

# ***Clergy Renewal Leave Policy***

*Revised September 2018 and approved by Diocesan Council on September 20, 2018*

## **Introduction**

Research has demonstrated that Clergy Renewal Leave provides 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. Congregations may also learn in deeper ways what it means to claim the ministry of the Baptized. Thus, renewal 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 renewal 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 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 renewal leaves.
- It is the expectation that the priest will remain in his/her cure for at least a year after a renewal leave.
- A renewal leave “prep session” will be offered for clergy and wardens each year in late October for all who are preparing for leaves during the following year to discuss “best practices,” including financial matters, preparing the congregation, and re-entry.

## **Policy**

- Each congregation in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts shall establish a line item in its parochial budget of at least \$500 per full-time priest per year, or make other adequate provisions so that at least \$2,500 will be available at the time of the study leave. This amount can be pro-rated for part-time priests. *Application for outside grants, especially from the Lilly Endowment, is strongly encouraged.*
- Eligibility for 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 leave; and quarter-time clergy - four (4) weeks of leave. All renewal leaves are 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 their leave.
- The parish will provide not less than \$2,500 for clergy expenses and budget adequate funds per Diocesan guidelines for supply clergy during the priest's leave.
- The Diocese will provide \$2,500 per full-time priest for renewal leaves. 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 leave. This allows the diocesan budget to be prepared for the next year's expenses.
- Congregations of the Diocese will include the provisions of this renewal leave policy in the priest's Letter of Agreement.