

Financial Assistance for Counseling Related to Harm Caused by Homophobia and Transphobia in The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Background

In 2021, The Presbyterian Church in Canada adopted the final report of the Rainbow Communion. The report draws on the stories of 139 people who shared their experiences of harm due to homophobia, hypocrisy, transphobia and heterosexism in the church. In recognition of the harm the church has caused, funds are available to provide financial assistance for accessing counseling or psychotherapy to help support healing.

This document includes information about who is eligible for funding and how the fund is administered.

If you would like to inquire about the funds or request financial assistance, you may contact any member of the review committee by phone or email.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the fund for?

The fund provides financial assistance to support psychotherapy or counselling for those who have experienced harm done by homophobia, hypocrisy, transphobia and heterosexism in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

For the purposes of this fund, The Presbyterian Church in Canada may refer to congregational ministries, colleges, camps, retreat centres, and other programs that are affiliated with the denomination. In some cases, harm may not have occurred in a church or building owned by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, but may have been perpetrated by an employee, volunteer, member or adherent of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Requests may be submitted A) to reimburse costs incurred for past counseling or psychotherapy sessions and/or B) to cover the cost of ongoing counseling or psychotherapy sessions. Financial assistance provided through this fund may be used for an array of therapeutic options.

Conversion therapy is illegal in Canada and goes against the stated policies and beliefs of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. As such, any requests for funding to pay for services that purport to be able to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression will be denied.

Who is eligible to receive funding?

People who have experienced harm done by homophobia, hypocrisy, transphobia and heterosexism in The Presbyterian Church in Canada are eligible to be considered for financial support.

Individuals inquiring about funds will be asked to relate their story and describe how homophobia or transphobia in the church has negatively impacted them, but they do not necessarily need to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity.

What level of funding is available?

Requests vary based on the needs of those applying. People inquiring about the funds should take into consideration the hourly fee of the professional they want to work with and how many sessions they expect to need.

Who reviews requests for funding?

Requests will be considered promptly by a small committee. There is no annual or quarterly deadline to submit a request. All requests are kept strictly confidential.

The review committee is comprised of the Program Coordinator, Sexuality and Inclusion; the General Secretary, Life and Mission Agency and the Principal Clerk, General Assembly.

The work of the review committee is confidential and only pertinent details are shared with the full review committee. Questions about this process and its composition can be discussed when speaking with one of the members of the committee about applying for funds.

What can individuals do if they want to inquire about the fund but are reluctant to contact the denomination's offices directly?

People who have experienced harm in the church may be hesitant to contact the church's national office. In such cases, individuals may choose to ask a trusted person to contact a member of the review committee on their behalf to seek additional information about the process.

A trusted third party might be a family member, friend, minister, church elder, or mental health professional. The review committee would not require a third party to disclose the name of the person who asked them to inquire about the fund.

What information do individuals need to provide when requesting funds?

The amount of information disclosed is at the discretion of the individual making a request for funding. Intake conversations will typically cover the following:

- A general description of the harm experienced and the reason for seeking help from a counselor or psychotherapist. The description of harm should include an account of how the events impacted the individual. It may not be necessary to disclose names or identifying details of other parties involved;
- The amount of funding requested; and
- A general plan for the use of the funding. This will usually include both the hourly rate of the professional the individual requesting assistance plans to work with as well as an estimate of how frequently they plan to see the counselor or psychotherapist of their choosing to work on this part of their healing)

Do individuals need to be LGBTQI2+ to receive funding? Do they need to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity to be eligible?

The Rainbow Communion's report acknowledges that the harm caused in the church due to homophobia and transphobia extends beyond the harm experienced by LGBTQI2+ people. Family members of LGBTQI2+ people also reported feeling isolated, silenced and being the targets gossip, judgement and harassment. Likewise, people who were assumed to be LGBTQI2+ shared that they experienced scrutiny and were subjected to homophobia and/or transphobia. As such, funding is available both to LGBTQI2+ people and straight, cisgender people who have experienced harm due to homophobia, transphobia, hypocrisy and heterosexism in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Do individuals need to have filed a complaint under one of the church's harassment policies to be eligible?

No. This process is separate from any proceedings related to The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Policy and the Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment in the Church.

Can individuals request funds if they don't already have a counsellor?

Yes. Financial assistance can be held until counselling begins.



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