

Introduction

East Midlands Synod Support Scheme for Local Churches

It was agreed at October Synod meeting to offer support of up to £250,000 to create an emergency support scheme to assist with energy costs. The Central URC Trust has also agreed in principle to put £2 million aside for a fund to help support Churches with their energy bills and each synod has been invited to contribute 10% of what they might provide as support to their churches into the Central Fund for wider distribution. Initially, 10% of our support package will be held back to potentially support the URC nationally if a fund is created.

East Midlands Synod Support for Local Churches – Energy cost increase support

The Synod's support package will cover the period October 2022 to March 2023 where energy costs have increased by more than inflation in comparison with the same billing periods last year, and will be split into two phases. The first will cover the period to 31 December 2022 and the second to 31 March 2023.

Any applications received from LEPs will be considered initially in line with the sharing agreement.

Any church that is still struggling but is not sure whether they meet the criteria should still contact us to discuss their situation as we do not want any church to experience unnecessary hardship.

Grant Scheme

The Synod will meet up to 100% of the increase in energy bills for the following items of church building expenditure only:

- Electric, Gas and Oil (including standing charges)

Phase 1 Grants

Applications under Phase 1 will be capped at a maximum of £1,500 per church and will be based on the increase in prices sustained by churches in the period 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022 compared to those in the comparative quarter for 2021. For electricity and gas supplies, grants will also reflect the level of usage and be based on the lower of units used in the fourth quarters of 2021 and 2022 (ie the grants are not designed to cover higher use in the current year, but higher prices).

Applications under this Phase may be made at any time up to 31 January 2023, and more than one application may be made by each church but the cap of £1,500 per church will apply to the total claim. This is designed to ensure that churches receive funds as soon as possible.

United Reformed Church East Midlands Synod

Emergency Financial Support for Local Churches during the Energy cost increase Crisis

For those churches heating by oil, we recognise that purchases are made in bulk and in advance and will not reflect actual usage. A discretionary scheme will therefore apply to such churches and applications under this scheme must be accompanied by copies of all heating oil invoices from 1 January 2021 onwards.

Phase 2 Grants

The level of support available under Phase 2 will be determined by the level of grants made under Phase 1 and any contribution to a Central URC Fund. It is therefore essential that Phase 1 applications are made by 31 January 2023.

Applications under Phase 2 may be made at any time up to 30 April 2023 and will again be based on the increase in prices incurred by churches and their usage in the period to 31 March 2023, and subject to a maximum for each Church. The amount claimed may be subject to scaling back depending on the level of claims received under each Phase of the scheme.

A further discretionary scheme will apply for those heating by oil.

If the Energy Bills increase put a Church in a position that it cannot meet them without the threat of closure, even with this support, it may be possible to seek support from the central URC fund that is proposed to be established for this purpose. Please contact Donna Varley for further details.

How to Claim

Please complete the enclosed forms and email (or post) them together with a copy of your latest set of accounts by 31st January 2023 in respect of Phase 1 claim and the 30th April 2023 in respect of the Phase 2 claim – no claims received after these dates will be accepted. Failure to include your latest set of accounts (which must be for a period ending in the last 15 months) will invalidate your claim.

As the level of support we can offer is necessarily limited, prior to submitting their claims we would ask all churches to consider whether they require this emergency support and whether there are other churches in the Synod whose needs may be greater.

The email address is: finance@urc5.org.uk

Postal Address: Donna Varley, Synod Office, Edwards Lane, Nottingham NG5 3AA

Questions should also be addressed to Donna Varley via email