

Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island  
**Policy 2.1.22: Professional Development Leaves**  
**(Continuing Education, Sabbatical, Annual Retreats)**  
*(revised November, 2024)*

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## 1. PURPOSE

## Clergy, Diocesan Office Staff (Lay and Clergy)

The Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (the Diocese) is a member of the General Synod Pension Plan (GSPP) of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC). As a member, the Diocese is a participant in the Continuing Education Plan (CEP) of the ACC.

Professional Development Leaves are a key element of vocations in our Diocese and impact lay, clergy, and congregations and other ministry communities. Policy 1.1.23: Episcopal Guidelines for Healthy Parish Life states: “The clergy and the parish will collaboratively work to maintain the well-being of the priest, and by extension, the parish, by ensuring that the incumbent has two full days off each week, a full vacation, annual retreats and regular continuing education.”

The Ordinal also makes clear the expectation for ongoing education: “Will you be diligent in the reading and study of the holy scriptures, and in seeking the knowledge of such things as may make you a stronger and more able minister of Christ?” The Church gives support for clergy in this endeavor when asked: “Will you uphold him/her in this ministry?”

The importance of Continuing Education is further shown in the way it is funded. Employees do not contribute to their CEP. Contributions are paid, instead, entirely by a plan member’s Parish and Diocese. These contributions finance approximately 75% (schedule, 2024) of any approved continuing education opportunity. The participant is responsible for whatever balance remains after the approved CEP contribution has been applied.

## 2. SCOPE:

This policy applies to all employees of the Diocese, including Diocesan Staff (Clergy and Lay) and Parish Stipendiary Clergy who are members of the General Synod Pension Plan (GSPP) of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC).

This policy does not apply to Lay staff in the Parishes nor Clergy staff in Parishes who are not part of the General Synod Pension Plan (GSPP) of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC).

Whether it is sharpening a skill or the scholarly pursuit for professional development, you can exercise your mind with the help of the Church’s Continuing Education Plan. Since the Anglican Church Continuing Education Plan (CEP) began in 1971, it has given hundreds of clergy and lay employees the opportunity to develop their skills and enrich their working lives. All paid clergy automatically have a CEP account opened on their behalf on their first day of employment with a participating diocese/employer. Lay employees of the Church or other participating organizations may have an account opened in the plan, with their employer’s approval, on the first day of any month. It is the perspective of the plan that, “A healthy inquiring mind contributes to your personal well-being and, by extension, to the well-being of your parish/employer and the Church as a whole.”

## 3. POLICY:

When you participate in the plan, a CEP account is set up in your name. Benefits accumulate in your account at an annual rate which your employer contributes on your behalf. The plan pays you a bonus each time you use

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your account. The bonus is normally set at 5% of the total cost of your educational expenditure. However, since 2023, to help with the catch-up from the COVID shutdowns, that bonus is set to 10%.

It is an expectation of this Diocese that you engage annually in continuing education. It is incumbent upon clergy to identify and participate in appropriate courses, reading, or other educational opportunities. Parishes are expected to reasonably accommodate identified continuing education opportunities.

As long as the expenditure confers a benefit to your employer, you may use your CEP account to cover up to 75% of the cost of:

- any continuing education program or course of study
- books or other materials and equipment
- computer hardware or software (accessories are generally not funded)

The plan is designed to promote lifelong learning among clergy and lay professionals. This benefit remains accessible up to 3 months before retirement or departure from employment. Continuing Education funds are not available during any authorized leaves (including medical and family). Applications for benefits are available for download, from your diocesan office, or the Pension Office.

#### 4. CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Clergy may plan a few days or a week each year for **Continuing Education Opportunities**. Consulting the Anglican Church of Canada Continuing Education Plan: CEP Online is a great place to start. Opportunities to take advantage of this leave are manifold and, if you are unsure of whether the session or resources you are exploring will be covered by your CEP money, please contact the Diocesan Payroll and Benefits Coordinator.

**Note:** You must coordinate this opportunity with your parish leaders. It is the responsibility of the parish to provide for the cost of Sunday replacement if this Continuing Education Opportunity removes you from the parish. Ample time for planning and budgeting is required.

#### 5. SABBATICAL LEAVES

Scheduling a **Sabbatical Leave** or a longer course of study takes more planning. You will need to coordinate with your Parish *and* with the Bishop. When planning a sabbatical leave, ***notice must be given to the parish at least one year in advance*** in order to allow time for appropriate planning for the parish (including budget considerations). This planning should occur with the Parish Wardens and Parish Council. It should also be part of the agenda for the Parish's Annual General Meeting.

Arrangements to be made include:

- provide regional or diocesan contact for questions of administration;
- in consultation with the Bishop, secure a Temporary Incumbent to provide sacramental and pastoral care in your absence;
- facilitate a conversation between the Temporary Incumbent and the Parish Wardens to clarify roles, responsibilities, and time commitment; and
- with the Parish Wardens, share information about the Leave and your replacement(s) with Parish Staff, local ministry connections (hospital, nursing homes, social service and other ministry networks) to facilitate liturgical and pastoral coverage.

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Expectations for your return from study leave include:

- planning different avenues of sharing your reflections on what you have experienced and/or learned during your Sabbatical Leave (with colleagues, the parish, the Region, the Diocese);
- sharing the resources and knowledge you have acquired with the appropriate, wider community (beyond the church); and
- consider making yourself available to others considering a Sabbatical Leave (by contacting the Bishop's Office).

## **6. ANNUAL RETREATS**

Active Clergy in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are encouraged to covenant Retreat time (away from their Parish) on an annual basis. An annual retreat should include a minimum of five (5) days and a maximum of ten (10) days. Parishes are to covenant with their Clergy person(s) to set time apart for intentional spiritual renewal and retreat on an annual basis.

In addition, all active Diocesan Clergy (Priests and Deacons) are expected to attend those days set aside by the Bishop for Continuing Education or Spiritual Development. All active Clergy are expected to attend a scheduled Diocesan Clergy Conference.

## **7. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Both the Diocese of NS and PEI and the Anglican Church of Canada provide different financial resources for Continuing Education Opportunities and Sabbatical Leaves. Several options are available. Please consult the Appendix for current information.

## **8. RESPONSIBILITIES (Parish and Diocesan)**

- maintain contributions to members CEP funds;
- Parish: encourage staff who receive CEP funds to make use of those funds on an annual basis;
- Parish: make every effort to accommodate time required for approved Continuing Education Plan opportunities;
- Parish: with regards to Sabbaticals, will fulfill stipend and housing benefits for the incumbent throughout the sabbatical as well as financing the stipend and identified expenses of clergy supply.
- Diocese: manage CEP fund contributions via centralized payroll; and
- Diocese: provide contact information for fund balances and process fund claims and inquiries in a timely, efficient manner.

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***The following Appendices are offered as supplementary information to Policy 2.1.22: Professional Development Leaves. They consist of separate and non-binding information.***

**APPENDIX 1: DISCERNMENT**

Before enrolling or engaging in Continuing Education opportunities, it is incumbent upon the employee to engage in a process of discernment. Whether it be for individual courses, a time of retreat, or a longer, scheduled Study Leave or Sabbatical, some questions you might consider follow. These are questions for discernment based on *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (Morehouse Publishing, 1991).

- Do you have an image or vision of your potential ministry or training?
- What are the benefits of your course of actions?
- How will this course affect your family? Your parish? Your community? How do others feel about you taking this action or pursuing this opportunity?
- What are your feelings about this action or opportunity? How intense are they?
- Is the course that you are considering motivated by zeal? By love?
- Do you have goals, long-range and short-range?
- What are your present commitments? Are you overworked? Too busy? Not busy enough?
- Do you feel a sense of urgency to get on with this opportunity or action?
- Are money, glory, or reputation factors in your discernment?
- Are there physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual elements that are compelling you to explore this action or opportunity?
- What are the needs of the community you are serving?
- Are you seeking to be obedient to God?
- Are there stories in your life related to this opportunity or action?
- Do I see Christ present in this opportunity or action? Do I see Christ present in me? Will this opportunity or action help me to reflect Christ in a fresh or better way?

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**APPENDIX 2: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**  
**(2024-2025)**

**Continuing Education Fund**

Application must be made in order to access the accumulated continuing education funds. The Synod of the Diocese contributes to this fund, which accumulates at an annual amount of \$900 (2024). See **3. Policy** for acceptable expenditures.

**Sabbatical Grant**

Once you have been in the plan for at least five years you may apply for full-time study leave. Resources permitting, you may be granted up to \$5,000 in order to complete eight or more weeks of consecutive study. You will be asked to provide the following information:

- Study goals
- How work will be supervised
- How work will be evaluated
- Pertinence to future employment in the Church
- Budget

The application for a sabbatical grant is available through the diocesan office or national church office. All accumulated continuing education funds must be used at the same time (before the grant can be allocated).

**Anglican Foundation of Canada**

This resource not only provides assistance to parishes for various projects but also administers a number of different trusts and grants specifically for post-graduate studies by qualified clergy. You may apply as an individual for grants via the website: [anglicanfoundation.org](http://anglicanfoundation.org).

**Canon W.S.H. Morris Scholarship**

This is a scholarship (or scholarships) to a maximum of \$5000 annually, funded by the estate of the late Robert Morris, in memory of his father, the Reverend Canon W.S.H. Morris, M.A., D.D., Kingsman, scholar, and parish priest in the diocese of Nova Scotia for forty years. The scholarship assists in the ongoing education of clergy within approximately five years after graduation from theological studies. It is awarded to clergy from an Anglican diocese in the Atlantic Provinces to enable study and/or travel outside of the region.

Academic merit as well as commitment to pastoral ministry will be considered. Preference will be given to those pursuing a formal qualification. Recipients of this scholarship will be required to serve in an Anglican diocese in the Atlantic Provinces for at least three years after completion of the study funded by the scholarship. Should the recipient at any time within the three years wish to be released from this undertaking, the recipient will be required to repay the scholarship in proportion to the un-expired part of the three-year period. Contact the Atlantic School of Theology for application information.