

A Clergy Covenant
Working Draft Number Two
The South Carolina Conference, The United Methodist Church

As clergy of the South Carolina Annual conference, called by God to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, gifted by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ, and having pledged myself to live in covenant with the clergy of this conference, I acknowledge my need for God’s grace as I seek to be faithful in ministry, and I accept that covenant relationships are a vital and necessary part of fulfilling my vows and calling.

Self-Care

Because I know that I cannot offer what I do not have; and because I know that I must live deeply in Jesus Christ in order to proclaim the Gospel with integrity, with God’s help, I covenant the following:

1. I will commit to a regular discipline of daily private and regular communal prayer life apart from my duties as a pastor or deacon.
2. I will cultivate a practice of regular Sabbath keeping, taking time apart from work to be renewed and refreshed.
3. I will abide by annual conference guidelines for continuing education in order to keep my ministry fresh.
4. I will negotiate with my Pastor-Staff Parish Relations Committee or other appropriate body to implement the annual conference guidelines for vacation.
5. I will commit myself to a healthy lifestyle, including:
 - Working toward achieving and/or maintaining a healthy weight
 - Following guidelines for good nutrition, regular exercise, and appropriate medical care
 - Examining my personal habits such as smoking, getting proper sleep, and cultivating healthy relationships, with the intent to making small or large steps toward greater health and wholeness.

Care of Family and Supportive Relationships

So as not to add to the stress of living within the itinerant system or to cause harm to those persons closest to me, and in order to enjoy the blessings of family and friends, with God’s help, I covenant the following:

1. I will set aside time weekly to be with family and/or friends away from the church.
2. I will commit to grow in my personal financial stewardship, seeking assistance when needed in keeping a family budget, reducing debt, building savings, and simplifying my lifestyle, with the goal of becoming able and/or maintaining the capacity to tithe and even give sacrificially when called by God to do so.
3. I will seek appropriate psychological and psychiatric care for myself and/or family members when the burdens of ministry, life, or family become overwhelming.
4. I will order my personal life through the establishment of legal documents appropriate to the particulars of my relationships, such as a personal will, durable power of attorney, living will, guardianship for surviving children, etc. I will make the location of these documents known to the appropriate persons.
5. I will, if I am single, cultivate a network of supportive relationships that allow me to be in community during my times away from the church.

Care of Congregation

In order to grow in my capacity to effectively lead God’s people, with God’s help, I covenant the following:

1. I will offer quality leadership and live by a work ethic appropriate to one who has offered herself/himself to a lifetime of servant ministry. I will be available to those I am appointed to serve and provide for their care.
2. I will set and abide by appropriate boundaries with persons in my care, recognizing that it is my responsibility and sacred obligation to do so.
3. I will, when I am moving to a new appointment, offer full support to the incoming minister. I will not return to the area without his/her knowledge.
4. I will leave the parsonage in better shape than it was when I arrived, taking responsibility for any damage I incurred and working with the appropriate committees to address needs before I leave.
5. I will communicate about this covenant and my personal needs with the appropriate church bodies. I will respect the culture of the congregation as I negotiate my plan for self-care.
6. I will, to the best of my ability, abide by the disciplinary requirements for quadrennial renewal leave.

I invite the following persons to covenant with me to support and hold me accountable as I seek, by the grace and help of God, to live into this covenant. I agree to meet with them regularly to seek their guidance and offer them support. 1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____

4. _____