

Guidelines: Financial Aid for Continuing Education Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ

Introduction

Each pastor of the Conference should engage in regular Continuing Education. The pastor needs periodic renewal, and new information on theology and the ministry. The congregation will be enriched by encouraging a pastor to participate in Continuing Education, and the Conference standards for ordained ministry will be raised.

There are many opportunities for Continuing Education: seminars, retreats, colloquies, conferences. The Conference and Associations sponsor many Continuing Education events. Colleges, universities, seminaries and organizations such as the Alban Institute offer a variety of programs.

Sources of Income

The Conference has three basic sources of income for Continuing Education and Student Aid: the Conference budget, the offerings at the services of ordination and installation, and the money from the Sarah Hand estate.

When pastors engage in Continuing Education, the pastor, the congregation and the Conference benefit. Therefore, it is expected that all will share in its cost. *In general, financial aid for Continuing Education follows a formula of 1/3 from the pastor, 1/3 from the congregation, and 1/3 from the Conference.*

General Guidelines

- Application forms for financial aid are available from the Associate Conference Ministers; all requests must be on the appropriate form.
- All applications for financial aid shall be endorsed by the Moderator/President of the congregation, and the Associate Conference Minister.
- A grant may not exceed \$750 for any specific program, nor may a pastor receive more than \$750 in any given year; *except* for long-term programs, where the limit is a total of \$1,000 for the entire program.
- Applications for grants up to \$200 may be approved by the Associate Conference Minister.
- If the pastor requests more than \$200, the Associate Conference Minister must bring the request to the Pastoral Leadership Committee for approval.
- Grants are not generally given for a trip; if the Continuing Education program involves a trip, it should have a specific and identifiable theological or religious orientation and purpose.
- Loans, interest-free, are also available. The same guidelines apply to a loan as to a grant. Any loan for Continuing Education will be repaid within one year following the date of the event.

Types of Continuing Education: Seminars, Retreats, Conferences

These events are often closer to home and require a less-extensive commitment of time and finances. In many cases, the cost of such events can be supported by the pastor and the local congregation. In recent years, these events have become increasingly expensive. A pastor requiring financial assistance in order to attend a seminar, retreat or conference may apply for such assistance, remembering the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 formula.

Types of Continuing Education: On-going Programs

In addition to regular, short-term Continuing Education events, pastors are strongly encouraged to participate in longer-term educational programs that may lead to further theological degrees or increased competencies in various areas of ministerial practice. Such programs may be longer seminars in a specialized area of ministry, or a degree program geared to the practice of ministry. In most cases these programs require more extensive commitments of time and finances. Examples include CPE, a D.Min. or Ph.D. program.

These kinds of educational programs should be carefully worked out with the leadership of the local congregation, which often realizes substantial benefit from the pastor's participation.

Financial assistance for long-term programs that carry over a number of years is limited to a total of \$1,000 for the entire program.

Normally, if the Conference contributes a grant or loan toward a long-term program, it is understood by the pastor and the congregation that the pastor will continue to serve that congregation for at least a year after completing the Continuing Education, unless by mutual agreement there is some other arrangement.

Types of Continuing Education: Sabbaticals

Pastors are encouraged to work with their congregations to plan for sabbatical times. If requests are made for Continuing Education funds for a sabbatical, the request must be in relation to a specific portion of the sabbatical, and not just a general request for support of a sabbatical. For instance, the request might be for a specific class or seminar anticipated to be part of the sabbatical. In most cases, a pastor has 5-7 years to plan for a sabbatical, and money should be put aside by both the pastor and the congregation during those years.

