

Questions on Notice

Proposal 4 - Mission Development Fund (MDF)

Q.

In relation to the statement "According to our Constitution, we are all stewards of the property and funds held by a congregation or presbytery;" are we not also stewards of the property and funds of the synod and the community services agencies and Uniting Church schools (exempting PMSA etc)? A focus on the assets of the whole church would acknowledge we are ONE CHURCH.

A.

That is correct, we are stewards of all the assets of the church. However, this proposal relates to the MDF, and the scope of contributions to this fund has been Presbyteries, congregations and faith communities. We are very aware of the benefits of operating as ONE CHURCH and as a result the relationships across the life of the church are continuing to grow in health and vitality.

Q.

4.6.3 and 4.6.4 of the current guidelines seem already to broaden the context of where MDF money may be applied.

A.

The proposed new policy is intended to provide more clarity as to what can be spent and gifted in the context of being a capital fund.

Q.

Congregational annual reporting has included MDF in available funds. This has hidden the fact that these funds are not available for the everyday running of the Congregation. This is probably exacerbated by the need of Synod to provide a bookkeeping service to congregations as the availability of this skill has diminished with in the life of our church.

A.

Comment – noted and agreed

Q.

1.c of the proposal suggests that Beneficial funds may be required to be forgone by a Congregation or Presbytery. These funds are often closely held by a congregation because of:

- a) the amount of work required to obtain them
- b) past generations have raised them and they are part of the community's capital
- c) safety net

Therefore, if these funds are required to be forgone, how can this be done so it isn't seen as an 'inheritance tax' or a money grab by faceless people for some unknown cause?

A.

The proposed new policy will detail the mechanism of any transfer of beneficial use. The process will be transparent. It will adhere to the principles of stewardship and aligning resources to the mission strategy and priorities of the church.

Q.

Is it possible in the initial stages to communicate with congregations about which projects the funds are to be spent on?

A.

Presbyteries will be encouraged to communicate the spending of MDF funds as a standing item on their agendas. Presbyteries will approve all MDF spending before it is distributed. For example, you will see some communication from Presbyteries at this Synod which indicates where resources are being directed.

Q.

We have an increasing number of congregations relying on the interest from MDF to meet running costs. If money from the MDF is contributed to a project, then is it possible for the equivalent of the forgone interest be allocated to that congregation for a period of 5 years, out of the remaining capital?

A.

This feedback will be considered in policy development post Synod.

Q.

In relation to 2.(a) Capital and/or development opportunities -What would be seen as developmental opportunities? What would be capital?

A.

Developmental opportunities will be agreed in relation to the whole of Synod strategic priorities and will be monitored by the Synod Standing Committee. Examples might be:

- Costs (including project manager or similar) for expansion projects that explore alternative models of church
- Costs related to expansion projects that use existing churches to replant/revitalise congregations
- Capital will also be defined in relation to the principles, however capital can be taken in its normal meaning which includes infrastructure development and does not include operating expenses.