

MMCRA DONATIONS

In response to a question relating to the CAC's report, I promised at the Conference to offer some information about the Methodist Ministers' Children's Relief Association (MMCRA). This fund is not to be confused with the Methodist Ministers' Children's Fund – sometimes known as the Trinity Hall Trust – which is for the educational purposes of 3 to 18 year-olds.

The MMCRA's sole purpose is to provide a modest annual grant to ministers who continue to have regular care responsibilities for their adult children. These responsibilities are often life-long and the MMCRA never refuses to offer an annual grant. As from 2019-20, the normal amount is being increased from £500 to £600 per year, but in exceptional cases, up to £1000 may be granted.

The MMCRA's income is wholly dependent on the collections made at District Synods of which, in any year, 20 or so of the 30 contribute. As recent CAC reports to the Conference have indicated, the expenditure has been in excess of the income by £1500 to £2000 per year. The balance as at August 31st 2018 was £53,000 so there is no immediate danger that funds will dry up, but it is important to sustain income at or near expenditure, noting that in 2019-20, this will rise to about £12,000 to cover the increased grants, compared to the income in 2017-18 of £7600.

It goes without saying that the ministers who make a claim on the fund are deeply grateful for the grants they receive and therefore may I encourage Synods to continue to remember their needs and to be generous.

On the matter of claiming gift-aid on donations (also raised at Conference), it is much the most practical and cost-effective if an arrangement can be made locally using a church or circuit already registered to make the claim (perhaps using the facility of GASDS – Gift-Aid on Small Donations Scheme – now permitting cash donations of up to £30) and for the amount including the gift-aid to be forwarded to the Finance office in MCH. The concern is that if hundreds of individual envelopes are collected, each with small amounts, at all Synods, the administrative burden of processing them might outweigh the benefits. With this guidance, it seems to be matter for local common sense and discretion rather than unhelpful prescriptive solutions from the CAC or its Chair!

Kind regards,

John Bell

Chair of the Connexional Allowances Committee

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