# THE SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE
# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
# CONTINUING FORMATION MANUAL

Revised 10/13/2025

*Mission Statement:* Our purpose is to facilitate continuing formation of appointed pastors within the Susquehanna Annual Conference to give servant leadership for a joy-filled people in vital congregations making disciples of Jesus Christ.

All paragraph references are to the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline*

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# KEY TOPICS FROM THE 2020/2024 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

1. The Call to Continuing Formation and Education

"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" (*BOD* ¶351).

2. Professional Leaves Are Encouraged…and Are NOT Vacations!

"A clergy member's continuing education and spiritual growth program shall include professional formation leaves at least one week each year and may include 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 [P/SPRC and church council] or other agencies to which they are appointed as well as the bishop, district superintendent, and annual conference continuing education committee" (*BOD* ¶351.2).

3. Longer Spiritual Growth Leaves

Clergy members who have "held full-time appointments for at least six years" may "request a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continuing to hold and appointment in the local church." Such a leave requires approval by "the committee on pastor-parish relations, the church council, and the district superintendent" (*BOD* ¶351.3).

4. Financial Arrangements for Continuing Formation

"Financial arrangements for continuing education as part of one's professional development, formation, and spiritual growth shall be negotiated in the following manner: (a) for elders and local pastors it shall be done in consultation with the district superintendent and the committee on pastor-parish relations; (b) for deacons, with an appropriate supervisory body; (c) for district superintendents, with the district committee on superintendency; (d) for conference staff, with the appropriate supervisory body; (e) for others in extension ministries, with the appropriate persons in their agency" (*BOD* ¶351.4).

5. Yearly Reporting of Continuing Formation

"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" (*BOD ¶*351.5).

6. Continuing Formation in Extension Ministries

"Clergy in extension ministries and appointments beyond the local church shall give evidence of their continuing formation and spiritual growth program and future plans in their annual reports (¶344.2a)" (*BOD* ¶351.6).

7. Sabbatical Leaves

A Sabbatical Leave must be approved by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and is available to associate members and clergy members in full connection who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years from the time of their reception into full or associate membership, or the equivalent of six consecutive years if less than full time (*BOD* ¶352).

# CLERGY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CONTINUING FOMATION

1. Clergy Responsibilities

Each clergyperson is responsible for developing and carrying out his/her own personal plan for continuing formation. In developing a personal program, the following areas should be considered:

a.) The skills needed to effectively serve in the current appointment.

b.) Personal spiritual needs.

c.) Developing a vision for the future.

2. Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Responsibilities

For those appointed to a local church, the local church Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee is responsible for providing time and monetary resources so that clergy can be involved in continuing formation and spiritual renewal (¶258.2.g.8). At present, the Annual Conference policy mandates a minimum of $750 for continuing education and spiritual formation to be part of the compensation package of full-time appointments.

3. Board of Ordained Ministry Responsibilities

The Board of Ordained Ministry is responsible for setting the guidelines and standards for continuing education, formation in servant leadership and continuing spiritual growth in Christ and ensuring the availability of needed experiences (¶634.2.o,p).

The Board of Ordained Ministry is responsible to administer the portion of the Ministerial Education Fund for use by the annual conference in its programs of…continuing formation….and professional growth of ordained ministers (¶634.2x).

4. Cabinet Responsibilities

"The superintendent shall seek to be in regular contact with the clergy on the district for counsel and supervision and shall receive written or electronic reports for the clergy's continuing education, spiritual practices, current ministry work, and goals for future ministry (¶419.7).

# SUSQUEHANNA ANNUAL CONFERENCE POLICIES

1. Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

Each clergy person under appointment serving full-time is required to complete a total of 10 Continuing Education Units during each quadrennium. Each clergy serving less-than-full-time is required to complete a total of 5 CEUs during each quadrennium.

Ten contact hours of instruction under a credentialed instructor are equivalent to 1.0 Continuing Education Unit, or one contact hour is equivalent to 0.1 Continuing Education Units.

2. Acquiring Continuing Education Units

Many education opportunities in the conference offer CEUs and CEU certificates. Examples of these events include the Bishop's Retreat for Our Clergy Family, the Bishop's Day Apart, and district Supportive Fellowship Events.

CEUs may also be granted by the Committee on Continuing Formation of the Board of Ordained Ministry for individual programs of study and skill development and for group events in which CEUs are not offered. The Committee will require the following information to consider CEUs for an event: a) name of the event, b) date of the event, c) location of the event, d) name of the instructor, e) number of instruction/contact hours (lunches, worship, non-structured groups discussions, and fellowship time do not count), and f) a short paragraph of how the event helps the clergy be a more transformational leader. Limited funding may be available for these events.

Realizing that the two often overlap, it is the conviction of the Committee on Continuing Formation that an individual program of continuing formation should include a balance between spiritual formation and study/skill development. Clergypersons should design and carry out a balanced program of continuing formation in a four-year cycle. Every four years, one's personal program should be evaluated and revised.

3. Sources of CEUs

A. Offices connected to the conference offer numerous CEU events throughout the course of the conference year. Certificates are issued upon completion of such events.

B. As stated above, any clergy may request that an event qualify for CEU credit. The clergy must petition the Chair of the Continuing Formation Committee with the following information: a) name of the event, b) date of the event, c) location of the event, d) name of the instructor, e) number of instruction/contact hours (lunches, worship, non-structured groups discussions, and fellowship time do not count), and f) a short paragraph of how the event helps the clergy be a more transformational leader. If the event is deemed appropriate, CEUs may be issued.

C. Clergy may read books on spiritual formation and leadership and apply for CEU credit. The clergy must petition the Chair of the Continuing Formation Committee and include a 1-page paper explaining how the book helps become a more transformational leader. One book is the equivalent of 0.1 CEUs and clergy may petition for up to 10 books each year.

D. Many clergy in our conference participate in and receive CEU credit for Lectionary Study Groups. These groups are a great way deepen Scriptural knowledge, learn collaboratively, and study in a way that directly impacts worship. All Lectionary Study Groups must seek approval from the Chair of Continuing Formation before offering CEUs for the gathering. One contact hour is equal to 0.1 CEUs; clergy may only count a maximum of ten contact hours each year from Lectionary Study Groups toward quadrennial CEU requirements.

E. As more resources appear online, clergy have access to excellent training videos from in and out of the conference. Clergy may receive CEU credit for watching online training videos. To do so, clergy must petition the Chair of Continuing Formation and provide a 1-page paper explaining how the video helps become a more

transformational leader. Each hour of video is worth 0.1 CEUs; clergy may only count a maximum of ten contact hours each year from videos toward quadrennial CEU requirements.

F. CEUs from accredited schools, programs, and seminaries count toward a clergy member's quadrennial requirement and do not need additional approval from the Board. Transcripts should be kept for yearly education reporting.

G. Silent Benedictine-Monastic Retreats, like those offered by the Center for Spiritual Formation, qualify for 2.0 CEUs. Retreats taken outside of the Center for Spiritual Formation require petitioning with the same information as (B) above.

H. *Coaching and Spiritual Direction*: Working with a ministry coach or spiritual director does not automatically qualify for CEU credit; being in such a relationship is simply a part of effective vocational practice. If, however, a clergyperson studies a book with the coach or spiritual director, that clergyperson may receive credit as outlined in (C) above.

4. Sources of Funding

A. *Clergy Compensation:* It is the current policy of the Susquehanna Annual Conference that all full-time clergy compensation packages include a <u>minimum</u> of $750 for continuing education. Remember that any of these funds that are unused <u>carry over</u> year-to-year.

B. *Ministerial Education Fund (MEF):* This fund allocates up to $2500 per quadrennium ($500 per year equivalent) to all active clergy, including full-time, part-time, and retired. A written application must be submitted to the Chair of the Continuing Formation Committee of BOOM to be considered for funding.

Districts are eligible to request money from the *MEF* Fund to support educational events for clergy. Each district may request up to $5000 per quadrennium for such events, capped and limited to a total of $20,000 across all districts per calendar year. A written

application must be submitted to the Chair of the Continuing Formation Committee of BOOM to be considered for funding.

C. *Educational Leave Fund (ELF):* Educational Leave Fund (ELF): This fund—subject to availability—allocates a once-in-a-lifetime disbursement, up to $5,000, in accordance with the following eligibility guidelines:
    a. Elders in Full Connection
        i. To those who have completed their educational requirements for ordination and have completed the equivalent of 5 years full-time under appointment.
    b. Associate Members
        i. To those who have completed the equivalent of 5 years under appointment.
    c. Local Pastors
        i. To those who have completed their educational requirements (M Div. or Course of Study) and have completed the equivalent of 5 years full-time under appointment.

D. *Use of the ELF Fund:* Use of this fund is limited to Advanced Academic Degrees and Advanced Professional Certifications. A written application must be submitted to the Chair of the Continuing Formation Committee of BOOM to be considered for funding. If approved, the grant is issued in two installments, one at the beginning of the program and the other at the midway point of the program (if funds are requested for the first time part way through the program, a petition for the second half of the funds may be made in the next conference year). A progress report from the Institution should be forwarded to the BOOM annually through the Committee on Continuing Formation Chair. At the completion of the program a copy of the Diploma/Certificate must be forwarded to the Board of Ordained Ministry for the records, through the Continuing Formation Committee Chair.

E. *Unused Funds:* The Committee understands that in rare cases plans may change, education events may cancel, or other factors could prevent attending an education event. All funds dispersed by the Continuing Formation Committee that go unused or are not used

for their stated education purposes must be returned to the Continuing Formation Committee as soon as possible.

# SABBATICALS AND STUDY LEAVES

1. Sabbaticals (12 Months) - ¶352 in the *BOD*

*Availability*: A sabbatical leave for study or travel is available to full-members and associate members who have been under full-time appointment for six consecutive years from the time of their reception into membership. Further leave is possible after the equivalent of six additional years of service since the last Sabbatical Leave.

*Financial Support*: Financial support should come from the following sources: the local church, the Educational Leave Fund (ELF) administered by the Committee on Continuing Formation of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Expenses which may be covered by the Educational Leave Fund are: a) Tuition, b) Travel, c) Living Costs, d) Day Care, e) Direct Educational Expenses.

*How to apply*: Apply in writing to the Chairperson of the Continuing Formation Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry with a copy to the Bishop and District Superintendent at least six months in advance. Include the following documentation if applicable: a) A letter from the District Superintendent, b) A letter from the P/SPRC of the local church, c) A letter from the Administrative Board or Council of the local church, d) A budget outlining cost and sources of funding, and e) Outline and content of course/program. Continuing Education Credit is to be negotiated with the Committee on Continuing Formation.

2. Short-term Study Leaves (1 to 6 Months) – ¶351.2-351.3 in the *BOD*

*Availability:* A one-month study leave is available to members and full time Local Pastors each quadrennium. Three-Month leaves are available to members and full-time Local Pastors after five years of full-time service. Six-Month leaves are available to members and full-time Local Pastors after ten years of full-time service. If the leave is longer than one month, further leave is possible only after six additional years of service since the last approved leave.

*Financial Support:* The local church, conference, or institution served, shall pay at least 80% of the cash salary of the clergyperson during the leave. Grants may be made available from the Continuing Formation Committee from the Educational Leave Fund (ELF). Expenses which may be covered by the Educational Leave Fund are: a) Tuition, b) Travel, c) Living Costs, d) Day Care, e) Direct Educational Expenses

*How to Apply*: Apply in writing to the Chairperson of the Committee on Continuing Formation of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Include the following documentation if applicable: a) A letter from the District Superintendent, b) A letter from the P/SPRC of the local church, c) A letter from the Administrative Board or Council of the local church, d) A budget outlining cost and sources of funding, and e) Outline and content of course/program. Continuing Education Credit is to be negotiated with the Committee on Continuing Formation.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND RESOURCES

### Frequently Asked Questions:

*Q: How many CEUs do I need each quadrennium?*
A: All clergy serving full-time must accumulate 10.0 CEUs each quadrennium; all clergy serving less-than-full-time must accumulate 5.0 CEUs each quadrennium.

*Q: Do I need to get approval from the BOOM for all of my CEUs?*
A: No. For events that already issue CEU certificates or for programs from accredited schools, no additional BOOM approval is necessary. Simply keep your certificates and transcripts for church conference reporting. For events that don't issue their own CEUs, you may petition the Chair of Continuing Formation and apply for CEU credit.

*Q: Does "x" event or program qualify for CEUs?*
A: When in doubt, contact Continuing Formation/Secretary of Board of Ordained Ministry with any questions about the appropriateness of an event. It never hurts to ask!

*Q: Can I receive funding for "x" event? How much funding can I get?*
A: Please see Page 5 of this manual for conference funding sources.

*Q: How quickly will my request for CEUs or Funding be processed?*
A: Please remember that all members of BOOM are volunteers! We do our very best to serve you and the conference! Please allow 4-6 weeks turnover time. If you have not heard back within that window, please feel free to contact the Chair of Continuing Formation of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Sometimes requests fall through the cracks, and we apologize for anything missed!

*Q: Does coaching and/or spiritual direction count for CEUs?*
A: Normally, no. We see these relationships as a normal outgrowth of effective vocational ministry. Please see Page 5 of this manual for additional thoughts on that subject.

## Resources:

*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (2020/2024) Free Edition:
https://www.cokesbury.com/forms/DynamicContent.aspx?id=87&pageid=920

*SUSUMC Board of Ordained Ministry Website:*
https://www.scboom.org

*Continuing Formation Manual, Resources, Applications, and Links:*
http://scboom.org/index.php/continuing-formation/continuing-formation-resources

Contact the Continuing formation Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry at bomsecretary@susumc.org