

Synod Financial Assistance for Ministry Stipend Protocol

Contents

1	Purpose.....	1
2	Scope.....	2
3	Key roles and responsibilities	2
4	Financial assistance overview	2
4.1	Financial assistance available and related conditions.....	2
4.2	Funding source.....	3
4.3	Principles	3
4.4	Eligibility	3
5	Application process	4
5.1	Applications	4
5.2	Assessment and approval.....	4
5.3	Funding payments	5
5.4	Monitoring, review and reporting	5
6	Definition of key terms	5
7	Related documents.....	5
	Document control.....	6

1 Purpose

The purpose of the Synod Financial Assistance for Ministry Stipend Protocol (**the Protocol**) is to outline the circumstances in which the Synod may provide temporary financial assistance from the Sustentation Fund to support ministry stipend costs where a congregation is experiencing genuine financial hardship and is unable to meet its stipend obligations.

Financial assistance is intended to:

- support payment of stipend for a minister in placement during a period of financial crisis;
- enable time for appropriate consultation and discernment regarding the future sustainability of ministry within the congregation;
- assist presbyteries and relevant Synod bodies to work with congregations to identify longer-term solutions; and
- ensure continuity of ministry and fulfilment of stipend obligations during the approved assistance period.

2 Scope

This Protocol applies to requests for financial assistance from congregations or other approved Church bodies within the bounds of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania that are responsible for funding the stipend of a ministry agent in placement.

The assistance is intended to address short-term financial hardship and is not intended to provide ongoing subsidy of ministry placements.

3 Key roles and responsibilities

The table below summarises the key roles and responsibilities in relation to this Protocol.

Role	Responsibilities
Ministry and Mission Committee (M&M)	Provide governance oversight of the Protocol, monitor utilisation of financial assistance, and receive periodic reporting on approvals, expenditure and emerging trends as relevant.
Placements Committee	Provide advice to the AGS when requested on ministry, placement, pastoral or sustainability considerations relevant to an application.
Associate General Secretary (AGS)	- Coordinate financial assistance in accordance with related Synod policy and this protocol. - Monitor funding source balances, and committed funds. - Approve financial assistance allocations within delegated authority and approved budget. - The AGS may delegate administrative aspects of this Protocol, including receipt of applications, gathering of supporting information and administration of approved payments. Responsibility for approval of financial assistance remains with the AGS or an appropriately authorised delegate.
Minutes Secretary of M&M	Administer applications, payments, recordkeeping, acquittal and reporting.
Presbytery	Provide advice regarding the congregation's circumstances, support ministry and sustainability planning, and endorse or comment on requests where appropriate.
Congregation Church Council	- Identify financial need, submit requests, provide supporting financial information, and comply with any conditions of assistance. - Undertake discernment in consultation with presbytery regarding the future sustainability of ministry within the congregation.

4 Financial assistance overview

4.1 Financial assistance available and related conditions

Subject to available funding, assistance may:

- contribute towards a portion of stipend costs incurred by the congregation;
- be provided as a lump sum payment or periodic instalments, or may be paid directly via Synod Payroll to offset ministry stipend costs;
- be approved for a defined period to support short-term financial recovery or discernment activities;
- be subject to conditions determined at the time of approval; and
- may be varied, suspended or terminated where circumstances change conditions are not met, or assistance is no longer required.

Assistance will normally not exceed \$10,000 per application or per placement, unless exceptional circumstances exist and an alternative amount is approved by the AGS.

Repeat applications for the same placement or congregation will not ordinarily be supported. A further application may only be considered where exceptional circumstances exist, the prior assistance period has concluded, and the congregation and Presbytery can demonstrate that appropriate action has been taken to address the underlying financial sustainability issues.

4.2 Funding source

The Sustentation Fund (the Fund) is a long-standing Synod fund established to provide emergency assistance where congregations are unable to meet ministry stipend obligations.

The Fund receives some income distributions from special purpose trusts, providing for ongoing sustainable funding.

4.3 Principles

Financial assistance under this Protocol will be administered in accordance with the following principles:

- Assistance will only be provided where a genuine financial need has been demonstrated.
- Financial assistance is intended to be short-term and temporary in nature.
- Congregations are expected to contribute to ministry costs to the greatest extent possible.
- Assistance should support a sustainable ministry outcome and not defer necessary decisions indefinitely.
- Decisions will take into account advice from the relevant Presbytery and any other Synod body, such as a committee, as considered appropriate.
- Funding availability will be subject to the balance and commitments of the Sustentation Fund.

4.4 Eligibility

Financial assistance may be considered where:

- a congregation has a minister in placement;
- the congregation is experiencing financial hardship that prevents it from meeting stipend obligations;
- the congregation has limited capacity to meet the shortfall through existing reserves or local resources;
- the relevant Presbytery supports the request; and
- there is a reasonable expectation that the assistance will provide time for consultation, discernment, restructuring or other action to address the underlying circumstances.

Financial assistance will generally not be provided where:

- the request relates to long-term structural funding deficiencies without a pathway to sustainability; or
- the congregation has not provided sufficient information to demonstrate financial need.

5 Application process

5.1 Applications

Requests for financial assistance should be submitted first via email to the relevant Presbytery. If presbytery endorses the request, the application should be submitted via email from the Presbytery to the Associate General Secretary or other nominated delegate.

Applications should include:

- details of the congregation and placement;
- the amount and duration of assistance sought;
- details of the financial circumstances giving rise to the request;
- current financial information, including budget and cash-flow information;
- steps already taken to address the financial shortfall; and
- advice or endorsement from the relevant Presbytery.

A prescribed application form may be used where available, however a formal application form is not required for consideration.

5.2 Assessment and approval

In assessing an application, consideration may be given to:

- the congregation's financial position;
- the extent of the stipend shortfall;
- available cash reserves and other financial resources;
- advice from the relevant Presbytery;
- any placement, pastoral or ministry considerations;
- any previous financial assistance provided to the congregation or for the same placement, including the timing, amount and outcomes of that assistance;
- actions being undertaken to address the underlying financial issue; and
- the availability of funds.

The AGS may seek advice from:

- the Presbytery;
- Placements Committee;
- Pastoral Assistance Committee; and/or
- other appropriate Synod staff or bodies.

The AGS (or delegated authority) will determine whether assistance is approved and may impose conditions considered necessary.

5.3 Funding payments

Once approved, funds will be made available to the congregation. Depending on the approval conditions, funds may be provided as a lump sum payment or periodic instalments, or may be paid directly via Payroll to offset ministry stipend costs.

Funds provided may only be used for ministry stipend costs. If funds are used for other purposes, the Synod will seek recovery from the congregation to refund the balance to the Sustentation Fund.

5.4 Monitoring, review and reporting

Recipients may be required to provide:

- updated financial information;
- progress against agreed actions;
- outcomes of Presbytery consultation processes; and
- confirmation of how funds were applied.

The AGS may determine the extent of reporting required having regard to the amount and duration of assistance.

6 Definition of key terms

The table below provides definitions for key terms specific to this policy to support consistent interpretation and application.

Term	Definition
Eligibility	The minimum requirements that an applicant, project or activity must satisfy to be considered for assessment under a funding program.
Financial assistance	Provision of funds to support an entity experiencing a specific need, hardship, emergency, compliance requirement, or other identified eligible circumstance. Unlike a grant program, financial assistance is generally needs-based and may be assessed against specified eligibility criteria, on balance with funds available, rather than through a comparative or competitive grant assessment process. Compared with grants, this may be subject to less onerous reporting and acquittal requirements.

7 Related documents

This section provides a summary of key related documents as at the time of writing.

- Synod Grant and Financial Assistance Policy (2026)

Document control

Document Owner:	The Associate General Secretary is responsible for the management and maintenance of this document.			
Review cycle:	This document will be subject to formal review every 3 years .	Next review date:	Sep 2029	
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Document management:

- Any minor changes made between review periods should be reflected in the above table. Only changes of a material nature will require approval by the nominated approver between formal review periods.
- Note:** when reviewing this document, the reviewer should ensure the template used is still the most current template for Synod policies and procedures, as found on the Synod intranet. This document is based on the **November 2025** template as approved by the Senior Leadership Team.