

PRESBYTERY OF LONG ISLAND SABBATICAL LEAVE GUIDELINES

The Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Long Island requires churches to grant Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE), and Certified Christian Educators a compensated Sabbatical Leave of up to three (3) months after the completion of six (6) continuous years in an individual congregation within the Presbytery of Long Island.

Preamble:

Sabbatical Leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of renewal through the Sabbath day and Sabbath year. The model for Sabbatical Leave is Jesus Christ, who took time to be in prayer away from his own community of disciples on the mountain, on the road, and out on the water. Sabbatical Leave is a time of "... holy leisure, leisure that is for holy things, leisure that makes the human more human by engaging the heart and broadening the vision and stretching the soul."¹ Sabbatical Leave is "...a time to receive, to be nurtured, to dig deeper into yourself, your relationship with God and your own roots and stories so that you can be renewed, refreshed, and revitalized by the breath of God."²

Definition:

The Sabbatical Leave for a Minister or Certified Educator is qualitatively different from an academic sabbatical, study leave, or vacation. The Sabbatical Leave frees the leader from the ongoing pressures of deadlines, pastoral duties, and being constantly on Call, and replaces that with a plan that encourages activities such as rest, travel, study, and reflection while allowing for the possibility of seizing the moment when opportunities not planned present themselves. A renewed and refreshed leader would be expected to bring new energy and insight to the life of the congregation.

The Sabbatical Leave is also for the congregation. It is an opportunity for the congregation to reflect on the whole nature and meaning of ministry and the place of the congregation in that ministry; to renew and strengthen congregational lay leadership; and to continue to grow in faith through different perspectives and preaching styles which supply preachers may bring.

Establishment of Leave:

We require that a Sabbatical Leave be a part of the initial terms of Call for a Minister, CRE, or Certified Educator beginning with a congregation in the Presbytery of Long Island. Making this provision well in advance will allow ample time for the leader to plan the time away from the church as well as for the congregation to set aside funds in the budget each year to cover expenses projected for the period of Leave. In the event the Sabbatical Leave was not part of the initial Terms of Call, the Minister, CRE, or Certified Educator and Session are urged to work together with the Committee on Ministry on a proposal for Sabbatical Leave, which would be a part of the subsequent Terms of Call to be approved by the congregation. The congregation should have at least six (6) months' notice prior to the beginning of Sabbatical Leave.

¹ Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*: Harper San Francisco, 1991, pg 101.

² A. Richard Bullock, *Sabbatical Planning for Clergy & Congregations*. The Alban Institute, Inc, 1998, pg 5.

Sabbatical Leave Guidelines

Appendix A

Minister, CRE, or Educator Responsibilities

1. The sabbatical candidate should submit a proposal to the session, through its Personnel committee, for approval at least six (6) months prior to its commencement.
2. The proposal should contain the dates, location, and general design of sabbatical time.
3. The candidate and the session, working together, should ensure the coverage of church-related responsibilities during the candidate's absence.
4. Normally, the candidate should assure the session of continued service to the church for at least one full year from the conclusion of the sabbatical, although it is recognized that calls from God do not always fall into neat patterns.
5. The candidate should submit to Committee on Ministry the session-approved sabbatical proposal at least four (4) months prior to the commencement of the Sabbatical Leave.
6. Within the (3) months of returning, the candidate should present a written overview of the sabbatical experience to the session.

Session Responsibilities

1. A sabbatical, by its nature, requires a change to the Terms of Call. Therefore, after the session has received and approved the candidate's proposal, the session must call for a congregational meeting with the minimum purpose of changing the Terms of Call.
2. After the session has approved the proposal, the session shall communicate to the congregation the importance and value to the church of a sabbatical.
3. Sabbatical Leave shall not exceed (3) months. Sabbatical Leave may be combined with vacation so that the total time away with full salary and benefits is no more than four (4) months.

Committee on Ministry Responsibilities

1. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the minister.
2. Determine who will moderate the session in the minister's absence.
3. Provide support to the session, including a moderator to the session, a list of potential supply preachers, a list of PC(USA) ministers to administer the sacraments and assurances of pastoral care in the event of an emergency or crisis.
4. Serve as a mediator in any concerns of session, educator or minister relative to the sabbatical.

Sabbatical Leave Guidelines

Appendix B

Addressing Financial Concerns

One of the unfortunate realities for most ministers and churches is that the church simply cannot afford to pay for ministerial services while their pastor is away on sabbatical Leave. "Creative financing" is counseled for these circumstances. This might include some combination of the following:

1. Going it alone: using of lay preachers, Women's Sundays, Men's Sundays, Youth Sundays, etc. for pulpit supply; relying on elders, deacons, Stephen Ministers, etc. for pastoral care.
2. Hiring seminary interns or inquirers for preaching and pastoral care.
3. Making part-time, temporary supply arrangements with hospital chaplains, pastoral counselors, minister members-at-large, etc.
4. Applying for funding from the Pastor's Salary Supplement Fund.
5. Offering "mini-Sabbaticals" on a more frequent basis (e.g. six weeks sabbatical for every four years of service.)
6. Applying for Sabbath Sabbatical grant from the Board of Pensions (for churches with fewer than 200 members)
7. Providing a Sabbath reserve line item in the church budget, perhaps saving an amount equal to 1/24 of the pastor's salary for six years, to support a sabbatical in the seventh year of that minister's service.

Adopted 2/17/2009

Presbytery of Long Island - Adopted 2/17/2009
Committee on Ministry - Updated July 2024

Resource List: Sabbatical Information for Clergy and Congregations

Books

[Clergy Renewal: Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning](#)

This Alban Institute book, published in 2000, shows how a sabbatical is a necessary part of the spiritual growth of a congregation as well as the clergy.

This book is available from the PRC resource center.

[Pastoral Pause](#)

This Upper Room book has a publication date of 8/1/2024. It tells the story of one pastor's renewal leave and provides spiritual and practical resources such as renewal leave checklists, budget-planning tools, book lists, reflection prompts, liturgies, and devotions to equip others on their journeys.

This book is available from the PRC resource center

[Planning Sabbaticals: A Guide for Congregations and their Pastors](#)

This book was published by Chalice Press in 2019 and "draws on nearly two decades of wisdom from the Lily Endowment Clergy Renewal Program.

This book is available from the PRC resource center.

PCUSA Online Resources

[Sabbath Sabbatical Support](#)

The Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions provides eligible ministers with a portion of the financial support they need to take a sabbatical. The grant amount is up to \$5,000.

[Sabbatical and Continuing Education Resources](#)

This list of continuing education opportunities, sabbatical grants, and retreat centers is from the Pittsburgh Presbytery website.

[Sabbaticals Are a Must for Healthy Pastors and Healthy Congregations](#)

This article from the Presbyterian Mission Agency discusses how sabbaticals are an affordable must for the health and vibrancy of ministry.

[Sample Sabbatical Leave Policy for Parish Ministers and Educators](#)

This sample policy comes from the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Other Online Resources

[The Center for Congregational Resources Pastoral Resources](#)

They provide for the renewal of clergy, both full-time, and bi-vocational, through a variety of educational, networking, consultations and grant offerings.

[Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs](#)

Lilly's programs provide opportunities for pastors to engage in a period of renewal and reflection. Here are links with tips for applying for a Lilly grant: [What Makes a High Quality Proposal](#) and [Tips for Proposal Writing](#).

[Louisville Institute Grant Programs](#)

The Louisville Institute Pastoral Study Project Grant (PSP) awards grants of up to \$20,000 to support individual or collaborative study projects.

[Ministry Sabbatical Planning Tutorial - Congregation](#)

This list of questions may be a helpful guide in developing a sabbatical plan and then communicating it to the congregation.

[The Pastor's Sabbatical](#)

This PDF document comes from the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ and discusses the benefits of sabbaticals for clergy and congregations, as well as financial and other preparations to consider.

[The Pastor's Sabbatical and Tax Implications](#)

This article comes from the Church Law and Tax website.

[Sabbatical and Renewal Resources](#)

This is a list of grants and programs for clergy renewal from the Massachusetts Council of Churches.

[Sabbatical Leave Booklet](#)

The United Church of Christ offers this downloadable booklet which includes these topics: Theological Grounding and Relational Value, Policies and Best Practices, and Case Studies and Resources.

[Sabbatical Resources for Tired Pastors](#)

This article on the Patheos website has links to articles and resources related to clergy sabbaticals.

[What Kinds of Activities Can the Congregation Do?](#)

This excerpt from Robert C. Saler's book, *Planning Sabbaticals: A Guide for Congregations and Their Pastors*, offers advice for congregations during a clergy sabbatical.