



¶ 353 **Provisions for Change in Conference Relationship** — When a change in conference relationship is deemed necessary or desirable by a provisional or associate member, clergy in full connection, district superintendent or bishop, whether for a short or long term, the person(s) requesting the change shall make written request to their Board of Ordained Ministry stating the reasons for the requested change of relationship. In addition, the Board of Ordained Ministry may request personal interviews with the provisional or associate members and members in full connection named in the requested change, except where personal appearance results in undue hardship. Clergy appointed to a general agency of The United Methodist Church shall be covered by the policies of the agency in relation to family leave, maternity or paternity leave, and medical leave.

¶ 354 **Voluntary Leave of Absence** — 1. Provisional, associate, or members in full connection of the annual conference who for sufficient reason choose to temporarily take leave from their ministerial appointment may request in writing with a copy to the bishop and their district superintendent a voluntary leave through the Board of Ordained Ministry. This leave is granted or renewed by vote of the clergy members in full connection upon recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

2. A voluntary leave of absence may be taken for a variety of reasons:

- a) **Personal Leave**—A relationship that is granted to clergy who self-determine for personal reasons that they are temporarily unable or unwilling to continue in a ministry appointment.
- b) **Family Leave**—A relationship that is granted to clergy who, because of an immediate family member’s need for fulltime care, are temporarily unable to continue in a ministry appointment.
- c) **Transitional Leave**—A leave granted for up to twelve months with approval of the bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry executive committee to provisional and associate members and full clergy members in good standing who are temporarily between appointments.

A transitional leave of absence may be granted for the following reasons:

- (1) A provisional or full member deacon needs to seek and secure an appointable primary position—compensated or non-salaried.
- (2) A provisional or full member elder, or an associate member needs to transition from an extension ministry to another appointment, or from a local church appointment to an extension ministry appointment. During transitional leave, the clergyperson shall provide quarterly substantiation of his or her effort to obtain such an appointable position to the bishop and to the Board of Ordained Ministry executive committee. Transitional leave ends when the clergy member begins an appointment or at the conclusion of twelve months, whichever comes first.

354.3-5 (Requesting Voluntary Leave of Absence) — Written request for a voluntary leave of absence, with the exception of transitional leave, should be made at least ninety days prior to the annual conference session giving specific reasons for the request. Representatives of the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry may interview the clergy member to determine sufficient cause. Personal leave and family leave shall be approved annually upon written request of the clergy member and personal or family leave shall not be granted for more than five years in succession, except by a two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection.³⁹ Transitional leave shall not be renewed beyond a twelve-month period. Voluntary leave shall be counted as a part of the eight-year limit for provisional members (¶ 327).

4. Between sessions of the annual conference, voluntary leave of absence may be granted or terminated by the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry after consultation with and approval by the bishop and district superintendents. This interim action shall be subject to the approval of the clergy session of the annual conference at its next session.

5. Should there be active complaints or charges, a request for voluntary leave of absence shall not be permitted until those complaints or charges have been resolved.

354.6 (Ministerial Support while on Voluntary Leave) —6. Clergy on voluntary leave of absence shall have no claim on the conference funds. Notwithstanding the foregoing, where the conference has made certain elections under applicable benefit plans that require continued participation by clergy on voluntary leaves of absence, the clergy shall continue to participate in such plans. They may participate in the conference health program through their own contributions, if applicable. However, in exceptional

circumstances, on recommendation of the bishop and district superintendents, salary and/or other benefits, subject to the terms of the applicable benefit plans, may be granted to a clergy member, if applicable, by vote of the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference. In an interim between sessions of the annual conference, by vote of the bishop, cabinet, and executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, salary and/or benefits, subject to the terms of the applicable benefit plans, may be granted, if applicable.

354.7 (Committee Membership while on Voluntary Leave) —7. Clergypersons on voluntary leave shall be eligible for membership on annual conference committees, commissions, or boards. They may vote for other clergy delegates to General or jurisdictional conferences and may be elected to serve as delegates themselves.

354.8-10 (Accountability and authority while on Voluntary Leave) 8. After consultation and with the written consent of the pastor in charge, and with the approval of the district superintendent and the staff-parish relations committee of a local church, clergy members shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference to which they shall relate and submit an annual report. They shall report all marriages performed, baptisms administered, funerals conducted and other ministerial activities to the charge conference, pastor in charge, and Board of Ordained Ministry. The exercise of this ministry shall be limited to the charge conference in which their membership is held and with the written permission of the pastor in charge unless special permission is granted by the bishop of the conference where membership is held. With the permission of the bishop of the conference where membership is held, under the supervision of the district superintendent, the clergy member may preach, teach, perform marriages, and, if holding sacramental privileges, administer the sacraments outside of the charge where membership is held.

9. Those on voluntary leave of absence shall be held amenable to the annual conference for their conduct and the performance of their ministry. In case of failure to report to the Board of Ordained Ministry, the provisions for administrative location (§ 360) may be invoked.

10. Clergy members on voluntary leave of absence may, with the permission of the bishop and with the approval of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency, continue to hold an existing reserve commission as an armed forces chaplain, but may not voluntarily serve on extended active duty.

354.11-12 (Ending or Extending a Voluntary Leave of Absence) 11. When an end to voluntary leave of absence is requested, except for transitional leave, it shall be by written request at least six months prior to the session of annual conference. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall review the circumstances surrounding the granting of the leave for the purpose of determining whether those circumstances have been alleviated or resolved. When the board has determined that the circumstances of the voluntary leave have not been alleviated or resolved and the request is denied, the board will inform the person of the remaining options, which include: *a*) remaining on voluntary leave of absence; *b*) taking honorable location; *c*) being recommended to the bishop and district superintendents to be placed on involuntary leave, administrative location, or involuntary retirement, using the fair process of § 362.2; or *d*) such other action as deemed appropriate.

12. When clergy members on voluntary leave of absence do not request an annual extension of the leave of absence during the five-year period or do not indicate willingness to receive an appointment at the end of the five-year period, following documented efforts to make contact with the clergyperson, the provisions of administrative location (§ 360) may be invoked.

¶ 356 Maternity or Paternity Leave— Maternity or paternity leave, not to exceed one-fourth of a year, will be available and shall be granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry to any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption.

1. Persons desiring maternity or paternity leave should file their request with the committee on pastor-parish relations after consulting with the district superintendent at least ninety days prior to its beginning to allow adequate pastoral care for the churches involved to be developed.

2. During the leave, the clergy member's annual conference relations will remain unchanged, and the health and welfare benefit plans will remain in force.

3. A maternity or paternity leave of up to one-quarter of a year will be considered as an uninterrupted appointment for pension purposes.

4. Compensation will be maintained for no less than the first eight weeks of leave.

5. During the leave time, pastoral responsibility for the church or churches involved will be handled through consultation with the committee on pastor-parish relations of the local church(es) and the district superintendent.

6. Special arrangements shall be made for district superintendents, bishops, and those under special appointment.

Voluntary Leave of Absence (Personal, Family or Transitional)

Eligibility

- Provisional, associate, or members in full connection of the annual conference who for sufficient reason choose to temporarily take leave from their ministerial appointment.
- FOR TRANSITIONAL LEAVE ONLY:
 - A provisional or full member deacon needs to seek and secure an appointable primary position—compensated or non-salaried.
 - A provisional or full member elder, or an associate member needs to transition from an extension ministry to another appointment, or from a local church appointment to an extension ministry appointment.

Requesting Voluntary Leave of Absence

- Request should be made at least ninety days prior to the annual conference session (February).
- A written request for voluntary leave should be sent to the Office of Clergy Services (clergy@umcsc.org) that includes the type of leave requested (personal, family or transitional), specific circumstances/reasons motivating the leave request, and the charge name where you intend to place your charge conference membership while on leave.
- The Board of Ordained Ministry may require a personal interview to determine sufficient cause.

While on Voluntary Leave of Absence

- For Personal and Family Leave of Absence the clergy should submit an Annual Leave of Absence Report to the Conference and their Charge Conference. 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). The report is due on December 1st each year. It can be completed online here: www.umcsc.org/cs-vloareport/
- For Transition Leave of Absence the clergy should submit a Quarterly Leave of Absence Report to the Conference. The report is due March 15th, June 15th, September 15th or December 15th of each quarter that a clergy member is on Transitional LOA. It can be completed online here: www.umcsc.org/cs-tloareport
- The exercise of this ministry shall be limited to the charge conference in which their membership is held and with the written permission of the pastor in charge unless special permission is granted by the bishop of the conference where membership is held. With the permission of the bishop of the conference where membership is held, under the supervision of the district superintendent, the clergy member may preach, teach, perform marriages, and, if holding sacramental privileges, administer the sacraments outside of the charge where membership is held.

Ending Voluntary Leave of Absence

- The clergy should request in writing to end their Personal or Family Leave of Absence at least six months prior to the session of Annual Conference (December 1st). The letter should be sent to the Office of Clergy Services (clergy@umcsc.org) and include how the specific circumstances/reasons that motivated the initial leave request have been addressed. The letter should also include how the clergy met any requirements the Board of Ordained Ministry or Cabinet may have assigned. The Board of Ordained Ministry may require a personal interview.
- The clergy should request in writing to end their Transitional Leave of Absence. The letter should be sent to the Office of Clergy Services (clergy@umcsc.org) and include how the details related to the new position. Depending on the position, the clergy may need to submit a request for Extension Ministry approval (www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/GUIDE-TO-extension-ministry.pdf) and write a letter to the bishop and their DS requesting to be appointed to said position.

Maternity/Paternity Leave

Eligibility

- Local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption.

Duration

- No longer than twelve weeks. Compensation will be maintained for no less than the first eight weeks. Compensation is not guaranteed for more than the first eight weeks.

Requesting Maternity/Paternity Leave of Absence

- Submit the Maternity/Paternity Leave Request form to the Office of Clergy Services and your DS at least ninety days before the requested leave is to begin. The form is here: www.umcsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Maternity-Paternity-Leave-Request-Form-2.pdf
- After the BOM and Cabinet have approved the leave, the form is returned to the SPPRC chair for their approval.