



## **SABBATICAL LEAVE GUIDE**

### Introduction

How do clergy keep their vision and their passion alive? It has been observed by many that a priest really only reaches his/her full stride in a new church after 6 years. However, priests frequently change churches at this point just to get the respite they need because there is no other recourse available to them.

Moving every four to six years means priests never grow beyond their ability to minister for that period of time. This does not serve our parishes or ministry well. Hence a sabbatical offers a priest time to step back from the day-to-day pressures, to heal his/her own soul, recover vision, rethink the mission, research new possibilities to fulfill it, and return with a restored passion.

Clergy need to practice appropriate self-care in all areas of health: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. This can be done in several ways including: taking a true weekly Sabbath; allowing time for personal retreat (e.g., one day a month); providing for a reading week(s); and occasionally taking a longer term sabbatical.

### Definition of Sabbatical

A sabbatical is an approved time away from work granted to full time clergy or ministry staff who has been employed for the same employer for a period of 6 years.

### Benefits

A sabbatical provides various benefits including the following.

- Rest and spiritual renewal
- Renewed commitment to the church
- Enhanced job performance

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- Staying current with professional developments
- Opportunity to pursue an area of theological interest
- Replenished energy stores
- Renewed emotional and physical health
- Increased spiritual vitality
- Acquirement of new skills
- Rediscovered zeal for ministry
- Personal growth and refreshment
- Increased effectiveness in ministry
- Rekindled sense of God's calling
- Nurture of the body and soul

### Eligibility

- Full time ordained clergy
- Ministry associates
- Full time non-ordained ministry staff
- An applicant must have continuously served the congregation for 6 years

### Terms

- May be provided after 6 years of continuous service.
- Following initial sabbatical, subsequent ones may be taken after 6 years of additional service
- Normally provided for a period of 3-4 months (will vary with each circumstance)
- Ideally to be taken all at once but may be taken in segments
- Those on sabbatical are to be completely released from all duties during sabbatical
- Sabbatical time may not be accumulated
- Clergy may still receive continuing education and vacation time during their sabbatical year.

### Process and Conditions

- Proposal for Sabbatical must be submitted to Council (Executive Leadership) and the Diocesan Bishop, 3 months prior to the sabbatical
- Plan must include: project proposal, time away, reporting schedule, budget, and description of benefits to both applicant and congregation
- Application must be approved by Council (Executive leadership)
- Applicant provides additional 2 years of service after sabbatical

### Responsibility of Church Council or Executive Council

- Review the application for sabbatical and make appropriate recommendation
- Determine that sabbatical plan will benefit both pastor and congregation
- Find replacements or an interim for the time of sabbatical
- Decide on visiting and/or pastoral care needed by congregation
- Ensure applicant is not contacted by congregants for ministry needs during sabbatical
- Plan ahead for Sabbatical by allocating funds in annual operating budget

### Financial

- Applicant receives full salary and benefits during sabbatical. Other expenses incurred during the leave are not normally provided unless negotiated.
- Applicants are encouraged to search out grants/donations/funds for expenses during sabbatical
- Sabbatical not granted unless budget has sufficient funds

### Reporting

- Applicant submits written report to Council within 1 month of returning from sabbatical
- Upon return, the applicant and Council consider best course to be followed as they re-enter life of congregation—allowing evaluation of responsibilities, new opportunities, and adjustments to regular duties.