



The Methodist Church

The South Bedfordshire Circuit

EXPENSES GUIDELINES

Introduction

This document is designed to assist all members of the Circuit in establishing what the Circuit considers to be valid expenses incurred, for which reimbursement can be claimed. It may also form a useful basis for churches to adopt, albeit in a modified format.

The guidelines cover all Presbyters with pastoral responsibilities as well as Supernumeraries, Lay Employees (with employment contracts), Circuit Office holders (e.g. Stewards), Local Preachers and members of the Circuit Meeting. They are equally applicable to any church member within the Circuit who may be asked to undertake a job or project for the Circuit and in doing so, expenses directly related to that piece of work are incurred.

Members need to appreciate that there will be, and indeed are, differences between those in the Circuit who are paid employees (e.g. Presbyters, Bursar, Administration Staff, Circuit Mission enabler) and those who undertake roles as a consequence of being elected representatives of their church.

There are other roles, in particular Local Preachers, we would deem to be more vocational.

Within any guidelines we have to be mindful that a sensible balance needs to be struck between what is genuinely an out of pocket expense and what constitutes expenses a member should really expect to bear themselves because they knew that expenses would be involved when they agreed to take on the role.

In setting out the guidelines I have for ease specifically highlighted certain roles.

Travel using own transport

This section is applicable to all classes of employee or potential claimant of mileage expense claims. The Circuit always expects staff and others to travel by the most economical method of transport having due regard to the convenience of the traveller. Therefore for any journey/trip where the return mileage is in excess of 200 miles, the traveller should explore alternative modes of transport. Such alternative modes to be explored include, but are not limited to, rail, coach, and car hire. If the difference in cost between the cheapest mode and a normal mileage claim is less than £25 then the traveller may use his/her own transport. **If the difference is in excess of £25 the traveller may use/her own transport but may only claim the equivalent of the cheapest mode of transport.** Travellers are expected to apply these guidelines in a pragmatic manner.

Local Preachers

Are invited to claim travel (normally car mileage) and other related expenses. If a claim is to be made it should be submitted to the Secretary of the Preachers' Meeting. The authorised expense is then submitted to the Bursar for payment.

*Mileage claims will be based generally at slightly above "cost of fuel" and not the HMRC rate (currently 55p per mile). For ease, and bearing in mind the current cost of fuel (May 2026) the applicable rate is set at 2/3 of the HMRC rate. Therefore, **reimbursement will be at 37 pence per mile.** The Bursar will review this rate from time to time but it is envisaged that the 2/3 of the HMRC rate will be the norm.*

[The rationale here is that whilst it is appreciated Local Preachers undertake more frequent journeys than many other members of the Circuit Meeting, their role is considered vocational. By way of comparison we would not expect Circuit Meeting members to each claim travel expenses to and from the various Circuit related meetings they are expected to attend. Therefore paying Local Preachers on pure cost of getting from A to B and expecting them to stand the wear and tear costs seems entirely reasonable]

Presbyters

CPD states that all essential expenses incurred in the discharge of responsibilities of their appointment shall be defrayed in full by the Circuit. Each year Conference agrees reimbursement rates for cars and other means of personal transport.

In claiming reimbursement for expenses Presbyters need to be aware that for certain types of expense, the Circuit is required to inform HMRC (by way of a P11D) of the amounts so reimbursed.

Central Stipends issue a "Taxation Dictionary" which sets out a compressive list of reportable expenses. This is available on the Methodist Church website

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=churchlife.content&cmid=3587>

Presbyters must take personal responsibility to ensure they understand the relevant issues.

It is not practicable to produce here an exhaustive list of the type of expenses the Circuit would deem as falling within the definition "essential expenses incurred in the discharge....." That said, the following list contains those which are more obvious and are included in the expenses claim form:

Broadband Copying/Stationery Hospitality (care!)	Magazines/Publications Manse Items Paper & Envelopes Parking Postage	Mileage:(Car/Motorcycle/Bicycle) Public Transport Taxi (if no public transport) Teaching/Study Material Telephone (business calls/rental)
Ink/Toner Training - Course fees (agreed in advance)		

However:

- 1. If a Presbyter wishes to be reimbursed for an expense which a reasonable person might define as "non-essential" then authority must be obtained from the Senior Circuit Steward before the expense is incurred.*
- 2. Expenses incurred as a direct result of undertaking an activity/piece of work which is for the benefit of, or exclusive to, one specific church must be charged to the local church and not the Circuit. In such cases prior approval should be sought from the local church.*

Lay Employees

Essentially, the same guidelines that are applicable to Presbyters should be followed by Lay Employees. Connexional travel reimbursement rates apply and any Lay Employee with an annualised remuneration package of £8,500 or more is also subject to P11D reporting. Lay Employees should also familiarise themselves with the contents of the "Taxation Dictionary". Claims for expenses are to be approved, in the first instance, by the Lay Employee's Supervisor.

Supernumeraries

Generally only incur expenses when undertaking preaching appointments. Again, Connexional travel reimbursement rates apply and in addition Supernumeraries are entitled to claim a Connexionally agreed preaching fee (currently £25.00). Claims for preaching fees and travel costs should be made direct to the Circuit Bursar at the end of each quarter (Nov, Feb, May and August).

Lay Pastoral Assistants

Are to be treated in the same way as Local Preachers i.e. car travel will be reimbursed on a “cost of fuel” basis only. Claims should be made to the supervising presbyter for approval and then sent to the Circuit Bursar for payment.

Circuit Office Bearers

We would not normally expect claims for travel expenses when travelling “within Circuit”. However, out of Circuit travel (e.g. Synod held at a venue in another Circuit) may be claimed at the Connexional rates. However, we would expect people to make arrangements to travel together in order to minimise costs.

The costs of any materials/stationery/official forms/postage etc., should be claimed direct from the Circuit Bursar

Members of the Circuit Meeting/Others

We appreciate that the venue of Circuit meetings in particular is governed by size and suitability of premises. Inevitably some members have to travel further than others. It is our policy that travel costs will not be reimbursed and members are encouraged to travel in groups.

Exceptions

From time to time there will inevitably be situations which do not fit the norm and cases where members who are not entitled to claim any travel expenses may experience severe financial hardship. As a caring community we will consider such situations on an individual and confidential basis. Anyone who wishes to claim under this heading should speak to their local minister or Superintendent.

Payment Procedure

All payments will be made by direct transfer to the claimant’s bank account. Claimants should ensure that the Circuit Bursar is provided with these details at the time of the first claim and whenever bank account details change.

David J Hallworth ACIB
Circuit Bursar
May 2026