

**PRESBYTERY OF GENESEE VALLEY  
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

**Continuing Education / Study Leave Policy**

**Policy**

The Presbytery of Genesee Valley affirms the value of lifelong learning as Christian disciples and leaders, acknowledging that we are “transformed by the renewal of our minds” (Romans 12:2). The world in which we live constantly offers opportunities for church leaders to grow in our understanding of how applications of the gospel may enrich our Christian practices.

Calls approved by the presbytery include both time and funds for continuing education, and it is important that pastors make wise use of these resources in order that they achieve the greatest benefit for the people God has called them to serve in the congregation and the presbytery.

Study leave encourages the continuing education, in-service training and/or research study for its church professionals. The Presbytery of Genesee Valley will ordinarily approve a call for a Pastor, Co-Pastor, Designated Pastor, Associate Pastor, Temporary Pastor, and Commissioned Ruling Elder in a pastoral position (hereinafter called Church Professional), in any of its churches only when there is included in such a call both time and funds for continuing education. A minimal provision of two weeks leave for continuing education each year is recommended by the presbytery. It is understood that there will be no loss of salary and that the sum of money as specified in the annual terms of call will be used to help defray continuing education/study leave expenses. Unused leave time and funds may accumulate for up to eight weeks in four years. Longer leaves may be negotiated with the Session for special purposes. The adequacy of the continuing education/study leave allowance should be revised when compensation is reviewed annually. The Committee on Ministry is ready to consult with all Sessions and Church Professionals in this regard.

**Guidelines**

1. Each Church Professional will be granted a paid two-week annual leave for continuing education with no loss of salary. If the Church Professional so elects, these periods (and financial allowances) may accumulate up to eight weeks in four years.
2. It is understood that these scheduled leaves for continuing education are separate and apart from regular vacation period, although by mutual agreement of a Session and the Church Professional, they may be taken in conjunction with vacation.
3. It is expected that the Church Professional will ordinarily take study leave at least once during a four-year period, and that the allowances of time and funds will be used.
4. The specific dates for the beginning and the completion of the leave must be mutually agreed upon by the Session and the Church Professional. The Church Professional, in cooperation with the Session, shall make any necessary arrangements for coverage of pulpit, pastoral, and other responsibilities during the leave. The Committee on Ministry should be informed if a leave of four weeks or more is planned.
5. The Church Professional upon return from continuing education / study leave is encouraged to inform the Session of how the leave has been beneficial for ministry.
6. Funding for the Continuing Education / Study Leave:
  - Continuing Education / Study Leave allowance as specified in the annual terms of call may be used for continuing education registration, tuition, books, supplies, correspondence courses, meals,

lodging, and certain travel and transportation expenses relative to such. It is recommended that each church place in escrow any unspent continuing education / study leave allowance at the end of each year, which may accumulate up to the sum of four (4) years.

- Travel/Professional allowance as specified in the annual terms of call may only be used for continuing education / study leave upon a negotiated approval of the Session prior to the leave being taken.
7. For Church Professionals nothing in this document shall prevent a congregation upon recommendation from its Session from granting unused continuing education / study leave and stipend at the time of termination of the pastorate. Unused continuing education / study leave is not normally part of a termination package unless there has been a negotiated agreement concerning the unused time between the session and the Church Professional and approved by the congregation.
  8. Any unused continuing education / study leave funds which have been placed in escrow shall revert to the church, at the termination of the Church Professional's relationship with the church, except as has been negotiated with the Session and approved by the congregation prior to termination.
  9. A Church Professional may plan and pursue, in keeping with these guidelines, a course of independent study outside an institutional setting or framework as an appropriate use of continuing education / study leave time and funds.
  10. A Church Professional who is expecting to leave a church within the year may request Session approval to take accumulated continuing education / study leave for professional development in ministries which will serve the whole church. The Session may agree to such a leave, but is not obliged to do so, and its determination is final.
  11. In the case of Interim Pastors, the above continuing education / study-leave provisions shall apply in general. However, since it may not necessarily be convenient or possible for study leave to be used during the short terms of service of Interim Pastors, unused study leave shall be compensated as part of the Interim's termination agreement, along with all other negotiated payments owed according to the Interim's contract.
  12. Supervision of this policy shall be the responsibility of the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry. In the event that any of these provisions of this policy are felt to cause an undue hardship for a Church Professional or a Congregation, the Committee on Ministry should be consulted immediately.