

Renewal Leave FAQ

Orrville Trinity UMC

Spring 2019

What is a renewal leave?

Under Paragraph 350.3 of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline (2016)*, "a clergy member may request a formational and spiritual growth leave of up to six months while continuing to hold an appointment in the local church." Such a leave is defined as a time freed from normal duties in order to pursue spiritual and personal growth in the practice of ministry, and/or acquiring knowledge in related fields. Renewal leave is intended to prepare pastors to return to their pastoral appointments, empowered to continue their ministries.

Has Pastor David ever taken a renewal leave?

No. Since his time as a residential D. Min. student at Asbury Theological Seminary in 2007-08, Pastor David has not taken a renewal leave. A six-week renewal leave had been planned for him at his previous church appointment in 2016, but was called off once it was announced that David would be moving to Orrville.

How long would Pastor David be on leave?

Pastor David will be on renewal leave for a month, followed by one week of family vacation. In all, his time away will include a total of 6 Sundays and the 5 weeks in between.

When would the leave take place?

Pastor David will be on leave from Friday, June 21 - Monday, July 29. Sundays: June 23, 30; July 7, 14, 21, 28.

Would Pastor David return as our pastor at the end of it?

Barring any unforeseen circumstance, Pastor David would continue as pastor at Trinity upon his return.

Would Pastor David continue to be compensated while he was gone?

Yes, this is different from vacation pay. He will be paid his regular salary and benefits during the leave.

What would he do while on leave?

The renewal leave, for Pastor David, will be primarily about self-care as he steps away temporarily from the day-to-day and week-to-week duties of pastoral ministry in the local church. He has already begun to focus on healthier eating and exercise in these weeks leading up to the leave. The leave time will also give Pastor David time to learn and sharpen his focus around several ministry areas: prayer, preaching, and new expressions of the church. He will begin his renewal leave with a week-long silent prayer retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, KY. Pastor David has made it a regular practice to take week-long spiritual prayer retreats approximately every other year. During the remainder of the renewal leave, he plans to attend several churches on Sundays, visit regional Dinner Church sites, and read several books that have been sitting on his shelf.

Why is this a good time for Pastor David to take the leave?

Pastor David's oldest child, Daniel, will be entering his senior year in high school at the end of this summer. It is an ideal time to create family memories and do college visitations before the nest begins to empty. For David, this time of renewal leave feels overdue as he had planned and expected to take one back in 2016 in his previous church. It will be a good time for David to find renewal to prepare for the next 20+ years of ministry.

Why is this a good time for Trinity UMC to have him take the leave?

It has been a busy season of transition for Trinity UMC. We have had a good deal of turnover in our staff team in the last few years. Our United Methodist denomination faces a major challenge. During this season between General Conference sessions (2019, 2020), it seems like a good time to pause and, like Pastor David, focus on our own renewal as we prepare to enter into a new, and perhaps unfamiliar, season of ministry.

How will we keep the mission of Jesus alive at Trinity during the time Pastor David is on leave?

Like Pastor David, it is important for the congregation to have a clear focus during this time. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee expressed their desire for a similar theme of renewal to take place for the congregation. That way, when Pastor David and the congregation reunite, we can move forward in the same direction.

Who would preach and be in charge of worship?

Rev. Dr. David Oliver (*please find Rev. Oliver's bio below*)

Who would handle funerals and pastoral care emergencies in Pastor David's absence?

Rev. David Oliver would attend to the most critical pastoral care needs; we will seek out laypersons within our congregation who have gifts of Christian care to provide visitation to other needs during that time.

Will there be any assistance from the Canal District or East Ohio Conference to help cover the costs?

Yes. Our Staff Parish Relations Committee is in conversation with District Superintendent, Rev. Ed Peterson, to secure funds to help offset the cost of Rev. Dr. Oliver's services for preaching and urgent pastoral care. Rev. Peterson is supportive of Pastor David's leave and wants to see the district and church share the investment.

Who would be in charge of the staff and operating decisions while Pastor David is gone?

Linda and Dave Tibbitts will function as 'head of staff' while Pastor David is on leave. They will consult with the Ministry Support Team and/or other leadership groups to make important decisions. Several staff meetings will be held before the leave begins to ensure that coverage is in place. The Office Administrator (Jenny McFarren) and SPRC Chair (Marlin Nicol) will be able to contact Pastor David if his input is absolutely necessary.

How is this FAQ being distributed?

This FAQ will be sent out as a special newsletter to the congregation soon after May 19 verbal announcement and will be available on the Trinity UMC website, as well as hard copies at the Welcome Center in the church.

Who should I contact with additional questions, concerns, or feedback regarding this renewal leave?

Our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), made up of co-Chairpersons Marlin Nicol and John Stika. Other members – Art Vernon, Mike Davault, Donna Smith. Contact Marlin at (330) 601-3353 or (330) 682-4858.



Rev. Dr. David M. Oliver is the founder of Living Water, LLC in North Canton. He assists Christian leaders and churches across the globe to develop strengths, heal hurts, and create positive change. To do this he uses Transformational Coaching, Christ-centered Spiritual Direction, Inner Healing, and Freedom Encounter Deliverance. Dr. Oliver and his wife, Dr. Jane Hoyt-Oliver, have one married daughter and a delightful grandchild.

Dr. Oliver earned his Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Formation at Asbury Theological Seminary and his Master of Divinity from Duke University Divinity School. Before founding Living Water, he served United Methodist Churches in Ohio for nearly 30 years, including Smithville UMC, where he served for 8 years in the 1990's.