

## What's on your mind?

### What happens to continuing education allowance funds when the minister leaves a pastoral charge?

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Since 1969 the church has provided professional church workers with time and an allowance for continuing education. This is a wonderful gift, both for ministers and the people they serve. Whether the minister is pastoring a congregation or engaged in some other ministry, the entire denomination benefits when clergy grow in knowledge, experience and skill.

The 1980 Acts and Proceedings reminds the church that ministers ought to seek educational opportunities that will advance their ministry. Presbytery approval is required to help the minister discern the validity of the study choice. The minister also checks with the session regarding the timing of the study leave to ensure it fits into the life of the congregation. As a courtesy, the minister explains to the session what the course of study is about.

Congregations are to provide the minister with two weeks for continuing education and at least the minimum allowance set by the General Assembly annually. Currently that allowance is \$600. Both the money and the time are cumulative for up to five years. That means, theoretically, a minister could have ten weeks and \$3,000 available for continuing education.

When a minister retires or is called away to some other work, what happens to unused money left in the continuing education fund?

The church's Continuing Education Regulations, found at [presbyterian.ca/mcv](http://presbyterian.ca/mcv) present answers. In particular, regulations

“L” and “M” describe what happens at the end of a ministry.

Regulation “L” states that “under normal circumstances it is not advisable for a professional church worker to use accumulated entitlement of time and cash allowance for study leave purposes when they know there are firm plans to leave the pastoral charge.” It then describes an exception to that advice. With the agreement of the minister, congregation and presbytery, the money can be used for an approved study program before the minister leaves the pastoral charge.

Regulation “M” describes how, under certain circumstances, 50% of accumulated continuing education funds can be used by a minister after leaving the pastoral charge. The money must be requested before the pastoral tie is dissolved and it must be for a specific program that is approved by the presbytery. See the regulations for more detail.

While the letter and the spirit of these regulations encourage ongoing growth and training, they point to the reality that continuing education funds set aside by the congregation do not necessarily belong to the minister. The minister is only entitled to apply for them in specific situations and for approved programs. When a minister moves away from a pastoral charge, unused educational funds are normally left behind.

