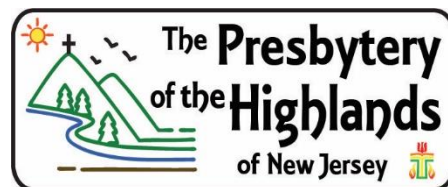


## Clergy Renewal Policy

May 2021



### INTRODUCTION

Often on completion of a number of years of ministry and service, clergy and/or senior Presbytery staff members need time to refocus their vision, update professional skills and find renewal of the sense of call. Just as the Sabbath day is a gift from God during a busy week of work, so the greater gift of a Clergy Renewal Leave can offer valuable refreshment and rejuvenation for those who labor continuously for God's people.

### I PURPOSE

The purpose of a Clergy Renewal Leave within the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey is to allow clergy both full and part-time adequate time away from normal job responsibilities for personal and professional growth, spiritual renewal and a revitalization of vision and hope. The Clergy Renewal Leave should offer a time of refreshment for the benefit of both the participant in the leave and his or her staff, congregation, or presbytery.

### II DEFINITION

A Clergy Renewal Leave is a break and change from the everyday routine and therefore would include a balance of reflection and prayer, rest, study and travel. A church-related Clergy Renewal Leave is ordinarily not the same as in a corporate or scholastic setting. Therefore, it is not primarily a time for advanced degree work (Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D., etc.), although some formal study may be one component of a well-balanced Clergy Renewal. The time away is not to be considered a vacation nor should it be used for career advancement. It is NOT intended to be used as a chance to escape difficulties within the local church. While a Clergy Renewal Leave is not the same as the annual study leave, the pastor ordinarily shall forego his/her annual study leave six months prior and six months following the leave time.

### III ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for a Clergy Renewal Leave within the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey would require the completion of at least six (6) consecutive years of employment.

There must be at least six (6) years between Clergy Renewal Leaves. The number of leaves allowed throughout the presbytery within the same calendar year will be approved at the discretion of the COM. Clergy Renewal Leaves will be limited to one staff person per year in multiple staff situations. Clergy Renewal Leaves are to be made available to all pastors within the Presbytery as well as to the Presbytery Executive/Leader.

#### **IV SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS**

The length of a Clergy Renewal Leave within the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey will typically be up to three (3) consecutive months in any twelve (12) month period. However, even a one month leave, appropriately and creatively designed, may accomplish many of the purposes of a Clergy Renewal. Ordinarily, neither annual study leave nor vacation may be used to add to the time of an approved Sabbatical Leave.

Adequate opportunities for planning the substance of the Clergy Renewal Leave and for the sharing of its results are vital to its success and should not be overlooked. The pastor shall confer with the session as to his/her desire to take a Clergy Renewal Leave at least one year prior to the leave.

The pastor shall then request COM approve his/her intention to take a clergy renewal leave and to reserve that time on the presbytery's calendar. Following COM's approval of the concept of the leave, the pastor shall notify the session of the COM's concurrence and work with the congregation and/or staff in outlining the timing and purpose of the clergy renewal.

Approximately nine months prior to the leave, a written proposal detailing its purpose and content including plans for pastoral coverage, funding, and sharing the results and benefits of the leave ("Re-Entry Plan") shall be submitted to the personnel committee and session. At least six months prior to the leave all plans shall have final approval from the Committee on Ministry. Upon obtaining approval, COM shall notify the session of its action. A commissioning ceremony would be most appropriate and meaningful.

During the period of the Clergy Renewal Leave, full salary and benefits will be provided by the employing organization. Payments under the terms of call for travel expenses and other administrative expenses will be suspended during the period of the Clergy Renewal Leave. It is not expected that congregations will normally bear the entire cost of the Clergy Renewal Leave. A plan for funding the leave, including all expenses related to pastoral coverage during the leave, shall be part of the leave proposal. *(See below for some possible sources of funding.)*

Upon returning home from Clergy Renewal Leave, the Renewal Participant ordinarily shall remain in his or her position for at least one (1) year or forfeit the salary attributed to the period of the leave.

The aforementioned “Re-entry Plan” will allow the Presbytery/congregation and EP/minister to share their different journeys. Examples of such plans might include a one day all-church retreat with church congregation leaders, a special debriefing with session members followed by an all-church supper and time for sharing, etc.

The re-entry process provides a great opportunity to reflect upon the benefits that resulted from the Clergy Renewal Leave. Such expected benefits may include:

- Discovering the strength of lay leadership heretofore under-utilized
- New understandings of the concepts of mission between clergy and congregation
- Reaffirmation of calling to ministry on part of clergy and congregation with both being reinvigorated and rededicated to the work of God’s people.

In all cases, the clergy/staff member will be restored to his/her former position, salary and benefits.

Ordained Presbytery Staff should be guided by this policy and the Presbytery Personnel policy in planning and implementing a Clergy Leave plan.