

Policy #12 – Continuing Education
Committee on Ministry – Presbytery of Tampa Bay

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 minister. A part of the call to ministers serving in the Presbytery of Tampa Bay is the provision for a minimum of two weeks study leave each year, along with financial support for the study time.

Continuing education should be designed to enhance ministerial skills and the understanding of the Christian faith. Appropriate kinds of continuing education would include:

1. Events sponsored by accredited institutions of higher learning (college, seminary, etc.).
2. Events sponsored by the governing bodies of the denomination (Montreat, Ghost Ranch).
3. Educational events given by other recognized and approved institutions (hospitals).
4. Continuing education time and funding may be accrued up to six weeks over a three year period when it has been approved by the minister and the session. Presbytery retreats and workshops are not considered a part of continuing education unless of an extended duration.
5. Planning is helpful for a minister. It is, however, something that is a part of ministry and should not be substituted for continuing education.
6. Ordinarily, travel is considered vacation. 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.
7. A request for approval of continuing education should be made by the minister to the session with specifics as to the event, where it is to be held, for how long, at what cost, and the subject matter to be studied. Questions regarding the appropriateness of the continuing education event can be made to presbytery's Professional Support Committee if there is a question regarding its appropriateness or if an exception to the guidelines is being requested.
8. While continuing education leave, as noted above, may be accrued for up to six weeks, 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.