



West Ohio Conference

50 Ways to Support Your Pastor's Well-Being *Supplemental thoughts to the Wespath Document*

#11. Americans are notorious for promoting a 7-day work week. We want our clergy to model for us another way. A way that, like Jesus, includes time for Sabbath, prayer, and rest. The vacation policy for the West Ohio Conference indicates that full time pastors are expected to work a 6-day work week, which includes one day for Sabbath. The seventh day would be a regularly scheduled day off. SPRC plays a big role in holding the pastor accountable for taking Sabbath and a day off and educating the congregation about when those days are. Encourage your clergy to turn off their email on their Sabbath and day off. Do not expect clergy to return phone calls or text messages on these days unless it is a true emergency.

#12. Statistics show that the majority of clergy do not use their full-allotted vacation. For some clergy, “getting away” is not something they can afford and so their vacation must be taken while staying in town. Many clergy who stay in town find it difficult to not be called in for pastoral emergencies, funerals or general church needs. Your congregation can help support the pastor by ensuring there is adequate coverage and by communicating clearly with the community that the pastor is on vacation, even if they are staying in town.

#20. Take the initiative to identify the meetings that your pastor needs to be present for and the ones that they do not need to be present for. This continues to encourage lay leadership and ownership of the vision and mission, as well as freeing up key time for clergy to be with family, friends, and to have down time in the evening.

#22. Remember that spiritual retreats do not count as vacation. A vibrant spiritual life is central to the leadership role that your clergy person provides. Help your congregation to understand this importance by celebrating when your pastor is taking a retreat and praying for God's Spirit to bring them new wisdom and discernment.

#27. Renewal leave is a part of the normal rhythms of a healthy clergy life. Our Book of Discipline allows clergy to take up to six months of paid leave every six years of full time service (Paragraph 350.3) Most clergy who take renewal leave find that a time of 3-4 months away is ideal. It is best to weave this into the normal rhythms of life and not wait until the clergy person feels “burned out.” When it is planned with intention and thoughtfulness, both congregations and clergy report the time to be a gift beyond measure. Clergy have time away from the demands of the job to rest and rejuvenate and often return to ministry with a revitalized heart and spirit. Congregations learn to care for their needs in ways that call something out of them that they often didn't know they had. They see practices of healthy rest and rhythms being modeled and find themselves invited into reflection on how they can grow in self-care. They are also encouraged by the leadership of their pastor when they return and bring new energy and vitality.



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Of all the spiritual practices, renewal leave remains one of the most neglected practices among active clergy. Many clergy are not aware that they can take renewal leave. Many clergy do not feel that their congregations would be supportive. Many congregations do not understand why they would pay their pastor for what they see as “an extended vacation.” Advance planning, thought and intention is essential in helping your congregation and clergy prepare for this important practice. Ideally, clergy and SPRC should begin talking about renewal leave at least 18 months before the proposed time.

Congregations are encouraged to apply for financial assistance through the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program, <http://www.cpx.cts.edu/renewal>. Applications are turned in each April for renewal leave that would take place the following year. Whether you apply for the grant or not, the questions that the grant asks are exactly the kinds of questions that congregations need to ask to think through the process with intention. In addition to the grant, the district and conference staff can be helpful resources as congregations think through a plan for pastoral care coverage while their pastor is away.

#28. A spiritual director is not a counselor, but a trained spiritual guide who accompanies you on your quest to grow in your walk with God. The director listens and asks questions to assist in the process of reflection and spiritual growth. As a key spiritual guide for your congregation, pastors often find it extremely helpful to have monthly conversations with a person who is guiding them in their own growth. If possible, the SPRC and Finance Committee can support this work by providing adequate funds in the Pastor’s Expense Account.

#41. If your pastor has been at minimum salary for 5 years or more without an increase, consider ways that your congregation could develop a plan to increase this salary and maintain the integrity of the finances at the church. If a raise is not an option, consider other ways you could compensate your pastor and honor their work.

#48. Ensure that your treasurer is adequately trained on the Ohio tax laws and implications for withholding so that you are setting your pastor up for financial success. If you are unsure about whether your withholdings are correct, we encourage you to reach out to the West Ohio Conference office for guidance.