

Florida Conference Guidelines for Clergy Vacation, Continuing Education and Renewal Leave

Time for vacation, continuing education and formational renewal are extremely important in the life of every person involved in professional ministry. There must be times for recreation, study and re-centering in each clergy person's life. The Cabinet of the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church adopts these guidelines for clergy and churches as a way of encouraging clergy to be living a balanced life in ministry.

The guidelines that are listed below are for all full-time clergy – licensed local pastors, probationary deacons, probationary elders, associate members, deacons in full connection and elders. The guidelines may also be useful to churches in establishing policies for lay professional workers.

Vacation

All full-time clergy shall have four weeks of vacation time in each annual conference year (July 1 through June 30). Unused vacation time does not accrue from year to year.

Continuing Education

In accordance with ¶351.2 of the 2008 Book of Discipline, each full-time clergy shall have at least one week in each annual conference year for a program of continuing education and spiritual growth. And, once per quadrennium each full-time clergy shall have at least one month for a program of continuing education and spiritual growth. These times of continuing education are not to be considered as vacation time.

Renewal Leave

In accordance with ¶351.3, a clergy person who has served at least six years in a full-time relationship may request a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continuing to hold an appointment. Such requests must be approved by the staff-parish relations committee, the church council and the district superintendent.

Days Off

It is important for clergy to have a regular time away each week. Each clergy is encouraged to establish a schedule that includes at least one day a week, and preferably two, in which the clergy is not involved in the duties of clergy. Such days off should be scheduled so that the congregation and the staff will know when such days are to occur.

Consultation with the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the Superintendent

All leave times, including the establishment of regular days off, should be done in consultation with the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. For extended times away, the district superintendent should also be consulted.

Other Time Commitments

Clergy are often asked to serve on various boards, agencies, committees and task forces of the Annual Conference. Involvement in such activities is part of the understanding of being in connection together. Such involvements are not to be construed as vacation or continuing education.

Clergy are also often asked to be involved in various community groups. Such involvement provides an opportunity build a bridge between the community and the church. These involvements should not be considered as vacation or continuing education.

Clergy are encouraged to use good judgment in the amount of commitment beyond the primary appointment. Consultation with the Staff-Parish Relations Committee should take place before accepting such responsibilities.