

# What's On Your Mind?

## What happens to continuing education funds when a minister leaves a congregation?

Don Muir, Associate Secretary, General Assembly Office

William Butler Yeats, the Nobel Prize winning Irish dramatist, author and poet, once stated, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

All of us can benefit from having another log tossed onto the fire of our learning and experience now and then. One of the blessings of serving as a Presbyterian minister is the promise of time and money set aside by the congregation in order to keep that fire burning. Whenever a minister is called to a pastoral charge, the congregation promises to provide, as of 2011, a minimum of two weeks and \$600 annually for continuing education. These benefits are cumulative for up to five years. That means, over a five-year period, a minister could accumulate up to 10 weeks and \$3,000 for study leave.

Some ministers use their continuing education benefits every year. Others tend to let them build up for a year or two, while still others may wait the full five years before making a continuing education request.

Congregations should set aside \$600 each year so that whenever the minister requests a study leave, along with the accompanying money to help defray costs, the congregation does not have to raise the funds suddenly. It would also be wise to reserve sufficient funds to cover the cost of pulpit supply during the minister's absence.

When a minister retires or is called away from the congregation, there may be some accumulated time and money still set aside for continuing education. Occasionally I am asked if the departing minister may use these resources, carry them over to another pastoral charge, or if they are to be left behind.

There are denominational regulations that answer continuing education questions. They can be found on

The Presbyterian Church in Canada website, [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca). Type "continuing education regulations" into the search box and you will be led to the downloadable regulations link. If you don't have access to the Internet, you may contact me (see contact information on the cover of this article) and I'll send you a paper copy.

The regulations include these headings:

- A. The Principle of Study Leave
- B. Amount of Allowance
- C. Accumulation of Study Leave
- D. Use of Allowance to Buy Books
- E. Self-Directed Study
- F. Continuing Education in the First Year of Ministry
- G. Content of Continuing Education
- H. Format of Continuing Education
- I. Professional Church Leader's Responsibilities
- J. Presbytery's Responsibilities
- K. Congregational Responsibilities
- L. Use of Continuing Education Allowance Before Leaving a Position
- M. Portability of Continuing Education
- N. Aid-Receiving Congregations
- O. Inter-Mission

It is helpful to read the whole document (three pages), but as you will see, the two sections that relate most directly to the question of what happens to the funds when a minister leaves a congregation are "L" and "M".

May we thank God for fires of learning that continue to be ignited.

Blessings,

Don Muir

## What's on your mind?

Do you have a question about the polity of our church? Are you confused by something that happened at session, presbytery, synod, or General Assembly? Puzzling over a section of the *Book of Forms*?

Send your questions to The Rev. Don Muir and he will strive to answer them in future issues of *Equipping for . . . Elders* in a manner that maintains confidentiality and seeks to be helpful to the church at large.

Contact Don at: [dmuir@presbyterian.ca](mailto:dmuir@presbyterian.ca), 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, Ontario M3C 1J7  
416-441-1111, ext. 223 or 1-800-619-7301, ext. 223