



**VACANCY GUIDELINES FOR
KIRK SESSIONS AND
INTERIM MODERATORS**

Produced by the
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GUIDELINES FOR KIRK SESSIONS AND INTERIM MODERATORS

These guidelines are designed to help Kirk Sessions and Interim Moderators in vacant or soon to be vacant charges. They are offered to the Church in the belief that a well-handled vacancy is the best possible start to a new ministry.

1. THE BEGINNING

So, the congregation is in vacancy: the previous ministry has ended and the Presbytery has appointed an Interim Moderator. This may be a disconcerting time in the life of a congregation. The end of a ministry, particularly if it has been a long one, may well bring deep sadness, or other emotions. There may well be uncertainty, or indeed fear, as the congregation contemplates the future. However, it is also a time for reflection, prayer, growth and opportunity if used well.

It is the task of the Kirk Session and Interim Moderator to lead the congregation in this period of transition. The task is twofold. Firstly, it must not be forgotten that the ongoing life and witness of the congregation continues. We often speak of a “vacant congregation”, but nothing can be further from the truth: there may be a ministry vacancy but the life of God’s people continues, as do the responsibilities of the Kirk Session. But secondly, there are particular tasks for the Interim Moderator and the Kirk Session as they lead, pastor and equip the congregation through the vacancy, and seek to discern God’s calling for the next stage in the life of the people of God.

This document should be read alongside the Guidelines for Nominating Committees, which the Interim Moderator and Kirk Session should also read. The Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Act XI, 2025) contains the legislation with which you will need to be familiar. The Act and appropriate schedules may be accessed through the Church of Scotland website, following the link:

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/135026/2025-Act-11-New-Vacancy.pdf

It is also possible to download and print the required notices from the website.

Interim Moderator

An Interim Moderator has a dual role to discharge. On the one hand, being the Presbytery’s appointee, the Interim Moderator is expected to help in representing the views of the Presbytery to the congregation. On the other hand, as the congregation’s minister for the time being, the Interim Moderator may be called on to help in representing the congregation’s views to the Presbytery. More is said on this matter in the section on Presbytery Mission Planning.

The Interim Moderator acts with all the powers and authority of an inducted minister, even where the regular preaching and pastoral aspects of ministry are delivered by a Locum. That said, Kirk Sessions in vacant charges should be sensitive to the fact that in most instances an Interim Moderator will have responsibilities for his or her own charge and Kirk Session. All the expenses incurred by the Interim Moderator are met by the congregation to which that person is appointed as Interim Moderator. Interim Moderators, whether ministers or elders, are entitled to the same mileage rate as parish ministers for which that person is appointed as Interim Moderator: currently 45p per mile.

2. THE APPOINTMENT OF A LOCUM

It is usual to ease the Interim Moderator’s burden by appointing a Locum. It can also be of assistance to the congregation to have the same preacher week by week in their pulpit and consequently someone they know performing the essential pastoral duties. A separate leaflet entitled ‘Appointment of a Locum - Guidance Notes’ is available at this link:

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/ministries-resources>

Congregations may fund additional days of Locum cover where they have the financial resources to underwrite this.

If there is no Locum then the Interim Moderator will have to ensure that pulpit supply is arranged

- continuity and acceptability are both factors which should be considered. Those providing such supply should be paid by the Congregational Treasurer on the day when the pulpit is supplied. Guidance on Supply Fees can be obtained from the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT) and can also be found in the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team's Report to the most recent General Assembly.

See also Appendix 3, paras. 1 to 3, 6 and 7

When vacant, a congregation's Ministries and Mission contribution is reduced by a Vacancy Allowance of (as at 2025) £933 per month, and £1082 per month for linked charges, so that the congregation may pay for a Locum or for other cover arrangements. The 2025 fee for a Locum is £315 per month for each day of pastoral cover a week plus a fee for pulpit supply. The vacancy allowance is sufficient to cover two days of pastoral work plus the associated pulpit supply.

3. THE KIRK SESSION

The Kirk Session has an increased pastoral role during a vacancy - this cannot be emphasised too strongly. The Interim Moderator should also guide them in what will happen in the weeks which lie ahead in terms of Vacancy Procedure, the appointment and duties of a Locum (where appointed), and the availability of the Interim Moderator, in terms of his or her time commitment. The Session should be encouraged to see the vacancy as a time of reassessment both of the congregation's needs and resources and the challenges and opportunities afforded by the parish which they serve (see Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Act XI, 2025, s.13).

4. THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

The Kirk Session's Communion Roll, and Adherents' Roll shall form the Electoral Register of the Charge, with the names of those entitled to vote in the election of the Nominating Committee, and in the election of a minister. Details of the Kirk Session's responsibilities with regard to these rolls can be found in the Communion Rolls and Adherents' Rolls Act of the General Assembly. ([Act IV, 2025](#))

One week before intimation of the meeting to elect the Nominating Committee, the Session Clerk shall send the current Electoral Register to the Presbytery Clerk, and this shall constitute the Electoral Register for the duration of the vacancy.

The Electoral Register may be amended if any communicant is given a certificate of transference, or if any person's name is removed, e.g. due to death. A certificate of transference can only be issued on receipt of written application. Such written application shall be retained until the vacancy has ended.

The Electoral Register may only be updated to reflect additions of members/adherents where a reinstatement and extension of Permission to Call is granted in terms of S.28 of the Act.

5. THE FORMER MINISTER

It should be made clear to all concerned that the minister who has demitted, been translated or retired has no locus in the vacancy. He or she should neither seek nor expect to take any part in the appointment of a Locum or Interim Moderator, nor should the former minister try to influence any Mission Planning discussions conducted by the Presbytery. On no account should the former minister seek to influence the congregation in the choice of those to serve on the Nominating Committee, or influence the Nominating Committee, during the course of its work.

The Kirk Session should be aware that it is for the Interim Moderator to ensure appropriate cover for funerals and weddings is in place, and that the former minister must not carry out any functions of ministry (including weddings and funerals) in the congregation or parish without the explicit permission of the Interim Moderator.

6. Presbytery Mission Planning

Every vacancy is now subject to the General Assembly's Presbytery Mission Plan Act, Act 8, 2021. It is important to consult the Presbytery Clerk, or the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT), for advice if you are in any doubt about how to proceed. The FAPLT has published guidelines for the use of this Act. All Acts may be accessed through the Church of Scotland website, following the link:

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/church-law/acts>

Kirk Sessions and Interim Moderators are reminded of the fact that, charges where current or accumulated shortfalls in contributions to central funds exist, will normally require a statement from Presbytery that these shortfalls are justified, before they are given permission to call. Please see sections 9 and 10 of Act XI, 2025, on Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

The congregation will naturally expect the Interim Moderator to explain the Mission Planning and Vacancy procedures, and this he or she should readily do. BUT on no account should the Interim Moderator seek to influence the readjustment discussions and vacancy procedures. It can happen that the congregation's views will differ from those of the General Assembly's or the Presbytery's Planning Committee. In these circumstances it may be necessary for the Interim Moderator to speak for the congregation, and this too he or she must be prepared to do whatever may be his or her personal opinion or those of the Presbytery. But the Interim Moderator must on no account see it as his or her function to champion the congregation's cause or, of necessity, vote for it in Presbytery. The Interim Moderator is well advised to maintain a neutral position throughout any readjustment proceedings. The Interim Moderator must of course ensure that all edicts and formal intimations which have to be served from time to time are properly served, signed and recorded. If in doubt on any matter, it is wise to consult the Presbytery Clerk. Further information can be found in the Presbytery Mission Plan Act.

7. PERMISSION TO CALL

When a Presbytery is aware of a vacancy, the Presbytery's Vacancy Procedure Committee will appoint a Presbytery Advisory Panel (3 people) to meet with the Kirk Session and the Nominating Committee. The Presbytery Advisory Panel will be available at all times for Nominating Committee, Kirk Session, and Interim Moderator. The Convener of this Presbytery Advisory Panel should contact the Interim Moderator to arrange these meetings. The task of the Presbytery Advisory Panel is to develop discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation, the problems and opportunities offered by the parish and the input which can reasonably be expected of the new minister. A note of topics which might be covered is given in Appendix 2.

8. STIPEND ARRANGEMENTS

Before a minister can be inducted there must be agreement to contribute to the National Stipend Fund of the Church at the prescribed level. This agreement takes the form of a Vacancy Schedule. The Interim Moderator should arrange with the Presbytery's Ministries Convener to have this processed. As well as being put before the financial court(s) of the congregation(s), it must also be agreed by Presbytery and the appropriate Committee of the General Assembly. All these steps must be completed prior to the induction. The minister when inducted will receive his/her stipend based on the National Stipend Scale as declared annually.

9. MINISTERS AND DEACONS IN CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS AND SAME SEX MARRIAGES - ACT 1, 2015

The Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages Act (Act 1, 2015) affirms the historic and current doctrine and practice of the Church in respect of same-sex relationships and its application to the ministers and deacons of the Church. This means that the default position is that the congregation may not call any minister in a same-sex relationship. However, the Act allows a Kirk Session to depart from this historic position and permit the consideration of ministers in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages.⁹

The Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament (8.3) states: “It shall be the duty of the Interim Moderator to ascertain whether or not the Kirk Session (or Kirk Sessions in the case of a linking or deferred linking or deferred union) may wish to follow the procedures contained in the Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages Act (Act I 2015), as regards making a decision on whether or not to depart (as “depart” is defined within that Act).” Any such decision should be made after the Kirk Session(s) meets with the Advisory Panel in terms of section 5.4 of this Act.

Where a Kirk Session or Sessions wish to follow the steps outlined in the Act, there will of necessity be a delay between the visit of the Presbytery Advisory Panel and the due election of the Nominating Committee, to allow voting to take place with the due period of notice specified in the Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages Act S.3(5) being given. Interim Moderators should map out timelines carefully to allow for the possibility of a Kirk Session or Sessions seeking to consider the question whether to depart.

Nothing in the Act requires the Kirk Session to take any particular action: if it does not wish to explore the issue it may simply move on. However, should the Kirk Session or Sessions wish to depart, the detailed steps are laid out in the 2015 Act. Further guidance is available from the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team or the Principal Clerk’s Office. The Act can be accessed [here](#).

10. THE PROFILE OF THE PARISH AND CONGREGATION

Vacancies are a good opportunity for congregations to reassess their strengths and weaknesses and the challenges which face them. It is important that candidates for the vacancy are given an open and honest picture of the charge under consideration and that they should be able to assess their personal gifts and calling alongside the challenges and vision of the charge.

The Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament (s.13) states that: Subject to the right to call having first been granted, the Kirk Session(s) shall prepare a Profile of each congregation and parish within the charge, in accordance with the template published in the Guidelines for Kirk Sessions. In the case of a linked charge, this shall take the form of a single document, with separate sections for each constituent congregation. In all cases the Profile shall contain, as an Appendix, a copy of the current Mission Action Plan on each constituent congregation produced in accordance with the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021). The draft Profile(s) shall then be submitted to the Advisory Panel, prior to its meeting with the Kirk Session(s) (section 5(4)(a)), for possible comment and revision.

A template for profiling the parish

The profile of the parish might include things like: number of houses and type of housing, population (accurate figures, please!), age structure, ethnic composition and religious adherence, industrial or agricultural activity, schools, colleges, hospitals - all the features which contribute to the character of the parish and the task which will confront the new incumbent.

A template for profiling the congregation

The profile of the congregation might include a brief history, numbers on the roll and a profile of their ages, details (and perhaps photographs) of the church buildings and manse, details of local constitutions if applicable, organisational life, the composition of the Session and the financial

court. A copy of the accounts and a brief summary of the last Professional Fabric Report should also be prepared for distribution. Every applicant should be given this information and every member of the Nominating Committee should have a copy with which they should become familiar.

If there is (or there is envisaged) a team ministry in the parish - whether minister of word and sacrament or MDS, or a new Team Ministry, in terms of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act 2021, it would be helpful for any candidate to see any existing contracts or agreements between members of the team, including any Basis of Team Ministry.

Where a Kirk Session (or Kirk Sessions) have voted to depart in terms of the Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages Act, this should be mentioned in the Parish Profile. There is no requirement to refer to this otherwise.

11. REVIEWABLE CHARGE

If the right of call involves a Basis of Reviewable Charge, this must be made clear to all applicants. The Nominee must have the conditions made clear to him/her before he/she is expected to accept the invitation. The nominee should sign a written acceptance indicating that they are aware of being inducted on a Basis of Reviewable Charge (section 9.1.3, Presbytery Mission Plan Act 8, 2021).

12. THE MANSE

It is essential for tax reasons that every parish minister is provided with a manse, be it owned or rented by the congregation. It is extremely important that the manse thus provided is of a good standard. It is only possible to offer a minister the opportunity of living in his/her own house in exceptional circumstances. The conditions for such an arrangement must be placed before the General Assembly's Manse Adjudication Committee, who may approve an arrangement whereby the minister's own house may be rented by the congregation as the manse. It is important to note that, in such circumstances, the congregation would be expected to pay the full market rent while, at the same time, maintain the wherewithal to provide a manse for any successor in office. BEFORE considering this possibility, contact MUST be made with both the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, the General Trustees, and the Presbytery.

Details of the processes relating to the Manse Adjudication Committee can be found in Schedule 4 of Act 5, 2024, of the General Assembly, at this [link](#).

The manse should be inspected immediately it becomes vacant, by the Presbytery Buildings Officer, or a professional surveyor. At the time of the vacancy, every congregation must complete a Manse Condition Schedule. This document will be issued by the General Trustees and should be used to ensure that information about the manse and its decoration and repair is up to date and that a schedule of work has been approved by the Financial Board. Ensuring that the Manse Condition Schedule is complete will make conversations with prospective ministers much easier. The last property survey report on the manse should also be consulted. The Interim Moderator should also advise the Presbytery's Fabric Convener that the manse is now vacant, and the Presbytery Property Committee should be engaged jointly with local office bearers to complete the Manse Condition Schedule. The aim should be to carry out all major repairs before a new minister arrives, with the proviso that redecoration should wait until a minister is elected and his/her views sought on the matter or, alternatively, to begin conversations on replacing the existing manse.

The clerk of the financial court should advise the Church of Scotland Insurance Company when the manse is vacated. The clerk should also inquire about relief from the Council Tax while the manse is unoccupied. Arrangements must also be made to ensure adequate frost protection, security, insurance etc. If it is expected that the vacancy may be a prolonged one, a Caretaker Occupancy Contract (provided by the General Trustees) might be considered, or the possibility of a private residential tenancy might also be considered.

It is extremely important that consultations on the manse begin immediately the vacancy occurs, because in the eventuality that the manse is deemed unsuitable, the time taken for its replacement

could significantly delay any right to call. If it is thought appropriate to sell the present manse and buy or rent a new manse, an early consultation should be encouraged with the Presbytery Clerk so that the various legal steps can be taken. The context of this consideration is the Manse Handbook, downloadable at this [link](#). These are extremely important documents for consideration at the time of the vacancy.

The General Assembly in 1991 instructed “that Presbyteries, before considering a Call to a vacant charge, shall have in their possession a written report from the Presbytery’s Fabric Committee indicating that all necessary work on the Manse, as earlier detailed and agreed by the Presbytery, has been fully and satisfactorily completed”. Use of the Manse Condition Schedule will make this a much easier task to carry out.

In all matters relating to the Manse, the Interim Moderator is asked to be proactive and wherever possible to act as a facilitator between the Nominee and the Board or Committee responsible for the Maintenance and upkeep of the Manse.

It may be advantageous in a vacancy, while a manse is unoccupied, that members of the financial court (and indeed perhaps the whole congregation) are encouraged to take the opportunity to visit the manse and become familiar with it. This ensures that when, in the future, the financial court is discussing the manse, there is a good understanding of the property for which they are responsible.

13. THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE AT WORK

The document “Guidelines for Nominating Committees” is available as a download or from the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team. This document outlines both the role of the Committee and the particular role of the Interim Moderator within it. It is critical that the Interim Moderator reads it alongside this present document, and Kirk Sessions should also familiarise themselves with it, in order that elders will be able to answer questions from the congregation.

The Kirk Session itself has no direct role in the process of choosing a minister once a Nominating Committee is elected. The Kirk Session should not seek to influence the Committee’s work, and should not ask for updates. The Committee’s work is confidential, as are the names of any applicants, and this confidentiality must be respected, both during the time the Committee is at work and, indeed, subsequently.

14. AFTER THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE’S WORK

The Nominating Committee has up to one year to complete its task of nominating one person to be the minister. This is calculated from the time that Presbytery grants the congregation leave to call. If no nomination is made within that period, the Presbytery shall decide whether to extend the leave to call, or to reopen the question of readjustment. You will find all the options available to the Presbytery in section 28 of the Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

Once the Nominating Committee has agreed its nominee, and the Presbytery’s Advisory Panel has been consulted, the name of the nominee shall be reported to the Kirk Session and Interim Moderator. At this point the Interim Moderator will make arrangements for nominee to conduct public worship, after which the congregation shall vote on whether to elect the nominee as their minister. (The regulations are in section 22-25 of the Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.) Should the congregation vote against the nominee, or the nominee withdraw after the vote, a new Nominating Committee is elected.

At the election, the Kirk Session shall arrange a sufficient supply of voting papers printed in the form indicated in the schedule to the Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The Interim Moderator, who shall preside at the election, shall issue any person whose name is on the Electoral Register a voting paper, noting on the Register that this has been done. Facilities shall be provided whereby the voter may mark the paper in secrecy, and a ballot-box shall be available wherein the paper is to be deposited when marked. (The full procedure can be found in section 25 of the Call, Election, and Appointment of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.)

15. REMOVAL AND DISTURBANCE COSTS

Remember that the new minister must receive his/her removal expenses and the Disturbance Allowance, which is £1,740. In addition, the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team will:

- meet the removal and disturbance costs of all charges with an average income base below £30,000;
- where the income base is between £30,000 and £60,000, provide either a loan in the first instance or a grant, where considered appropriate, based on the congregation providing an application for assessment.

Congregations with an income above £60,000 are responsible for meeting these costs.

The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team has arrangements with some removal companies; it is advisable to explore which companies provide credit facilities via FAPLT, although they may not provide the cheapest quote.

16. THE INDUCTION

Arrangements for the Induction Service are the responsibility of the Presbytery Clerk. The Clerk will give guidance on local policy.

17. THE NEW MINISTER

The Interim Moderator has an important part to play in supporting and encouraging the new minister from the moment of election to the induction and, if possible, beyond. The new minister, if entering a first charge, will be notified by the Presbytery Clerk of the pastoral care arrangements within the Presbytery.

The Interim Moderator should also remind the Kirk Session and, through them, the congregation, of the importance of their pastoral role towards the minister and his/her family. They are as susceptible as any other family to the stresses and strains that affect family life such as illness, bereavement, or even marital breakdown.

APPENDIX 1

SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTER WHOSE DEMISSION OR TRANSLATION HAS BROUGHT ABOUT THE VACANCY

It is our view that on retirement or translation the minister and spouse should:

- as a matter of course, transfer their membership to another congregation unless there is no other congregation nearby;
- take no part in shaping, guiding or influencing the vacancy process;
- before performing any ministerial duty in their former parish, seek permission from the Interim Moderator or their successor. Please remember that even to ask puts the new man or woman in a difficult position if they wish to say 'No'. In general, former ministers should do nothing to interfere with the filling of the vacancy or the position of their successor.

APPENDIX 2

CHECK LISTS

INTERIM MODERATOR:

- Have you obtained from the outgoing minister, or compiled from another reliable source, full information about members who are in hospital, in residential care, housebound, in need of urgent pastoral care?
- Have you made out a list of all weddings and future congregational events?
- Have you received a list of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all office-bearers?
- Have you conferred with the Session Clerk about pulpit supply and discussed with the Session the appointment of a Locum?
- Have you obtained from the Financial Court information about major repairs they wish to undertake on the vacated manse?
- Have you advised the Convener of the Presbytery's Fabric Committee of the date when the Manse will be empty and ready for inspection?
- Have you confirmed that arrangements for the payment of Removal Expenses and Disturbance Allowance have been organised?
- Have you ascertained whether or not the Kirk Session (or Kirk Sessions) may wish to follow the procedures contained in the Ministers and Deacons in Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages (Act 1, 2015), as regards making a decision on whether or not to depart?

SESSION CLERK:

- Have you received all official records from the outgoing Minister?
- Do members of the Session fully appreciate the increased pastoral care they must give to those in their district?
- Have you consulted with the Interim Moderator about the provision of pulpit supply or the employment of a Locum?
- Have duties formerly in the hands of the minister been devolved to others, eg editing the magazine, leading a particular group or organisation?
- Have you provided the Interim Moderator with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all the office-bearers?

CLERK TO FINANCIAL COURT:

- Has the Financial Court arranged for the transfer of the Manse 'bills' during the vacancy, eg telephone, gas, electricity?
- Has the Insurance Company been advised of the date when the Manse will become unoccupied? Has the Council Tax Office been advised of this date?
- Has the Presbytery's Fabric Convener been advised of this date?
- Is your Fabric Committee aware of the need to put the Manse in good order and do they have plans to achieve this? (This does not include any internal redecoration, which should take into account the wishes of the new minister.)
- Is the Treasurer aware of the need to pay expenses to the Interim Moderator, Locum and anyone supplying the pulpit? Do they realise that they should consult the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team about other continuing ministry payments?
- Has the question been raised of expressing the thanks of the congregation to the Interim Moderator and the Locum after the vacancy is filled?

APPENDIX 3

LOCUMS, ASSOCIATE MINISTERS AND ASSISTANT MINISTER

GUIDELINES FOR THOSE TO BE PAID THROUGH THE CENTRAL PAYROLL

1. Basic Regulation: Anyone seeking appointment as Locum, Associate Minister or Assistant Minister (full-time or part-time) must fulfil the provisions of the Parish Ministry Act 2 (2018), as amended with regard to the conduct of public worship.
2. Where salary and other appropriate payments are to be made through the Central Payroll, all appointments must be noted by the appropriate Presbytery and intimated to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team by Extract Minute. Appointments of Locums are the responsibility of the Kirk Session, while appointments of Associate or Assistant Ministers must be authorised and agreed by the Presbytery and intimated to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team by Extract Minute.
3. The authorising Presbytery shall determine whether or not a particular appointment as Locum, Associate Minister or Assistant Minister admits the holder to Membership of Presbytery.
4. Travelling expenses for all appointments shall be paid locally according to the scales intimated by the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team for Locums.
5. The Payroll, Pensions and Congregational Payments Section of the Stewardship and Finance Department shall have no responsibility in, or for, any such appointment beyond that of processing payments received from the appropriate Congregational Treasurer.
6. Further information can be obtained from the Stewardship and Finance Department in the Church Offices. Email: sfadmin@churchofscotland.org.uk

APPENDIX 4

GUIDELINES FOR MANSES

Accommodation

So far as the level of accommodation is concerned, the General Assembly has reaffirmed that a Manse should normally have not less than three public rooms, four bedrooms and a garage. However, the General Trustees will consider sympathetically requests to provide accommodation which is more suitable to the needs of an individual minister and his/her family, so long as the congregation is able also to retain or return to providing a Manse of recommended proportions should circumstances change.

It shall be desirable to provide:

- A fridge, washing machine, tumble dryer and dishwasher
- Security system, as appropriate
- Double glazing and loft insulation
- Carpets and floor coverings in all rooms
- Blinds or curtains in the study and the public rooms

Many of these are integral in modern housing, but the Manse Condition Schedule should establish which of these facilities belong to, and are the responsibility of, the congregation.

Financial Considerations

It is recognised that not every Manse will immediately have these desirable provisions and a Board may therefore need to plan a programme to bring its Manse up to standard over a period of several years. For congregations with holdings in the Consolidated Fabric Fund, costs will be recoverable from capital or revenue. Financial assistance may also be available from the Central Fabric Fund by way of grants and loans.

A recommended decoration programme for a standard seven-apartment Manse is as follows:

Year 1	Outside Paintwork	Year 6	Outside Paintwork
Year 2	Vestibule, hall and stairway	Year 7	Bedroom 2
Year 3	Bedroom 1	Year 8	Dining room and kitchen
Year 4	Kitchen, utility room and study	Year 9	Bathroom, toilet and bedroom 4
Year 5	Lounge	Year 10	Bedroom 3

Further Notes

Guidelines are available from the General Trustees' Secretary Department.

- Building a New Manse
- Acquisition and Sale of Manses
- Energy Guidelines
- Security Systems

Email: gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk

Information on allowances is also available from the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team on:

- Young Ministers' Furnishing Loans
- Removal and Disturbance Allowances

Please consult also the Manse Schedule available at:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/building_and_property_resources

APPENDIX 5

Sponsorship of Ministers Coming to Scotland from outside the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (UK&I) Updated November 2025

This guidance note is designed to assist Presbyteries and congregations to understand the process involved should they wish to consider, or are approached by, a minister of religion or other person who is a national of a country outwith the United Kingdom and Ireland (UK&I) for work or appointment within the Church of Scotland.

Broadly, it is illegal for anyone coming from outside the UK&I and who does not hold a British or Irish Passport to work in the UK without having or obtaining the right to work, even if that work is temporary or unpaid.

1. Engaging Personnel from Outside the United Kingdom and Ireland

Any Presbytery or Congregation considering engaging someone from outside the UK&I must contact the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team before taking any steps towards recruitment of anyone on either a paid or voluntary basis. Should your Presbytery or congregation be considering engaging someone from outside the UK&I, please contact the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team [by email to: FaithAction@churchofscotland.org.uk].

EU Settlement Scheme

If the person is an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen who was resident in the UK by 31 December 2020, they and their family members (including children and non-EU citizens) can apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to continue living in the UK beyond 30 June 2021. Even if they have lived in the UK for many years or they have a UK permanent residence document they still need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.

The EU Settlement Scheme allows such persons and their family members to get the immigration status they need to continue to live, work and study in the UK beyond 30 June 2021. In these cases, sponsorship as described in Sections 2 and 3 below is not required. However, they should produce evidence of their membership of the EU Settlement Scheme. See EU Settlement Scheme: presentation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

2. Sponsorship

The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team is responsible for administering the sponsorship of individuals on behalf of the Church as a whole. This entails:

- Deciding if an individual meets the criteria for sponsorship, and if so, issuing a Certificate of Sponsorship number for that individual to use in the course of making their own visa application¹.
- Monitoring individuals who are working in the categories detailed below.

Congregations & Presbyteries should be aware that Tier 2 or T2 (Minister of Religion) Visas are valid for a period of up to 3 years and 1 month. Ministers (and where applicable their families) can apply to extend their visas for a further period of up to 3 years having first obtained a new Certificate of Sponsorship from the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team. In practice the Visa is extended for a further 2 years on the basis that Ministers (and their families) can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (Settlement) in the UK following a period of 5 years continuous residency in the UK (holidays abroad and other short-term absences are permissible).

There are significant costs incurred by a minister (and family) migrating to the UK. The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team currently meets the cost of the Certificate of Sponsorship but the costs of visas, renewal of visas; immigration health surcharges; and of obtaining indefinite leave to remain are the responsibilities of the minister. Airfares and charges incurred in the transport of personal possessions are only payable by the congregation from the port of entry in the UK to the manse.

The minister and any family will also be required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge, currently (November 2025) £1035.00 per year per adult member of the household as well as a lower fee for younger members.

1 It is important to note that the issuing of a Certificate of Sponsorship is not a guarantee that a visa will be issued. It is solely and entirely the responsibility of the individual to apply for and obtain a visa once the Certificate has been issued by the Forum.

A Tier 5 or T5 (Temporary Religious Worker) Visa is issued by UK Visas & Immigration for a period of up to 24 months. This type of visa is unsuitable for someone becoming a Parish Minister. It is the appropriate document for someone coming to the UK to be engaged within the Church on a short and/or fixed term contract of no more than 24 months' duration and who must receive at least the National Minimum Wage.

At the end of the 2-year period the visa cannot be extended and the holder of the visa must normally return to his or her own country when it expires.

A Charity Visa is a route for applicants who want to enter the UK to undertake unpaid voluntary work for a registered UK charity, advancing the charity's primary purpose. Individuals of all nationalities who wish to work voluntarily for a registered UK charity for up to a maximum period of 12-months can apply. At the end of the 1-year period the visa cannot be extended and the holder of the visa must normally return to his or her own country when it expires.

3. Who is Eligible for Sponsorship?

On behalf of the Church of Scotland, the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team sponsors individuals under three categories:

- A. Tier 2 (T2): Ministers of Religion
- B. Tier 5 (T5): Temporary Religious Workers
- C. Charity - volunteers undertaking religious work

For the avoidance of doubt: the Church does not hold a licence to sponsor individuals who fall outside these three categories, for example, crèche workers, cleaners or care assistants.

Any individual seeking Sponsorship must provide detailed information, including that of their proposed role and responsibilities. The number of people who can be sponsored each year is limited by UK Visas & Immigration, and the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team has to follow very specific guidelines in order to fulfil its duties and responsibilities as a Sponsor and to enable the Church to maintain its status as a sponsor. Accordingly, your cooperation with this process is vital.

4. Implications for Vacancy Procedures

Abolishing the Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT)

Under the new Skilled Worker route there will be no requirement for employers to undertake a RLMT. For the Church of Scotland this previously required a minimum period of advertisement of 6 months before applicants from outwith the EU and Switzerland could be considered for a vacancy.

This reform will remove at least four weeks from the end-to-end process for sponsoring skilled workers. However, sponsors must still be seeking to fill a genuine vacancy which meets the skill and salary thresholds of the new route. Roles cannot be created solely to facilitate immigration of a specific migrant to the UK.

Guidance Note for Non-UK and Irish Citizens Seeking Work in the Church of Scotland

This guidance note is designed to assist you with understanding what steps you should take if you are a national of a country outwith the United Kingdom and Ireland (UK&I) seeking work or appointment within the Church of Scotland.

It is illegal for anyone coming from outside the UK&I to work in the UK without having or obtaining the right to work.

APPENDIX 6

GUIDELINES ON UNSOLICITED APPROACHES TO MINISTERS

It has been brought to the attention of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team that some ministers in the early years of their first charge are being approached by Nominating Committees to apply for another charge. Because of this, it has been decided to issue some guidelines to those involved in the vacancy process.

Under normal circumstances, newly ordained ministers are encouraged to stay in their first charge for a minimum of five years, especially if that charge is unrestricted. This allows the new minister to settle into a new home, put into practice the academic, practical and pastoral training he/she has received over the previous few years and, not least, to bring some stability to a congregation which may have had a long vacancy. In addition, those ministers with a spouse and family can settle into a new job, perhaps new school, new area and make new friends.

However, it is recognised that ministers, in answering a call to a charge which has a five-year Reviewable Tenure, are in a less secure situation and, therefore, in their fifth year may be searching for, or be open to, an invitation from another congregation. In this case, it may be reasonable for a Vacancy Committee or Interim Moderator to approach such a minister.

There are also exceptional circumstances (as indicated in Act VIII, 2003, Section 4 (2)) that may lead a minister in his/her first five years or the respective congregation to consider translating to another charge.

Please note too that while the above applies to ministers in their first charge, it is good practice not to make unsolicited approaches to ministers who have served fewer than three years in their current charge.

APPENDIX 7

FAITH ACTION PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP TEAM

PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR PRESBYTERIES ON INTERIM MINISTRY

At a time of vacancy, the suggestion of Interim Ministry may be raised by various parties: the congregation, the Interim Moderator, the Advisory Group or other committee of Presbytery. It should, however, be Presbytery who initiates the process.

Initial enquiries, however tentative, will be welcomed and should be directed in the first instance to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team.

Background information: the Presbytery is asked to provide background information using a proforma from the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team. This information is required to assess if formal discussions should take place.

Informal discussions will then be arranged for representatives of FAPLT, including one of the Interim Ministers, to meet with office-bearers and/or representatives of Presbytery. This is an opportunity to outline the concept and procedure of Interim Ministry and to allow the congregation and Presbytery to explore whether or not it might be appropriate in the particular circumstances of each situation. Our experience to date has shown that we have been of most help in establishing an Interim Ministry where discussion happens at the earliest possible stage. There is absolutely no commitment made at this point.

Formal discussions will then take place between representatives of FAPLT and the office-bearers (or the full congregation) to discuss in depth the possibility of Interim Ministry. This would lead to a decision being made by the congregation as to whether or not they wish to ask Presbytery for permission to apply for an Interim Minister.

Formal request is made by Presbytery to FAPLT who will determine if an Interim Minister is available, or is likely to become available, within a suitable time frame.

Aims and Objectives are then established by Interim Ministry representatives and the congregation. The relevant committee of Presbytery should participate in this exercise. These form the basis of the contract for the period of Interim Ministry.

On-going supervision takes place with a Transition Support Group consisting of representatives appointed by the Presbytery and by FAPLT. The Transition Support Group meets regularly with the Interim Minister and with the Congregation, with the relevant representatives reporting on progress to the Presbytery and FAPLT.

Termination of Interim Ministry will take place over a planned and structured period of time, at which point the Presbytery will then either implement the previously sisted terms of call or begin a new process of re-appraisal. Depending on demand for Interim Ministers, and the particular circumstances, the Interim Minister may act as Interim Moderator for all or part of the time of vacancy.

May 2014

Important Information

Interim Moderators Travel

Dear Colleague,

As from the 1st April 2011, Interim Moderators mileage of 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles travelled and 25p per mile for all additional miles travelled is the agreed rate.

As a result of Inland Revenue regulations regarding associated employment, different rules will have to be applied to different ministerial situations. Set out below are different scenarios and the process which the Council asks each minister to comply with. Please ensure that you adhere to the appropriate rules and that the Minister does not reclaim travel expenses in excess of the amounts allowed by the Inland Revenue before incurring a tax liability. See over for relevant legislation.

Scenario 1: The Minister is a Parish Minister and an Interim Moderator and uses their own vehicle for business travel.

The Minister should complete their mileage claim as usual but separately indicate any mileage travelled on behalf of their Interim Moderator's charge, the period involved and the name of the vacant charge. This situation comes under associated employment and only entitles the minister to one set of 10,000 miles at 45p per mile per fiscal year. Both charges will be charged on a pro rata monthly basis. Reimbursement of these expenses will be made through the payroll/centralised payment of travel expenses scheme.

A pro rata monthly basis means that the total monthly mileage of the minister will be calculated at the appropriate rates. This amount will be invoiced between the Minister's own charge and the vacant charge based on the number of miles travelled for each charge as a percentage of the total.

Scenario 2: The Minister is a Locum (includes retired ministers acting as Locums) and an Interim Moderator in another charge and uses their own vehicle for business travel.

The Minister should keep a record of their business mileage and separately indicate the mileage for the Locum charge and for the Interim Moderator's charge. The minister should ask for reimbursement from each charge locally as appropriate. When 10,000 miles has been reached in any fiscal year (April-March) the mileage reimbursement rate should be reduced to 25p per mile.

This situation comes under associated employment and only entitles the minister to one set of 10,000 miles at 45p per mile per fiscal year.

Scenario 3: The Minister is an employee of the Central Services Committee of '121' or other Church of Scotland employing body and an Interim Moderator and uses their own vehicle for business travel.

The Minister should keep a record of their business mileage and separately indicate the mileage for the other work and for the Interim Moderator's charge. The minister should ask for reimbursement locally from the vacant charge for which they are Interim Moderator. This situation comes under associated employment and only entitles the minister to one set of 10,000 miles at 45p per mile per fiscal year. The Church's employing body will have to monitor the mileage to ensure that only 10,000 per annum is paid at 45p per mile per fiscal year. Please inform your employing body of the amounts claimed as an Interim Moderator.

Scenario 4: The Minister has a car provided by their charge or the Council or Committee of the Church of Scotland for business travel and is an Interim Moderator.

The Minister should keep a record of their business mileage and apply locally to the charge for which they are Interim Moderator, for reimbursement of their travel for that vacant charge. This situation does come under associated employment, but as the provided car falls into another tax provision the reimbursed mileage should be reimbursed to the provider of the car. Please ensure the car provider is aware of such reimbursement as an Interim Moderator.

Scenario 5: The Minister is an Interim Moderator but not an employee of the Church of Scotland and uses their own vehicle for business travel.

The Minister should keep a record of their business mileage and apply locally to the charge for which they are Interim Moderator, for reimbursement of their travel for that vacant charge. This situation does not come under associated employment.

For information only - the Inland Revenue Regulations are summarised below:

There are two main Inland Revenue regulations relevant to travel reimbursement in this situation.

SE31220 - Employees using their own vehicles for work - states that from 6 April 2002, mileage allowance payments which employers make to employees who use their own vehicle or bicycle for business travel are not chargeable to tax if they do not exceed the appropriate approved mileage allowance payment (AMAP) limit. Payments which exceed the AMAP limit will be taxed to the extent that they exceed the limit.

The second (para 4, schedule 12AA ICTA 1988 as introduced by section 57 and schedule 12 FA 2001) states where an employee uses his or her own vehicle in the course of more than one employment during a single tax year, it is important to identify whether or not the employers involved are associated. If they are associated, then the business mileage from both employments is added together when working out whether the 10,000 higher rate limit for cars and vans has been reached. This applies for both working out the amount of any mileage allowance payments that are exempt from tax as approved mileage allowance payments. One employment is associated with another if -

- the employer is the same;
- the employers are partnerships or bodies and an individual or another partnership or body has control over both of them; or
- the employers are associated companies as defined in section 416 ICTA 1988

The underlying principal is that an individual should only receive reimbursement of travelling expenses from one employer/group of employers in any tax year of no more than 10,000 miles at 45p per mile and 25p per mile for any additional mileage. Reimbursement in excess of these rates incurs a tax liability.

Yours sincerely
Elaine Macadie
Finance Manager, Faith Action Programme Leadership Team

Further Information

These Guidelines for Kirk Sessions and Interim Moderators, together with Guidelines for Nominating Committees, Appointment of a Locum during a Vacancy and the Schedules can be accessed on the Church of Scotland website, following the link:

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/ministries-resources>

Or, if you require a hard copy, please contact:

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Should you have queries about any of these documents or wish further information, please contact:

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