

¶ 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).

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