



Clergy Continuing Education Guidelines

Committee on Ministry

Presbytery of Baltimore

June 2006

The goal of professional continuing education is to equip the individual to serve his or her constituents more effectively. Some examples of the ways that continuing education may benefit the church are through

1. Improvements in ministerial skills such as preaching, administration, counseling, conflict mediation, and spiritual guidance
2. Increased spiritual maturity and commitment to Christ
3. Increased understanding of Scriptures, Christian history and practice, or theology
4. Development of new programs, missions, or ministry direction
5. First hand experience of foreign or national mission programs, to better interpret these programs and encourage greater commitment to mission in general.

We encourage ministers and other church professionals to take advantage of the gift of continuing education to grow intentionally through study and to use this time to seek the support of colleagues and mentors.

The policy of Baltimore Presbytery concerning continuing education for clergy is in *The Manual of the Presbytery of Baltimore*, page 18. That excerpt is included here.

XIX. Terms of Call

5. Continuing Education. All pastoral calls approved by the Presbytery, including all changes in call, must--and professional calls should--additionally provide for two weeks study leave with the following provisions:
 - a. Expenses at a minimum rate set by the Presbytery on the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry will be paid to cover the costs of the continuing education during the study leave.
 - b. Expenses at a minimum rate set by the Presbytery on the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry to defray expenses for books and periodicals related to professional development and enrichment.
 - c. The two amounts stipulated above may be combined as "continuing education" in a call. In the case of part-time calls, a proportionate amount will be provided.
 - d. In order that a pastor's study leave period not be interrupted, sessions will arrange to supply the pulpit and to provide for the handling of any emergencies that may require the services of a minister, according to the procedures that are normally followed when the pastor is on vacation.
 - e. The use of continuing education resources of time and money is to be decided by the minister/professionals and is subject to the approval of the session.
 - f. Upon completion of the study program, the minister/professional will report on the study leave to the session.
 - g. Sessions will encourage ministers/professionals to take their study leave.
 - h. Continuing education funds may not be used for other purposes.

- i. Study leave may be accumulated up to six weeks, and the compensation for expenses stipulated in subparagraphs a and b above may accumulated up to a total of three times the amount provided in the current call of a minister/professional.
- j. Calls may incorporate these provisions for study leave by reference to this article of the Manual, citing only the amount of funds and time to be provided.

According to item (e), the minister or other professional decides what constitutes continuing education, subject to the approval of the session. We encourage ministers and other professionals to consult their sessions, personnel committees, or other governing authority in discerning the general areas in which their continuing education resources might best be spent, both to meet the needs of the individual and of those they serve.

Suggested types of continuing education include

1. Formal workshops, seminars, and other events sponsored by accredited bodies of higher learning, governing bodies of the church, and other recognized and approved institutions.
2. Courses of study leading to further professional degrees.
3. Travel that is specifically study oriented. (Travel that is the equivalent of a layperson's vacation is not an appropriate form of continuing education.)
4. Time at a spiritual retreat center or time in solo retreat under the guidance of a spiritual director.
5. A self-directed reading program developed in conjunction with the session, personnel committee, or other governing body.

Both clergy and churches are encouraged to respect time away. Item (d) is intended to allow for uninterrupted study leave. Calls back to the church to see how things are going and, conversely, consulting with the pastor who is away are both discouraged. Note that our policy includes instructions that sessions are to arrange for pulpit supply and pastoral care during periods of continuing education.

Because continuing education is designed to benefit both the congregation and the minister, it shall not be used as terminal leave. Unspent continuing education funds are retained by the church, as is implicit in item (h).

Bibliography

The Manual of the Presbytery of Baltimore, June 2005

Clergy Continuing Education and Sabbatical Leave Guidelines, Presbytery of Western Reserve, December 1997