

Clergy Study Leave Policy

Enacted by Diocesan Council 1/9/03

Introduction

Research has demonstrated that study leaves provide an opportunity for growth and health for both the priest and the congregation. The priest may garner or develop new ideas and directions and may return refreshed with deeper commitment to the parish. Thus, study leaves for clergy are essential to the development of healthy, mission-focused congregations. The following policy is offered in the context of a series of expectations:

- It is the expectation that the study leave can be for education and refreshment.
- It is the expectation that the priest will provide to the Vestry an outline of a plan before the study leave begins and a report after it is concluded.
- It is the expectation that the parish will set aside funds on an annual basis for a study leave.
- It is the expectation that funds will be provided only for the priest (and not the family).
- It is the expectation that the priest will remain in his/her cure for at least a year after a study leave.

Policy

- All previous Diocesan study leave policies are repealed.
- Each congregation in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts shall establish a line item in its parochial budget of \$500 per full-time priest per year, or make other adequate provisions so that \$2,500 will be available at the time of the study leave; a pro-rated amount for each part-time priest per year.
- Eligibility for study leaves will be, at a minimum after five years of tenure, and priests who change cures within the Diocese will be eligible after four years in their new cure. Full time clergy will receive three (3) months study leave, and part-time clergy will be pro-rated as follows: half-time clergy - six (6) weeks of study leave, and quarter-time clergy - four (4) weeks of study leave. All study leave is granted in addition to regular vacation time and annual continuing education time.
- The parish will continue to provide the priest with regular salary and benefits during study leave.
- The parish will provide \$2,500 in expense money to the priest, and budget adequate funds per Diocesan guidelines for supply clergy during the priest's leave.
- The Diocese will provide a stipend for study and travel of up to \$2,500 per full-time priest and the priest will present to the Diocese a request for funds, with a tentative plan and budget before the end of September of the calendar year preceding the study leave.
- Congregations of the Diocese will include the provisions of this study leave policy in the priest's Letter of Agreement.