Renewal Leave FAQ’s

What is a renewal leave?
Under Paragraph 351.3 of the Book of Discipline, 2012, “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, 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. (From the California-Pacific Annual Conference brochure “Renewal Leave.”)

Has Pastor Mike ever taken a renewal leave?
No. During his time as a pastor including his time at Christ Church, Mike has not taken a renewal leave. He has taken two spiritual retreats for a few days at a time.

What is the grant?
The Lilly Foundation provides money, through a competitive application process, to fund the activities of the pastor’s renewal leave and some for the congregation’s renewal activities.

How much money is the grant?
The Lilly Foundation provides up to $50,000, of which up to $15,000 could be used for the congregation’s renewal activities.

How long would Pastor Mike be gone?
By the rules of the grant, he must be gone between three and four months; his plan is for a 12-week leave.

When would the leave take place?
The plan is for Pastor Mike to be on leave from mid-May until mid-August of 2015.

Would Pastor Mike return as our pastor at the end of it?
By the rules of the grant, he would have to be pastor at Christ Church for AT LEAST one year after the leave is taken, and the District Superintendent must provide a letter of support for the leave, indicating the Conference’s commitment to keep Pastor Mike here.

Would we pay Pastor Mike while he was gone?
By the rules of the grant, Pastor Mike must be paid his regular salary throughout the leave. This is not vacation pay.

What would he do while on leave?
The renewal leave, for Mike, would be about studying his heritage. He would visit churches and communities served by his great-grandfather and great-great grandfather, both Methodist pastors. He would re-read sermons and writings of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. The centerpiece of the program would be a 5-6 week trip for Mike and his family to Europe. They would visit places where Mike’s great-great grandfather served churches and other points of interest from his family in England, as well as places in Norway and Germany that Mike’s ancestors came from.

Why is this a good time for Pastor Mike to take the leave?
Mike’s oldest child will be entering his senior year in high school at the end of that summer. It is an ideal time to create family memories before the nest starts to empty! Mike will have completed 7 years at Christ Church by the beginning of the leave, making it an excellent time for him to reflect on his changing role and to be renewed to lead Christ Church into its second 50 years of existence.

Why is this a good time for Christ Church to have him take the leave? / How will this relate to the upcoming 50th Anniversary Celebration of Christ Church?
We will use the time while Mike is away to learn about and reflect on the history of Christ Church, who we are in the present and determine God’s vision for our future. A portion of the funds from the Grant will be used to expand on the activities planned leading up to and including the Anniversary Celebration in the fall of 2015.
Will Pastor Mike still take the leave if he doesn’t get the grant? Will the 50th Anniversary celebration still happen if he doesn’t get the grant?

Pastor Mike does plan to take renewal leave in the summer of 2015. The duration would be shorter. The 50th Celebration and associated renewal activities would still happen, but we would have to fund the celebration through other channels, probably the General Budget.

How will we keep attendance from decreasing from average attendance during those months while he is on leave?

The Pastor, General Council, and 50th Anniversary Planning Committee would plan worship services and activities to actively engage and motivate all regular Christ Church attendees to continue to Experience God’s Love through worship and Develop relationships through fun fellowship activities. A major part of this process will be exploring our past to determine’ God’s vision for our future as Christ Church.

Who would handle weddings and funerals in Mike’s absence?

Those who schedule weddings would need to find another pastor to do the service, but the church building would be available to them as always. Funerals could be conducted either by other staff members, some of whom already have experience doing funerals, or we would contact other United Methodist pastors in the area, as we would when Pastor Mike is on vacation.

Who would handle pastoral care emergencies in Mike’s absence?

It would be handled the same as when Mike is on vacation. We would cover with a combination of staff and other United Methodist pastors in the area.

Who would preach and be in charge of worship?

Former pastors of Christ Church will be invited to return to preach. Other staff members and lay members of Christ Church would also be invited to preach. The preacher each week would be responsible to work with staff to plan the worship. The scheduling of the preachers and some of the planning work would be done before Mike goes on leave.

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

Ultimately, the General Council is responsible for the vision and direction of Christ Church. Before Mike leaves, they will have a plan for renewal activities for Christ Church and the staff will help to execute that plan. Mike’s day-to-day responsibilities would be delegated to appropriate staff members and lay leaders. In the event of major staff conflict or a staff change, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee would step in to manage it. The Business Administrator and the SPRC Chair will be able to contact Pastor Mike if his input is absolutely necessary.

Who officially has to approve application for the grant?

The General Council of Christ Church, on the recommendation of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the District Superintendent, will need to approve prior to application.

Where can we see more details about the Lilly Endowment Grant Application?

The Request for Proposal documentation is located at CTS.edu in the Clergy Renewal section to the right.

How is this FAQ being distributed?

This FAQ will be available on the Christ Church website as well as hard copies at the Welcome Center in the church. We will also send it out as an insert in an upcoming newsletter.

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

You are encouraged to talk to any member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee or General Council or contact the Christ Church office with any feedback or questions. A list of committee members will be in the newsletter if you don’t have one already.