

CONTINUING FORMATION AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH
2012 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE - PARAGRAPH 351 AND 352

¶ 351. 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.

2. A clergy member's continuing education and spiritual growth program should include such leaves at least one week each year and 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, 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 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.