

Continuing Education and Spiritual Formation Policy The Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.
Philippians 4:4-9

The life of the clergyperson is a journey of renewal and excellence in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul gives us the essence of this journey in Philippians when he invites us to focus on spiritual disciplines and to focus on the things of excellence as we journey. Through this focus we can live out our calling in the balance God desires for us called “shalom.” This policy is designed for every clergyperson under Episcopal appointment.

Spiritual Formation is the intentional lifelong pursuit of the nourishment and renewal of the soul through the Holy Spirit in the use of the spiritual disciplines in order for clergy to center their lives in Christ so that the differentiated self* can live out the calling to be more Christ-like.

Continuing Education is the intentional development of the professional identity of the clergyperson through education and instruction that enhances the effectiveness and excellence of the clergyperson’s methods of work and self awareness so that the clergyperson can better equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Each year, effective clergypersons work collaboratively with P/SPR Committees and District Superintendents to select and participate in 20 continuing education contact hours (2.0 units) and 10 spiritual formation contact hours (1.0 units) which help them stay centered in Jesus Christ and hone skills needed to continue equipping congregations. Beginning in 2008, clergypersons will be expected to report continuing education and spiritual formation contact hours in the Dove System annually by December 1. Churches should ensure that every pastor has adequate time and financial support to participate. ***In addition to vacation time***, a minimum of 10 days each year is considered essential for a full-time clergyperson’s study, retreat, and renewal.

*Self-differentiation is a two-step process. The first step is knowing what one believes (an internal task) and the second step is defining oneself to others (an interpersonal task.) See http://www.academicleadership.org/emprical_research/The_Edwin_Friedman_Model_of_Family_Systems_Thinking.shtml

Benefits of CE/SF

- Improvement of some specific ministry skill, such as preaching, administration, time management, conflict management
- Increased spiritual maturity and commitment to Christ
- Life increasingly centered in Christ
- Increased self-differentiation
- Calmer spirit
- Increased understanding of the scriptures, Christian history, theology
- Development of new innovative programs, missions, or other ministry forms

Types of CE/SF

1. Professional skills/knowledge development.
2. Personal assessment and life planning
3. Self care and personal growth
4. Increasing faith and commitment through spiritual formation.

Approved Events and “Contact Hours”

There is no approved list of CE/SF events. Instead of naming an “approved list” of events, each clergyperson is responsible for choosing growth producing, transforming and formative events in collaboration with the P/SPRC and District Superintendent, and determining the appropriate number of “contact hours” to report for each event. A “contact hour” is the actual time of learning or transformation--usually the actual hours of lecture, instruction, group discussion, or individual study. Hours for travel, meals, sleep, fellowship, and group discussion of issues outside the study topic are not considered contact hours.

Forms of CE/SF

Actual contact hours (hours of lecture, instruction, group discussion, or individual study) during the following activities are forms of CE/SF:

1. Supervised activities such as degree programs, credit courses, pastor’s schools, clinical training, etc.
2. Short term events such as seminars and workshops
3. Peer study
4. Short study leaves
5. Sabbatical leaves
6. Carefully chosen travel and work experiences
7. DCM for probationary members
8. CE/SF retreats or events

Some Examples of Continuing Education/Spiritual Formation events:

- The Gathering, Lakeview
- Minister’s Week, SMU
- UMW School of Christian Missions
- District/Conference workshops, retreats, seminars
- Spirit Journey
- CPE

- Elder's, Deacon's, or Local Pastor's Retreat
- Bishop's Week, Mt. Sequoyah
- Minister as Instructor for an Intern Program
- Doctor of Ministry Programs or other degree programs that instruct ministry
- Upper Room Academy for Spiritual Formation
- Silent or Guided Retreat

What is not considered Continuing Education or Spiritual Formation:

- List of books read for sermon preparation
- Classes taught by the clergy person
- Study trips without contact hours
- Mission trips

Self-Directed Continuing Education

Continuing Education may be self directed once every quadrennium for 10 hours of the requirement, such as:

- Reading a series of books culminating in writing a study
- Distance learning, such as: Wayne Oates Institute
http://www.oates.org/olc/0100/learning_modules-01.html, Lovett Weems Church Leadership.org
- Personal study and writing

Self-Directed Spiritual Formation

Spiritual Formation may be self directed each year, but the clergy person must be willing to produce evidence of the work, such as:

- A selection from a journal of what is learned
- A schedule for the spiritual or silent retreat

Part-time Clergy

Clergypersons in less than full-time appointments should participate in Continuing Education and Spiritual Formation in accordance with the % of their status. (For example, a half-time pastor should complete half the full-time requirements or 10 Continuing Education hours and 5 Spiritual Formation hours.)

Accountability and Reporting

(See 2004 Book of Discipline, paragraphs 351.2, 351.5, 259.2.g.8)

The clergy person is responsible for devising a plan for CE/SF in collaboration with the S/PPRC and District Superintendent, implementing the plan, and reporting the completion of the plan through the Dove system by December 1 of each calendar year (beginning in 2008). A CEU certificate is not required. If an event is not fully attended, a portion of the event may be counted if the attendance is enough to receive the benefit of the event. For example, if a Clergy Gathering includes 10 Continuing Education contact hours and a clergy person leaves after 5 hours of attendance, he/she should report 5 hours of CEU or .5 credits.

Funding

Each clergyperson is responsible for continuing education and spiritual formation funds. Each church should ensure that their pastor(s) have adequate funds for all required CE/SF contact hours. We recommend a minimum of \$1,000 be available for those in full time appointments. Limited funds may be available through the Board of Ordained Ministry for CE/SF. Interested clergypersons should contact the Continuing Education Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry (currently Chappell Temple).