

SABBATICAL POLICY

Approved 2023.02.11

A Sabbatical has its roots in the Bible. Sabbatical means to rest or to break from work. The biblical pattern of 6 days of work and 1 day of rest served to identify the people of God. All full-time (35 hours per week or more) teaching elders in permanent, installed positions and full-time commissioned ruling elders shall be granted a compensated sabbatical of at least three months after completion of six years of continuous full-time service to a particular parish setting, and such sabbatical is part of the terms of call. This paid time away is intended for refreshment and renewal, both for the servant and for the congregation. The servant withdraws temporarily from the spiritual and emotional demands of ministry. A Sabbatical might be used to travel, pursue a passion, volunteer in a mission, study, or relax and renew. Sabbaticals can help avoid burnout and increase energy and vision for future ministry. The Commission on Ministry strongly endorses this policy for all full-time professional staff of any church. With the agreement of the session, a sabbatical may be combined with vacation and study leave. If the teaching elder / commissioned ruling elder leaves within 12 months of completion of the sabbatical, he/ she is not eligible for severance. In churches with multiple staff, congregations may limit sabbatical leave to one staff person per year. Pastoral Nominating Committees in the presbytery are required to incorporate sabbatical leave provisions into pastoral terms of call in order for such terms to be approved by COM. Part-time installed pastors or pastors serving in temporary pastoral relationships with congregations may negotiate provisions for a sabbatical in their terms of call/contracts. The requirements of this policy go into effect upon approval by the presbytery.

Responsibilities of the Teaching Elder / Commissioned Ruling Elder

* A minimum of six months prior to the proposed commencement of the sabbatical, bring a sabbatical proposal to the session. The proposal may include a description of the proposal, and may include the goals to be achieved, the expected results, and a personal statement as to how sabbatical leave will be beneficial to the teaching elder / CRE and to the church.

* Make any necessary arrangements for coverage of pulpit, pastoral, and other responsibilities during sabbatical leave. In cooperation with the session, assure that pending responsibilities are brought up to date prior to departure on sabbatical leave.

* Upon return, present an overview of the sabbatical experience with the session and the COM. Sharing of the experience with the entire congregation is strongly encouraged.

Session Responsibilities

* Review the sabbatical proposal with the teaching elder / CRE and negotiate any necessary clarifications or changes.

- * Communicate to the congregation the importance and value to the church of the sabbatical leave.
- * Continue terms of call / financial commitments to the teaching elder / CRE during sabbatical leave.
- * Receive from the teaching elder / CRE the written overview of the sabbatical experience upon his/her return.
- * Set aside funds annually to accumulate toward the sabbatical year. For example, if a congregation determines that the cost of providing a sabbatical for its teaching elder / CRE will be \$3,000 - \$5,000, the congregation would write \$500 - \$834 into its annual budget to accrue to the Sabbatical year.

COM Responsibilities

- * Serve as mediator in any concerns of the session or the teaching elder / CRE with respect to the sabbatical, making sure the agreement is being met.
- * Appoint a moderator for the session for the duration of the sabbatical.
- * Provide human and financial resources as needed.

Grant Amount: \$1500

Grant Eligibility:

- Priority is given to congregations with solo pastors, CRE's, or Stated Supply Pastors meeting the criteria of the Sabbatical Leave Policy.
- Any congregation applying for this grant must have completed and filed their annual statistical and budgetary report for the previous year. This report must be on file with the presbytery.
- Applications are due by **March 1** of the year when the sabbatical will be taken.
- This grant, if awarded, will go directly to the session of the church applying to help with congregational expenses.
- The Pastoral Care subcommittee will be responsible for reviewing the applications and submitting their recommendations to COM.

Application [to be turned in by Clerk of Session]

Name of Congregation:

Name and email of Pastor:

Name and email of Clerk of Session:

__ I certify that I have read the PMT Sabbatical Policy and that the sabbatical we are offering falls within those guidelines and meets or exceeds presbytery minimums for eligibility and length of time.

Narrative Questions:

1. What are the anticipated dates of your pastor's sabbatical, and what will it cost your congregation to offer it?
2. What resources does your congregation already have (finances, people, etc.) that will help provide for their needs (pastoral, liturgical, and administrative) during the sabbatical?
3. What additional support will you need from the PMT?
4. The sabbatical period should be a time of reflection for the congregation as well. What will your congregation do to facilitate their discernment of call during this time?