



¶ 351.1 Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth — 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.

SCBOMP XIV.b.i — Each Minister must be involved in a program of continuing education (¶350) throughout her/his years of Ministry. Twelve CEU's must be earned in each quadrennium with not less than one CEU being earned in any one year. Programs that don't fit the CEU pattern may be submitted to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry for approval. Continuing Education Covenant Groups for clergy will be sponsored annually by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Establishment of leaders and groups shall be administered through the Director of Continuing Education Covenant Groups of the Board. Three CEU's will be granted upon successful completion of a Covenant Group.

¶ 351.2 (Professional Formation Leave)— 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.

¶ 351.3 (Formation and Spiritual Growth Leave)— 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.

¶ 351.4 (Financial Arrangements)— 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.

¶ 351.5-6 (Accountability and Reporting)— 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.

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).

¶ 352 Sabbatical Leave — A sabbatical leave should be allowed for a program of study or travel approved by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Associate members or clergy members in full connection who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years, or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, from the time of their reception into full or associate membership may be granted a sabbatical leave for up to one year. Whenever possible, the compensation level of the last appointment served before the leave should be maintained in the appointment made at the termination of the leave. The appointment to sabbatical leave is to be made by the bishop holding the conference, upon the vote of the annual conference after recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Associate members and clergy members in full connection shall submit a written request for a sabbatical leave, including plans for study or travel, to the Board of Ordained Ministry, with copies to the bishop and district superintendent, ordinarily six months before the opening session of the annual

conference. To be eligible for an additional sabbatical leave, associate members and clergy members in full connection shall have served six consecutive years under full-time appointment, or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, following the previous sabbatical leave. After consultation and with the written consent of the pastor in charge, and with the approval of the district superintendent, clergy members granted sabbatical leave shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference in which they shall hold membership and to which they shall submit an annual report.

SCBOMP XXIII.c.ii — Application for Sabbatical Leave (§351) requires a Board interview unless waived by the Board after examination of the submitted written plan for study or travel. Sabbatical Leave will be granted only for study leave or travel for the purpose of returning to ministry after the leave ends. Persons applying for Sabbatical Leave shall apply to the Board of Ordained prior to February 1st preceding the Annual Conference session.

Continuing Education and Professional Formation Leave (does not end current appointment)

Duration

- At least one week a year most years. (can be cumulative or consecutive days)
- May increase to at least one month during one year in a quadrennium.

Requirements of All Clergy

- Twelve CEU's must be earned in each quadrennium with not less than one CEU being earned in any one year.
- Clergy enrolled in Seminary or the Course of Study may count their academic work toward meeting Disciplinary and Conference requirements as Continuing Education. Once clergy have completed their required seminary or course of study work they are expected to engage in a regular plan of continuing education.
- Clergy must report to the charge conference and District Superintendent annually their plans and progress related to Continuing Education. Churches should report their provisions for time and financial support of the continuing education of their clergy.

Professional Formation Leave Process

- Plans should be made by clergy in consultation with their charges (S/PPRC) or agencies to which they are appointed and their District Superintendent (DS communicates with the Bishop).
- In some instances, consultation should be made with the Continuing Education Committee regarding potential CEUs.

Funding for Professional Formation

- Coverage in their absence is ultimately the responsibility of the Clergy
- Elders and Local Pastors: Financial Arrangements are made in consultation with the District Superintendent and S/PPRC. Typically, as part of an Accountable Reimbursement policy approved by the Church Council.
- Deacons, conference staff, and others in extension ministry: Financial Arrangements are made with an appropriate supervisory body.

Formational & Spiritual Growth Leave (does not end current appointment)

Prerequisite

- Clergy must have held a full-time appointment for at least six years.

Duration

- Up to six months.

Requirements

- Must include a carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically
- by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities.
- Clergy must report to the charge conference and District Superintendent annually their plans and progress related to Continuing Education. Churches should report their provisions for time and financial support of the continuing education of their clergy.

Professional Formation Leave Process

- Plans should be made by clergy in consultation with and approval by the S/PPRC, the church council and their District Superintendent.

Funding for Professional Formation

- The District Superintendent and conference may assist with coverage and support during the duration of the Formational & Spiritual Growth Leave, but ultimately coverage and support are the responsibility of the Clergy.
- Elders and Local Pastors: Financial Arrangements are made in consultation with the District Superintendent and S/PPRC. Typically as part of an Accountable Reimbursement policy approved by the Church Council.
- Deacons, conference staff, and others in extension ministry: Financial Arrangements are made with an appropriate supervisory body.

Sabbatical Leave (is an appointment itself, and ends current appointment)

Prerequisite

- Associate Members or Clergy Members in Full Connection who have who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years, or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, from the time of their reception into full or associate membership may be granted a sabbatical leave for up to one year.
- To be eligible for an additional sabbatical leave, associate members and clergy members in full connection shall have served six consecutive years under full-time appointment, or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, following the previous sabbatical leave.
- Sabbatical Leave will be granted only for study leave or travel for the purpose of returning to ministry after the leave ends.

Requirements

- Must be for a program of study or travel approved by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Duration

- Up to one year.

Process for Requesting a Sabbatical Leave

- Write a letter to the Office of Clergy Services (clergyservice@umcsc.org) that includes details of your plans for study or travel. A copy of the letter should be sent to the Bishop (Bishop@umcsc.org) and your District Superintendent. Clergy Services will send a copy to the Board of Ordained Ministry. The letter should be written six months before the opening session of Annual Conference (December 1).
- The Board of Ordained Ministry is responsible for approving Sabbatical Leave request and will require an interview to discuss the submitted written plan for study or travel.

Funding for Professional Formation

- Responsibility of the Clergy, although there may be funds for which the clergy may apply.

If Approved

- After consultation and with the written consent of the pastor in charge, and with the approval of the district superintendent, clergy members granted sabbatical leave shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference in which they shall hold membership
- Clergy members granted sabbatical leave shall submit an annual report.