

## 'Pointers for Thinking' sheet – linked to finance

Many treasurers will be aware of the following, but these are wider points that local church members may find helpful. This is in addition to the recent Q&A sheet:

### On assessment (or 'share')

1. Churches are obliged to cover an assessment, expenses, and maintain a financial reserve. Technically, the assessment is determined by the Circuit Meeting and can be enforced, but in recent times, we have requested local churches to contribute what they can.
2. Our financial records indicate that some churches are operating on narrow margins.
3. Failing to meet the assessment could potentially lead to the closure of the church, although this would be a distressing and complicated procedure.
4. Within the scope of our strategy, we may want to investigate the allocation of time that churches receive for their share. While fairness is essential, we must also uphold the connexional principle that acknowledges the role of stronger entities in supporting weaker ones and the sharing of resources.
5. Arrangements for joint denomination churches (LEP's Local Ecumenical Projects) are often complex. Whether an LEP contributes a share relates to who is providing the ministry, and the arrangements (such as the contribution of assets) to form the new church.

### On Property

1. Property is owned by the Methodist Church, not local churches, even though local people invest financially in it – and we are deeply grateful for that.
2. Sale of property leaves a 'connexional levy' whereby some of the proceeds are redirected to the wider Methodist Church.
3. Selling churches does not make as much money as you would think – often they have restrictive covenants attached to them, lack additional land for conversion to houses, and come with property issues.
4. Selling churches has a detrimental impact on how the Methodist Church is seen locally.
5. A church could, in theory, opt to sell their building and reinvest elsewhere. The Circuit's role here is to facilitate and becomes involved particularly if two or more churches feel that this is an option for them.
6. We cannot sell property to local groups at less than market value.
7. The sale of manses is easier although there is an obvious balance between the benefits of manse sale, and manse rental.

### On Staffing

8. Whilst it may be tempting for some of our members to think contractually, ministers live in covenant with local churches and the wider Church, providing them with a significant degree of flexibility in how they allocate their time. This flexibility becomes especially valuable in the long term, as it enables ministers to be on call and available when needed, ensuring that they can provide sustained support to a church's specific needs, even if their presence isn't always immediately visible. Ministers blend maintenance, advice, and emergency support.
9. Ministers have varying leadership styles, but in terms of vision their role is to work together with you, not to tell you what to do. Whilst ministers have an influence, the future of a local church also hinges on the faith and friendship that you give each other.
10. The most recent development connexionally, without question, has been the rise in lay people employed to assist in administration (which also includes safeguarding and property in other circuits), or to assist ministers in follow-up work.