

Trusted Congregational Advocate

Ministerial Excellence Fund



The congregational advocate is a trusted individual(s) within the congregation chosen to walk alongside the pastoral leader (grant recipient) as an advocate and supporter. In most cases, one person serves as the congregational advocate. However, up to three trustworthy individuals may comprise a congregational advocate team. The pastoral leader selects an advocate(s) based on the level of comfort he/she feels with confiding personal information. The congregational advocate(s) serves as the pastoral leader's sounding board and voice to the congregation, as needed. In these instances, it is good for the congregational advocate to have some detailed knowledge of the pastoral leader's financial circumstances, so they can assist in seeking out others within the church that may be able to provide ideas for assistance or lend advice. It is at the pastoral leader's discretion as to how much or how little information is disclosed to the advocate. The congregational advocate would go to these individuals to discover how they can help meet some of the articulated needs.

It is suggested that the Advocate not be a pastoral colleague or pastoral supervisor. We suggest that a trusted lay leader be enlisted as the advocate.

The trusted congregational advocate(s) will also help facilitate the church financial support of four coaching sessions and a travel stipend for training events. Compensated time off will also be expected.

Other assistance may be suggested by the congregational advocate to the congregation at large. This may be in the form of matching gifts for further assistance, initiating of a loan, or other support as needed. The trusted congregational advocate(s) will covenant to maintain and protect the confidentiality and dignity of the grantee.

Ministerial Excellence Fund Grant Overview

In 2016, CBF received a one-million-dollar grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. This funding is directed towards financial education and fiscal debt relief of pastoral leaders in efforts to relieve the devastating impact of financial stressors upon pastoral leaders leaving the ministry as found in studies by Lilly Endowment. During the planning phase of MEI, a 2015 survey of CBF pastoral leaders revealed the breadth and depth of financial burden within the Fellowship. Four priority areas were identified: Debt Relief, Health Benefits, Retirement Contributions and Financial Advisement.

The survey also revealed that financial issues are staggeringly more prominent than anticipated across all subgroups:

- 67% of those surveyed carry a debt that equals up to two times their salary (not including mortgage)
 - Over 50% of the participants making \$70k-\$90k annually have at least \$150k-\$250k of debt (not including mortgage)

- 41% of participant debt is student loans
- 44% of participants do not receive medical benefits from their employer.
- Of this 44%, half have a church operating budget of \$101k-\$500k annually
- Three out of five participants do not feel prepared for retirement
- Only one out of four participants have met with a financial advisor

Addressing long-term financial challenges, this grant will provide grant funds up to \$10,000 to individual grant recipients and will require activities which will take place over a one-year period. These efforts together are directed toward relieving financial burdens which impact the effectiveness of pastoral leaders.

Grant Eligibility Requirements for Grant Recipient:

- Participate in a covenant agreement between CBF, trusted congregational advocate(s), and grant recipient
- Work with a financial advisor and coach
- Participate in two Lake Institute training events
- Complete a report after each training event and at the end of first year

Covenant with CBF and Congregation

The pastoral leader will covenant with CBF and the trusted congregational advocate to complete the grant requirements. The trusted congregational advocate(s) will covenant to maintain confidentiality and provide support to the grantee. CBF will covenant confidentiality, support, training and guidance so that each grantee may better serve his/her family and congregation. These covenants serve to ensure that the pastoral leader, congregational advocate and CBF honor their commitments and understand the role of each one within the covenant.

Training Events

This opportunity will teach fiscal expertise and sound strategies to enhance the financial literacy and management skills of pastoral leaders in relation to both personal and congregational needs. ***These trainings are mandatory for the grant recipient and the trusted congregational advocate. Spouses are welcome and encouraged to attend both events. CBF will be responsible for all expenses on-site. The Personal Finance training is a one-day training that will be held regionally and the Creating Generous Congregations (CGC) training is a 3-day event held in Atlanta.***

Cost Commitment

As previously mentioned, the trusted congregational advocate will help to initiate financial assistance from the church for:

- Four coaching sessions
 - The grant recipient will receive a total of eight coaching sessions with an outside coach. The cost for an hour of coaching is \$100 per hour. Four sessions are paid for by CBF and four sessions are paid for by the congregation. Payments should be sent to the CBF office and addressed:

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
ATTENTION: LATOYA CROSS
160 Clairemont Ave. Suite 500
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Payment for coaching may be made upon notification of the grant award or within six months after award notification.

- Additional coaching may be pursued at the initiative of the pastoral leader or congregation at their expense.
- Church expectation for training events
 - Travel to the events for the grantee and trusted congregational advocate(s) is not provided by MEF grant program funds. However, CBF will be responsible for all expenses and lodging upon arrival
 - It is the expectation of CBF that the church will provide compensated time off for the pastoral leader to attend training events.

If you have any questions or would like to set up an appointment for more information, please email us at mei@cbf.net.