

# A Plan for Clergy Renewal

## Purpose

According to A. Richard Bullock and Richard J Bruesehoff, “Clergy and lay professional leaders tend to burn out after four to seven years.”<sup>1</sup> A renewal leave provides energizing renewal for clergy, staff, and congregation. It is an important part of maintaining a focus, commitment, passion, and skill for ministry. A time apart encourages a person to step off the treadmill long enough to rest, renew, and clarify vision for life and work. In the biblical tradition keeping Sabbath is essential to maintaining one’s relationship with God. We believe that the renewal leave program of the Kentucky Annual Conference will deepen the spiritual lives of our pastors and result in building up strong spiritual leaders to serve the Church.

## Benefits

For the minister:

- “Transforms dreams of vacation to new visions of vocation.”<sup>2</sup>
- Infuses new life into the minister
- Sharpens ministry skills
- Refocuses the minister’s calling and mission
- Deepens the minister’s appreciation of the congregation
- Creates in the minister a new resolve to serve the congregation and the Kingdom of God

For the church:

- Focuses and engages the ministry of the laity
- Creates a renewed appreciation of the minister
- Return of minister who is energized and refocused
- Blessed by a revival of mutual devotion of minister and members
- Spiritual growth of the minister results in greater effectiveness

## Individual Leave Time

A continuous leave time of **one to three months** provides for flexibility and creativity. The goals of a renewal leave under this approach may include spiritual renewal, intellectual stimulation, physical and emotional refreshment, strengthening of family relationships, or a wide variety of other possible objectives. A renewal leave is **not** to be considered as an extended vacation and

---

<sup>1</sup> Bullock, A Richard and Richard J Bruesehoff, *Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning* (Herndon, VA: Alban 2000) p.6

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.7 ¶

should not be used as a substitute for vacation time. Neither is renewal leave the same as a sabbatical leave.

Renewal leave may be requested for a period of time ranging from four to twelve weeks.

The 2016 Book of Discipline (§ 350.3) states that “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 member 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.” (§ 351 defines sabbatical as “a program of study or travel approved by the conference board of ordained ministry. *Sabbatical is the appointment and unlike on Renewal Leave there is no appointment to the local church, nor an expectation that this person would return to the same congregation.*)

## Eligibility

A clergyperson who has been a member of the Kentucky Annual Conference for six (6) years and serving in a full-time appointment during those years will be eligible to apply for a renewal grant. It is expected that the pastor will return to the current appointment following the renewal leave for the following year. Clergy is defined by the 2016 Book of Discipline (§ 602) as consisting “of deacons and elders in full connection, probationary members, associate members, affiliate members, and local pastors.” *Part-time pastors would be considered on a pro-rata basis. For example, those serving at ½ time would receive ½ the stipend.*

## Design

The congregation and pastor will work together on the design for the clergy renewal leave. In the case of those in extension ministries, the governing board or its equivalent will work with the clergy on the design of the renewal leave. The application must be submitted by the clergyperson *and* his or her S/PPRC or governing body. It is understood that the salary and benefits package of the person taking a renewal leave will continue uninterrupted during the leave. Travel expense is usually not paid by the local congregation during a renewal leave. During the renewal leave, participants will be free from any church-related responsibilities. After returning from renewal leave, it is anticipated a clergyperson shall continue to serve his or her appointment for the following year. Under no circumstances should a renewal leave be used as a means to end an appointment.

## Leave Components

Regardless of the length of the renewal leave, each proposal should include goals for the time spent on leave. Four general areas of focus are offered for consideration. The person requesting leave should have a spiritual goal and a goal in at least one of the other areas:

- Spiritual

- Personal/Relational
- Professional
- Health/Wellness

The renewal plan should include time for silence, worship, and prayer. We urge that creativity guide the structure of the renewal leave for each individual and encourage the inclusion of a minimum of one week away from the parish setting. We encourage the clergyperson to maintain a journal (written or taped) during this time.

## **Renewal Leave Funding**

The Renewal Leave Grant is administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry and must be requested at the time of application. An amount not to exceed \$150/week of pastoral leave may be awarded to the congregation to assist with the expense of pulpit supply. Clergy may request a stipend of up to \$500 to assist with leave-related expenses (retreat, books, travel, etc). Regular employment of any kind during the study will not be permitted unless it is directly related to the goal of the applicant's renewal leave program and the intention is shared through the application process.

## **Resources for Exploring Renewal**

The following resources are available to you at no charge through the conference office:

- Video – *Why You Should Give Your Pastor a Sabbatical* (Alban Institute)
- Richard Bullock, *Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning*
- Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives*

Another helpful book is *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, Ruth Haley Barton

One good way to prepare for your clergy renewal leave is to talk with someone who has already taken one! A list of those persons can be obtained from the Office of Ministerial Services.

## **Retreat Locations**

A brief search of the internet will yield many options of location for personal retreat. We are including contact information for a few:

Loucon Training and Retreat Center  
8044 Anneta Road  
Leitchfield, KY 42754  
270-242-7160

Aldersgate Camp & Retreat Center  
125 Aldersgate Camp Road

Ravenna, KY 40472  
606-723-2233  
Saint Meinrad Archabbey  
200 Hill Drive  
St. Meinrad, IN 47577  
812-357-6611

Abbey of Gethsemani  
3642 Monks Road  
Trappist, KY 40051  
502-549-3117

## **Timeline**

Clergy renewal leave applications should be submitted to the Office of Ministerial Services, where they will then be reviewed by a team from the Board of Ordained Ministry. Applications should be submitted no less than three months prior to the beginning of the desired time of leave. Prior to submission, the application must be signed by clergyperson requesting leave, the chair of the S/PPRC, and the District Superintendent. It may be a couple of weeks before the response is received. After the application is approved, the Office of Ministerial Services will arrange for any requested stipend to be paid. Again, this may take a few weeks.

## **Nuts and Bolts**

The clergyperson should be in close communication with the District Superintendent during the planning process. During the renewal time, the District Superintendent should be invited to preach for the congregation at least once. *(The first Sunday of the Renewal Leave is suggested.)*

The District Superintendent will be available to the local congregation for guidance in regard to any emergencies that may occur during the time of leave.

Within six weeks the clergyperson should have a short “debrief” session (phone call or face to face) with a member of the Board of Ordained Ministry to share about the experience – such feedback is helpful in assessing the efficacy of this program. He or she should also share with the congregation about the experience and how goals were met.

The District Superintendent shall have an opportunity to meet with the returning clergyperson and the S/PPR committee of the local congregation (or the appropriate body in the case of extension ministry), for a debriefing of the renewal experience.

## **Application Process**

Begin by discussing your desire for renewal leave with your District Superintendent. When that is done, share this with the chair of the S/PPRC at your church, who will then bring it up with the entire committee. It is good to engage them in the planning ... they may have some helpful and life-giving suggestions for you! Consider the implications of renewal leave for members of your family.

Complete the application that is available on the conference website. Be sure to include the dates for your time away and plans for those who will cover congregational responsibilities during that time. Be as specific as you can about your personal plans for your time away.

The application form is to be filled out in entirety and all signatures (pastor, chair of S/PPRC, and District Superintendent) obtained prior to its being sent for consideration and approval. It may be sent to the Conference Office of Ministerial Services, who will then forward it to the appropriate team of the Board of Ordained Ministry.