

WHAT IS PRESBYTERIANS SHARING ...?

Presbyterians Sharing... is the name of the fund that supports the national programs and ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The fund is supported by gifts from congregations. It was formerly called the General Assembly Budget. Presbyterians Sharing... does not fund development work and emergency relief; they are funded through gifts to [Presbyterian World Service & Development](#). Presbyterians Sharing... is a unified fund. That means that all gifts are pooled and then distributed to a wide variety of ministries in Canada and overseas. This includes the work of the [Life and Mission Agency](#) and its departments -- [International Ministries](#), [Canada Ministries](#), [Justice Ministries](#), [Ministry and Church Vocations](#), [Education for Discipleship](#), and [Communications](#). It also includes the work of the [General Assembly](#), [Financial Support Services](#) and the [theological colleges](#) in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

What does this mean? It means that Presbyterians are sharing in a wide range of ministries -- mission personnel working with partners overseas; inner city, native, refugee, urban, remote, and chaplaincy ministries in Canada; new church developments; support for congregations in faith education, worship, evangelism, stewardship, mission education; youth ministries; justice and ecumenical work; training and support of ministers. It means that the denomination's national office is supported so programs and services can be coordinated and unified. It means that the church continues to do God's work in this world. A unified fund such as Presbyterians Sharing... is a fair and efficient means of supporting the overall mission and ministry of the church. It allows the church and our partners to plan ahead and it enables the church to make long-term commitments when needed. The Presbyterians Sharing... budget is voted on annually by the commissioners to the General Assembly, who are the representatives of congregations and presbyteries from across Canada.

What is the difference between Presbyterians Sharing... and Presbyterian World Service & Development?

While Presbyterians Sharing... supports the broader mission work of International Ministries, Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) has a specific focus, namely development and emergency relief. Working with overseas church and community partners and ecumenical bodies, PWS&D responds to human need in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. It operates with its own budget and raised money directly from individuals, congregations, and government grants. International Ministries and PWS&D work closely together. PWS&D does not employ overseas staff. However, International Ministries staff, funded through Presbyterians Sharing, often work with PWS&D partners.

How does a congregation know what it should give?

Suggested Allocations

Each congregation is given a suggested allocation. The allocation is simply a fair share guide, based on the dollar base of the congregation. It is not based on the membership of the congregation. What is the dollar base? The dollar base is money raised by the congregation for all congregational purposes in a given year, minus funds collected for Presbyterians Sharing and other mission givings, as well as money used for debt repayment (principal and interest). These figures are taken from the Statistical Report which is received from each

congregation annually. A formula, on a graduated scale, is then applied to the resulting dollar base.

Who gives us our suggested allocation?

In the fall, presbyteries receive the total allocation for their presbytery for the coming year, with the breakdown for each congregation. It is the responsibility of the presbytery to review the suggested congregational allocations, taking into account the particular situation of each congregation and making adjustments as necessary. The goal of such adjustments should be that the presbytery meets its total allocation. The presbytery then passes the suggested and/or adjusted allocation to each congregation.

Accepted Allocations

It is the session's responsibility to inform the congregation of the suggested allocation and to report the amount accepted by the congregation back to presbytery (The Book of Forms. 113.6.1). The congregation decides, usually at its annual meeting, what allocation it will accept. The accepted allocation is reported back to presbytery immediately after the congregation's annual meeting. When the presbytery has gathered the accepted allocations from all its congregations, it reports these back to the stewardship office of the national church.

So how do we decide what allocation we should accept?

Allocations are not assessments; that is, they are not mandatory. Here are some guidelines that our church has suggested over the years:

- Congregations are urged to accept or meet their allocations; they may even accept a higher figure than that set by presbytery.
- Congregations may work at growth in giving. It has been the policy of some presbyteries to encourage congregations that are giving at their suggested level not to let their givings drop even when their suggested allocation drops in a given year.
- If a congregation is far short of its suggested allocation, it is encouraged to make a plan that will help it to grow towards that allocation. Positive growth, even in incremental steps over time, motivates congregations and affirms that they are moving in the right direction.
- **Stewardship is at the heart of the matter.** While suggested allocations are a general guide for fair share giving, they do not speak to the heart of what stewardship is about. Congregations are asked to give joyfully and with prayer the amount they wish to give, in response to God's gracious blessings and in the spirit of Paul in his fund-raising appeal to the Corinthian church:

"Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." II Corinthians

9:7, 8

- **Mission Education is Key.** It is important for all congregations -- even those that guarantee an allocation -- to provide ongoing education for members so that they know how their money is being used, so they will pray with understanding for the ministries of the church, and so a sense of connectedness with the broader church will be fostered.

***When we accept an allocation, does that mean we guarantee that it will be fulfilled?
Should it be a part of our annual budget?***

Those congregations that consistently meet or even exceed their commitment typically include their accepted allocation in their annual budget, with the intention that it will be fulfilled. By including it in the overall congregational budget, everybody participates. These congregations may or may not have a separate line for Presbyterians Sharing on their offering envelope. Many find it helpful to keep the line on the envelope as a weekly reminder of their participation in the work of the broader church. All monies designated by givers to Presbyterians Sharing... must be remitted within the year of designation, even if they exceed the accepted amount.

Why should we give to Presbyterians Sharing... when we have difficulty meeting our own budget? Congregations have many very real needs of their own. Stipends must be paid, buildings need to be maintained, and local ministries require funds as well. Shouldn't we look after our own needs first?

First of all, why give to mission and ministry beyond our walls at all? The principle of proportional giving, whether a tithe or some other percent of our income, is a biblical principle. It applies not only to individuals but also to communities of faith. Congregations that have a concern beyond their own survival and their own programs, however important and necessary, will likely find that their own ministries grow as they also reach out beyond themselves. Secondly, The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a connectional church. This means that we covenant to support each other and to work together. Each year at General Assembly we approve the church's ministries and the budget required to achieve them. Finally, if one congregation falls far short of its fair share, this places a greater responsibility on other congregations, who are also often struggling, to make up the difference. Having stated these reasons for giving, there are times and circumstances when a congregation has to decrease its givings, at least for a time.

What has Presbyterians Sharing... done for my congregation?

Do you have a minister who received training at one of our theological colleges? Have you been helped by church offices in the search for a minister? Do you use Christian education, worship or evangelism resources provided through church offices? Have you ever sent delegates to a Stewards by Design event or training seminar? Have your young people participated in a Canada Youth event or a Youth in Mission program? Has somebody in your congregation benefited from the ministry of a university chaplain? Have you used the services of the finance department in processing your minister's benefits? Has your congregation ever received financial support through Canada Ministries? Do you use the worship bulletin covers produced by the church? Have you required legal or other advice from the Assembly Office? Have you hosted a mission speaker? These are just some of the ministries that are available to congregations because of their gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.

*This material can be found on-line at www.presbyterian.ca
Respectfully Submitted by The Missions Committee*