



## Planning your Continuing Education & Spiritual Growth

The 2016 Book of Discipline, ¶ 350 states the following: *“Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities. These practices embody the Wesleyan emphasis on lifelong growth in faith, fostered by personal spiritual practices and participation in covenant communities.”*

*For many clergy, the idea of planning and advocating for rest feels odd and sometimes even feels uncomfortable. Sabbath and renewal leave planning or even continuing education can easily fall to the wayside when caring for others. This guide is designed to help you as a pastor think through this time in advance, allowing you to set aside time for growth and restoration, and to fully engage in your time away. Use this tool to help you create, plan, and set boundaries for your Sabbath Days, Continuing Education, and Renewal Leave.*

### Sabbath Day (do you have a Sabbath day?)

My weekly Sabbath day will be: \_\_\_\_\_

What do I hope to accomplish during my weekly Sabbath and what can I do to avoid skipping my Sabbath?

- *What are the activities that renew my spirit to engage during Sabbath?*
- *What activities that drain my spirit or distract me should I avoid during Sabbath?*
- *What would tempt me to break my Sabbath?*

### **Things I need to do to prepare for my Sabbath?**

- ✓ *Put my phone on Do Not Disturb.*
- ✓ *Add to the weekly church calendar.*
- ✓ *Add my Sabbath day to my voicemail / church voicemail.*
- ✓ *Turn on out of office notices for email that indicates I am on my Sabbath.*

### Continuing Education

What type of event/group have I recently participated in?

Where do I see an area of growth either personally or for my ministry leadership?

What Annual Conference programs and trainings are available?

What programs are offered beyond the conference that interest me?

**Renewal Leave Preparation (§ 350.3)**

You may request a formal renewal leave, or you may have a set week of your vacation for renewal and education. Here are some starter questions for your planning.

When are the ideal times to schedule a renewal leave?

Ideas of locations:

Alone or with a group?

Focus of renewal time:

- ✓ *When was the last time I took a break and rested? What did I enjoy about that time?*
- ✓ *What do I feel like I "should" be doing during my renewal leave?*
- ✓ *What am I tempted to do during this time of rest that is others-focused instead of focusing on my own spiritual and mental care?*
- ✓ *What is uncomfortable about caring for myself instead of crossing things off a checklist or caring for others?*
- ✓ *How did my planning (or lack of planning) impact my ability to rest right now?*
- ✓ *What did I have to say "no" to in order to take this time to rest?*
- ✓ *The thing that is exhausting me the most is...*

**2016 Book of Discipline** (pages 293-294) ¶ 350. *Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth*—1. Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities. These practices embody the Wesleyan emphasis on lifelong growth in faith, fostered by personal spiritual practices and participation in covenant communities. Each annual conference, through the chairs of the Clergy Orders and Fellowship or other leaders designated by the bishop, shall provide spiritual enrichment opportunities and covenant groups for deacons, elders, and local pastors.

2. A clergy member's continuing education and spiritual growth program shall include professional formation leaves at least one week each year and may include at least one month during one year of every quadrennium. Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the ministers' vacations and shall be planned in consultation with their charges or other agencies to which they are appointed as well as the bishop, district superintendent, and annual conference continuing education committee.

3. A clergy member may request a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continuing to hold an appointment in the local church. Such leaves are available to clergy members who have held full-time appointments for at least six years. Such a leave shall be with the approval of the committee on pastor-parish relations, the church council, and the district superintendent. Annual conferences are encouraged to assist with pulpit supply and other temporary support for such leaves.

4. Financial arrangements for continuing education as part of one's professional development, formation, and spiritual growth shall be negotiated in the following manner: (a) for elders and local pastors it shall be done in consultation with the district superintendent and the committee on pastor-parish relations; (b) for deacons, with an appropriate supervisory body; (c) for district superintendents, with the district committee on superintendency; (d) for conference staff, with the appropriate supervisory body; (e) for others in extension ministries or appointments beyond the local church, with the appropriate persons in their agency.

5. Clergy shall be asked by the district superintendent in the charge conference to report on their programs of continuing education, formation, and spiritual growth for the past year and plans for the year to come. The district superintendent shall also ask the local church to describe its provision for time and financial support of continuing education for ministry, professional development, formation and spiritual growth for the pastors, diaconal ministers and deacons serving their primary appointment in that local church.

6. Clergy in extension ministries and appointments beyond the local church shall give evidence of their continuing formation and spiritual growth program and future plans in their annual reports (¶ 344.2a).