

Continuing Education, Study Leave, and Sabbaticals

The *2016 Book of Discipline* in ¶350, *Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth* and ¶351, *Sabbatical Leave*, gives guidelines and support for clergy study leaves, continuing education, and sabbaticals. In addition, ¶350.4 addresses the issue of financial support. In terms of time, the requirement of the *Discipline* is that clergy shall spend at least one week each year and may include at least one month during one year of every quadrennium for continuing education. These leaves are not to be considered vacation. Study leaves of up to six months may be taken by clergy who have held full-time appointments for at least six years. All such leaves are to be scheduled in consultation with the local church pastor/staff-parish relations committee, the church council, and the district superintendent.

Financial support for continuing education and professional development is offered through the Ministerial Education Fund. Clergy who have completed basic educational requirements, may request funding on a calendar year basis – according to the date of the event and not the date of the request. In addition, other sources of funding include Foundations, local church, district, and conference funding. Details can be found at www.vaumc.org/ClergyContinuingEducation.

In addition, ¶419.7 says that one of the responsibilities of the district superintendent is to “*receive written or electronic reports of the clergy’s continuing education, spiritual practices, current ministry work, and goals for future ministry.*”