



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

TREASURERS' NEWSLETTER

March 2020 - Issue 212

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Welcome

Welcome to our March newsletter! These are unprecedented times, and I hope you are all keeping safe and staying at home. I will be covering the Covid-19 Government Subsidy within this newsletter but want to acknowledge the stress many of us are feeling at this time. We at National Office are now all working from home and will be available to help you in any way we can. Please [click here](#) to be taken to our website where we have a full update on Covid-19.


Farewell to Margaret Fawcett

I am sad to advise that after 21 years of service, Margaret will be retiring from the Church. Her last day will be 27 March. Margaret has been a fantastic servant to the Church's National Office, working in many different areas during her time with us. I know many of you will join with me in wishing her all the best in her retirement. On the bright side, Margaret will not be leaving us completely. She will be working on a part time basis, continuing to answer your emails and questions for the next month or so.

Covid-19 update

The impact of Covid-19 will have financial implications for many parishes and we have started to receive some questions about this. We want to remind treasurers that terms of call are set by presbytery and if congregations need to raise concerns about their financial viability, and in particular their ability to fund their minister's stipend or staff salaries and wages, the first step is to engage with presbytery.

We note the Government has announced a set of financial packages relating to the impact of Covid-19. **We have now received confirmation that parishes and other charities are able to apply for the subsidy.** Details on how to apply are below.



We have also sought advice from the Book of Order Advisory Committee about whether ministers are eligible, and our advice is that ministers *may* be eligible (as ministers are called and are not employees, it isn't clear whether they qualify). Again, we are seeking further advice on this point and will provide a further update as soon as we have more information.

To ensure your request is considered, we recommend that any parishes wishing to make an application to the Ministry of Social Development for financial relief do so. The turnaround on claims has so far been quick and the full 12-week subsidy is paid up front.

To be eligible, the parish must have suffered, or are projected to suffer at least a 30% decline in revenue compared to last year for any month between January 2020 and the end of the scheme in June 2020. One would assume that proof of turnover will be required at some future point and there may be clawbacks for parishes who receive the subsidy but cannot demonstrate a decline in income.

Parishes are required to enter a NZ Business Number on their application. If you do not have a NZBN, you can insert "NZBN" in the relevant box. Please [click here](#) to be taken to the Charities Services website which provides information on the process you will need to follow.

Undertakings required by the Employer

1. Employers will need to declare that, on their best endeavours, they will continue to employ the affected employees at a minimum of 80% of their income for the duration of the subsidy period. This is the equivalent of keeping people working 4 out of 5 days of the week.
2. Employers must also have taken active steps to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and sign a declaration form to that effect.

Parishes can apply to MSD for the subsidy at this link:

https://services.workandincome.govt.nz/ess/employer_applications/new



Leave Payments

The leave payment is to cover employees and contractors who:

- Need to self-isolate in line with Ministry of Health Guidelines; or
- Cannot work due to being diagnosed with Covid-19; or
- Cannot work because they are caring for dependents who are sick or who are required to self-isolate.

The weekly amounts are the same as the wage subsidy above, but the employer must reapply for this leave every 14 days. It can be paid for the entire period the employee is sick but on the basis the employee cannot work from home.

Church Charities Officer Resource Kit

This month, presbyteries and parishes were sent a Church Charities Officer Resource Kit, which we have developed in consultation with the Book of Order Advisory Group. We hope that this addresses the many queries we have received about how the charities officer rules apply in a church context.

In this document, we emphasize the importance of parishes offering training for incoming charities officers so that they are aware of the obligations and responsibilities of being a charities officer.

[Download the Charities Officer Resource Kit](#)

Payroll support 0800 number

A quick reminder that National Office operate an 0800 number for all parish payroll queries. This is a free service for parishes. We acknowledge that many parishes have relied on Margaret for assistance in this area in the past and will be concerned about who to contact in the future. We are working in partnership with Laurenson's Accountant to provide good quality payroll advice to you. The 0800 number is: **0800 567 957**

