CHAPTER 31
MINISTERS' RETIREMENT SCHEMES

Irish Methodist Ministers’ Retirement Fund

31.01 The object of the Irish Methodist Ministers' Retirement Fund is to secure provision for ministers connected with the Methodist Conference in Ireland who have retired, and for the widows of ministers who were in connection with the Conference at the time of their death.

31.02 A Ministerial Treasurer/Secretary and a Lay Treasurer shall be appointed annually by the Conference. The Ministerial Treasurer/Secretary shall keep a register of all claimants on the Fund, and shall perform such other duties as are required of him/her. The Treasurers shall keep an account in a Bank in the name of the Irish Methodist Ministers' Retirement Fund. The Fund shall be administered by the Stipends and Allowances Board.

31.03 The income of the Fund is derived from the following sources:

   (a) a share of the Comprehensive Assessment
   (b) subscriptions, donations and legacies
   (c) the interest and dividends arising from the invested capital

The Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland are authorised by Statute (Methodist Church in Ireland Act, 1915), to hold real, leasehold, or personal estate, devised or bequeathed, or legally assured to them upon or for any trusts connected with the Irish Methodist Ministers' Retirement Fund, and by direction of the Conference all such moneys or estates are held by the Statutory Trustees.

31.04 The scale of allowances shall be determined annually by the Conference and shall be printed in the Minutes of Conference each year. Allowances shall be paid monthly in arrears.

31.05 The minimum age of retirement is sixty-five years. The Conference may permit a minister to retire for exceptional reasons. Ministers wishing to apply for permission to retire at the ensuing Conference shall submit their application in writing to the District Superintendent before 30th September.

31.06 A minister who is required by the Conference to retire for some specific reason other than age or ill health shall receive such allowance as the Conference may determine.

31.07 When a retired minister, or minister's widow, by reason of extreme infirmity or any other cause, is deemed to be unfitted to receive the allowance personally, the Treasurers may appoint some competent person to receive the allowance on his/her behalf.

31.08 If a minister who retired at or after the Conference of 1948 subsequently marries, his widow becomes eligible for a widow's pension under the National Insurance Act, or a corresponding allowance from the Fund, provided she was over fifty years of age when her husband died, and had been married for three years or more. If previous to such marriage she had been a beneficiary of the Fund her original allowance shall be revived.
31.09 A minister's widow who re-marries shall cease to be eligible for allowances from the Fund.

31.10 A retired minister or minister's widow ceasing to be a member of the Methodist Church shall cease to be eligible for any allowances from the Fund.

31.11 When, through death or otherwise, a retired minister or minister's widow shall cease to be a beneficiary of the Fund, the Superintendent of the Circuit in which he or she resided shall forthwith inform the Ministerial Treasurer/Secretary of the Fund. He/she shall also report any change of residence which may take place in the case of retired ministers or ministers' widows residing on his/her Circuit.

31.12 When a minister dies before reaching retirement his widow shall receive from the Circuit in which he had been stationed his stipend for the remainder of the connexional year.

31.13 A minister who served the Church and had resigned prior to 1 July 1984 is eligible for a proportion of an allowance from the Fund in accordance with our Rules and Regulations.

31.14 By Deed of Settlement the late Mr. Charles Cookman McMillan, of New Zealand, donated a sum of money to found the "Rev. Gibson McMillan Supernumerary Fund" in memory of his father. The endowments of the Fund are vested in the Trustees of Charitable Funds under a Scheme of Management, dated 9th May, 1930, established by an order of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales, the income thereof being paid to the Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland by whom the Fund is administered.

The Trustees of the Methodist Church in Ireland acting under the provisions of the aforesaid Scheme of Management, have made Rules and Regulations for the Administration of the Fund.

Ministers Serving Overseas: Retirement Allowances

31.15 Retired ministers of the Irish Conference who have served overseas, and widows/widowers of same, shall be entitled to the allowance from the Irish Methodist Ministers' Retirement Fund based on the full period of service at home and overseas.

Retirement Benefits Scheme

31.16 The Retirement Benefits Scheme is administered in accordance with the provisions of a Trust Deed dated 1 July 1984, amended by a Supplementary Deed dated 22 December 1992 and the definitive Trust Deed and Rules dated 23 September 1996. The Scheme is approved by the Pensions Scheme Officer of the Inland Revenue.

31.17 The Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland has the power to appoint and remove the Trustees, who have been appointed in accordance with the Trust Deed and Rules. Decisions of the Trustees are taken in accordance with the Scheme Rules by a majority of Trustees present at any meeting.

31.18 All persons in receipt of a Stipend, including missionaries, who are aged not less than eighteen years and not more than sixty five years, who do not have permission to be without pastoral charge and are either Ministers or Probationers are eligible to join the scheme.
A person who has not otherwise become eligible to join the Scheme may, with the permission of the Church and the Trustees, be admitted to membership of the Scheme on such terms and conditions to benefits and otherwise, and with effect from such date as may be agreed with the Church and the Trustees.

31.19 The Trustees are required to produce a Statement of Investment Principles in accordance with Section 35 of the Pensions Acts 1995. In the preparation of the Statement the Trustees obtain appropriate professional advice and consult the principal employer. The Trustees review the Statement annually in conjunction with the Scheme advisers and the Scheme Actuary, taking particular note of any changes in the Scheme liabilities and of the position regarding the Minimum Funding Requirements.

31.20 The day to day management of the Scheme investments has been delegated by the Trustees to investment managers. The custody and safekeeping of the Scheme is provided by the custodians appointed by each of the investment managers. As part of the statement of investment principles the Trustees have determined that the Custodian will supply, where appropriate, a statement to the effect that all dividends, interest payments and tax repayments due to the Scheme have been allocated and all transactions settled in timely manner. The Trustees review from time to time the suitability of the Custodians and arrange for any necessary replacement.

31.21 The audited accounts, made up to the anniversary date of the Scheme as required by the Pensions Act 1995, are presented to the Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

31.22 A minister or probationer about to be married shall inform the Treasurer of the Ministers' Retirement Fund, in writing, of her/his intention, and of the respective ages of herself/himself and the intended spouse.

31.23 The provisions and regulations in respect of the Scheme are printed annually in the Minutes of Conference.

Ministers’ Disability Fund

31.24 The Fund was established by the Conference in 1995. The purpose of the Fund is to provide defined financial benefits when a minister is unable, through sickness or disablement, to perform the duties of the Ministry.

31.25 For the purpose of the Fund “sickness” or “disablement” means a continuous period of illness or disablement in respect of which evidence satisfactory to the Church has been produced showing that the minister because of her/his illness or disablement has not been able to perform the duties of the Ministry and as a result is no longer stationed.

31.26 (a) All ministers in Full Connexion who were receiving a stipend and were in full time service prior to their disability, who have not yet reached their normal retirement date or taken early retirement under The Methodist Church in Ireland Retirement Benefits Scheme are eligible to benefit.

(b) A minister who leaves service or who reaches her/his normal retirement date will no longer be eligible to benefit.

31.27 Those eligible shall make application on the appropriate form to the Special Committee which shall make a recommendation to the Conference after consultation with the
Fund Administrators. Application Forms may be obtained from the Secretary of Conference. It is assumed that the applicant is in receipt of all State Benefits to which he/she is entitled before applying to the Fund for financial assistance.

31.28 The benefits are:

(a) Fifty per cent of stipend escalating at the Retail Prices Index, per annum compound, subject to a maximum of five per cent.

(b) The payment of the Church’s and the member’s pension scheme contributions.

(c) The payment of the Employer’s National Insurance Contribution.

Payment will be deferred until such time as the stipend ceases to be paid. Where a minister is not eligible for State Benefits, consideration will be given to making a payment in lieu of them.

31.29 Benefit shall cease when the minister is certified as medically fit to resume her/his full ministerial duties, or if earlier, at the date the minister leaves service, takes early retirement or, reaches her/his normal retirement date.

31.30 (a) Where a minister undertakes part-time remunerative work whilst still receiving benefit from the Fund he/she must notify the Fund Administrators of this fact and declare the amount of the remuneration.

(b) Where a minister resumes her/his employment after having received benefit but later has to cease work, a new application shall be required.

(c) Any person receiving benefit from the Fund may be requested periodically to submit further medical evidence.

31.31 (a) Members of the Ministers’ Disability Fund shall contribute a set percentage of annual stipend, deducted at source, as determined by the Conference from time to time.

(b) The Church shall contribute an amount through the Connexional Assessment, as determined by the Conference each year through the Connexional Finance Committee.

31.32 The Fund Administrators consist of the following:

The Secretary of the Conference
A Treasurer of the Ministers’ Benevolent Fund
The Chairman of the Stipends and Allowances Board
One elected member of the Stipends and Allowances Board
Two trustees of the Retirement Benefits Scheme
The Secretary of the Irish Methodist Ministers’ Retirement Fund.

Methodist Ministers’ Retirement Income Augmentation Fund
31.33 The Fund was established by the Conference in 2003 to ensure that ministers who were received into Full Connexion at or before the Conference of 1984 and their widows/widowers should have a minimum income from all sources as approved by the Conference. The approved minimum income levels are printed annually in the Minutes of Conference.

31:34 The Conference of 2010 extended eligibility to ministers and widows/widowers received into Full Connexion after the 1984 Conference.

31:35 The Conference of 2011 introduced a range of new conditions:
(a) Ministers who served in the Stipendiary ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland and belonged to the IMMRF or RBS, and served the required minimum period of service in this capacity, and spouses of same, are eligible to apply to the Fund.
(b) For those who retired at Normal Retirement Date (or earlier due to ill health, but remained a member of the IMMRF or RBS to Normal Retirement Date), the minimum period of service is 10 years.
(c) For those who left the Stipendiary ministry of the Methodist Church in Ireland before Normal Retirement Date, the minimum period of service is 20 years.
(d) Eligible Ministers must have 20 years service in order to qualify for the normal level of benefits under the Fund. For eligible Ministers with less than 20 years service, the Minimum Income Levels (as published in the Minutes of Conference) will be reduced on a pro-rata basis, e.g. 50% for 10 years’ service.
(e) In cases of need, the independent Administrators can use their discretion to allow eligibility or increase the standard benefits, in consultation with the Stipends & Allowances Board if necessary.
(f) Payments will normally be made monthly in arrears, once eligibility has been established and the appropriate amount calculated.
(g) Potential applicants should make contact with either of the two independent Administrators listed in the Minutes of Conference.