

October 1, 2020

Dear Congregational Leader,

There are a great many small and tiny churches in the Presbytery of West Virginia. These churches are staffed by people serving in numerous ways for all kinds of hours per week. The Committee on Ministry is charged with reviewing all the covenants between churches and anyone serving a church part time as pastor. Certainly, the covenants reflect the will and intentions of the Session and Congregation of each church, and that is as it should be.

We have noticed, over the years, a wide discrepancy in a couple of areas of these covenants – mostly having to do with the number of hours it will take to meet the terms of the covenant, and the time that must be allowed for vacations and educational pursuits. It is NOT the intention of the Committee on Ministry to overrule the will of the Session, but rather to come to a common understanding of the time involved to complete the terms of the covenant. The most common problem is an underestimation of the time needed to complete the basics of leading worship, Session meetings, and doing some visitation. To this end, we offer the attached information to help your session in its decision-making.

The amount of time it takes in a given week to prepare a sermon and lead worship is generally at least 12 hours. That includes 10 hours of preparation, travel time, and time before and after the service socializing with friends and members. Session meetings, in addition to the time actually spent in the meeting, also requires time to prepare, especially if the meeting includes training and/or worship. Visitation varies greatly with the community and the number and the type of visits desired.

Visitation has greatly changed in most churches over the last 30 years. The number of folks needing or requiring regular and consistent visitation has dropped tremendously. Many small churches have only a couple of people in this category. The next group would enjoy a visit, but they know how to find the pastor if a need arises. The final group, and usually the largest, does not have time for a “formal” pastoral visit. They are way too busy.

The usual time for vacation is four weeks, and two weeks for continuing education. Continuing education, like everything else, has become more expensive in recent years; however, the Presbytery offers several Ministry Toolbox events each year. These events offer high quality continuing education right here in West Virginia, often on Saturdays, and most events are under \$100.

Thank you for reviewing and considering the contents of this letter. If we can be of help, please contact us through the Presbytery office.

Sincerely,

Committee on Ministry's Relationship Team

*Beckie Alvaro, Sharon Gearing, Lanny Howe, & Kyle Key*