

PEACE RIVER PRESBYTERY

Continuing Education Policy

6.1320 Continuing Education Policy.

Education has traditionally been stressed by Presbyterians. An educated clergy is the hallmark of our church. Education does not stop with graduation exercises and the conferring of a degree. Rather it is a continuing process in the life of the pastor. A part of the call to pastors serving in the Presbytery of Peace River is the provision for a minimum of two (2) weeks study leave each year, along with financial support for the study time.

Pastor's Continuing Education Guidelines

A. Introduction.

These guidelines for pastor's continuing education planning are based on several assumptions:

- (1) That the ministry is both a vocation and a profession. As a vocation, it is a response to God's call for an individual to use his/her gifts in service to God's people. As church professionals, pastors have a specialized body of knowledge that they apply in specific ways to address particular human needs. That this body of knowledge and its application is not static but continues to grow and develop.
- (2) That seminary is simply the beginning of professional training. Its purpose is to equip pastors with the tools for a lifetime of continuing professional development.
- (3) That it is the responsibility of a professional to continually update his/her professional expertise that she/he might service his/her constituents better.
- (4) That continuing education is to enhance ministerial skills and the understanding of the Christian faith.
- (5) Planning is helpful and positive to a pastor. It is, however, something that is a part of the ministry and should not be substituted for continuing education.

B. It is for these reasons that ministerial calls in Peace River Presbytery include minimums of both time and money for professional continuing education (see latest Presbytery minimum terms of call). These guidelines are intended to assist both pastors and governing bodies in using these resources wisely.

C. Sessions are encouraged to consider providing similar provisions for Certified Christian Educator and other program staff.

D. Guidelines for Continuing Education

1. General Guidelines. Pastors are encouraged to consult their session, personnel committees, or other governing authority in discerning the general areas in which their continuing education resources might best be spent. The pastor should schedule continuing education in coordination with the session.

Both pastors and churches are encouraged to respect time away. Calls back to the church to see how things are going or consulting with the pastor who is away are discouraged. Pastors and sessions are encouraged to review their administrative procedures so as to ensure the church is able to continue to function smoothly with the pastor away. Similarly, provisions for providing normal pastoral care should be made during the pastor's absence for Continuing Education so that she or he need not have to be called.

2. Expected Outcomes. The goal of professional continuing education is to equip the individual to serve the congregation and the church at large more effectively. Pastors and their governing bodies are encouraged to discover ways in which new knowledge gained through continuing education might be put to use in the life of the church or organization. Some examples of the ways professional continuing education might benefit the church include:

- (a) Improvement of specific ministerial skills such as preaching, administration, counseling, conflict mediation, spiritual guidance, etc. so as to be a better overall leader.

- (b) Increased spiritual maturity and commitment to Christ so as to better lead the congregation in following God's call.
- (c) Increased understanding of the Scriptures, Christian history and practice, theology, etc. so as to be a better preacher and teacher.
- (d) Development of some new, innovative program, mission, outreach, service, or other form of new mission/ministry direction.
- (e) First hand interpretation of foreign or national mission programs so as to better interpret these programs and encourage greater commitment to mission in general.
- (f) Improvement of skills in cultivating diversity, inclusiveness, tolerance and openness within the church or organization.

E. Continuing Education includes the following:

- (a) Formal workshops, seminars, and other events sponsored by
 - i. accredited bodies of higher learning
 - ii. governing bodies of the church, and
 - iii. other recognized and approved institutions (hospitals, American Association of Pastoral Counselors, etc.).
- (b) Courses of study leading to further professional degrees (M.A., D. Min., Ph.D., etc.)
- (c) Travel that is specifically study oriented (see above).
- (d) Time at a spiritual retreat center or time in solo retreat under the guidance of a spiritual director.
- (e) A disciplined, systematic, self-directed reading program developed in conjunction with the session, personnel committee, or other governing body.

F. Uses of Resources. While all clergypersons are encouraged to make maximum use of their continuing education resources, time away in excess of that agreed upon in the call must be approved by the session or other governing body.

Pastors anticipating the need for additional Continuing Education money in any given year will want to have this reflected at the time the call is approved for the year so as to avoid having to pay tax on this amount.

Continuing Education time or money not spent in a calendar year must be returned to the church budget unspent unless accumulated for use in a previously negotiated longer period of leave.

G. Travel. While travel can be enlightening, educational and culturally satisfying, a travel event that is equivalent of a vacation for a layperson is not an appropriate form of Continuing Education. Travel that is part of one's ministry or which clearly enhances one's work is acceptable.

While traveling with or conducting an organized tour should normally be considered as vacation time, exceptions might be considered for tours to such places as the Holy Land, if clear goals and benefits related to one's ministry can be reviewed and approved by the session.

H. Accumulated Study Leave. Continuing Education time and funding may be accrued up to six (6) weeks over a three (3) year period when it has been contracted in advance between the minister and the session. They are encouraged to plan this time away carefully in terms of 1) the minister's study plans, and 2) the continuing wellbeing of the church (i.e., pulpit supply, pastoral care, program supervision, etc.).

Continuing Education time not used at the end of a pastoral dissolution will not be compensated. Also, Continuing Education expenses may not be paid except as actually used for an approved event.