

SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY FOR CHURCHES

In the Blackhawk Presbytery

INTRODUCTION

Sabbath rest is built into the fabric of creation and is necessary for the well-being of community, for it reminds persons who they are and who God is. Jesus offered this invitation to his disciples: “Come and rest awhile” (Mark 6:31). Amidst the constant demands of ministry, Jesus knew the need for Sabbath time. Sabbatical is a time to receive, to be nurtured, to dig deeper into one’s self and one’s relationship to God. It is also a time to find one’s own roots and stories, to be renewed, refreshed, and revitalized by the breath of God. Blackhawk Presbytery highly recommends sabbaticals and feels they are a wise and healthful investment for Pastors and their congregations. Blackhawk Presbytery recommends that sabbaticals should be in the terms of call of all new Pastors. Blackhawk Presbytery also recommends adding sabbatical time to all Pastors currently serving (also adding them retroactively to date of hire).

PURPOSE

The purpose of a sabbatical is to provide a time away from normal duties for rest and renewal. It is a time to deepen one’s relationship with God and to clarify call. We all experience renewal in different ways; therefore each Pastor is encouraged to prayerfully discern the type of experience(s) that will renew his or her spirit and provide new life and creativity and energy for continued faithful ministry. A sabbatical plan needs to fit each individual pastor. The sabbatical will provide growth opportunities and the potential for new life for the Church. Church leadership and other volunteers will have the opportunity to assume greater responsibility for the life and well-being of the Church. To further help during the sabbatical time, the congregation may develop partnerships with other Presbyterian churches. With all these new opportunities taking place, new gifts and graces for ministry will emerge that will enrich the on- going leadership of the Church.

ELIGIBILITY

It is recommended that all full time ordained ministers of Churches in Blackhawk Presbytery be eligible for Sabbatical according to the schedule below:

1. After each six (6) years of service to a particular church in the Blackhawk Presbytery, it is recommended that the Pastor may have up to three (3) months to be taken in his/her seventh (7th) year.
2. The church may allow for an earlier leave in the event that the Pastor’s needs make this necessary. This should be no sooner than five years from the date of hire or from the date of return from a previous sabbatical. If an earlier sabbatical is granted, it shall be only for a period of two (2) months.
3. Vacation time may be attached to the Sabbatical with Session’s permission.
4. No study leave will be granted during the year of sabbatical.
5. The Pastor must be able to commit to remain at his/her church for at least one year of service beyond the date of return from the Sabbatical. Failure to return to his/her employment for at least one year shall create an obligation on the part of the Pastor to

refund the entire salary (excluding benefits) received for the period of the regular sabbatical leave. The requirement for repayment may not be waived without the specific approval of the Session of the Church.

PLANNING

Adequate opportunities for planning the substance of the sabbatical leave and for sharing of its results are vital to its success and should not be overlooked. After assessing eligibility, the Pastor shall:

1. Submit a request for sabbatical to his/her session one year in advance of the leave for its approval.
2. Upon approval, the session will appoint a Sabbatical Renewal Team (SRT) to work with the Pastor on planning. (Blackhawk Presbytery recommends that the SRT should consist of at least one or two Elders and two or three members at large of the congregation).
3. The SRT will present a written plan of activity for the leave to session for its approval at least six (6) months prior to the start of the Sabbatical. This plan of activity should include a description of the goals to be achieved and the expected end result, together with a personal statement as to why this sabbatical leave would be valuable to both the individual and the church. It shall be the responsibility of the SRT to inform the congregation of sabbatical leave at least ten months prior to the leave with an update when the approved plan is completed.
4. Blackhawk Presbytery, members of the Presbytery, and COM are willing to offer advice in the planning of the sabbatical.
5. Upon approval by the session, the plan will be forwarded to the Commission on Ministry (COM) of the Blackhawk Presbytery for their review. Included in the plan will be the church's plan for coverage of services (COM will have a list of Pastors and CRE's who would be willing to help) and a general outline of the staff member's expected calendar during the leave.
6. At the completion of the leave, the Pastor will present a report of activities and findings in written and/or oral form at the next regular meeting of session. Copies of a written report will also be sent to COM.

FUNDING

During the sabbatical leave, the individual church will continue to pay salary, housing, FICA contribution, pension/major medical dues, as well as professional, auto and continuing education expenses and any other package expenses at the same level as those already in effect at the time of the leave.

Each church will also contract for the necessary interim staff coverage during the period of Sabbatical Leave. Each church is encouraged to set aside funds each year so that resources will be available for both the Pastor and the congregation during the time of sabbatical leave. A plan for funding the leave, including all expenses related to the necessary coverage during the leave should be a part of the leave proposal. All expense account monies wishing to be rolled over and used for sabbatical leave, may only be rolled over from the year prior to the leave and must be approved by the Personnel Committee and Session of the individual church.

Pastors may apply for grants that are available for sabbatical leave. COM will have knowledge of these grants. There are informational resources available on how to apply for grants (look at resources at the end of this document).

RE-ENTRY

At the completion of sabbatical leave, the Pastor shall present an oral/written report to Session with the details of his/her leave as well as reflections on its value and benefits. The stories of how God's plans were followed and the experiences during the sabbatical should be reported to the congregation. This is a time the congregation can also share how the ministry of the church was changed during the sabbatical time.

CONCLUSION

A sabbatical for clergy renewal creates space in which God can work in new ways, for both the Pastor and the church. Let the creative juices and imagination flow. Avoid prescriptions; grow in your own way. Set out with enthusiasm and expectation. Breathe deeply as you go. Let yourself wonder and be open to the surprises of God, and know that years from now you and those you serve will still be reaping the benefits and the blessings of the experience.

RESOURCES

A recent study shows that sabbaticals can have a significant impact on a pastor's leadership skills and qualities (including effectiveness, delegation, creativity and confidence), relationships and self-identity. Many sources suggest sabbaticals not only benefit the pastor, but the congregation as well – giving them opportunities to develop new lay leadership, ministries and strategies for church growth, as well as creating openings for the laity to expand, try new things, and develop untapped talents and gifts. Research suggests that sabbaticals are a useful tool for healthy and thriving relationships between pastor and congregation, preventing pastor burn-out, and maintaining a church's vitality.

Web Sources:

The Transformational Effects of Sabbatical in Leadership Development
<http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jbpl/vol5no1/6turner.pdf>

Sabbatical Leave Handbook <http://www.lreda.org/content/sabbatical-leave-handbook>

Sabbaticals – The Necessary Option
<http://pinmin.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Sabbatical-Policy-Booklet.pdf>

Congregations Need Sabbatical and Jubilee
<http://www.abpnews.com/blog/leadership/congregations-need-sabbatical-and-jubilee-2013-11-01/>

Renewal Time: Planning Your Sabbatical (Near bottom, mentions congregational sabbatical)
<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2007/05/renewal-time-planning-your-sabbatical.html>

Pastor's Sabbatical Spurs Congregations Creative Streak
<http://www.ucc.org/news/pastors-sabbatical-spurs.html>

Going on Sabbatical Together

<http://spselca.org/documents/SPSDocuments/Sabbatical%20Going%20on%20Sabbatical%20Together%20Handout.pdf>

How to Score Your Sabbatical

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2012/summer/scoresabbatical.html>

How to Plan Your Sabbatical

<http://calclassis.org/how-to-plan-your-sabbatical/>

Caring For the Pastor: The Sabbatical

http://www.alliancenet.org/CC/article/0,,PTID314526_CHID598014_CIID2309204,00.html

Rationale for Sabbatical Leave

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/ministers/rationale-sabbatical-leave/>

Don't Make Your Pastor a Statistic

<http://www.9marks.org/blog/dont-make-your-pastor-statistic>

Pastor Burn-Out Statistics

<http://www.pastorburnout.com/pastor-burnout-statistics.htm>

My Sabbatical and My Evolution as a Leader-Coach

http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/sites/default/files/transcripts/clergy_sabbatical/FredNelson_My_Sabbatical_and_My_Evolution_Sabbatical.pdf

What Difference does a Pastoral Sabbatical Make: What Pastors and Congregations Have to Say

http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/sites/default/files/transcripts/clergy_sabbatical/SheldonSorge_What_Difference_Sabbatical.pdf

Taking a Sabbatical From Church

<http://theamericanjesus.net/?p=10957>

Clergy Renewal Programs (Part I): Taking Time to Renew Ministerial Vocations:

http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/sites/default/files/transcripts/clergy_sabbatical/TracySchier_Clergy_Renewal_I_ClergySabbatical.pdf

Clergy Renewal Programs (Part II): Renewal is Key to Pastors' Sabbaticals

http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/sites/default/files/transcripts/clergy_sabbatical/TracySchier_Clergy_Renewal_II_ClergySabbatical.pdf

Sabbatical Resources

<http://nextchurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/SabbaticalResources.pdf>

Sabbaticals for Pastors

<http://wscal.edu/resource-center/resource/sabbaticals-for-pastors>

The Dark Side of Sabbatical (A guide on what NOT to do and how to avoid certain pitfalls or mistakes)

<http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/the-dark-side-sabbatical>

Unusual Sabbaticals

http://www.lynnabaab.com/articles_unusual_sabbaticals.htm

Sabbatical Leave Resources

<http://www.pointloma.edu/experience/academics/centers-institutes/center-pastoral-leadership/church-relations/sabbatical-leave-resources>

Pinterest Page on Sabbatical Ideas

<http://www.pinterest.com/ladyrev60/sabbatical-ideas/>

BOOKS

The Alban Guide to Clergical Renewal:

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781566994873>

<http://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?sts=t&tn=Clergy+Renewal%3A+The+Alban+Guide+to+Sabbatical+Planning>

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-

[keywords=Clergy%20Renewal%3A%20The%20Alban%20Guide%20to%20Sabbatical%20Planning](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Clergy%20Renewal%3A%20The%20Alban%20Guide%20to%20Sabbatical%20Planning)

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

[http://www.amazon.com/Sabbatical-Primer-Pastors-Initiate-](http://www.amazon.com/Sabbatical-Primer-Pastors-Initiate-Spiritual/dp/1495255166/ref=sr_1_8?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669388&sr=8-8&keywords=sabbatical)

[Spiritual/dp/1495255166/ref=sr_1_8?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669388&sr=8-8&keywords=sabbatical](http://www.amazon.com/Sabbatical-Primer-Pastors-Initiate-Spiritual/dp/1495255166/ref=sr_1_8?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669388&sr=8-8&keywords=sabbatical)

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

[http://www.amazon.com/Journeying-Toward-Renewal-Spiritual-](http://www.amazon.com/Journeying-Toward-Renewal-Spiritual-Sabbaticals/dp/1566992737/ref=sr_1_10?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669491&sr=8-10&keywords=sabbatical)

[Sabbaticals/dp/1566992737/ref=sr_1_10?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669491&sr=8-10&keywords=sabbatical](http://www.amazon.com/Journeying-Toward-Renewal-Spiritual-Sabbaticals/dp/1566992737/ref=sr_1_10?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669491&sr=8-10&keywords=sabbatical)

The Sabbath by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (not about Sabbaticals specifically, but Sabbath in general – filled with beautiful, inspiring, profound truths about the Sabbath.)

[http://www.amazon.com/The-Sabbath-Abraham-Joshua-](http://www.amazon.com/The-Sabbath-Abraham-Joshua-Heschel/dp/0374529752/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669277&sr=8-1&keywords=heschel)

[Heschel/dp/0374529752/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669277&sr=8-1&keywords=heschel](http://www.amazon.com/The-Sabbath-Abraham-Joshua-Heschel/dp/0374529752/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1402669277&sr=8-1&keywords=heschel)

SABBATICAL GRANTS AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Lilly Endowment Grant Website: <http://www.lillyendowment.org/religion.html>

(Up to \$50,000 (15k for congregation, 35k for pastor)

Wheatland Grant (Not clear if this is still available, but it has a lot of really great info in the PDF file):

http://www.wheatridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/FINAL_SABBATICAL_PAPER_2011.pdf