

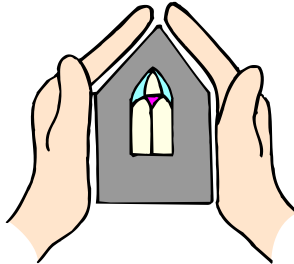
Thames North Synod

**Helping Ministers and Their Families Feel Safe  
and Comfortable in Their Manses**

**MANSE**

Policies & Procedures for Ministers and Local Church  
Elders

**2019**



This book belongs to the manse at:

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The usual point of contact for dealing with matters concerning your manse will be your local church elders. If the matter concerns advice on property or legal aspects, you should contact either:

Muna Levan-Harris (Legal & Trust Officer) 020 7799 5000

E-mail [trust@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:trust@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

and

David Skipp (Property Officer) 07717 087561 / 01245 425290

E-mail [propertydevelopment@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:propertydevelopment@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

If you have a question about or problem with your home that the local church is unable to deal with, please e-mail (preferred) or telephone before taking any action.

In case of a real emergency, the number below may be helpful, but should be approved by the local church before using:

Central Heating, plumbing & Electrical Installation:

Hall & Randall: 020 8953 2094; 020 8953 9828; 020 8207 3286

Email: [office@hallandrandall.com](mailto:office@hallandrandall.com)

Local Contacts:

***It might be helpful to record the relevant numbers for your area and those approved by the local church:***

Electricity Supplier: \_\_\_\_\_

Gas Supplier: \_\_\_\_\_

Water Supplier: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Call Out: \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep this booklet in a safe and accessible place and let your elders have a copy if they do not already possess a copy.

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## **Houses for Ministers**

In Thames North Synod manse are usually owned by URC Thames North Trust. The responsibility for the general upkeep and maintenance of manses rests with the partnership between the minister and the local church elders (as local managing trustees). The Synod & Trust will help with any matters relating to the church manse where required.

Your manse has two functions. First and foremost, it is a home for you and your family. But it is also where you do much of your study and preparation for worship and preaching as well as holding the occasional meeting and maybe some church administration.

It is the responsibility of the local church elders to make sure that your manse is appropriately maintained and, when necessary, repaired in accordance with the Manse Policy, while still giving you a chance to make it your 'own'.

It is your responsibility, helped by your church elders, to contribute to this maintenance by taking proper care of your home.

In cases of a joint pastorate, where a minister is appointed to two or more churches, a "lead church" should be identified for practical reasons in order to simplify the day-to-day aspects of managing the manse. The "lead church" will be your first point of contact; thereafter they will seek any financial contribution from the partnering church(s) as appropriate under your terms of settlement. Within this booklet when the term "Local Church" is mentioned it is deemed to imply the "Lead Church".

The rest of this booklet aims to help you and us in meeting these shared responsibilities by clearly defining their range and nature.

The Synod and Trust are always looking to improve the support that we provide and welcome any suggestions for how we can do this. We also welcome feedback on the clarity and helpfulness of this booklet.

## **Synod Committee Support Structure**

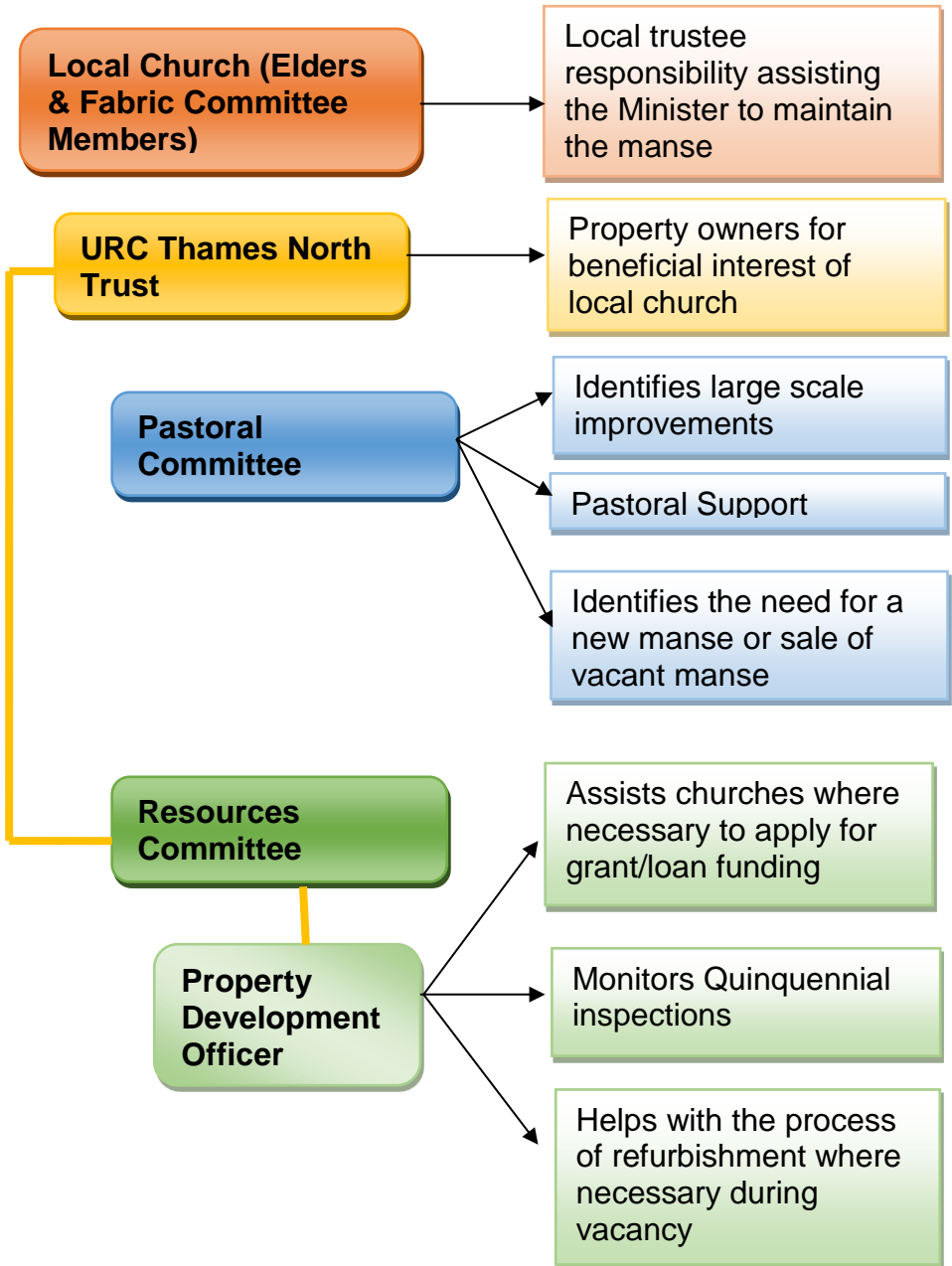
The various committees identified below, seek to manage the property portfolio owned by the United Reformed Church Thames North Trust.

All questions relating to the fabric of the manse should be referred, in the first instance, to the Elders Meeting of your local church

When a minister first takes up occupation of a manse, the Synod and Trust will ask the local church to ensure that the house is clean, safe well decorated and complies with the standard set out in the Manse Policy and complies as near as possible to the URC Plan for Partnership National Manse Guidelines. The minister and family should be able to feel safe, warm and comfortable in their home. Thereafter, the general maintenance of the manse falls to the elders of the local church(s) usually via the church's Elders or Fabric & Finance Committee.

Outlined on the next page is a diagrammatical representation of who does what.

# Who Does What



## **1. BEFORE YOU MOVE IN**

Following vacant possession and prior to you moving in the church Elders will meet with you and inspect the property.

It is important to note that, whilst the necessary maintenance and repair will be carried out before you take up an appointment, it will not always be possible to tailor all redecorations to your specific taste. The Local Church will endeavour to provide a good quality attractive and pleasant home for you and your family.

## **2. DURING THE TENURE of YOUR MINISTRY**

Once you are in your manse, you will be responsible for keeping the house in general good order and the garden tidy and free from accumulated debris. Your Local Church will be responsible for redecoration of the interior from time to time. Care must be exercised when such work is undertaken since it could be regarded as payment in kind and you may incur a tax liability (see the note below).

The Local Church Elders have an on-going responsibility to maintain and repair the house to an appropriate standard.

### **(a) Income Tax and National Insurance implications**

Certain aspects of internal repairs and decorations paid for by the local church or the Synod while a manse is occupied are regarded as taxable benefits by HMRC. In addition, the local church is liable to pay Class 1 National Insurance contributions on the same items. Detailed guidance on this subject is issued to all ministers annually in April by the URC MoM office. Ministers should pass these documents to the church treasurer for completion of the P11D form.

## **(b) Maintenance and Repair**

The Church Elders have a duty to carry out repairs funded from church funds, this may involve making good what already exists. In practice maintaining the manse to a good standard is a partnership between the Local Church and the Minister and involves regular inspection, maintenance and repair. Local Churches are encouraged to have a 'manse fund' within their accounts to cover ongoing repair and maintenance items.

## **(c) Regular Inspections**

Your manse will be scheduled for Quinquennial Inspection by a professional surveyor. This is monitored by the Synod Property Officer but must be dealt with by the Local Church. A separate guidance note for quinquennial inspection is available on the Synod website.

It is helpful if you make the surveyor aware during the inspection of any particular areas of concern, and provide copies of gutter maintenance reports, gas servicing and electrical test & reports, together with any other information you think may assist the quinquennial process.

The surveyor will send a copy of the Report to the Local Church and the Synod Property Officer. You should ask for a copy of the report from your Local Church so that you can provide them with comments on the report.

The Local Church Elders will consider any comments you have submitted and will authorise the appropriate work.

The authorised work of maintenance and repair identified as a result of the quinquennial inspection must start as soon as possible and at the latest within 12 months.

It is good practice for an annual manse inspection to take place between you and the Local Church. This may be undertaken via one of the following options:



- i) A representative(s) of the Elders or church Fabric Committee
- ii) Volunteers from other URC church in your Local Area Group.

**(d) Regular maintenance - Central Heating, Gas Safety & Electrical testing**

The Local Church must take responsibility for ensuring that boilers are serviced and gas appliances safety-checked annually and the electrical installation tested within a 5-year cycle. Regular maintenance work and everyday repairs are the responsibility of the local church and will be organised by them as soon as practically possible.

**(e) Emergency Repairs**

In the case of an emergency (e.g. a burst pipe or storm damage) where you judge that the fabric of the house would be further harmed by delay in following normal procedures, you should act immediately to have the repair carried out by contacting a relevant contractor. Details of the Synod Contractor are listed on page 1, but it is recommended that you inform the Local Church Elders in the event of emergency or storm damage etc, as they will need to involve insurers (and others) to take appropriate action and may have preferred contractors.

**(f) Maintenance and Repair – who does what?**

**Local Church:** The responsibilities of the Local Church whilst a minister is in residence comprise:

- carry out regular inspections of manse (other than the Quinquennial Inspection);
- maintain and repair (subject to the Manse Policy);
- i) painting the external structure and fabric of the buildings of the manse, including external doors, windows, drains, gutters and external pipes;

- ii) drives (normally minor repairs only), walls (subject to Synod approval), gates and fences;
- iii) installations in the manse for the supply of water, gas and electricity, and for sanitation, including basins, sinks, baths, showers and sanitary conveniences. The minister must not carry out installation or repair and maintenance and must always ensure these matters are dealt with via the Local Church.
- iv) space and water heating installations within the manse. The annual servicing of the boiler will be organised by the Local Church;
- v) any fixtures and fittings in the manse, as long as they belong to the church (note: a tax liability will be incurred if the church purchases goods on behalf of a minister);
- vi) burglar alarms, CCTV.
- vii) The local church must notify the Trust Officer of damage to the property resulting from the operation of an insured peril - including subsidence - whereupon detailed site investigations will be undertaken in collaboration with the insurance company.

**The Minister:** should contribute to the good maintenance of the home by regularly:

- looking from ground level at the roof to check that tiles/ slates are all in place and that gullies and gutters are not overflowing;
- checking the boundary fences and ensuring that hedging is trimmed at appropriate intervals and that wooden fencing is treated with a preservative every couple of years (a grant may be available for buying the preservative from the local church subject to prior agreement);
- keeping the house in good decorative order in partnership with the local church.

When repairs are required you should, in all normal circumstances, contact the convener of the Fabric Committee or church secretary of your local church first, who will be able to advise you on your best option.

Where there is an emergency e.g. a burst pipe you should take the necessary action immediately by contacting a contractor to make safe but not necessarily deal with final repair solution. You must keep the Local Church and Trust informed as appropriate.

### **(g) Legionella**

The Local Church should have undertaken a general risk assessment as to the possibility of an incident of Legionella bacteria developing in your manse. In order to ensure there is no possibility of such an outbreak, please ensure that, on a regular basis (ie once a week) you run any shower, hoses and taps (hot or cold, inside or out) especially the ones you do not use very often, for at least 2 minutes. This way you will not only keep the entire system clean but will, also spot any leaks or defects before they become a real problem.

### **(h) A word on contractors**

The Local Church Elders, Church Treasurer or Fabric Convener are the only people entitled to give instructions to the Contractor. **If you give a contractor an instruction to do additional work while at the property, you will be personally liable for the costs involved.**

## **MOVING OUT**

Before you leave your manse:

- a) You will receive a copy of the letter from the Pastoral Committee which will also have been sent to your Church Elders explaining how the property should be left and inviting them and you to report on the condition of the manse together with any recommendations you feel are appropriate to make about its possible improvement.
- b) The Pastoral Committee will appoint an appropriate person to meet with the Elders after your departure to inspect the property and discuss the comments.
- c) It is essential that you clear the house thoroughly and remove all unwanted articles and/or rubbish not only from the manse but also from the garage and its grounds before you leave so that they are left in a state in which you would expect to find them. The house should be in an acceptable decorative and clean condition.
- d) Enclosed in **Appendix One** to this guide is a schedule that **must** be completed by you or your Church Elders which seeks to record final meter reading of all public utilities along with a record of the location of keys.

## **INSURANCE**

### **Buildings Insurance**

The Local Church are responsible for insuring the manse, unless the property is a Synod owned manse. The insurance must cover the property together with their surrounding walls, fences, gates etc against accidental and other damage but not 'normal' wear and tear. If an insurable problem arises in relation to your house, you must let the Local Church know right away, since all claims have to be lodged, together with photographs, as soon as possible.

If you are not sure if an insurance claim is appropriate, ask the advice of the local Church, Trust or Property Officer.

If the damage is the result of criminal activity, you must tell the police, who will issue you with a crime number. Without this number, the claim will not be valid. These details must be given promptly to the Local Church, Trust or Property Officer so that an appropriate claim can be made.

### **Contents Insurance**

You are responsible for your own Contents Insurance policy. Please ensure that you, and your family, maintain the correct level and type of cover for contents, high risk items and named items at all times.

Ensure that if present your security system is always used. It is also important to ensure that all window and door locks are used and fully operative, because this may affect your insurance premium.

### **SECURITY**

The Synod takes security very seriously and would expect the Local Church to do its best, within its budget, to support improvements and repairs to items such as security alarm and lighting systems.

### **DECORATIONS & REPAIRS**

During a time of vacancy, the Local Church should take the opportunity to redecorate the manse as needed prior to a new minister taking up residency. Under such circumstances the house and garden should be in excellent condition to welcome a new minister and family.

The vacancy period also provides a good opportunity for the Local Church to carry out repair, maintenance and refurbishment of the property. If this policy is properly followed the Local Church should have sufficient funds within the designated 'manse fund' for this purpose. Synod may be open to providing a grant and/or loan to help with these costs. See separate guidance notes for grants and loans on the Synod website.

## **NOTES FOR CHURCH ELDERS**

### **What happens before and during a vacancy?**

The Elders should arrange for an inspection of the property to be carried out with the minister present. The purpose of this inspection is to outline the responsibilities on each party just prior to and when the manse becomes empty. The inspection should also record any repair and maintenance issues and look at the security needs for the property during vacancy. The insurance provider should also be informed of the date the property will be vacant from.

#### ***The Manse***

Vandalism is a high risk in virtually all areas. Unfortunately keeping an occasional eye on an empty manse is no longer sufficient to protect it. Experience has shown that a more careful strategy is required. There are two basic scenarios:

#### ***(i) Where the vacancy is expected to be under 6 months***

Where the Pastoral Committee has approved the appointment of a new incumbent and that appointment is expected to be taken up in under six months, the local church is responsible for the manse. This means that:

- a) The Church Elders and/or their appointed representatives must inspect the manse at least once a week and a record of those inspections must be kept, preferably in the log at the back of this handbook.
- b) Where the house is likely to be empty for a period during the winter and there is a danger of burst pipes, the water must be drained since burst pipes and the damage they cause cost a great deal to put right. Please contact a local plumber to undertake this task.
- c) The Insurance company is likely to request that central heating is kept on constant at a low temperature to avoid the risk of burst pipes.

- d) It is usually most economic to ask the telephone provider to maintain the telephone since re-connection is costly, though it might be advisable to ban outgoing calls.
- e) Utility services during the vacancy when the property is empty must be transferred to and paid by the local church, unless it is a Synod owned manse and in this case the Synod will take over this responsibility. Meters should be read when the minister moves out and again once anyone takes up occupation and when they leave.

***(ii) Where the vacancy is expected to be over 6 months***

It is most common for vacancies to last beyond six months. In this case the Local Church should seek approval from the Synod Resources Committee for the letting of the manse in accordance with Thames North Trust Guidelines. Where such a letting is approved the tenants will become responsible for all utility bills.

## **Frequently asked Questions**

### **Who provides the cooker?**

The Local Church is responsible for provision of a free-standing cooker, unless of course the property has a fitted oven/hob.

### **What is the policy on smoke alarms & CO2 alarms?**

Every manse must be fitted with a hardwired smoke alarm on each floor. Usually one in the hall and one on the landing. It may also be necessary for a heat detector to be installed in the kitchen. A CO2 alarm should be installed in a position recommended by your electrician or gas servicing engineer. It is essential that these alarms are maintained in full working order and tested on a regular basis. A note of the testing and any action taken should be included within the property log on page 18 of this booklet.

### **Who is responsible for television aerials/telephones?**

The Local Church is responsible for the installation and maintenance of telephone or terrestrial, cable or satellite TV. The local church(s) will be responsible for these items when provided for business use by you, the minister. You will be responsible for such service provision for your own social/pleasurable usage. Careful attention should be paid to your own tax liability and reference made to the guidance notes provided by the URC MoM office (as referred to on page 6 of this booklet).

### **What is the policy on showers?**

It is recommended that Local Churches should provide a shower in the manse as part of environmental commitment. Please bear in mind that showers will normally be incorporated over the bath rather than a separate cubicle.



## **What happens if there is a problem with a fitted kitchen?**

Any minor problem to the kitchen fitments would come under the normal heading of 'Repair'. The replacement of, for example, the worktops would be regarded as an upgrade. The replacement of a full kitchen would come under the heading of 'Improvements'. Careful attention should be paid to your own tax liability and reference made to the guidance notes provided by the URC MoM office (as referred to on page 6 of this booklet).

## **Who is responsible for plumbing in my washing machine /appliances?**

This is your responsibility and can be carried out by a local heating and plumbing engineer at your cost.

## **How to deal with trees, hedging and gardens?**

**Trees:** The Local Church should be alerted to any matter concerning a tree because of possible problems like preservation orders. They may require approval from the local authority planning department. Such approval would be required prior to any tree work being carried out.

Where there is a clear and foreseeable threat to the personal safety of residents or visitors, or to property, that is directly related to the condition of a tree, the local church must take immediate action to minimise that risk.

The local church must ensure that adequate clearance of highways is maintained at all times. Any such problems must be reported promptly, by the minister, to their local church elders to take immediate action.

**Planting of new trees** If you are contemplating planting any new trees within your manse garden please **DO NOT** plant them without full regard as to the ultimate size of the mature tree and after obtaining approval from the Local Church **beforehand**.

**Hedging:** should always be kept to a manageable size, and it is the responsibility of the local church to ensure that the minister keeps the hedge regularly cut.

**Gardens:** should also be cared for with grass regularly cut and borders, pathways kept clear of weeds etc.

### **Gutter Maintenance Programme**

Thames North Synod operate a gutter maintenance programme for churches, halls and manses and employ the Synod contractor, Hall & Randall, to carry this out on an annual basis at no cost to the local church. Further details of this scheme can be found in a separate guidance note included on the Synod Website. It is the responsibility of the Local Church to sign up for this service and deal with any resulting repairs highlighted within the report.



APPENDIX ONE

**VACATING A THAMES NORTH SYNOD MANSE**

<b>ADDRESS:</b>			
<b>ELECTRICITY</b>			
Name of Supplier			
Account Number			
Final meter reading			
Location of meter			
Have you notified the supplier that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Transfer date	
<b>GAS</b>			
Name of Supplier			
Account Number			
Final meter reading			
Location of meter			
Have you notified the supplier that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Transfer date	
<b>COUNCIL TAX</b>			
Local Authority			
Account Number			

Have you notified the Council that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Transfer date	
<b>WATER</b>			
Name of Supplier			
Account Number			
Final meter reading			
Location of meter/stopcock			
Have you notified the supplier that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Transfer date	
<b>SECURITY SYSTEM (if applicable)</b>			
Supplier			
Account Number			
Alarm code			
Have you notified the supplier that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Transfer date	
<b>TELEPHONE</b>			
Supplier			
Account Number			

Have you notified the supplier that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Transfer date	
<b>TELEVISION/BROADBAND</b>			
Supplier			
Account Number			
Have you notified the supplier that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Transfer date	
<b>Please provide details of who the keys will be left with, and could you please the label the keys as to which door they open</b>			
<b>To the best of your knowledge please provide details of any issues, problems, idiosyncrasies and details of any other services contracts on these premises.</b>			

<b>Signed:</b>		<b>Print:</b>
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Please return this form to your Local Church who in turn will send a copy to Thames North Trust for inclusion on the Synod database</b>		

