

**California-Pacific Annual Conference  
The United Methodist Church**

**FORMATIONAL AND  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH  
LEAVE**

**Guidelines Developed by the  
Orders Executive Committee**

**WHAT IS IT?**

Under Paragraph 350.3 of the *Book of Discipline, 2016*, “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.

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE?**

Such leaves are available to clergy members who have held full-time appointments for at least six years. A Formational and Spiritual Growth Leave shall be made with the approval of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Church Council/Board, and the District Superintendent.

**WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF FORMATIONAL AND  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH LEAVE?**

- Spiritual retreats, guided or solitary
- Pilgrimage to Biblical or historical sites
- Study of spirituality
- Practice of the contemplative prayer life

- Guided home study involving specific reading, use of media or online classes, etc. related to ministry
- Participation in short-term classes, study programs, seminars, and workshops designed to enhance skill development and/or spiritual growth
- Language training
- Supervised experiences such as degree programs, credit classes, pastor’s schools, clinical training, etc.
- Cluster of persons in ministry meeting for specific training to increase their skills and/or enhance their personal intellectual and spiritual growth

**WHAT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?**

The salary and benefits compensation level of the present appointment will be maintained by the local church or agency. For applicants who are ordained in full connection, an application may be made to the Orders Executive Committee --Continuing Education Chairperson, for formational and spiritual growth leave funds of up to \$1,000 per month for pulpit supply/pastoral needs to the local church for a period not to exceed three months. (Total of \$3,000.00)  
These funds are sent to the local church at the time of the leave.

All funding will be granted subject to availability and ranking according to:

1. Number of years since last leave/sabbatical.
2. Need. Small membership church clergy are particularly encouraged to apply.
3. Merit of written leave-plan.

In addition, the clergy member can apply for a Continuing Education Grant to cover expenses of a class/event taken during the Formational and spiritual growth leave.

**STEPS FOR APPLYING FOR FORMATIONAL AND  
SPIRITUAL GROWTH LEAVE**

**A. REQUESTING LEAVE FROM THE LOCAL CHURCH**

Formational and spiritual growth leave begins with a request from the pastor to local Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and the local Church Council/Board. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee will serve as a liaison committee to coordinate the needs of the local

church with the clergy who is/are providing pastoral care and pulpit coverage during the appointed pastor’s formational and spiritual growth leave. For those with appointments beyond the local church, a liaison will be the appropriate person in that agency.

**B. APPLYING THROUGH THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT**

The District Superintendent will participate in the initial stages of application for formational and spiritual growth leave (as per Para 351.3). The District Superintendent, in consultation with the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, may help to arrange for pastoral care and pulpit coverage for the local church.

**C. APPLYING FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE CONFERENCE**

1. The Clergy member shall be considered under local appointment with continuation of benefits and salary.
2. Application for funding a formational and spiritual growth leave shall be submitted to the Orders Executive Committee after approvals from the local church and District Superintendent are received. The application must be sent to the Orders Executive Committee -- Continuing Education Chairperson, Rev. Rev. Kathy Cooper-Ledesma, 6817 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90028-4401, [revkathy@hollywoodumc.org](mailto:revkathy@hollywoodumc.org), (323) 874-2104
3. Along with the application and proposal, the Continuing Education Chairperson must receive letters of recommendation from the Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chairperson and the District Superintendent. These letters need to include a statement of the approval of the formational and spiritual growth leave.
4. Grant funds are available only to clergy ordained in full connection.

**WHAT IS THE EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT?**

An assessment of the impact that the formational and spiritual growth leave has had on the pastor’s effectiveness in ministry shall be submitted within three months after the conclusion of the leave. The assessment should be reported to the Continuing Education Chairperson of the Orders Executive Committee.