

## **SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY**

Approved February 18, 2020

### **A. Rationale & Applicability**

The purpose of a sabbatical is to enhance and strengthen a minister's effectiveness by giving them an uninterrupted time to care for their own well-being, and to return to their work with renewed energy and enthusiasm. A sabbatical is an extension of the concept of a sabbath day and sabbath year for renewal. Often, after completion of a number of years of service, a minister needs time to refocus their vision for ministry, explore new personal and professional skills, and renew their sense of call. Just as the sabbath day is a gift from God, during a busy week of work, so the greater gift of a sabbatical can offer valuable spiritual rejuvenation for those who labor continuously on behalf of God's people.

A period of sabbatical leave can also have several benefits for the church:

1. Enhancement and development of the gifts of lay leaders
2. A chance for other staff to stretch and grow into new ways of ministering
3. A new appreciation of both the pastor themselves and the role of the pastor in the life of the congregation
4. Rest and renewal may enhance the longevity of the pastor's relationship with the congregation

Applicability: although this policy is specifically directed toward installed clergy, everything contained in this policy can also apply to temporary pastoral relationships, Christian Educators, and Commissioned Ruling Elders.

### **B. General Guidelines**

Sabbatical leave is qualitatively different from vacation or study leave for the minister, in that there is a plan for personal and professional restoration. Thus, neither vacation nor study leave should be affected by sabbatical leave – however, vacation time or study leave may be taken in conjunction with the sabbatical leave, adding no more than four additional weeks of time away.

Sabbatical leave shall last for a period of at least three months, containing thirteen consecutive Sundays.

Unless otherwise negotiated in terms of call, ministers with six continuous years of service (with at least three years of continuous service to their current congregation) shall be eligible for a sabbatical. Sabbatical leave may be repeated at six-year intervals thereafter.

Pastors who complete a sabbatical shall assure the session of continued service to that congregation for at least one full year after the conclusion of the sabbatical.

## **C. Procedure**

Plans for sabbatical should be thoroughly discussed and approved by the pastor and the session and have a clearly stated focus.

### **1. Minister's Role**

- a. One year in advance, begin discussing the timing and nature of the sabbatical with the session.
- b. Three months in advance, bring the sabbatical proposal to the session, which shall contain a brief description of the sabbatical's focus and an overview of proposed activities.
- c. Once the sabbatical proposal is approved, work with the appropriate leaders and committees to ensure pastoral responsibilities are covered and pulpit supply is lined up.
- d. Upon return, present a written overview of the sabbatical experience to the session.

### **2. Session's Role**

- a. One year in advance, discuss with the pastor the timing and nature of the sabbatical.
- b. Three months in advance, receive for approval the minister's sabbatical proposal, and once approved, notify the Commission for Church Professionals of the planned sabbatical.
- c. Throughout this process and through the sabbatical period, communicate to the congregation the importance and value of the sabbatical for the church.
- d. Continue the terms of call commitments to the minister during the sabbatical's time frame.
- e. Receive from the pastor a written overview of the sabbatical experience upon their return.
- f. Fully fund any temporary pastoral or professional services necessary in the absence of the minister. (Congregations may wish to set aside funds each year in anticipation of requests for a sabbatical leave.)

### **3. Commission for Church Professionals' Role**

- a. Serve as mediator and resource regarding any concerns of the session or the minister in relation to the sabbatical and help both work out details upon request.
- b. Appoint a session moderator during the minister's absence.