

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

The current ministerial leadership polity paper states that every credentialed ministerial leader in the Church of the Brethren is expected to complete one of several approved educational tracks.<sup>1</sup> However, as important as formal education is, formal education does not complete one's learning and preparation for ministerial leadership. Education is a lifelong process. Historically, polity has recognized this need and included as one of the areas of accountability this statement: "Each District Ministry Commission is expected to promote continuing education expectations for every ministerial leader under its jurisdiction."<sup>2</sup> To support uniformity and encourage participation in continuing education opportunities, the Ministry Advisory Council and the Office of Ministry, in consultation with the Council of District Executives and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, developed this paper on "Guidelines for Continuing Education" with final approval given by the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee.

The current ministerial leadership paper calls the denomination to recognize the importance of continuing education for its credentialed leaders.<sup>3</sup> The nine Areas of Service for credentialed leadership are included in the continuing education requirements with the exception of the ninth area (retired ministers). The following statement affirms this point for pastors: "Ministerial leaders (lead pastors, associate pastors, pastors in special ministries, etc.) serving congregations in pastoral roles influence the lives of parishioners in significant ways. These leaders need to pay special attention to their 'spiritual health' and continue to improve their professional skills."<sup>4</sup> Retired ministers should also take advantage of continuing education opportunities, especially when they are still providing pastoral leadership; but, as a group, retired ministers are not included under these guidelines. Continuing education for part-time and bi-vocational pastors will need to take into account the pastoral/congregational agreement and be pro-rated to satisfy the agreement.

Credentialed ministerial leaders serving in roles other than those in congregational settings may fulfill the expectations of these guidelines through the continuing education requirements of their employment. District Executives should receive copies, from all credentialed ministers, of information about continuing education events attended for placement in the ministerial files.

These guidelines urge . . .

- Congregations to be supportive by providing pastoral leaders with time away from ministerial duties so that they may engage in continuing education events;
- Congregations to provide continuing education accounts through their annual budgets or to create special reserve funds for their pastors;
- District ministry commissions to promote continuing education;

- Districts and the Office of Ministry of the Mission and Ministry Board to establish continuing education accounts in their annual budgets, or create special reserve funds, for the purpose of responding to requests on a need basis for pastoral leaders who are engaged in continuing education.

These guidelines also . . .

- Define the roles of congregations, pastors, and districts;
- Establish a minimum number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) per 5year cycle;
- Establish a process for decision making.

## **THE MINISTER’S ROLE**

### Ministry in a congregational setting

The pastor engages in continuing education for the purpose of personal and professional growth. This “time away” from one’s normal routine is designed to enhance the pastor’s ministry; therefore, the congregation is a direct beneficiary of the pastor’s growth.

What is expected of the pastor? The following actions are especially helpful:

1. Consult with the congregation on appropriate continuing education events.
2. Work with the congregation to schedule time away for continuing education events.
3. Invite congregational members, when appropriate, to attend continuing education events with the pastor.
4. Report completion of continuing education events to the congregation and the district.
5. Give Church of the Brethren continuing education events a high priority<sup>5</sup>, recognizing, however, that there are many fine educational opportunities provided by other denominations and agencies.
6. Find appropriate ways to integrate new learnings and experiences into the ministry context.
7. In selecting a continuing education plan, be sensitive to areas where professional skills may be limited, and growth is desirable and needed.

### Ministry in other settings

Credentialed ministerial leaders serving in roles other than those in congregational settings may fulfill the expectations of these guidelines through the continuing education requirements of their employment.<sup>6</sup> District Executives<sup>7</sup> should receive copies, from all credentialed ministers, of information about continuing education events attended for placement in the ministerial files.

## **THE CONGREGATION’S ROLE**

Congregations benefit directly when its pastoral leaders engage in continuing education. Leaders must continue to grow spiritually and professionally if they are to provide the quality leadership expected and needed by the membership. Those who do not continue to grow and mature are

likely to become discouraged and even dissatisfied with their ministry. These individuals are prime candidates for “burnout” and “dropout.” In the end, the church suffers the loss of good leadership. By the same token, renewed leaders are much more likely to provide inspired leadership, and the church becomes healthier as a result. Continuing education is mutually beneficial for both congregations and pastoral leaders.

What can a congregation offer? The following actions are especially helpful:

1. Strongly encourage and support continuing education.
2. Establish long-range continuing education goals, based on the needs of the congregation, with an annual review.
3. Incorporate at least seven (7) days a year in the pastor’s schedule for continuing education. This should be planned so that the pastor is not away for more than one Sunday during the seven days.
4. Assist with appropriate financial support by creating a continuing education account in the annual budget or a special reserve fund, whereby both the congregation and the pastoral leader can save for the future.
5. Offer the pastor suggestions about growth opportunities.
6. Stay informed about the pastor’s continuing education goals and plans.
7. Provide for feedback and reflection following each growth event.

## **THE DISTRICT’S ROLE**

Neither the District Ministry Commission nor the Executive is in a good position to manage continuing education agreements between congregations and their pastoral leaders. It is important, however, for pastors and congregational leaders to keep the district office informed. Records of completed growth opportunities should be sent to the Executive for placement in the ministerial files by the pastor. This official information will be particularly useful for the credentialing renewal process that occurs at five-year intervals.

What can districts offer? The following actions are especially helpful:

1. Districts can model their commitment to continuing education by encouraging and supporting their executive staff with their own continuing education goals and plans.
2. Help the Office of Ministry to distribute this paper to all current pastoral leaders.
3. Discuss continuing education in the negotiation process.
4. Promote continuing education in the districts.
5. Provide growth opportunities within the districts that meet the requirements for Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as set forth by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.
6. Inform ministerial leaders of additional growth opportunities.
7. Assist with financial support where possible by establishing continuing education accounts in the annual budgets, or by creating special reserve funds, for pastors engaged in continuing education.
8. Assist pastoral leaders and congregations with the development of continuing education plans.
9. Given that, as stated in current ministerial polity<sup>1</sup>, “Credentialed ministers are also required to participate in an official denominational ethics training course every five years”, districts will collaborate with the Office of Ministry to ensure that these training sessions are provided. The corresponding number of CEU credits will be awarded.

## **THE AWARDING OF CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEUs)**

One (1) CEU is equal to ten (10) contact/instruction hours of work offered by a recognized entity of the Church of the Brethren: Bethany Theological Seminary, The Mission and Ministry Board, Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, Brethren Benefit Trust, On Earth Peace, Academy Certified Training Systems (ACTS) and the Districts, as well as other qualified organizations. While not all CEUs must come from a Brethren entity (see below), the unique perspective that emphasizes the distinctive Brethren heritage, theology, and identity is valuable. This perspective should be included and prioritized as ministers work to earn CEUs in the Focus Areas described in this document.

CEU certificates may be awarded by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, Academy Certified Training Systems (ACTS), and Districts according to the requirements set forth by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

Regional entities of the Church of the Brethren (districts, ACTS programs, etc.) may provide Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to clergy living within their geographical jurisdiction. These CEUs may be awarded for events that correlate with the Focus Areas identified by the most recent Annual Conference Guidelines for Continuing Education and in accordance with the guidelines of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership (BAML). Clergy participating in a continuing education event, in person or via technology, located outside their own region should contact BAML regarding CEUs. BAML will contact the event organizers for documentation of the event and confirmation of the clergyperson's attendance.

Not all non-Brethren organizations guarantee quality education that is compatible with the values and heritage of the Church of the Brethren. Therefore, it is imperative that the minister consult with the appropriate leaders of the congregation and District Executive staff as continuing education plans are developed.

In general, clergy may receive 0.1 CEU per contact/instruction hour.

Instructors need to have advanced degrees such as an MA, MDiv, DMin, PhD and/or education, expertise, and experience in a specific area of study.

A schedule of the event and descriptions of the content are kept in hard copy files in the office of the conferring agency.

When determining what qualifies as "instruction" time, it is important to note:

Worship does not count as instruction time unless it is modeling something that is being taught at the event.

Meals do not count as instruction time unless there is a speaker during the meal and only the time of the presentation is counted.

A fee is charged for each CEU certificate, regardless of length of the event for which it is awarded, except for live events earning 0.1 CEUs or less. For shorter, live events, certificates are provided free of charge. CEU certificates are not issued or required for insight sessions offered at Annual Conference, National Older Adult Conference or National Youth Conference.

Conference leadership will provide an alternate form for record-keeping. It is the responsibility of each minister to submit these records to their own District office.

Note: Ministers providing instruction for an approved educational event for other ministers may receive CEUs for the first instance of presenting specific material, but only the first instance. This is based on the understanding that in order to present material well one must study and prepare. The number of CEUs awarded will be based on the number of actual “instructional hours”.

CEUs can be awarded for live or recorded events. For recorded events to be eligible for CEUs, they must: 1) have been created by a Church of the Brethren entity, 2) be no more than ten years old, and 3) have been originally offered for CEUs according to the criteria set forth by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. Clergy seeking CEUs for viewed recordings must submit a “Continuing Education Report for Recorded Material” for each event. This form and additional information can be found on the Brethren Academy web pages, located on the website of Bethany Theological Seminary.

### **MINIMUM NUMBER OF CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEUS)**

A ministerial leader is expected to work toward CEUs in at least five (5) of the focus areas listed below during the five-year interval between credentialing reviews. A full-time ministerial leader is expected to earn a minimum of five (5) CEUs (50 contact hours) in the five-year period. Ministerial leaders serving less than full-time service are expected to earn the part-time equivalent of those five (5) CEUs in the same time period. Ministers are encouraged to complete work in all focus areas over the span of two or three 5-year review cycles. Continuing education for part-time and multi-vocational pastors will need to take into account the pastoral/congregational agreement and be prorated to satisfy the agreement.

#### Focus Areas

- **Biblical Studies**  
The scriptures are foundational in every aspect of the church’s life. The need for biblical study does not end when one has graduated and been ordained. Research and archaeological discoveries are constantly shedding new light on old truths, and a well-informed pastoral leader is a blessing to the people of God who gather regularly for worship, fellowship, and service.
- **Evangelism and Church Growth**  
Evangelism is sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ by our lives with service and speech. Church growth refers to the expansion of faith communities through worship and hospitality. Living out the Good News in an invitational manner realizes church growth in deepening spirituality, wider service, increasing numbers, and radiant manifestations of the reign of God. As both the gathered and sent people of God, we participate in church growth and evangelism through embodying God’s love.
- **Financial Responsibility and Leadership**

Because attitudes about and use of money reflect spiritual health, Jesus talked more about money than anything else. Ministers are important promoters of congregational stewardship. Continuing education in charitable giving and religious fundraising such as that offered by Indiana University's Lake Institute–Lilly Family School of Philanthropy can provide ministers with information, insights, and inspiration, empowering them to talk about, educate, resource, and encourage members and the church toward growth in stewardship, joyful generosity, and wholeness of health.

#### Personal Financial Responsibility

Church Law & Tax, an important resource for ministers, congregations, and church treasurers, reports that 90% of pastors feel financial pressure. Planning for one's tax responsibilities and practicing healthy financial habits can alleviate stress, contribute to a more viable future, and positively encourage others. It can also protect ministers from falling prey to unethical financial behavior that could undo themselves and their ministry—and damage the church. Less personal financial stress equals more energy for ministry.

- **Intercultural Competency**

In an increasingly diverse society, it is essential that ministers develop skills and abilities to navigate among cultures in order to effectively embody the good news of Jesus Christ. Annual Conference recommends “that the denomination widen the relevancy of our witness to those ‘from every nation, people, tribe and tongue’ by adopting Revelation 7:9 as our denominational vision for the remainder of the 21st century.”<sup>8</sup> In order to carry out this vision, ministers will need to seek opportunities to be equipped to offer ministries that can dismantle the walls of separation and further the work of racial justice and reconciliation.

- **Ministerial Leadership and Administration**

Ministerial leadership involves many different areas of focus and the skills to fulfill a variety of responsibilities. Ministers need to have the ability and desire to envision the future and develop short and long-range plans to meet it. They need to be able to work with congregational leaders. In the midst of this, they must also manage the routine tasks of administration: communications, record-keeping, and time management. Leading well in this context requires self-differentiation, a willingness to ask for and receive feedback on ideas and performance, and the openness to make beneficial changes without losing sight of personal ethics.

- **Pastoral Care**

To use the biblical image, the minister is a shepherd who loves, knows, and is committed to those in their care. The good shepherd knows the unique identity of every sheep in the flock and will risk his or her own life for the sheep. So, pastoral care involves visitation in a variety of settings: homes, hospitals, and nursing care facilities; crisis counseling; celebrating high moments in people's lives; and weeping with those who weep. It is important to note that the minister should not be the only one providing the care; the minister needs to assist in calling and equipping lay people as caregivers.

- **Preaching and Worship**

Preaching and worship planning/leadership are among the most important aspects of a minister's life. Preaching must be grounded in Scripture and relevant to today's issues; the preacher must believe and live what he or she proclaims and be passionate about wanting

others to receive Christ into their lives. Worship must focus on the awesome presence of God and Christ in the life of the gathered community. The worship planner and leader need to be very sensitive to the needs of individuals and the “unchurched” community, seeking always to find new ways of proclaiming the good news.

- **Spiritual and Personal Formation**  
Ministerial leadership that is resilient and truly grounded in God is dependent upon a dedicated and regular practice of the spiritual disciplines. In order to distinguish God’s voice from the myriad of others that permeate life, ministerial leaders must immerse themselves in daily practices of prayer, study and attentiveness to God. From Jesus to Mary to the Apostle Paul to the early church leaders, all spoke to the necessity of tending to one’s spiritual growth to maintain health and integrity in service. There is no substitute for this regular attentiveness to God’s movement for those who are called to consider and enter the work that God has laid before them. Therefore, it must be our work, as well, to remain healthy and vigorous for the duration of our service in ministry.
- **Theology**  
Theology concerns our language about God and how we express those ideas. Theology may take several forms, including historical theology, systematic theology, contextual theology, and biblical theology. The process of constructing affirmations about God and the relationships between God and humanity and between God and creation have a long, rich history in the Christian tradition. Ministers regularly engage in the theological enterprise and use theological categories; in various aspects of the practice of ministry, ministers draw on language, beliefs, and commitments about God using such theological approaches.
- **Special Ministry Areas**  
Individuals are increasingly called to serve in specialized ministries. These include, but are not limited to, children’s ministry, youth ministry, young adult ministry, singles ministry, older adult ministry, small group ministry, visitation ministry, counseling ministry, leadership of non-profit organizations, and Christian education ministry. Those who serve in specialized ministry areas may include studies related to their specific ministry description in this focus.
- **Personal Enrichment**  
Professional growth may lead to opportunities for education and personal enrichment in areas not directly related to ministry. Options are unlimited. Ministers are strongly encouraged to consult with the district prior to pursuing an educational opportunity that may count toward necessary CEUs. Possibilities include health care, arts, athletics, mechanical endeavors, ecology, etc.

## **EXCLUSIONS**

The above continuing education requirements may be waived in conversation with one’s district credentialing committee for the period of time during which an individual is engaged in post-ordination education, such as a Ph.D. or a D.Min. degree program following the completion of a Master’s level program or a Master’s level program following the completion of a certificate-level program through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

## PROCESS FOR DECISION MAKING

- Executives should include continuing education in the pastoral placement discussions with search committees.
- The minister and appropriate congregational leaders should establish long-range continuing education plans, including time away for sabbath rest.<sup>9</sup>
- A sabbath rest program could include at least one of the focus areas.
- The minister should provide a written report to the appropriate congregational body following each continuing education event.
- The minister should provide a copy of the written report to the congregation (including copies of CEU certificates) and to the District Office for placement in the ministerial file.

This document was originally developed by the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee and the Office of Ministry in consultation with Ministry Advisory Council, Council of District Executives, and Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

The original document was approved by the 2002 Annual Conference, has been subsequently reviewed by the same originating groups, and is presented to the 2022 Annual Conference for action by the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee.

It is recommended that the Ministry Advisory Council review this document no less than every 5 years in consultation with the same originating groups and that any future substantive action requiring Annual Conference approval be brought to the delegate body by the Office of Ministry through the Mission and Ministry Board.

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### Endnotes:

1. 2014 “Ministerial Leadership Polity,” recorded in the Manual of Organization and Polity, chapter 5 “The Ministry,” sections E.3.b. and E.4.b. at <http://www.brethren.org/ac/documents/polity-manual/5-the-ministry.pdf>.
2. 1999 “Ministerial Leadership”, III.J.3 at <https://www.brethren.org/ministry-office/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2018/09/ministerial-leadership-paper-1.pdf>
3. All licensed, commissioned, and ordained ministers are accountable to both the district and the denomination. The Annual Conference charges districts with the responsibility of credentialing ministers in the Church of the Brethren, and the denominational Office of Ministry works to resource and support districts in this process. Ministers remain accountable



through the five-year credential review process, participating in continuing education, and regular training in ministerial ethics. Ministers serving as pastors of congregations are also responsible for ensuring that yearly district and denominational statistical report forms are completed and submitted. 2014 “Ministerial Leadership Polity,” recorded in the Manual of Organization and Polity, chapter 5 “The Ministry,” section F. Accountability at <http://www.brethren.org/ac/documents/polity-manual/5-the-ministry.pdf>).

4. 1999 Ministerial Leadership polity, III.J.3., note 36 at <https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2018/09/ministerial-leadership-paper-1.pdf>
5. Those serving in a dually aligned congregation should be sensitive to opportunities in the affiliated denomination.
6. These ministers might include teachers, chaplains, district, and denominational staff, etc.
7. Hereafter, the term Executive will include District Executive, District Pastor, District Executive/Minister, Associate District Executive, or any other term used by districts to identify district executive staff.
8. 2007 Annual Conference Minutes 841 “Separate No More: Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church”, Denominational Recommendations at <https://www.brethren.org/ac/wpcontent/uploads/sites/18/2020/09/2007MultiEthnic.pdf>
9. Continuing education includes sabbaticals. This paper uses the term sabbath rest, rather than sabbatical. Sabbath rest seems more appropriate and biblical for ministerial leadership and is possible after four, five, six, or seven years of ministerial leadership to the same congregation. A separate paper on “Guidelines for Sabbath Rest” may be obtained from your District Office or from the denominational Office of Ministry at <https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice>

#### **Action of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee**

This document was submitted by the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee on October 19, 2021 for consideration by the 2022 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren. The Annual Conference Officers, in consultation with the committee, determined that the document would be deferred to the 2023 Annual Conference due to the press of business.

#### **Action of the 2023 Annual Conference**

Background information on these guidelines was presented by Deb Oskin, chairperson of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, and members of the Ministry Advisory Council including Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, Janet Ober Lambert, Steven Schweitzer, Cindy Sanders, and Daniel Rudy. Nathan Rittenhouse, Standing Committee delegate from the Shenandoah District, presented the recommendation of the Standing Committee that the proposed 2023 Guidelines for Continuing Education be adopted. *Annual Conference approved the Standing Committee recommendation that the proposed 2023 Guidelines for Continuing Education be adopted. The guidelines were approved by more than a two-thirds vote as a change in polity.* This action supersedes the previous Guidelines for Continuing Education, accepted by the 2002 Annual Conference.