

Travel Reimbursement Policy

Rationale

The Book of Order mandates annual consultations with all those under care until they are “certified ready to receive a call, and triennial visits after that until such time as the candidate receives a call and is ordained. Even if not constitutionally mandated, these consultations would be important parts of our responsibility to engage inquirers and candidates in the discernment process on the part of the community. The National Capital Presbytery’s Commission on Preparation for Ministry also understands the tightness of budgets while undertaking seminary studies, and there are, of course, budget constraints on the Presbytery as well. For all these reasons, our presbytery has a policy of reimbursing a portion of the transportation costs associated with these visits.

Our travel reimbursement policies are built on three basic assumptions. First, we feel it is important that inquirers and candidates have the opportunity to choose seminaries with programs and orientations that will best help them to prepare for ministry. That means that we realize people will be coming in for these consultations from around the country. Second, since the Book of Order requires all inquirers and candidates to maintain membership in and ties with a congregation within their presbytery of care (an important part of how those Sessions fulfill their own responsibilities in the discernment process), we expect all those under care to have some ties in the community that can assist with some logistics associated with these visits. The reimbursement policy indeed relies on such assistance. Absent that assumption, it would be impossible for us to give folks the opportunity to choose whatever Presbyterian approved seminary they like and have us absorb the financial implications of that decision. Finally, we typically have around 50 inquirers and candidates under care at any given time, which makes travel expenses a major portion of our budget and a cost we must work to hold within reasonable limits.

Policy and Guidelines

We will reimburse 70% of distance transportation expenses for Inquirers and Candidates to come for Annual Consultations, moves to Candidacy, preparations for and Final Assessments, and required appearances before the National Capital Presbytery. We do not pay automobile mileage for those who at the time of these visits either are currently residing in and/or are attending seminaries within the geographical bounds of the National Capital Presbytery, nor for mileage driven within the presbytery related to travel between places of accommodation and required meetings by those coming in from out of town. The base mileage rate from which the 70% reimbursement will be calculated will be the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) standard business mileage rate in effect at the time the travel is conducted.

In keeping with usual business practice, followed by General Assembly in reimbursing travel for denominational functions, it is our policy to reimburse distance transportation expenses at the least expensive rate in comparing driving mileage versus flying. Inquirers and Candidates are free to choose whatever modes of transportation they prefer, but the

basis for reimbursement will be set at the lower of the driving mileage rate, the lowest available advance purchase airline fare, or actual expenses incurred in the event some other means of public transport (train, bus, etc.) is elected. Inquirers and Candidates are responsible for making these comparisons between costs and submitting reimbursement requests with appropriate documentation accordingly.

We do not reimburse for hotels, rental cars, taxi service, food and the like. We do not reimburse for a spouse's travel, unless we have required for some reason that the spouse be present for the meeting.

Some congregations will pay the remaining 30% of distance transportation expenses, so we encourage our Inquirers and Candidates to seek this support from their home congregation.

Requests for reimbursement can be sent directly to Janet Biermann at the Presbytery office. *Please note that IRS requires that reimbursements requests be submitted within 90 days of occurrence.*

Revised June 19, 2014