE PRESBYTERY

Hillhall	No Change
Moirá	Increase by £1,000

DUBLIN AND MUNSTER PRESBYTERY

Adelaide Road	No Change
Donabate	Increase by €1,000 and retain Annual Review

IVEAGH PRESBYTERY

Tandragee	No Change
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MONAGHAN PRESBYTERY

1st Ballybay and	No Change
2nd Ballybay and	No Change
Rockcorry and	No Change
Drumkeen	No Change
Drum and	No Change
Cootehill and	No Change
Kilmount	No Change

NEWRY PRESBYTERY

Clarkesbridge and 1st Newtownhamilton and	No Change
Garmany's Grove and	No Change
McKelvey's Grove	No Change

OMAGH PRESBYTERY

Enniskillen	No Change
Mountjoy and	Increase by £1,000
Drumlegagh	No Change

ROUTE PRESBYTERY

Armoy and	No Change
Ramoan	No Change
1st Kilraughts	No Change

TEMPLEPATRICK PRESBYTERY

Greystone Road	No Change
High Street, Antrim	Increase by £1,000
Kilbride	No Change

TYRONE PRESBYTERY

1st Cookstown	No Change
Maghera	Increase by £1,500
Molesworth	No Change
Newmills and	No Change
Carland	Increase by £1,000
Orritor and	No Change
Claggan	No Change

Review of Ministerial Expenses Scheme

24. Proposal regarding a 2 Part Expenses Scheme for PCI: the issue of the Scheme by which P.C.I. makes payments to its Ministers in respect of expenses has been considered by the (former) Union Commission and the Linkage Commission for a number of years. To set the matter in context: “expenses” are reasonable legitimate costs directly incurred by an individual arising out of their ‘employment’.

25. The current system is that at the time when the Linkage Commission grants Leave to Call, in addition to setting a Stipend Figure, the Commission sets a Minimum Expenses figure. This figure is based on two elements: travel, and other expenses.

26. For 2016 based on an average of 14,400 business miles per year, the recommended figures for travel are:

Northern Ireland: £5,985 Republic of Ireland €10,000.

Ministers recording a higher business mileage should be paid more, while a lower amount may be appropriate to those who do not record as many business miles.

As it has done for a number of years, the Commission used 125% of the travel recommendation in setting its recommended figures for total expenses, which are as follows in 2016:

Northern Ireland: £7,500; Republic of Ireland €12,500.

27. It is acknowledged that in setting the total figure using this methodology the Commission sought to reflect what was felt to be a reasonable average figure but it remains an art rather than a science. In proposing a replacement to the present Scheme the Commission is guided by the desire to achieve a system that more appropriately reflects the reality of expenses incurred by Ministers and which is fully transparent, accurate and accountable.

28. In the Union Commission Report to 2015 General Assembly, on the issue of the Review of Ministerial Expenses, it was stated that: *The fundamental aim of the review is to ensure that the system for the payment of Expenses ensures that Ministers are fully reimbursed for ALL the expenses they incur in the course of their work, whilst at the same time achieving a system that is fully transparent, accurate and accountable.* (Reports, p.145, Par 39.) The Report went on to state that at the February Meeting of the then Union Commission the following report was received:

1. A “pure reimbursement System” for ministerial travel expenses in which Congregational Treasurers would reimburse Ministers’ monthly, on the basis of accurate records of daily work related travel, but which would not detail individual visits. Reimbursement would be at the rate recognised by HMRC, or the equivalent on Republic of Ireland , and this would therefore remove travel expenses completely from the Ministers’ taxable returns.
2. An Expenses Allowance to cover the other work – related expenses which are significantly more difficult to measure and record, with the Linkage Commission continuing to set this figure, as under the current system. It would continue to be the Ministers’ responsibility to account for this element of ministerial expenses in their tax returns. (Reports, p.145, Par 41.)

The 2015 General Assembly approved the following Resolution:

That the proposals re Ministerial Expenses based on a 2-part system made up of (a) reimbursement at HMRC rates for all travel related expenses and (b) an expenses allowance set by Linkage Commission for all other expenses ,be approved, and that the Linkage Commission be instructed to present full proposals for the introduction of this system to 2016 General Assembly. (Minutes, p.192, Resolution 4.)

29. Accordingly at the 2016 General Assembly Option 3 (see Appendix 1) was adopted (Reports, p.181, Minutes p.50, resolution 4). It was intended to implement this in April, 2017. However, before implementation the Commission conducted a consultation process seeking the views of ministers, treasurers and Presbyteries. Following the receipt of comments during the consultation period the Linkage Commission exercised its Assembly powers and suspended the implementation of this Option. The Commission has now drawn up Option 4 (again detailed within Appendix 1) and set out below. In light of the opinions expressed during the consultation period, the Linkage Commission recommends the General Assembly should now adopt Option 4 for implementation in April 2018.

Supply Fee

30. The level of Supply Fee is determined by the Code. Par 238, and for 2017 this is £102 (€155) and £68 (€105) where only a single service is supplied in one Congregation. Travelling expenses should be paid in accordance with the rate set for attendance at Assembly Councils, currently 15p (22c) per mile.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE AND MANSES PANEL

Mr Brian Knox reports:

31. In the past year the Panel has met eight times and considered forty-nine applications concerning the construction of new churches, halls, manses, extensions to church halls and manses, removal of pews for wheelchair access and the provision of new audio-visual systems. Forty-eight of these applications were recommended to Linkage Commission for approval. While many were able to be dealt with based on information provided, on other occasions the Panel were able to assist by making helpful suggestions which were appreciated by the Congregations involved.

32. During the year the Panel were able to give guidance to Congregations in respect of proposals by Department of the Environment/Department for Communities to remove Ecclesiastical Exemption in respect to Listed Church Buildings.

Order of Permissions re Congregational Property

33. Prior to the new Structures arrangement, the Church Architecture Committee had to be consulted concerning changes to congregational property. This committee sat under various Boards from time to time, but was always an Assembly Committee, reporting to a Board. The order in which permissions were required was

- (a) Congregation, Presbytery, Committee

More recently this was changed to

(b) Congregation, Committee, Presbytery.

34. Under the new structures, the Assembly Body which has to be consulted is the Linkage Commission. In practice the Church Architecture and Manses Panel examines proposals and makes recommendations to the Commission. The order of permissions continues to be a modified form of (b) as

(c) Congregation, Commission, Presbytery.

There is a variation in actual practice. Some requests come directly to the Church Architecture and Manses Panel, whereas some come through Presbytery. In the latter case some Presbyteries simply transmit, whereas others give the proposals detailed consideration.

35. Identified issues that cause difficulties with this order include:

(a) Variation in practice.

(b) Presbyteries are uncertain of their role – transmitting body only, power to veto in principle, power to recommend/require variation to proposals?

(c) Confusion over whether Presbytery has the power to make a different decision from the Commission which is a higher court of the church. If the Linkage Commission has given permission for a project to proceed, can the Presbytery at final sign-off refuse permission?

(d) Changes to proposals requested by the Church Architecture and Manses Committee may not be communicated to Presbytery with the result that the project that goes ahead may be significantly different from that originally presented to Presbytery.

36. The Commission considered whether to retain the present order, or to adopt the following order for permissions: Congregation, Presbytery, Commission. The following pros and cons of this new order were identified:

Pros

- Order appears more ‘natural’, progressing from a lower to a higher court.
- Opportunity for Presbytery to veto a project on missional, financial or other grounds before it comes to the Panel.
- Opportunity for Presbyteries which have the capacity to do so to critique the details of a project.
- The Panel/Commission, can exercise an ‘expert’ role in relation to design.
- Most Presbytery Clerks are in favour of this order.

Cons

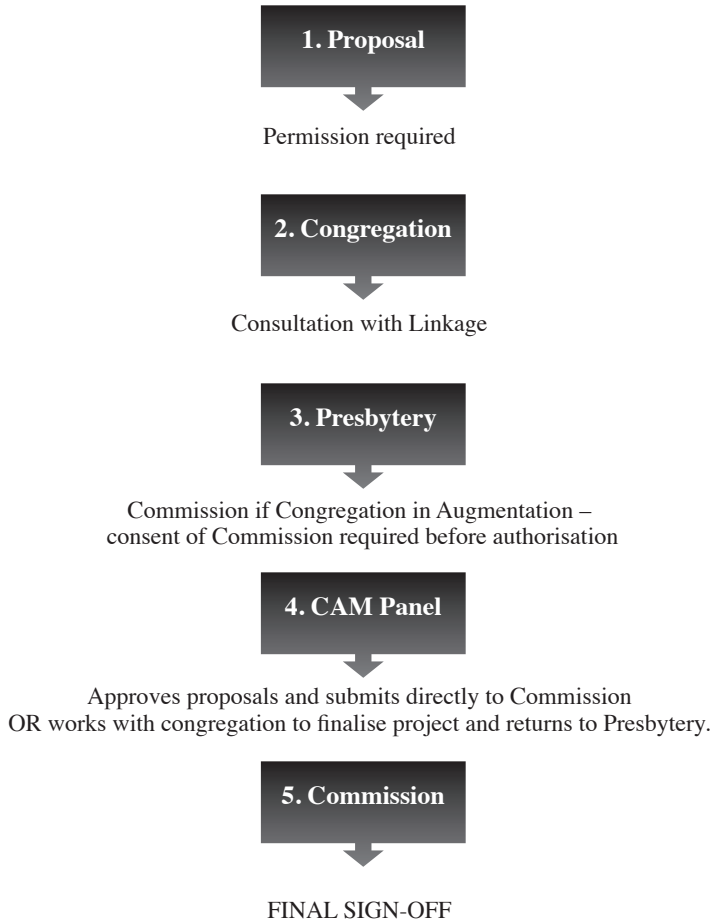
- Change.
- Presbytery does not have final sign-off.
- The order of permissions for augmented congregations is different from that for others.
- More paperwork.

37. Informal consultation with Clerks of Presbytery indicated a majority in favour of the new order. The Commission recommends this new order, that is: Congregation, Presbytery, Commission. Appropriate overtures are appended and the General Assembly is asked to note these initial guidelines, which may be modified in the light of experience. In addition a pro-forma application form will issued to congregations.

GUIDELINES ON PERMISSIONS RE CONGREGATIONAL PROPERTY

1. If there is a proposal for a congregation to carry out work in connection with property which falls within the scope of Code Par 57(5), permission at a congregational meeting must first be obtained.
2. The advice of the Church Architecture and Manses Panel may be sought early on, even before congregational approval is obtained.
3. Full planning permission should not be sought until final sign-off by the Linkage Commission.
4. The proposal is submitted to Presbytery which decides whether to approve the proposal on missional, financial and other related grounds, unless the congregation receives augmentation, in which case it consults the Linkage Commission and obtains its consent before authorising the project.
5. If the project is approved, Presbytery transmits it to the Church Architecture and Manses Panel. It may, but is not required to, include comment on the details.
6. The Panel examines the proposal, taking into account any Presbytery comments. If necessary, it works with the congregation to finalise the project.
7. The Congregation resubmit the finalised project to Presbytery.
8. Presbytery approves and signs off on the finalised project and sends the revised plans to the Panel Convener for final submission to the Linkage Commission.
9. The Commission gives final sign-off.

IN DIAGRAMMATIC FORM



38. The remit of the Panel is: the consideration of the site and plans of all new buildings proposed to be erected on congregational property and of all proposed demolition, structural alterations of or structural additions to existing buildings; the consideration of proposals and designs for memorials, windows, artificial lighting and for seating and furnishings including the installation of audio-visual systems; and making recommendation to Linkage Commission in respect of a wide variety of manse issues. All enquiries and submissions for the Church Architecture and Manses Panel should be sent to Miss Lorraine Beatty, Property Support Officer, Assembly Buildings, 2-10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast, BT1 6DW.

ADDITIONAL PASTORAL PERSONNEL AND AUXILIARY MINISTRY PANEL

The Rev Colin Gamble reports:

39. In the past year the Linkage Commission approved the creation of 27 new APP posts and the extension of 20 existing posts. There were no requests for Congregational Auxiliary Ministry posts.

40. Kirk Sessions are advised to contact the Convener of the Panel as early as possible whenever considering the possibility of creating an APP post. Guidelines are available from the Convener which set out the necessary steps. Before a post may be advertised, approval must be sought and received from Peninsula Business Services, Presbytery and the Linkage Commission.

41. Extensions to existing APP posts also require approval from Peninsula Business Services, Presbytery and the Linkage Commission. Sometimes a request to extend an existing post is submitted late. Therefore, when appointing someone to a fixed-term post, Kirk Sessions are advised to note carefully when the contract ends and to decide early on whether or not to extend it.

42. New APP Salary Scales for 2017 were agreed by the Linkage Commission at its meeting in November 2016. These are available from the Convener of the APPAM Panel and are shown below. Kirk Sessions should normally follow the Salary Scales when creating a new post. Advice is given in the Guidelines for when it might be appropriate to award a salary increment to an employee in an existing post.

43. Guidelines for creating Congregational Auxiliary Ministry posts are available from the Convener of the Panel. Proposals to create such posts should normally come to the Linkage Commission through the Presbytery.

44. The Panel, in conjunction with the Head of Personnel, has also been working on two items of business assigned to the Linkage Commission by last year's General Assembly. The first is to produce guidelines to help Kirk Sessions deal with general employment issues. The second is to roll out a system to ensure all remunerated organists (or other similar persons) receive a contract and non-remunerated organists (or other similar persons) receive a volunteer agreement. It is intended to complete this work shortly.

45. Ministers are reminded to seek approval from Presbytery and the Linkage Commission before undertaking paid public appointments ('Extra-Parochial Work'). This kind of work has been defined as 'Remunerated work outside of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland undertaken by a parish minister that amounts to more than six hours in any week.' A return form, available from the Convener of the Panel, should normally be returned before the appointment begins and then annually by 15th September.

APP RECOMMENDED SALARY SCALES 2017

	Sterling salary pt	Euro salary pt	Level of responsibility of post	Qualification attained by employee or level of experience
Band A	£17,960 £18,603 £19,253 £19,899 £20,721 £21,363	€27,691 €28,683 €29,684 €30,681 €31,949 €32,937	Mostly direct work with children, young people or adults under close regular supervision; low management responsibility for people or projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtained or working towards OCN level 2 and 3 qualifications, PCI Youth/Children's Ministry Course or similar qualification in the relevant field; • Where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.
Band B	£22,401 £23,417 £24,467 £25,550 £26,290	€34,539 €36,105 €37,722 €39,392 €40,533	General responsibility for specific areas of programme and ministry oversight; graduating to less closely supervised responsibility for programmes, strategy, volunteers or leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate recognition of attainment or working towards undergraduate or postgraduate theological study or professional qualifications (including Youth and Community, teaching qualification or other related professional qualifications such as counselling or social work). • Where this level of qualification is not held, demonstrated experience in this field of activity may be deemed equivalent.

Please note:

- (a) This salary scale was initially based on the JNC Youth and Community work scale (2009) for the UK and has since been updated annually. For 2017, the NI salary scale has been increased in line with the increase in the NI ministerial minimum (1.5% for 2017). The ROI salary scale has been increased in line with the increase in the ROI ministerial minimum (1% for 2017).
- (b) The above rates are deemed to apply to a minimum of 37.5 hours per week. For employees working less than 37.5 hours per week a pro-rata rate is applicable.
- (c) The APPAM Panel Convener of the Linkage Commission should be contacted for the most up to date figures and for advice on their interpretation.

LINKAGE COMMISSION

APPENDIX 1

Proposal regarding a 2 Part Expenses Scheme for P.C.I.

OPTION 3

This was the Option adopted by the 2016 General Assembly and sent out to all active Ministers and Congregational Treasurers for Consultation regarding its implementation.

Part 1 – Travelling and Associated Expenses.

1. The Commission will draw up a Mileage Log. This Log will set out the following details:
 - (a) Minister's Name
 - (b) Congregations in a situation of Linkages. It is proposed that the Linkage Commission when setting Leave to Call figures will agree the % of Expenses to be met by each Congregation in the Linkage.
 - (c) Vehicle Description
 - (d) Rate per mile. Currently to comply with Tax Legislation this will be £0.45p per mile for first 10,000 miles and £0.25p per mile for over 10,000 miles (Northern Ireland) and €0.66cents per mile for first 10,000 miles and € 0.36 cents per mile over 10,000 miles (Republic of Ireland).
 - 1.1 The log will also show the following:
 - (i) Miles Year to Date Carried Forward
 - (ii) Current Month
 - (iii) Miles Year to Date
 - 1.2 On a daily basis the Minister will record:
 - (a) Date of Journeys
 - (b) Starting Location (this will normally be Manse)
 - (c) Destination. This will be general destination e.g. Lisburn Please note no personal identifying information is to be recorded e.g. names off persons visited etc.
 - (d) Description- this will be general e.g. Visits, Hospital Visits, School Assemblies, Meetings. Again no personal identifying details to be recorded.
 - (e) Mileage.
 - (f) Other.

The information contained on this Log will be held by the Minister and can therefore be made available to HMRC should any review of an individual's tax assessment be requested. The monthly mileage will then be transferred to the Monthly Expenses Form for ALL Expenses. This claims form should be submitted to the Congregational Treasurer by the 5th of each month.

Ministers who attend Councils or Commissions of the General Assembly should NOT include these journeys on this form as they are included on a separate form and paid centrally from Incidental Fund.

There are a few Ministers who avail of the “company car” scheme. They should note that reimbursement is at a separate rate:

Engine Size	Petrol	Diesel
1400cc or less	12p	13p
1401cc to 2000cc	15p	13p
Over 2000cc	21p	17p

Part 2 – Other Expenses

It is recognised that in drawing up proposals for the second part of the Scheme relating to All other Expenses there are both difficulties and sensitivities. However what cannot be lost sight of are:

1. The issue is one of Expenses i.e. the reimbursement to Ministers of actual expenses they have incurred in allowing them to carry out their role as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. Unfortunately a situation has been allowed to develop where the payment of “Expenses” was seen by some as an alternate to paying appropriate Ministerial Stipends. This has meant that Expenses were used to supplement Stipend rather than a payment for costs accrued. The alteration to the level of Minimum Stipend may have gone some way to addressing this but it may be that by the introduction of the new system Ministers may feel that their “total income package “ is being reduced and they are being left out of pocket.
2. The Code of P.C.I. requires that unless special permission is granted a Minister must live in a Manse in the Charge(s) to which he/she is called. Manses come in all shapes and sizes ranging from the old, large, draughty impossible to heat to the new modern well insulated fuel efficient building. It has to be borne in mind that the Congregation is only responsible for costs relating to 2public rooms”. To design a system which seeks to reimburse costs at a standard level for all is difficult. The current system simply “loaded” 125% onto travel and arrived at a global expenses figure. While it was the best that could be done, it is hard to argue that it is a perfect appropriate one size fits all.
3. Some have argued that whatever replaces it must not leave a Minister” out of pocket” but this is to suggest that what we are currently doing is appropriate. If that is the case why are we changing. To repeat the well -worn phrase” if it’s not broke don’t fix it”. It may be that is the conclusion though we leave ourselves open to external forces who may take a different position.

OPTION 4

To replace the current system of payment of Expenses to Ministers by Congregations with the following:

1. Taxable Car Allowance and Mileage Rate

- (a) Ministers will receive an annual Taxable Car Allowance initially set at £3,600 (ROI €5,400) and paid on a monthly basis via the Central Payroll i.e. £300 (ROI €450) per month. This allowance is a contribution towards the standing costs incurred by Ministers to provide a vehicle for the purposes of performing their duties. (*Part-time ministers should refer to Section 3*)
- (b) In addition a payment of 15p (ROI 22 cents) per mile for each business mile travelled will be paid locally by the Congregation(s). Ministers will have to complete a Monthly Record of Mileage and submit a claim for their mileage to their Congregational Committee for payment. The Linkage Commission will review the mileage rates payable on an annual basis.

2. Taxable Allowance for Ministerial Duties

- (a) Ministers will also receive an annual Allowance for Ministerial Duties initially set at £2,400 (R.O.I €4,080) and paid on a monthly basis via the Central Payroll i.e. £200 (ROI €340) per month. (*Part-time ministers should refer to Section 3*)

3. Payments to Part-time Ministers of Allowances

- (a) Ministers who have received a Call under the Part-time Ministry Scheme will be entitled to receive a payment of the Taxable Car Allowance and Taxable Allowance for Ministerial Duties in line with the percentage of Full-time Ministry set when the Linkage Commission granted Leave to Call (e.g. 50% or 60% etc.).
- (b) Part-time Ministers will be entitled to payment for all Business Miles as set out at 1(b).

4. General

- (a) The Taxable Car Allowance and Allowance for Ministerial Duties (the Allowances) are non-pensionable.
- (b) For ministers in congregations in Northern Ireland both Allowances will be subject to PAYE and NIC deductions.
- (c) For Ministers in congregations in the Republic of Ireland, in line with the present arrangements for the payments of stipend, the Allowances will be paid without Tax and PRSI deductions and ministers will be responsible for declaring the Allowances as income on their annual tax return.
- (d) The Allowances will be set at the time when the Linkage Commission grants Leave to Call but will be uplifted annually in accordance with the % increase to the Basic Ministerial Minimum Stipend as set by the Support Services Committee of the General Council. The Linkage Commission may consider some variation at subsequent Leave to Call depending on circumstances.

- (e) The Mileage Rate will be reviewed annually by the Linkage Commission.
- (f) The Allowances will be collected from Congregations through the quarterly Direct Debit System. In the case of congregations in Northern Ireland Employer's NIC on the Allowances will also be collected.
- (g) Ministers should be able to make a tax claim for expenses incurred against their Allowances and Mileage Rate via their annual tax returns. The amount of the claim will depend on the actual mileage and other costs incurred and the extent to which they are tax allowable. A minister's tax claim could therefore be less or more than the amount of the Allowances and Mileage Rate.
- (h) Ministers should as at present continue to claim mileage to Presbytery and other non-congregational business from their congregation(s).
- (i) Ministers who are required to travel on General Assembly business should continue to claim this mileage from the General Secretary's Department.
- (j) In a Linkage the proportion of Allowances payable by each Congregation should be in line with the percentage of Stipend payable by each as set by the Linkage Commission when Leave to Call is granted. The Claim of Mileage should be covered in the same proportions. In the case of ministers in North / South linkages the Allowances will be paid in the same currency as the stipend the minister receives.
- (k) The New Scheme to be introduced with effect from 6th April 2018.

**ASSESSMENTS ON FULLY CONSTITUTED
CHURCH EXTENSION CHARGES – 2016**

Under Par 234(3)(a) of the Code

<i>Church</i>	<i>Fully Constituted</i>	<i>Families (†)</i>	<i>Assess 2016 £</i>	<i>Assess Income £</i>	<i>Income* £</i>
New Mossley	2005	112 (77)	115	39,916	121,918
Ballysally	2007	150 (87)	130	51,731	156,682

† Families contributing at least £5.00 per annum

* As from 2012 Income includes all Organisational Income

ASSESSMENTS ON CHURCH EXTENSION CHARGES – 2016

<i>Church</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>Assessable. Income</i>	<i>Stip.</i>	<i>C.M.F.</i>	<i>Ch. Ext.</i>	<i>H.M.</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>
Taughmonagh	–	10,823	3,247	1,623	1,082	649	6,601

LICENTIATES – 2017

Licentiates are paid 75% of the Ministerial Minimum = £18,092 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

FIRST YEAR – From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Wellington	* J Boyd	19.06.16	42,063 (30%)	13,120	6,246
First Ballymena	* M Boyd	29.05.16	39,275 (30%)	12,284	7,082
Maze	* E Frazer	19.06.16	32,463 (30%)	10,240	9,126
Abbot's Cross	* S Hawthorne	29.05.16	32,529 (30%)	10,260	9,106
The Mall	* C Jackson	05.06.16	37,504 (27.5%)	10,815	8,551
McQuiston Memorial	* A Marsh	05.06.16	35,154 (30%)	11,047	8,319
Immanuel	† J Martin	27.05.16	33,094 (30%)	10,279	8,787
Cooke Centenary	* J Newell	19.06.16	31,033 (30%)	9,811	9,555
Fisherwick	* J O'Donnell	18.06.16	39,275 (30%)	12,284	7,082
Whitehouse	* R Orr	05.06.16	32,158 (25%)	8,541	10,825
Hamilton Road	* R Patton	29.05.16	46,177 (30%)	14,354	5,012
Alexandra	* J Porter	27.05.16	30,003 (25%)	8,002	11,364
Harryville	* M Rutledge	05.06.16	37,235 (30%)	11,672	7,694
Ballyclare	* J Smith	26.06.16	37,421 (30%)	11,727	7,639

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

s/a Special Arrangement

LICENTIATES – 2017

Licentiates are paid 80% of the Ministerial Minimum = £19,298 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

SECOND YEAR – From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Gardenmore	* A Burke	21.07.15	39,275 (32%)	13,069	7,521
Joymount	* I Cahoon	31.05.15	39,836 (32%)	13,249	7,341
Kilfennan	† D Clarke	07.06.15	35,666 (32%)	11,764	8,526
Kirkpatrick Memorial	* R Cronin	21.06.15	45,733 (32%)	15,136	5,454
Knock	* A Dickey	31.05.15	48,658 (32%)	16,072	4,518
1st Carrickfergus	† A Gill	07.06.15	43,343 (32%)	14,221	6,069
Bangor, West	* D Gray	14.06.15	43,911 (32%)	14,553	6,037
Bangor, Hamilton Road	* M Gray	05.06.15	46,177 (32%)	15,278	5,312
Carryduff	* B Kee	12.06.15	36,184 (32%)	12,080	8,510
1st Larne	† D Kelly	07.06.15	39,774 (32%)	13,079	7,211
Hill Street, Lurgan	* S Kennedy	26.06.15	40,563 (32%)	13,481	7,109
2nd Randalstown	* R Kernohan	07.06.15	30,340 (S/A)	5,600	14,990
1st Holywood	* S Lowry	31.05.15	39,790 (32%)	13,234	7,356
Ballyholme	* C Lynn	19.06.15	35,319 (32%)	11,803	8,787
Derramore	† R McClure	14.06.15	13,442 (32%)	4,420	2,439
Drumachose	† R McClure	14.06.15	26,324 (32%)	8,656	4,775
Templepatrick	* A McCracken	07.06.15	40,589 (32%)	13,489	7,101
2nd Comber	* A McQuade	21.06.15	44,529 (32%)	14,750	5,840
Dungannon	* G Mullan	14.06.15	38,886 (32%)	12,945	7,645
Stormont	* B Van der Linde	28.06.15	44,399 (32%)	14,709	5,881

LICENTIATES – 2017

Licentiates are paid 85% of the Ministerial Minimum = £20,504 plus House Allowance pa (single - £702; married - £1,002) if applicable. House Allowance is shared equally between the Congregation and CMF

THIRD YEAR – From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Licensing</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend</i> £	<i>Congregation's Contribution</i> £	<i>C.M.F.</i> £
Cooke Centenary	* C Heron	17.06.12	31,033 (32%)	10,432	11,382
Kilbride	† M Fryer (to 31.1.17)	16.06.13	37,215 (32%)	1,021	746
First Antrim	† P McClelland (to 31.1.17)	09.06.13	40,328 (27%)	937	830
High Kirk	* S Orr (to 31.1.17)	16.06.13	43,047 (32%)	1,190	602
Greenwell Street	† G Clinton	22.06.14	38,276 (32%)	12,599	8,915
Ballylinney	* R Hamilton	06.06.14	31,548 (27%)	9,019	12,795
Glendermott	† M McMaw	08.06.14	37,248 (32%)	12,270	9,244
Ballygilbert	* J McWatters (to 02.02.17)	08.06.14	36,165 (32%)	1,072	865
Harmony Hill	† S Moore	22.06.14	39,790 (32%)	13,084	8,430
Whiteabbey	† J Warburton (to 26.01.17)	08.06.14	39,417 (32%)	923	610

* Married House Allowance
 † Single House Allowance
 s/a Special Arrangement
 # No House Allowance

ORDAINED ASSISTANTS

From 1 January, 2017

<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Date of Ord</i>	<i>Minister's Stipend £</i>	<i>% Min</i>	<i>Salary £</i>	<i>House Allow £</i>	<i>Total £</i>	<i>Cong Contrib £</i>	<i>C.M.F. £</i>
Bloomfield	* D Burke	08.05.16	39,538	100	25,659	1,002	26,661	2,000	24,661

* Married House Allowance

† Single House Allowance

s/a Special Arrangement

No House Allowance - House provided by Congregation

ASSOCIATE MINISTERS – 2017

<i>Name</i>	<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Salary</i>		<i>Recovery</i> £	<i>House Allowance</i>		<i>Employer Pension</i> NIC Costs £
		<i>Paid</i> £	<i>Recovery</i> £		<i>Paid</i> £	<i>Costs</i> £	
A Mullan	Mourne	27,839.42	27,839.42		n/a	9,411.00	
G McCracken	Ballywillan	26,430.00	26,430.00		2,000.00	8,878.00	
D McGaughey	Cuningham Memorial	29,514.00	29,514.00		n/a	10,044.00	
D Stanfield	First Bangor	30,799.00	30,799.00		n/a	10,530.00	
G Ball	Orangefield	25,916.00	25,916.00		1,000.00	8,684.00	
A Galbraith	West Church Bangor	26,173.00	26,173.00		1,000.00	8,782.00	
D Currie	Knock	25,787.00	25,787.00		2,000.00	8,635.00	

LINKAGE COMMISSION**RESOLUTIONS**

1. That the Guidelines for Interviews at Vacancies, as amended in the Linkage Commission Report, Par 14, be adopted.
2. That Ministers and Kirk Session are encouraged to consider whether the Auxiliary Ministry Scheme would be helpful in their context.
3. That Option 4, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the Linkage Commission Report, be adopted as the basis for a two part Ministerial Expenses Scheme and that the it be approved for implementation in April, 2018.
4. That a change of order of permissions re Congregational Property to Congregation, Presbytery, Commission, as in the Linkage Commission Report, Pars 33-37, be approved and the Guidelines noted.
5. That CMF be authorised to pay inadequate expenses grants towards expenses incurred by Ministers, up to a limit of NI £5,985 or RI €10,000, within the terms of resolution 3, p.70 General Assembly Minutes, 1988.
6. That the Report of the Linkage Commission be received.