

The logo features a light green horizontal bar with the text "South Central Regional Training Partnership" in black. The bar is enclosed in a thin yellow oval outline. On the left side, a black bracket-like shape is partially visible, and on the right side, a yellow bracket-like shape is visible.

**South Central Regional
Training Partnership**

**Ministry Development Leave
(MDL and EMDL)**

guidelines for good practice

*The guidelines contained in this leaflet have been jointly
produced by the Partner Churches of the SCRTP
and agreed by the Management Board*

last amended April 2010

Introduction

It is widely recognised that many ordained ministers do not set aside sufficient time for Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD). This may be due to personal reluctance or lack of initiative, pressures of ministerial responsibility, or absence of support, permission, expectation or resources on the part of the Churches. At the same time the demands of ministry are multiplying and diversifying. Ordained ministers may be called upon to be leaders, team builders, enablers of the ministry of others, strategists, entrepreneurs and agents of change in addition to their traditional pastoral and liturgical roles. They may move into and out of sector posts or find themselves in a range of parochial settings. All of this demands a complex and evolving portfolio of gifts and skills.

It is not possible for ordained ministers to receive during Initial Ministerial Education all the learning and training they will need to equip them for the whole of their ministry. This is particularly true where ministers are ordained at a younger age and have several decades of ministry ahead of them.

Lifelong learning and ministerial development are not just desirable but essential if ministers are not to be undermined or overwhelmed by the demands which ministry places upon them. The basis on which ordained ministers are deployed is also currently changing. In future ordained ministers of all denominations will increasingly enjoy many of the same rights as employed people. The Churches will be called upon to demonstrate that they have made adequate provision not just for initial training and induction but for ongoing development and professional support at all stages of ministry.

Within the SCRTP, the Partner Churches are committed to the provision of appropriate CMD for all our ministers. An important aspect of this is the offer from time to time of periods of leave for the purposes of ministerial development. This includes both shorter periods of leave to enable developmental learning related to changes in ministerial role and longer periods of leave which are 'sabbatical' in nature.

Ministry Development Leave (MDL)

Transition points in ministry provide natural and fruitful opportunities for developmental learning. Within the SCRTP ordained ministers moving between ministerial roles are encouraged to undertake a short period of developmental learning specifically related to the needs and expectations of the new role. Non stipendiary ministers, particularly those in oversight roles, should be included in this provision as appropriate. The concept of Ministry Development Leave builds on the provision of targeted learning at transition points in ministry which the SCRTP is already offering through the Southern Regional Institute but takes it to a further stage.

The scope of MDL should be drawn up in Ministry Review or with a consultant identified for the purpose and should be negotiated through the CMD officer or equivalent with church leaders and relevant others. Ideally an element of funding should be offered if needed.

The timing of MDL should be flexible. For instance it might take place before or after a new post is taken up or in the period between posts. This is a matter for negotiation between the sending and receiving Dioceses or Districts and will of course be simpler within the SCRTP where an agreed policy exists. Where MDL is related to a change of circumstances within an existing appointment or to taking on additional responsibilities within an existing appointment it could take place at any time.

MDL might also be offered to someone wishing to explore the possibility of a change of direction in ministry. It might for instance take the form of a short placement to gain insight into a new sphere of ministry or a different type of role. This form of MDL might also be appropriate for nationally deployable ministers in their title post or equivalent.

It is recognised that MDL may not be practical, desirable or useful in every situation and that it may be more beneficial to support a minister in a new role eg by allocating a mentor or work consultant, offering membership of a work based learning group or action learning set or in some other way. However, an allocation of time with or without financial resources is a very strong indication of commitment on the part of the Churches and encourages ministers themselves to treat their ministerial development with the seriousness which it deserves.

Extended Ministry Development Leave (EMDL)

The Partner Churches of the SCRTP are committed to honouring the biblical principle of sabbatical, expressed as an extended period of leave, typically 3 months in length after every 7 years of ministry. It is recognised that this may not be appropriate or achievable in every case but represents a model of good practice which we wish to aspire to.

Ordained ministers should be eligible for consideration for a first period of EMDL after 11 years in ministry (being 7 years from the point of completing IME 4 – 7 or equivalent) and every 7 years thereafter. 'Eligible for consideration' is not to be construed as 'entitled'. Non stipendiary ministers, particularly those in oversight roles, should also be eligible for consideration where appropriate.

The timing of EMDL may depend on many factors such as a minister's current responsibilities or family situation, the length of time s/he has been in a particular post or the needs of the wider Church at that time but generally speaking it would be appropriate for there to be a discussion about EMDL, probably in the context of Ministry Review, approximately every 7 years with the intention of making EMDL a more frequent feature of ministerial life.

In making decisions about the timing of EMDL flexibility should be a guiding principle. For instance a minister's work or family circumstances may mean that a three month leave of absence is impossible. Other ministers may feel that their learning and developmental needs would be better addressed by spreading out leave eg into 2 x 6 weeks or 3 x 4 weeks over a period of time. This kind of imaginative use of EMDL is to be encouraged.

The content as well as the timing of EMDL should be discussed during Ministry Review and might include study, research, reading, rest, reflection, recreation, travel or pilgrimage. The intention should be to make it possible for a person to enrich their spiritual life and ministry in a deeper way than is usually possible through a regular retreat, holiday or course of study. EMDL may also offer the opportunity for vocational discernment perhaps leading to a change of direction in ministry.

Partner Churches should plan to provide a realistic level of funding for EMDL taking into account both their own resources and parity with what is being provided elsewhere in the Region. Non stipendiary ministers, particularly those in oversight roles, should also be considered for funding for EMDL, recognising that it may not always be possible or appropriate to offer this. Partner Churches should ensure that they can direct ministers planning EMDL towards a range of charities and grant making bodies which can offer financial assistance, sharing information and contacts regionally as far as possible.

It is recognised that increased take-up of EMDL could have the undesirable side effect of putting more pressure on other ministers who have to provide cover for absent colleagues. This should be taken into account in deciding whether it is realistic for individual ministers to take EMDL at any given time.

For further information about MDL or EMDL or any of the information contained in this leaflet please contact your own Continuing Ministerial Development Officer or equivalent