

GRACE BREAK: Planning Your Renewal Leave

Self-Directed Study



Big Sigh Ministries



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Introduction



A word from Big Sigh Ministries' founders Jack and Jacqueline Tookey



To begin your journey, we invite you to enjoy a moment of humor.
Watch "The Pastor's Chair" skit by The Skit Guys

Questions to Ponder

Where are you in your renewal leave process? Should you have taken it years ago, nearing burnout, planning for resilience or for some other purpose? Write all that apply in the space below. Be as honest as you can as this is your renewal journey.

On the lines below, write what you hope to learn/gather from working through this GRACE BREAK: Planning Your Renewal Leave material.



PART 1: PROBLEM AND PRESCRIPTION

PROBLEM



Choosing Health: Physical Symptoms and Prescriptions are Similar to Soul-Work, Rev. Jack D. Tookey, BSM Program Director

How is soul-work similar to, yet different from your medical care of self?

STRESSORS IN OUR LIVES

Below are two stress-indicators that can help you measure the pressure of stress on your life. Complete these two indicators, watch the video by Rev. Dr. Samuel Moore, Jr., read Johnathan Golden's Pastor's Persona synopsis and answer the questions that follow.

- Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale
The HRSS indicator does not mention every life stress scenario and you may need to add some of your own to make it more personal; however, it is a great way to monitor the amount of stress in your life so you can plan for better self-care.
- Big Sigh Ministries External and Internal Stressors worksheet (following pages)



Ministry External Stressors and Pressures

Which of the following **external stressors and pressures** are part of your current ministry environment?
Check each box that applies.

Cultural Myths and Misinformation

- "In order for *us* to be successful *you* must *produce!*"
- "If you don't produce more and more, there are four people waiting in line for your job."
- "In order to be a good parent, you must enroll your child into multiple sports, clubs, etc."
- "We're supposed to work all the time. That's what we do."
- Mass media's "bad news is best" approach
- Polarization of anything and everything
- Sundays are no longer considered as rest/worship days
- Our Sabbath days are filled with work at home and catching up
- Other(s) _____

Communication

- Pastors must always be available through face-to-face, phone call, fax, email, Facebook, texts, tweets, Face-time, Snap Chat, Instagram, etc.
- Pastors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for any communication a parishioner or constituent desires to have with them, regardless of the issue involved.
- Other(s) _____

Congregational Culture/Atmosphere.

- Desperation – Need to fill the "pews & plates"
- Passive Culture - "If there's a problem, pay someone else to take care of it."
- Pastor's/Christian Leaders are the spiritual problem solvers – "Fix it for me, preacher!"
- Low lay-member commitment - Folks will not participate in ministries
- Depressed Culture – Gray hair factor, fewer young people
- Loss of key leaders to age, death, "retirement"
- High job loss within congregation
- "We used to make a difference, but not as much anymore."
- Everyone is overwhelmed and overextended
- "Good pastors are perfect – they just don't make mistakes"
- Members run 24/7 and have little time for church
- Come to church or serve in the community only if there's nothing better to do
- Holiday practices of the congregation trump the family practices of the pastor
- Resist calls to unplug and observe the Sabbath
- Toxic congregational environment
- Clergy Killers and Pastor Smashers
- Expect too much from the clergy and staff – "Preacher! You need to..."
- Healthy Congregation with a lot going on – trying to keep up with it all
- Other(s) _____



Internal Stressors and Pressures

Which of the following internal stressors do you experience from within? Place a check mark in the boxes that apply to your current ministry situation.

- Up-on-a-pedestal syndrome – they expect me to, so I must...(*The Pastor’s Persona*, Dr. J. Golden)
- Martyr/savior complex – Unrealistic expectations of self
- Sabbath Hit or Miss – Ministers often don’t take weekly time away with God
- Human nature – “We want people to like us...”
- Egos – “The church can’t do it without me.” “The Church ‘needs’ me.”
- The Gospel is counter cultural – Constantly giving biblical challenges to folks builds up stressful pressure within us.
- Perfectionist personalities - “I’ve got to meet everyone’s expectations, complete all my projects and never make a mistake.”
- Addicted to busyness – “If I stop, I’ll get bored”
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – The trauma of past experiences carries over to today
- Struggle to find balance – Love and passion for God’s call on our lives drives us
- Ministry/compassion fatigue. “I want to care about you, but I just can’t get there.”
- Moral uprightness of a clergyperson – we are stressed by our high moral standards
- Sincere desire to be effective for the kingdom of God
- A sense of responsibility for the spiritual welfare of each person we serve
- “Take this job” syndrome – I used to be really good at <fill in the blank>. Maybe I can go do that, instead...
- Family concerns - My spouse and/or kids are hurting. What can I do for them?
- Feeling overwhelmed or depressed
- Other(s) _____

After completing the HRSS indicator and BSM External and Internal Stressors worksheet what surprises did you uncover?



How might you be more convinced of the need to create more balance in your life through the renewal leave experience?



Stressors That Pastors Are Under That Others Are Not , a conversation with Rev. Dr. Samuel Moore, Jr.

What from Dr. Moore's video resonates with you in your current ministry situation?

Are there additional stressors/pressures you are experiencing that are unique to clergy? If so, list them here:



Consider the synopsis of Johnathan Golden’s Pastor’s Persona below.

The Pastor’s Persona, Jonathan Golden, e-book

The Pastor’s Persona is:

- An unwritten, vaguely defined, but strongly intuitive character sketch of a “good” pastor (the congregation’s expectations of the pastor and the pastor’s expectations for him/herself)
- Often comprised of all the best qualities of the all of the previous pastors experienced by the individual or congregation
- In general, living up to the *persona* requires skills, abilities, and energy levels well beyond even the best human abilities
- The *persona* usually varies from congregation to congregation and individual to individual
- Ministers find themselves trying to fit the *persona* based both on their own and the congregation’s expectations
- There is **always** a difference between our actual selves and the *pastor’s persona*. This gap is a source of tremendous stress in ministry
- Depending on the level of the pastor’s awareness of it, the resulting stress can build up to the point of failure, whether physical, emotional, spiritual, or moral
- It is particularly aggravated in individuals who are perfectionists—a common trait among Christian leaders
- The most valuable way to deal with this stress is to remove yourself from the ministry environment – being apart, being yourself, and not trying to be the *persona*

Use the space provided to reflect what kind of expectations you have on yourself in your current ministry situation. Note those that may be unrealistic for you.



What expectations does your congregation have that might be unrealistic for you?

These stressors and expectation-pressures can lead to compassion fatigue within ministry professionals. Notes from Pastor Jerry Gernander's paper are shared below.

DEFINING COMPASSION STRESS, OR
SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS
Pastor Jerry Gernander

Stressors:

- Being sensitive to the needs of others. "...Two distinct meanings of sensitivity: awareness and accurate perception and the second is vulnerability to pain. We are good pastors because we are sensitive. And because we are sensitive, we pay a price." *Ochberg, Frank M. MD "When Helping Hurts". (from Pastor)*
- God calls pastors, sinners, to serve in a sinful world.
- Size of church does not seem to matter
- Mood of the congregation
- The pastor is often isolated, without a friend in the congregation
- Distant from family
- The environment in which he/she works
- Constant involvement in the lives of those they serve has a cumulative effect
- Pastors serve in extreme crises such as the diagnosis of cancer, addiction, divorce, abuse, suicide, terminal illness, death
- Lesser crises pastors serve in: guilt and shame, loneliness, anger and bitterness, sadness and discouragement, impatience and discontentment in their vocations, and doubts and fears. *(Pastor Gernander references Lucas Woodford, Great Commission, Great Confusion, or Great Confession?)*
- Declining attendance
- Budget deficits
- Apostasy in the world at large and its effect on the church's members
- Divorces, cohabitation, [and gender issues] that divide families
- Pastors live in a culture of criticism



COMPASSION STRESS LEADS TO THE DISORDER OF COMPASSION FATIGUE OR SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Compassion Fatigue, Key Characteristics: (Pastor J. Gernander's paper referencing Charles R. Figley).

1. Compassion fatigue is the emotional fallout from providing care.
2. Compassion fatigue can come on suddenly and rapidly, almost without warning — especially when pastor's daily work continually involves them in compassion stress, numbing them.
3. A victim of compassion fatigue feels responsible for providing care for people, and even still experiences "compassion satisfaction" along with compassion fatigue. He/she simply feels helpless with regard to finding relief.

WHAT COMPASSION FATIGUE LOOKS LIKE IN PASTORS from Pastor Jerry Gernander's paper referencing Dr. Beverly Yahnke's Doxology lecture, 2014.

1. Beginning of call – desire to exceed expectations
2. At end of stage 1 – rearranging expectations
3. Parish trumps personal priorities (postpone personal or family needs; overeating, less exercise, etc.)
4. Loss of sleep, exercise, and nutrition; give yourself pep talks for basic duties
5. No energy for friendships; family outings are made without you, at your suggestion
6. Small frustrations make you crazy; intense resentment, festering anger, feeling unappreciated; 'nobody understands me besides my wife [husband]'
7. Disillusionment; difficulty cultivating a spirit of thanksgiving; subtle paranoia; the ministry becomes a joyless progression of to-dos
8. Feeling trapped: "If I weren't a pastor, what else could/would I do?"; avoiding people; emotionally resigned
9. Letting personal care go; "getting through the day"; elevated blood pressure
10. Emotional pain; guilt and shame; "failure"; panic about the future; self-loathing
11. "I can't do this!"
12. Spiritual attack



HOW CAN PASTORS CONQUER COMPASSION FATIGUE/STSD?

1. Do not be alone. *[Find or develop] friendships, a support group, [and/or] receive pastoral care to hear the loving words of our LORD reflected back to him/her. Have someone to whom one can unburden himself/herself. Bonhoeffer, "Everyone who cares for the soul needs a person who will care for his soul."*
2. Daily Ordered prayer and meditation upon the Word of God. *Even our struggles, temptations, and spiritual testing can turn us back to God's Word and prayer.*
3. Honor the Biblical Sabbath. *Take time away to pray, study, and refresh yourself and take at least one day off a week. Sunday doesn't count!**
4. Spend time enjoying the Lord on a daily basis.*
5. Prioritize the things that are life-giving to you. *Take into account what energizes you. Prioritize time with God, reading the Bible, and church for spiritual renewal, key friends, family for emotional strength, exercise for physical health, hobbies, good music and literature for mental renewal.**
6. Recapture your original calling and vision. *[Rekindle your "first love."]**
7. Stay accountable to others within a leadership community. *We all need spiritual mentors and spiritual oversight. Peer friendships, coaching, accountability. Isolating one's self is the devil's strategy to destroy all leaders because during fragile times in our lives we need input from others the most.**
8. Take care of yourself physically to help stave off depression and/or fatigue.

* These items are from *10 Signs of Leadership Burnout and 5 Ways to Recover*,
by Bishop Joseph Mattera; *Ministry Today*, 2015

These stressors and compassion fatigue generate something in us that Big Sigh Ministries calls

"Symptoms of The Weary Soul"



ACTIVITY: Symptoms of the Weary Soul

Some pastor's and church leaders list the following symptoms of the weary soul. Circle which ones resonate with you and if you know of others add them in the space following.

- Needing to reconnect with God
- Needing to find internal compass again
- Needing to reconnect with one's calling
- Tired
- Weary
- Experiencing Compassion fatigue ("I want to care, but I just can't right now")
- Caution flags raised
- Starting to get angry and/or resentful
- Loss of joy
- Depressed
- Overwhelmed by the normal
- _____

Pastors take renewal leaves for many different reasons: renewal, burnout-prevention, personal spiritual reflection and reconnecting with family to name but a few.

What symptoms of the weary soul are you having that would make you think you need or desire a "Renewal Leave"?

OR

Are you in a preventative mindset needing Vitamins and planning ahead?



PRESCRIPTION

Biblical Prescription

A Quiet Place and Pattern for Renewal

Read Mark 6 and answer the questions below.

Focus passages: Mark 6:30-32, 45-52

What prompted Jesus to command the disciples to come away with Him by themselves to a quiet place and get some rest?

What aspect of the disciples' ministry resonates with you and your ministry?

What aspect of your ministry might be different from the disciples' ministry?

Mark 6 is one bible passage that gives us an ideal pattern for renewal leave: Get alone, get with people who love you, and show compassion where you are not in charge. See chart below.
Additional copies may be downloaded from the link on website.



GRACE BREAK Leave Planning, The Jesus Way, Mark 6

Get By Yourself	Get With People Who Love You	Show Compassion for Others (When You're Not In Charge)
<p>Examples: Two weeks to a month of alone time at beach, mtns., etc. (Your "broad space" place). Resting, playing, sitting in the quiet before God's presence</p>	<p>Examples: Visit family and friends or take a relaxing family vacation Go fishing/shopping with a good friend (not a church member) (A stress-free vacation – don't over-plan)</p>	<p>Examples: Serve at a soup kitchen not in your church's town/area, take a mission trip (not with your church) where you are not in charge but part of a team, work with Habitat for Humanity</p>



Grace Break Leave Dreaming and Planning Tool

Guiding Questions	Description	Minimal Leave	Dream Leave
What type of leave	1-month, six-week, 2-month, 3-month renewal leave. Recovery, renewal, or creative?		
When?	Dates, season preference, urgency?		
Where?	Mountains? Beach? Urban? Rural? Lake/Stream? Other		
Education?	Will any be needed? If so, what? (Note: Education can be helpful at the beginning or end of a renewal leave).		
Grants needed?	Are there financial resources that this renewal leave requires?		
What are your goals?	When you are done, what do you want to see when you look back?		
What feeds your soul?			



Renewal Leave as a “Broad Space”

Read Psalm 31



Bishop Larry Goodpaster: Finding a Broad Space

REFLECTION

What would a “quiet place” or “broad space” look like for you?

Activity Time!

Supplies needed: calming background music, white paper, magic markers, crayons or colored pencils, and a quiet place to dream

On a piece of white paper draw a picture of your quiet place/broad space.

Place your drawing on the wall, your desk, the refrigerator – some place where you will see it often and be reminded of your renewal dream.



PART 2: PERMISSION AND PROMISE

PERMISSION

God's Permission/Calling/Command

Review Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:8-11, Psalm 31, Mark 6, Matthew 11:28-30

Which of these passages are the foundation for your Sabbath practices and why?

Church Permission

The United Methodist System (Please note: you can adapt this to your particular denomination or organization's policy on taking leave or sabbatical).

Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth Program (See United Methodist Book of Discipline paragraph below for further information).

- a) At least one week each year
- b) At least one month during one year of every quadrennium
- c) Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the ministers' vacation

Formational and Spiritual Growth Leave ("Renewal Leaves" Big Sigh Ministries); ¶1350, 5.c.3.

- a) One to six months while continuing to hold an appointment in a local church.
- b) Available to clergy who've held full-time appointments for at least six years.
- c) With approval of SPRC/PPRC, the church council, and the District Superintendent
- d) Annual conferences are encouraged to assist with pulpit supply and other temporary support for such leaves.

BOD 2016, ¶1350 See below for full paragraph.

- e) Petition 9 (approved June 12, 2021) Vacation and Continuing Education for Clergy (As found on page 273 of the 2021 Journal of the Western North Carolina Annual Conf.)



2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church

¶ 350. Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth—

1. Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities. These practices embody the Wesleyan emphasis on lifelong growth in faith, fostered by personal spiritual practices and participation in covenant communities. Each annual conference, through the chairs of the Clergy Orders and Fellowship or other leaders designated by the bishop, shall provide spiritual enrichment opportunities and covenant groups for deacons, elders, and local pastors.

2. A clergy member's continuing education and spiritual growth program shall include professional formation leaves at least one week each year and may include at least one month during one year of every quadrennium. Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the ministers' vacations and shall be planned in consultation with their charges or other agencies to which they are appointed as well as the bishop, district superintendent, and annual conference continuing education committee.

3. 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 leaves are available to clergy members who have held full-time appointments for at least six years. Such a leave shall be with the approval of the committee on pastor-parish relations, the church council, and the district superintendent. Annual conferences are encouraged to assist with pulpit supply and other temporary support for such leaves.

4. Financial arrangements for continuing education as part of one's professional development, formation, and spiritual growth shall be negotiated in the following manner: (a) for elders and local pastors it shall be done in consultation with the district superintendent and the committee on pastor-parish relations; (b) for deacons, with an appropriate supervisory body; (c) for district superintendents, with the district committee on superintendency; (d) for conference staff, with the appropriate supervisory body; (e) for others in extension ministries or appointments beyond the local church, with the appropriate persons in their agency.

5. Clergy shall be asked by the district superintendent in the charge conference to report on their programs of continuing education, formation, and spiritual growth for the past year and plans for the year to come. The district superintendent shall also ask the local church to describe its provision for time and financial support of continuing education for ministry, professional development, formation and spiritual growth for the pastors, diaconal ministers and deacons serving their primary appointment in that local church.



6. Clergy in extension ministries and appointments beyond the local church shall give evidence of their continuing formation and spiritual growth program and future plans in their annual reports (§ 344.2a).

Government Permission

FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act)

3-month leave, guarantee of same job when return. Up to employer as to whether paid or not paid. Since pastors are employed at local church levels, but are members of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church (or other conference of UMC), our polity is then consulted. (In other words, salary to be paid).

Self-Permission



Rev. Dr. Mary Kinken: Self-Permission as a Necessary Step

REFLECTION

Which of these permissions has the greatest impact on your decision to take leave, and why?



HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Helpful definitions as you move forward in planning your renewal leave

Ministry Resilience



Watch Dr. Mary Perkins Kinken's conversation on ministry resilience.

What definition of ministry resilience does Dr. Kinken give?

According to Dr. Kinken, how is ministry like a marathon?

How do you see this definition helping you maintain balance in your ministry?



Bishop Larry Goodpaster speaks of getting apart so you don't fall apart. Watch the video.

What quote does Bishop Goodpaster reference from Leonard Sweet's book, A Jesus Prescription for a Healthy Life?

Self-Reflection

Of Dr. Kinken's and Bishop Goodpaster's conversations about ministry resilience, what resonates with you and why?

Sabbath

Read the Creation Story and God's Seventh Day Rest
Genesis 1:1-2:3; Focus on 2:1-3

What is God's definition of Sabbath according to this passage?



Why do you think God rested on the seventh day?

Do you take a Sabbath day, a whole day of rest each week? Yes No

If no, why not?

If yes, what does your Sabbath day look like?



Read the Giving of The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17; focus on the fourth commandment, verses 8-11

How important does God consider the Sabbath day and how do you know?

Suggested further reading:

[24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life](#) by Matthew Sleeth

[The Jesus Prescription for a Healthy Life](#) by Leonard Sweet

[Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight In Our Busy Lives](#) by Wayne Muller

[Sabbath](#) by Dan B. Allender

[Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership: 7 Rs of Sanctuary for Pastors](#) by Debora Jackson

[Leaders Who Last: Sustaining Yourself and Your Ministry](#), Margaret J. Marcuson

[Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry](#), by Roy M. Oswald

Sabbatical

“A ministry sabbatical is a period of time, usually three months, when ministry leaders and congregations set aside the leader’s normal responsibilities for the purpose of rest and renewal toward sustained excellence in ministry. A ministry sabbatical is not an extended vacation nor is it an academic sabbatical that normally involves extensive study. A ministry sabbatical is a release from the routine of the call for the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual well-being of the ministry leader.” <https://ministrysabbaticalresources.com/what-is-a-sabbatical%3F>

Note: In the United Methodist Church, language is very important when seeking a leave. Be sure you are clear as to what type of leave you are seeking: sabbatical, spiritual formation, renewal, family, etc. Read thoroughly [The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016](#), ¶1350. Consult your District Superintendent when needing help with interpretation.



PROMISE

Important Benefits of Taking a Renewal Leave

What God’s Word says

Exodus 14:14 (NIV2011)

¹⁴ “...The LORD will fight for you; you need only to **be still.**”

Psalms 46:10 (NIV2011)

¹⁰ He says, “**Be still,** and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV 2011)

²⁸ “**Come to me,** all you who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest.** ²⁹ **Take my yoke** upon you and **learn from me,** for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls.** ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Wisdom from Pastoral Counselors.

Watch these videos and answer questions.



Dr. Mary Perkins Kinken: Benefits of Taking Leave

List your benefit take-aways from Dr. Kinken’s video. What other benefits do you think/hope you will experience from taking a renewal leave?



Dr. Lee Dukes: Leave Can Be a Major Turning Point in Ministry

Reflect on the following quote from Dr. Duke's video:

"I saw things in a spiritually illuminating way that helped transform my life to be ready for the next half." Dr. Lee S. Dukes, III

How might your life be transformed after your renewal leave?



Salem UMC, Albemarle, NC: A Church Leadership Perspective on Benefits

According to the Salem church leader's ideas, what benefits might you gain from taking a renewal leave?



What benefits might the local church gain from a pastor taking a renewal leave?

Here are some additional thoughts:

- “A healthy church might look at their own church systems while the pastor’s away.”
Dr. Lee S. Dukes, III
- “Congregations grow and are fruitful when pastors are healthy and fruitful. This is a tool so that a pastor can be healthy and fruitful. So, take advantage of it.”
Rev. Dr. Samuel Moore, Jr
- A church may gain greater ownership
- A pastor being on leave will enable lay people to take leadership
- Congregations will learn what the pastor does.
- Pastors will model good self-care for parishioners.

How might God’s Kingdom be advanced when a pastor takes renewal leave?

...We talk a lot about leadership development among the clergy and this model of taking time away, this model of getting recharged and renewed...that is a healthy model and a healthy model is attractive. People are drawn to health. The healthiest person in a system, any system anywhere, is going to draw followers. So, when we take time away, when we take good care of our self and healthy practices, we draw people to us and that draws people to God and that’s sort of the point. Dr. Mary Perkins Kinken



*Please note: Now is a good time to take a break from the work and let things settle in. Allow more time for dreaming your leave. If you have more questions, feel free to contact Big Sigh Ministries.

For further reading:

Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning by Richard Bullock , Richard Bruesehoff

Journeying Toward Renewal: A Spiritual Companion for Pastoral Sabbaticals by Melissa Bane Sevier

A Sabbatical Primer for Pastors: How to Initiate and Navigate a Spiritual Renewal Leave by David C Alves

A Sabbatical Primer for Churches: How to Love and Honor the Pastor God Has Given You by David C Alves with Marcy Devers Alves



PART 3 : PROBLEM SOLVING

OBSTACLES

Potential Obstacles to Renewal Leave.

In working with pastors and church leadership groups, Big Sigh Ministries has found that anticipating any concerns during the planning process is helpful. If pastor, family and congregation honestly think through these concerns together and/or separately and seek answers ahead of time, the pastor's renewal leave will be more successful for pastor, his/her family and the congregation.

Brainstorm and write down all concerns that come to mind in the spaces below. You can do this individually or in consultation with your family and church/ministry setting leaders.

After you have created your lists, have open conversations around each concern and come up with possible solutions.

- Pastor's concerns

- Family Concerns

- Church Concerns



PLANNING

Planning Ahead to Achieve a Successful Renewal Leave

While the information below is listed in steps, you may work on them simultaneously or in a different order.

Step 1: Self

- Dream your leave, pray, find that quiet place before God.
- Consider when might be the best time for you to take a renewal leave.
- How long do you feel you might need to take? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 months, or more?
- Consult with Big Sigh Ministries for resources and possible connections: Grants and scholarships through the Annual Conference, Big Sigh Ministries, or other resources.
- Locations to retreat
- Big Sigh Ministry consulting
- Pulpit and Pastoral Care Supply
- Other Resources...

Step 2: Plan with your family

- Begin the conversation
- Test the waters so to speak so you discover any concerns
- Discover together who in your family system might want to be a part of some of your leave
- Evaluate what time of year your family might think is best for you to take a renewal leave

Step 3: Plan with your District Superintendent

- Begin the conversation
- Be clear that you would like to plan for renewal, not wait 'til crisis
- Ask questions about available funds, pulpit and/or pastoral care supply

Step 4: Plan with your church leadership team (SPRC/PPRC, etc.)

- Begin the conversation
- Encourage them to keep the conversation open, to ask questions
- Provide them with information. This is an opportunity to encourage the use of Big Sigh Ministries consulting



Benefits of Planning Ahead

- Resting ahead of time helps you be more prepared to do the internal work
- More resources available for which to apply
- More time to prepare the congregation
- More time to prepare your family
- Pray! There's merit in the process

Crisis Reality

- Identify and begin work with a pastoral counselor if you don't already have one
- Talk to your DS, PPR Chair, etc.
- Talk to Big Sigh Ministries



Salem UMC, Albemarle, NC: A Church's Perspective on Planning Ahead



PART 4: PLANNING YOUR RENEWAL LEAVE NUTS AND BOLTS

As you continue to dream and plan for your renewal leave, you might benefit by using some of the tools we have developed for this purpose. Below is a list of items and activities that will be beneficial for developing your renewal leave plans. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are available for download on our website from the workshop page. Other items refer to meetings and conversations that will be very helpful as you develop your plans.

Beginning to DREAM and Renewal Leave Consultations

Set aside free time for dreaming and filling in chart, etc. (Half a day a week)

Consultations with Jack or Jacqueline are available – see the Contact Us page on the website

Pastor's Renewal Leave Planning Chart and Checklist

Review the downloadable checklists (Pastor's and Church's)*

Work through the Planning Chart prayerfully*

Increasing Local Church Awareness of the Need for Renewal

- 1) Schedule conversations with church leaders
 - a. Cover stresses unique to pastors
 - b. Answer questions leaders might have using the checklists as guides
 - c. Big Sigh Ministries may be a helpful sounding board

- 2) Congregational Tools (SPRC Packets*)
 - a. Renewal Leave Brochure
 - b. 2016 Book of Discipline ¶1350
 - c. Leadership Checklist while pastor is on leave
 - d. Sample Pastor and Staff Renewal Leave Policy

- 3) How Big Sigh Ministries Can Help
 - a. Feel free to contact us (see the Contact Us page on bigsigh.org)
 - b. Keep the conversation open with your family, church, DS, etc.
 - c. GRACE BREAK Micro-grants *may* be available (very limited)
 - d. What questions do you have? We can help you find answers.
DON'T GIVE UP, it's too important!

Things to remember according to Dr. Lee Dukes, III

- 1) Don't plan too much
- 2) Not everyone will be happy with your self-care choice to take a renewal. That's okay.
- 3) Don't stop the renewal leave conversation.