

**Continuing Education and Spiritual Formation Covenant  
To Equip the Clergy in the Western Pennsylvania Conference of  
The United Methodist Church for Faithful, Effective and Fruitful Ministry**

(as proposed by the Clergy Study Team of the WPAUMC Believe Again! Plan for Ministry)

**Chapter I I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

This Covenant is intended to motivate all clergy to participate in continuous study, education and spiritual formation; the intent is to encourage and enable life-long learning, leading to growth in faithfulness, effectiveness and fruitfulness throughout the career of each clergy person.

While the primary responsibility for continuing education and spiritual formation rests with the individual who designs his/her own program, it is also a part of the responsibility of a Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC), in consultation with the District Superintendent, to assist the clergy person in the development of a continuing education and spiritual formation program and a financial plan to achieve that program.

**Chapter II II. DISCIPLINARY REQUIREMENTS**

Paragraph 351 of the 2004 *Book of Discipline* states:

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. 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 (6) years. Such a leave shall be with the approval of the S/PPRC, the church council, and the district superintendent. Annual conferences are encouraged to assist with pulpit supply and other temporary support for such leaves.
- D. Financial arrangements for continuing education as part of one's professional development, formation, and spiritual growth shall be negotiated in the following manner: (1) for elders and local pastors it shall be done in consultation with the district superintendent and S/PPRC; (2) for deacons, with an appropriate supervisory body; (3) for district superintendents, with the district

committee on superintendency; (4) for conference staff, with the appropriate supervisory body; (5) for others in extension ministries, with the appropriate persons in their agency.

E. 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.

### **Chapter III III. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION REQUIREMENTS**

- A. 1. Every clergyperson who is serving under appointment shall annually complete four (4) Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Any clergyperson who is serving less than full-time shall complete a pro rata portion of CEUs each year.
2. Clergypersons are exempt from the above continuing education and spiritual formation requirements if they are Probationary Members of an Annual Conference who are active in the Board of Ordained Ministry's Mentoring Program, or are involved in academic study, such as: Course of Study; Advanced Course of Study; college or university degree programs; seminary degree programs; accredited clinical Pastoral Education programs; or Doctor of Ministry programs.
- B. Any or all of a clergyperson's program for completing the 4 CEUs required annually may be determined by the District Superintendent (in consultation with the clergyperson and his/her S/PPRC) in satisfaction of the recommendations and requirements which result from an annual "Evaluation of Clergy Effectiveness".
- C. As part of the 4 CEUs required annually, each clergyperson shall complete one (1) CEU per quadrennium in each of the following four (4) areas:
1. Theology/Ethics/Biblical Studies
  2. Practice of Ministry (preaching, pastoral care, administration)
  3. Leadership/Contemporary Church
  4. Prayer/Spirituality
- D. In addition to the above requirements, all active clergy are required to complete training mandated by the Annual Conference (i.e., Safe Sanctuaries, Domestic Violence, Racial Inclusiveness, etc.).
- E. In addition, all active clergy are encouraged to participate in a covenant accountability group with other clergy which meets at least once every month.

#### **IV. DEFINITION OF A CEU**

Each of the following, when duly reported, shall be the equivalent of one (1) CEU:

- A. Ten (10) contact hours of instructional and/or counseling sessions under qualified leadership that results in the receipt by the clergyperson of an official Certificate of Continuing Education, or where no Certificate is received, it has been pre-approved by the District Superintendent (travel and meal time will not be included as contact hours.)
- B. Study / Book / Lectionary Groups related to formation for ministry (not including Covenant Accountability Groups), for a maximum of one (1) CEU annually, when accompanied by the following information: name of group, approximate number in group, location, frequency of meeting, leader, hours person seeking CEUs has attended (minimum of 10 contact hours in group).
- C. Reading and reflection on three (3) books, when accompanied by an outline of study and a written reflection on each book with regard to how it impacts one's ministry, for a maximum of one (1) CEU annually.
- D. Ten (10) hours of listening to or viewing audio or videotapes / CDs / DVDs, either with a group of other clergypersons or individually, with a written reflection paper with regard to how it impacts one's ministry, for a maximum of one (1) CEU annually.
- E. Ten (10) contact hours (instructional session or its equivalent) under qualified leadership with distance learning (including online classes).

#### **V. FUNDING FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

While some seminars and other programs of study can be expensive, this must be weighed against the absolutely critical task of maintaining faithfulness, effectiveness and fruitfulness in one's ministry. Continuing education funding through the Board of Ordained Ministry is available (up to \$1,200 per quadrennium) for every clergyperson. Clergy are also encouraged to view a portion of their accountable reimbursement amount as available for continuing education and spiritual formation. In addition, the S/PPRC must prioritize the designation of church funding for such purposes in consultation with its clergyperson(s) and the District Superintendent.