

Clergy Sick Leave Guidelines*

From time to time, medical conditions touch everyone, including those who lead ministry. Clergy are encouraged to honor the Clergy Self-Care Covenant to promote spiritual wellness, healthy lifestyles, and stress reduction, but sick leave will still be needed on occasion for medical conditions that prevent clergy from performing the essential functions of the job.

1. For everyday medical conditions, 12 days of sick leave shall be available each Conference year (July 1) beginning the first year of appointment and every year thereafter with a new 12 days being provided on July 1. These days do not accumulate or roll over, and they are not “paid out” in the event of clergy who leave their appointments before the end of the Conference year. These days are not to be used as additional vacation or personal time, and most clergy will not need to use all of these days in any given year. These sick leave days are truly provided for when clergy are ill or injured and cannot perform the essential functions of his/her job for a very short period of time.
2. For medical conditions that require more time away from ministry, S/PPRC’s are expected to work with the clergy and the DS to accommodate short-term paid medical leave for up to 45 days. Much as with parental leave, financial arrangements may be made for pulpit supply and pastoral coverage.
3. For medical conditions that will require between 45-179 days away from ministry, the clergy, applicable S/PPRC and DS will work out a ‘study and renewal’-type leave, making individual arrangements regarding clergy compensation, which may be reduced to help cover the cost of ministry coverage. Equitable Compensation may be a source of funding. (If an extension of leave of 180 days or more is possible and disability benefits may be sought: consultation with VUMPI is important in this situation prior to any reduction in salary arrangements.)
4. For medical conditions that are expected to require 180 days or more (six months) out of ministry, clergy will be recommended to the BOM and VUMPI for Medical Leave and disability benefits. Medical Leave is an appointment status/conference relationship that one begins and ends through the approval of the Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave. Disability benefits are handled by VUMPI’s contracted vendor and require independent medical verification.
5. None of these guidelines shall reduce benefits to a clergy under any short term disability policy coverage that an individual congregation may have; details of those individual insurance policy requirements should be shared by the S/PPRC with the clergy and the DS when an extended sick leave may be needed.

*These guidelines are meant to be minimum standards and are not meant to supersede local church personnel policies that meet or exceed these recommendations.

Adopted by Cabinet 6.2018