



# A Cord of Three Strands Is Not Quickly Broken

designed to help the participants to strengthen their resources for ministry by creating a safe space for prayerful, mutual support, faith development and learning. In all cases, faith development goals are kept clearly in view, although the group may focus its activity in a wide range of areas, including physical health and exercise.

6. Groups applying for grants may be ecumenical, welcoming into membership ministers serving in other denominations, provided at least half of the members serve in ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
7. The application receives presbytery approval.

As the provision of grants for colleague covenant groups is a new venture, it is difficult at the outset to know the level of interest or the size of the grants that will be requested. Nevertheless it is anticipated that grants will be limited to \$500 for each new colleague covenant group.

## Application

The application form is available on the denominational webpage (<http://www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online>). Search for Colleague Covenant Group Grant Application.

OR

By contacting Ministry and Church Vocations, through Sheila Lang, part-time secretary:

Phone: 416-441-1111, ext. 261 or 1-800-619-7301, ext. 261

email: [slang@presbyterian.ca](mailto:slang@presbyterian.ca)

For more information, contact Rev. Susan Shaffer,  
Associate Secretary, Ministry and Church Vocations

Phone: 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301, ext. 264

Email: [sshaffer@presbyterian.ca](mailto:sshaffer@presbyterian.ca)

Serving the Lord Jesus Christ in the church's ministries can call upon every fragment of the ministers' resources – intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual. It can touch ministers at the core of their beings – nurturing, challenging or shaking their faith in Christ and in the people and the church he loves. It shouldn't be done alone.

Of course, ministers don't serve alone. They interact daily with their people, many of whom pray for, care about and seek to encourage the minister. But the relationships between minister and people are directed towards strengthening the people to share in Christ's reconciling ministry in the world. The focus is the people and their maturing Christian faith and discipleship, not the minister. So where can ministers find the support and encouragement they need?

**Colleague covenant groups** are meetings of ministerial colleagues designed to offer participants encouragement and support. They create for ministers a safe space:

- to tell it like it is
- to gain perspective on how it is and how it might be
- to experience gentle accountability
- to receive support
- to engage in theological reflection and dialogue
- to learn
- to deepen Christian faith
- to pray together
- to offer these opportunities to one another.

**Colleague covenant groups** are consistent with the “one another” ministries taught in the New Testament – we are to love, pray for, support and admonish one another. Colleague covenant groups also witness to the wisdom of scripture:

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other. But woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help!* (Eccl 4:9-10)

*Though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A three-fold cord is not quickly broken.* (Eccl 4:12)

When colleague covenant groups bear fruit, ministers no longer feel alone. They engage in a supportive, network of peers who pray for one another. With the help of their colleagues, they have developed sound perspectives on themselves and their ministries and have grown in understanding and in Christian faith and discipleship. They have strengthened their resources for ministry and their ministries are enhanced.

While keeping these general goals in mind, **colleague covenant groups** choose a focus that best meets the needs of the participants. There are various possibilities, as these examples illustrate:

- A group seeking sustained, disciplined study could read a book together, exploring ways in which what they learn might inform their ministries.
- A group giving priority to prayer could spend most of its time together praying, along with sharing personal and ministry joys and concerns.
- A group focusing on accountability could set up a procedure for participants to make covenants with one another on personal and ministry matters.
- A group seeking collaboration on best ministry practices could follow a case study presentation model.
- A group seeking support with a particular ministry specialty (e.g. youth, families, urban, rural) could meet with peers engaged in similar work.

## Incentive Grants

The Life and Mission Agency (Ministry and Church Vocations) has obtained bequest funds to provide incentive grants to help ministers, diaconal ministers or lay ministers serving in The Presbyterian Church in Canada **to begin new colleague covenant groups**. Depending on the focus chosen by the group, these funds could be used to cover costs such as the following:

- to buy copies of the book the group will study
- to cover transportation costs to the meeting (when not covered by the ministers' congregations)
- to provide an honourarium to a paid group facilitator (when that person is not a member of the group)
- to pay for meeting space.

To qualify for funds, the following criteria must be met:

1. The individual submitting the application for funds is a minister, diaconal minister or lay minister serving within the ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
2. The funds are requested to cover costs associated with starting a **new** colleague covenant group.
3. The group has prepared a covenant expressing its purpose and focus, who will participate, when and where the group will meet, and its commitment with respect to accountability, attendance and confidentiality. The document outlining the group's covenant is required to complete the application. (A sample covenant is found in the file with the application form.)
4. The group intends to meet regularly and often, over the period of at least one year. (One-time or once-a-year events do not qualify. Funds to assist such conferences may be available through The Vine Helpline, toll-free at 1-866-642-2830 or by email at [thevine@presbyterian.ca](mailto:thevine@presbyterian.ca) .)
5. The group's goals and proposed activity reflect the stated goals for colleague covenant groups. They are meetings of ministerial colleagues