



## **CLERGY VACATION / LEAVE POLICY & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Time for vacation, sick leave, continuing education, and sabbatical are extremely important in the life of every person involved in professional ministry. There need to be times for recreation, study, and re-centering in each clergy's life.

This document outlines both Policies and Recommendations and distinguishes between the two. Policies are meant to be applied and to be adhered for each charge. Recommendations are suggested guidelines for each charge to consider as they draft a formal policy for their clergy. For each, adherence to federal, state, and local laws is required.

The policies and recommendations listed below apply to all clergy who are appointed to a local charge.

All leave times, including the establishment of regular days off, should be done in consultation with the Staff Parish Relations Committee (or its equivalent). For extended times away, the Presiding Elder should also be consulted.

### **VACATION TIME:**

Clergy shall have a minimum of four (4) weeks of vacation, to include four Sundays, in each calendar year. Newly appointed clergy or clergy whose appointment changes mid-year will have this time prorated based on employment dates.

### **Vacation Time Scheduling and Usage:**

In consultation with the SPR/PPR Committee, clergy may schedule vacation ensuring minimal disruption to church operations. The charge shall make reasonable accommodations to facilitate the clergy's use of allotted vacation time.

### **Unused Vacation Time:**

Local charges are encouraged to follow the above vacation policies that are consistent with federal, state, and local laws, that support the well-being of clergy by encouraging full use of vacation time. Such policies may include provisions for rollover, payout, or reasonable caps on accrued vacation.

### **DAYS OFF:**

It is important for clergy to have a regular time of sabbath each week. They are encouraged to establish a schedule that includes at least one day a week in which they are not involved in their vocational ministry. Such days off should be scheduled such that the congregation and the staff will know when said day(s) are to occur and agree to mutually respect said day(s). When a clergy member's regular sabbath day is interrupted by ministry obligations, another day that week should be observed as a sabbath.



### **CONTINUING EDUCATION:**

We follow the Global Methodist Church Book of Doctrines and Discipline, per paragraph 507.6 states All “*Clergy are expected to continue learning throughout their lifetimes as means of classes, retreats, seminars, and study leaves on at least an annual bases wherever possible. Time in continuing education should not be counted as personal time.*” The Heartland Annual Conference believes this can be used for spiritual and professional growth.

Each clergy shall have a minimum of two weeks for continuing education.

Clergy are expected to attend Annual Conference which can be counted as continuing education time away and will not affect vacation time.

### **SABBATICAL LEAVE:**

We follow the Global Methodist Church Book of Doctrines and Discipline, per paragraph 518.3 states: “*Clergy who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years may be granted sabbatical leave for a program of study, travel, or renewal. Sabbatical leaves of three months or less may be granted by the pastor-parish relations committee, with the approval of the presiding elder. A longer sabbatical leave of up to one year must be approved by the conference board of ministry. Compensation for the clergy during a sabbatical of three months or less shall be continued by the local church. Longer sabbaticals shall be the responsibility of the individuals involved, though the support of congregations and others is encouraged.*”

In the following example of Jesus fasting in the wilderness as accounted in Matthew 4:1-11, the Conference recommends 40 days of Sabbatical Leave.

Each charge has flexibility in how Sabbatical Leave is structured and supported. Each charge should adopt a written policy clearly outlining expectations for both clergy and congregation regarding requests, approval procedures, and support arrangements.

Our recommendation of Sabbatical Leave of 40 days or less should not be classified as Vacation Time and should not alter Vacation Time accrual.

### **OTHER TIME COMMITMENTS:**

Clergy are often asked to serve on various committees and task forces for the Annual Conference and/or denomination. 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 to build a bridge between the community and the church. These involvements should not be considered as a vacation or continuing education.

In addition, church-related or sponsored events such as mission trips, youth camps, leadership retreats, etc. are considered a part of the clergy's ministry. As such, these events and/or times are not to be considered vacation.

In all cases, clergy are encouraged to use good judgement in the amount of commitment beyond their primary appointment. Consultation with the Staff Parish Relations Committee (or its equivalent) should take place before accepting such responsibilities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Recognizing that ministry contexts and legal requirements vary across the Conference, the Conference does not prescribe uniform policies in the below areas. Charges are nevertheless encouraged to approach these matters with clarity, generosity, and pastoral care.

### **SICK LEAVE:**

Each charge is encouraged to develop and maintain sick leave policies for clergy that reflects its ministry context and complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

### **MATERNITY / PATERNITY LEAVE:**

Each charge is encouraged to develop and maintain maternity/ paternity leave policies for clergy that reflects its ministry context and complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

### **JURY DUTY:**

Each charge is encouraged to develop and maintain a jury duty policy for clergy that reflects its ministry context and complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.