

Wenatchee First Assembly (WFA)

Sabbatical Policy for Staff Pastors

Purpose:

The vocation of "Pastor" is a spiritual calling to God, to their congregation, and to the lost. This makes the Pastor and their family subject to continuous ministry and spiritual service. Due to this level of life commitment and for our church to express the high value we place on our Pastors, WFA offers our Pastors sabbaticals as extended periods of time to be temporarily released from this great responsibility in order to be refreshed and encouraged.

Also, giving our Pastors sabbaticals is intended to improve the spiritual condition of the Pastor, other staff and the congregation. A sabbatical offers a Pastor extended time away from their daily routine for their personal rest and spiritual renewal. As one Pastor is away on sabbatical, it allows opportunity for other staff and church members to grow in the use of their spiritual gifts and talents as they minister in the Pastor's absence. Finally, a Pastor returning from sabbatical may be better able to minister to the congregation and the lost with renewed spiritual insight and passion.

Scriptural References Supporting Pastoral Sabbaticals:

I Timothy 5: 17 (NIV)

"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."

I Thessalonians 5: 12-13 (NIV)

"Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other."

Hebrews 4: 9-11 (NIV)

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Leviticus 25: 1-4 (NIV)

"The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards."

Policy:

WFA full-time paid staff Pastors will be eligible to take a sabbatical based on the below schedule for their continuous years of service here. During a sabbatical the Pastor will receive his/her regular salary and benefits, plus they will be given an additional \$1,000 (or as amended by the Church Deacon Board) for each month of sabbatical time they are eligible. The sabbatical will be taken as a continuous period of time. A sabbatical should be determined at least six months in advance with its beginning date pre-approved by the Lead Pastor or in the case of the Lead Pastor's sabbatical; approved by the Church Board. The Pastor's previously accrued vacation time may also be taken in conjunction with this time to extend the sabbatical. Unused sabbatical leave may not be converted to vacation time.

WFA part-time paid staff Pastors may also request approval for sabbatical leave and additional pay from the Lead Pastor and Church Board based on the below sabbatical schedule for their continuous years of service here. The actual length of their sabbatical and amount of extra pay offered them will reflect the amount of part-time service they provide the church.

Only one Pastor will normally be able to take a sabbatical per calendar year unless pre-approved by the Lead Pastor and/or Church Board. Same Year Eligible Rule: should more than one Pastor be eligible the same year, preference to taking the sabbatical will be given first to full-time Pastors ahead of part-time Pastors and secondly to the Pastor with the longer continuous time of service at WFA. A Pastor whose sabbatical was delayed one year for this reason will receive first priority for a sabbatical the following year.

The church's expectation is that the Pastor on sabbatical is completely relieved of all their duties related to the church and congregation for the duration of their sabbatical. Any level of their attendance or involvement at WFA during the sabbatical is up to that Pastor. The church recommends each Pastor prayerfully consider what would work best for them in using this time as an opportunity to become spiritually, mentally and physically refreshed and renewed. It is up to each Pastor how to use their sabbatical time: for example to stay home, take a trip, take classes, do their own studies for personal growth, etc.

Sabbatical Schedule:

The number of sabbatical months offered is based on the number of continuous years a Pastor has served WFA as a paid pastoral staff member and reflects scriptural references to having a "Sabbath rest" every 7th year:

Lead Pastor: after their 6th year - receive up to 3 months sabbatical leave, after their 13th year - up to 3 months, after their 20th year - up to 4 months, after their 27th year - up to 4 months (The Lead Pastor's years of service include all of their continuous years as a paid staff Pastor at WFA to determine their number of sabbatical months they are eligible to take.)

All other Pastors: after their 6th year - receive up to 2 months sabbatical leave, after their 13th year - up to 2 months, after their 20th year - up to 3 months, after their 27th year - up to 3 months

Initiating this Policy:

Existing paid staff Pastors who have at least six years of continuous service at WFA are eligible to take their initial sabbatical according to the above schedule of sabbatical months offered. (Note the above Same Year Eligible Rule.) Existing Pastors will be eligible for their subsequent sabbaticals every seventh year after taking their first sabbatical. The number of sabbatical months eligible to be taken will correlate to the last seven year sabbatical period which they have passed on the above schedule for their number of continuous years of service here.

For example an existing non-lead Pastor who takes their first sabbatical sometime between their 14th and 20th years of continuous service here will be eligible for up to 2 months of sabbatical leave. When that Pastor takes their second sabbatical seven years later, between their 21st and 26th years of continuous service, they will be eligible for 3 months of leave.

Sabbatical Funding:

Additional costs to the church resulting from a Pastor's sabbatical will be taken from the church's Cash Reserve account or other source approved by the Church Deacon Board.

Policy Approved by Board of Deacons on _____.



The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

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Description: The 1990 General Conference called for the creation of a taskforce to study and report on the possibilities of a Sabbatical leave for credential holders, and that this report was to be brought back to the next General Conference. The General Executive appointed a study committee and a report of their findings was brought to the General Executive. It was reported to the 1994 General Conference that the conclusion of the General Executive was that it was not possible to institute a national policy in these matters. The 1994 Conference carried a motion to refer (so that more information could be gathered and circulated concerning the possibility of Sabbaticals). The General Executive in response to this motion appointed this committee to bring a report back the General Executive to help them in this matter.

PASTORAL SABBATICALS

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to outline the issues of Sabbaticals under the following headings: **Definition, Need, Biblical Foundation, Limitations, Objections, and Determining a Sabbatical Policy.**

1. DEFINITION

David Ellingston defines sabbatical as *“a time to relearn and rehearse that critical capacity to reflect, which transforms dreams of vacation to new visions of vocation”*. It is understood that in most professions a sabbatical is an opportunity to pursue advanced degrees or other career options. Sabbaticals normally extend over a range of time usually between six months to a year.

This narrow understanding is not the only context for pastors seeking a sabbatical and the concept needs to be broadened. Perhaps a different name, or term, that would better convey the larger purposes, a Pastoral Sabbatical, without the preconceived notions that this term brings with it, would be appropriate. It is important that the idea of sabbatical is not narrowly defined as relating to academic pursuit, nor is it in the context of a rigid length of time.

A sabbatical is not to be viewed as an extended vacation, but to be an opportunity for a pastor to step away for a period of time, in order to renew vision and hope, as well as life and soul searching.

The Pastoral Sabbatical is intended to provide pastoral staffs that have served for an extended period in a church, a gift of time away from normal responsibilities and routines, to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth in cooperation with the Holy Spirit that may include study, travel, relaxation or education.

The sabbatical is not just a reward for longevity of service. More importantly it is an opportunity for those who have given consistently of themselves in teaching and ministry to refill their own hearts and resources in order that they might continue to lead the congregation and serve the Lord in this calling.

2. THE NEED FOR SABBATICALS IN MINISTRY

“Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27-28

Renewal

A sabbatical is first of all pro-active in that it is a preventative measure that in some forms it to be a part of ongoing renewal and health for people in ministry. It appears the church and ministry today is very much involved in crisis management and one of the goals of leadership is to do all it can to not see these life crisis experiences result in personal and professional destruction.

A sabbatical is viewed as a nourishing pilgrimage, and provides an opportunity for sharpening of focus before a crisis situation develops. It does not guarantee that personal or ministry crisis will not happen, but that when it does, there is a strength and health that will help the pastor deal with these issues more clearly and wisely.

Restoration

There can be no denying the fact that one of the most pressing issues among pastors is that of “Burn-out”. While there is a great deal of misconception, generalization and abuse of this term, the fact remains that it is a real issue to be dealt with. Our districts have recognized the problem and are making attempts to address pastoral burn-out.²

It is an area that cannot be ignored. The pressures and expectations of pastoral ministry are intense and often destructive. The church at large including The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada is facing conflict, both in terms of personal conflict with pastors and congregations and in issues of theology that are intensified by the cultural pressures in Canada.

G. Nelson stated in an article in *Resource* that ...

“Congregations often hold unrealistic expectations relative to pastoral care, time, performance, visibility and availability ... Three of every four ministers endure a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their lives. Feeling helpless and cut off, many of them are overwhelmed by emotional overload ... many of them do, quietly and meekly, resign from their posts ... but most ministers continue to endure the hazards ... they continue because there is no option.”³

There can be no denying the fact that excessive prolonged stress can reduce alertness, create errors in judgment, distort one's ability and capacity to cope with the complexity of ministry and interpersonal relationships. Often pastors are left to struggle through with little or no help. This further creates anger, resentment and guilt. A sabbatical will not be the cure all to this issue; however, it can be met as a major step in the healing of burn-out.

Longevity

The issue of longevity applies to two areas. First, there are increasing social and economic factors that are encouraging pastors to look at longer ministry commitments to a church. It is recognized that while these must not replace a theological foundation for pastoring, or a calling to another pastorate, they cannot be ignored. There are always going to be situations where a relatively short pastoral stay in a church may be necessary and right, but there is a growing trend towards long-term pastoral situations. It is felt that Sabbaticals can help to facilitate the possibility for long-term ministry.

Marlin Saarinen points out that congregational life must be understood in some way within the context of a cycle. This cycle is not so much tied to chronology, but is factored by relationship and balance within congregational life.⁴ One of the keys to longevity in pastoral ministry is the recognition of this cycle by leadership and being able to appreciate and respond appropriately to this fact. Sabbaticals offer an opportunity in the cycle, of congregational life for congregational renewal and conflict resolution that if left unattended will often result in a major crisis.

They also provide for longevity in pastoral calling. The lack of opportunity for personal renewal and stress relief has led many PAOC pastors to “leave the ministry” to take up work in other job markets. The provision of a sabbatical may provide the means for pastors to spend the necessary time renewing their calling and allowing them to continue in pastoral ministry.

¹ Ellington, David. *Remember the Sabbatical to Keep it Holy* Where Word and World Engage: Campus Ministry Communications, Chicago IL, May 1980

² Eastern Ontario & Quebec District devoted an entire *Conference on the Ministry* to this subject in May 1994, and invited Rev. Richard Exley to address the conference on this topic.

³ Nelson, G. Edward. “Ministry May be Hazardous to your Pastor’s Health.” Resource. March/April 1994.

⁴ Saarinen, Martin F. The Life Cycle of a Congregation. Washington: Alban Institute 1994.

3. THE SABBATICAL PRINCIPLE: BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

No ministerial sabbatical is commanded in the Bible. Scriptures, nonetheless, uphold the sabbatical principle for renewal. Richard Bullock makes the observation that “over and over the stories of scripture point to the renewing power of ‘Sabbath time’. The Sabbath is more than an after thought of God’s action in creation. It’s a gift of rest from God, of renewal and hope”.¹

It is important to provide a short biblical survey of the Sabbath principle.

Sabbath rest

Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. (Ex. 20:8-11)

The Hebrew word “Sabbath” means to “cease or rest”. Its biblical context is the Genesis account of creation. The Sabbath is the seventh day in which “He (God) rested (or ceased) from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:3 NIV). From the beginning God gave the command to rest.

David wrote “He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul” (Ps. 23:2—3 NAS). A literal translation of “quiet water” is “waters of rest”.

After a prolonged period of ministry Jesus called his disciples to “come apart and rest”. Robert Randall commenting on this verse says: “Come apart and rest or simply come apart”.² Jesus proclaimed “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mk 2: 27-28)

The Old Testament records Sabbath rest as a normal pattern in Israel’s history even before the Ten Commandments were given (Ex.16:22, 29-30). The observance of the Sabbath:

- demonstrated Israel’s faith in God. The Israelites trusted God not only to provide food miraculously but to also provide enough to eat on the Sabbath,
- became a reminder of how God delivered them out of captivity in Egypt (Deut. 5:12-15),
- became a uniquely Jewish memorial distinguishing them from other nations. It became a sign of their covenant with God (EX. 31:16—17).

God established not only a day of rest but a sabbatical year as well every seventh year (EX.23:10-12, Lev. 25:1-7). ...“the land would rest” (Lev. 25:2 LSG). After seven observances of the sabbatical year came the year of jubilee (Lev. 24:8-25).

As a nation Israel was directed by Sabbath guidelines. Their disobedience led to captivity which allowed the land to rest (II Chron. 36:20—21, Jer.17:27).

Sabbath rest and renewal

Just as the sabbatical year was a biblically based provision to restore a farmer’s depleted field after six (6) years of planting and harvesting, a sabbatical period for those in the ministry provides time for rest and renewal.³

The created world affords an example of the renewing process in the seasons of the year. Before new life can begin, the cycle of rest needs to be observed.

The pace of modern society and pressures of contemporary ministry can blind us to see the need for this rhythm of rest and renewal. Eugene Peterson explores this sense of rhythm in life:

“As we re-enter that sequence of days when God spoke energy and matter into existence, we repeatedly come upon the refrain ‘and there was evening and there was morning, one day... and there was evening and there was morning, a second day... and there was evening and there was morning’ on and on six times.

This is the Hebrew way of understanding day and not ours; evening and morning, one day. More than idiomatic speech is involved here. There is a sense of rhythm. Day is the basic unit of God's creative work; evening is the beginning of that day. The Hebrew evening-morning sequence conditions us to the rhythms of grace. We go to sleep, and God begins his work. We wake and are called out to participate in God's creative action. Evening: God begins without our help. His creative day. Morning: God calls us to enjoy and share and develop the works he initiated."(4)

A principle observed

As a principle, a year of rest is allowed for deacons on The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada church boards after having served two three-year terms. This principle of sabbatical leave is also followed in many Christian organizations and secular institutions.

In keeping with the biblical principle of Sabbath rest and renewal, opportunity for Pastoral Sabbatical should be thoughtfully considered.

¹ Bullock, A. Richard. Sabbatical Planning for Clergy & Congregations An Alban Institute Publication.

² Randall, Robert. Time of Your Life. Victor Books 1986 1825 College Ave., Wheaton Ill 60187

³ Peterson, Eugene. Desert & Harvest A Sabbatical Journey Leadership Journal, Winter Quarter 1988, VOL.VIII, No1

⁴ Peterson, Eugene. God Gives to Us Even in Our Sleep Leadership Journal, Spring Quarter 1985, Vol. No. 2

1. LIMITATIONS AND OBSTACLES TO A SABBATICAL LEAVE

Even though the need and its biblical basis for sabbaticals may be established, it is recognized that there are obvious obstacles to a sabbatical leave that need to be considered and addressed.

An essential consideration would be ample advanced planning:

- the financial considerations need to be taken into account many years ahead, and
- the plan (retreat, study, travel, etc.) should be planned one year in advance. Family, church members and board need time to enter into the spirit of a sabbatical rest. Denominational leaders need to be consulted and advised for counsel and practical concerns of the local church

Generally there are two main obstacles in establishing sabbatical leaves: finances and security. These two obstacles apply both to the sabbatical applicant and the local church.

Finances

Questions arise such as:

- How will a minister receive a salary during his time off? How can a church fund an extended leave?
- How, with an already tight budget, could the church afford an interim pastor?

The following section, "Determining a Sabbatical Program" will suggest solutions for these concerns with various funding options. Generally speaking, three months of sabbatical leave will require an accruing of money over a period of years to prepare for the leave.

Security

Questions arise such as:

- Who will take care of the church while the pastor is gone?
- Will the pastor still have a position upon his return?

Guidelines would need to be established:

- the selection of the interim pastor should be a mutual agreement between the senior pastor, the board and the district superintendent;
- in the case of support staff (associate, assistant, youth, music, etc.) the board and the senior pastor should secure the interim pastor in consultation with the member taking leave;
- the duration of the interim appointment should correspond to the leave of the member;
- an availability list of credentialed pastors for interim positions would have to be consulted; candidates could be Bible College Faculty (summer months), retired pastors, retired general and district officers, missionaries... a compiled list could be accessed through district offices.

It is important that due communication and understanding for all sabbatical preparations in order that both the pastor and the congregation benefit from, and not bemoan the sabbatical leave.

5. DETERMINING A SABBATICAL POLICY

Issues to Be Addressed

Developing a Sabbatical Program will vary from situation to situation. A review of policies from three different professions; Education, Civil Service and Church provide a summary of the issues to be addressed:

- Purpose & Parameters of the Sabbatical

- Eligibility
- Length
- Scheduling & Priorities
- Accountabilities
- Financial Issues
 - Funding Options
 - Taxation
- Administration of Funds
- Sabbatical Policy
 - Policy Document
 - Sabbatical Contract

The following is intended to prompt the designers of the local sabbatical program through a series of statements and questions in reference to key issues that should be detailed in a Sabbatical Program Policy.

Purpose & Parameters

The policy needs to detail the specific purpose of the program. The sabbatical is intended to allow the individual to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth that may combine study, travel, relaxation, education and research. It is a time to refill their own life and calling after having given of them consistently so they might continue to be effective in service to the Lord and their constituents. It is not to be used to extend a vacation. It is not an opportunity to work another job during sabbatical to supplement personal income. Personal renewal, refilling inner resources is the focus.

Eligibility

Who in the organization will the sabbatical program be made available to? What time frames are involved before a person is eligible for sabbatical? Will there be time of service commitments required after sabbatical? If the staff member leaves before taking sabbatical, will there be any compensation or portability (will vary according to funding plan)? If the staff member leaves the organization after the sabbatical, but before the required time commitment is completed, what obligations will the individual have to the institution?

Length of Sabbatical

What is the maximum length of sabbatical offered by institution? How will the time off for sabbatical be accrued? How will vacation time be scheduled in relationship to sabbatical time? Who will be responsible to make that determination? After taking a sabbatical when will the staff member become eligible again?

Scheduling & Priorities

If there are multiple individuals eligible for sabbatical, who will be scheduled first? Those with the longest tenure would most logically be eligible first. How many sabbaticals will be allowed per year in a multiple staff situation? What congregational impacts must consider? Only one staff member at a time being absent would be a reasonable expectation.

Accountabilities

How will the individual and the decision makers assure themselves that the sabbatical reflects the stated purposes? Who must approve the application? What are the time frames for submission of application and approval and start time of Sabbatical?

Financial Issues

Funding Options

There are several ways that may be considered. Options range from self-funding by the individual to a sabbatical that is fully funded by the institution. One option is not recommended over another. Determination must be made in each local setting which option will work best.

Self-Funded Plan

An individual may choose to set aside a registered fund to provide for a Self-Funded Leave Of Absence (SFLOA). Revenue Canada recognizes such a fund. Some guidelines are outlined in an article in the May/June issue of "Financial Planning Report" which include...

"You must enter into a written arrangement with your employer for a leave of absence of at least six months.

You must finance your leave by savings up to one-third of your salary.

You must return to your job for at least the same period of time you were away or on leave.

Tax on money you contribute to a SFLOA is deferred for up to seven years. Interest on your contributions is taxed as it's earned."

The following issues should be detailed in the sabbatical policy and contract.

- where will the funds be deposited?
- when will they be deposited?
- who assumes responsibility for the funds?
- who arranges method of payment during the sabbatical?
- will benefits be retained during sabbatical?
- how will individual's share of benefit costs be paid to the institution?

Financial feasibility of a self-funded leave may seem unattainable unless a reachable goal is perceived. Let's assume an individual has been serving in their capacity for two years. They would like to take a six-month Sabbatical. For the next five years they could deposit 10.0% of their salary. At the conclusion of that period, there would be enough funds to draw a full salary for the six-month sabbatical. From the chart below any number of scenarios could be calculated. Tax considerations should be kept in mind (re. funds) during the accumulation period and during the sabbatical salary period. Consultation with a tax accountant should be considered a must in developing the Sabbatical Policy.

Duration of Leave	Self Funded Plan					
	1 Year	2 Year	Duration of Plan 3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year
6 weeks	11.54%	5.77%	3.85%	2.88%	2.31%	1.93%
8 weeks	15.35%	7.69%	5.13%	3.85%	3.08%	2.56%
12 weeks	23.08%	11.54%	7.69%	5.55%	4.62%	3.85%
16 weeks	n/a	15.38%	10.26%	7.69%	6.15%	5.13%
6 months	n/a	25.00%	16.66%	12.50%	10.00%	8.34%
8 months	n/a	n/a	22.24%	16.68%	13.40%	11.11%
10 months	n/a	n/a	27.80%	20.85%	16.68%	13.89%
12 months	n/a	n/a	n/a	25.00%	20.00%	16.67%

Deferred Salary Plan

This is similar to the Self-funded leave of absence. The difference is: The deferred salary is administered by the employer. Where the money is deposited; how the interest is administered and tax considerations may differ.

The purpose of the deferred payment plan is to allow the employee to see their salary spread out over a specific period, in order to benefit from a leave.

The following table is an example of the salary structure for a sabbatical leave with a Deferred Payment Plan as suggested by Centrale De L'enseignement du Quebec. (the 6,8,10 & 12 week scenarios have been added.)

Duration of Leave	Deferred		Salary Plan			
	1 Year	2 Year	Duration of Plan		5 Year	6 Year
			3 Year	4 Year		
6 weeks	88.46%	94.23%	96.15%	97.12%	97.69%	98.07%
8 weeks	84.62%	92.31%	94.87%	96.15%	98.92%	97.44%
12 weeks	76.92%	88.46%	92.31%	94.42%	95.38%	96.15%
16 weeks	n/a	84.74%	89.74%	92.31%	93.85%	94.87%
6 months	n/a	75.00%	83.34%	87.50%	90.00%	91.66%
8 months	n/a	n/a	77.76%	83.32%	86.60%	88.89%
10 months	n/a	n/a	72.20%	79.15%	83.32%	86.11%
12 months	n/a	n/a	n/a , 75.00%		80.00%	83.33%

Joint Funded Plan

This option would fund in a similar fashion as the PAOC Pension Fund. The institution/church would need to determine the upper limit of its willingness to match the funds contributed by the individual. The fund would be administered by the employer and agreements would need to be reached as to the disbursement of the accumulated funds should the individual leave the employ of the institution/church prior to a sabbatical being taken. Would the individual be able to receive the institution/church's contribution in recognition of length of service or would the institution/church require contributions to be forfeited?

The following table provides data useful for determining the rate of contribution. It is assumed the individual and the institution would contribute equal amounts.

Duration of Leave	1 Year	Joint Funded Plan		of Plan		6 Year	6 Year
		Duration		4 Year			
		2 Year	3 Year				
6 weeks	5.77%	2.89%	1.93%	1.44%	1.16%	0.97%	
8 weeks	7.69%	3.84%	2.57%	1.93%	1.54%	1.28%	
12 weeks	n/a	5.77%	3.84%	2.79%	2.31%	1.93%	
16 weeks	n/a	7.69%	5.13%	3.84%	3.07%	2.57%	
6 months	n/a	n/a	6.33%	6.25%	5.00%	4.17%	
8 months	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.34%	6.70%	5.56%	
10 months	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.34%	6.95%	
12 months	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.34%	

Institution or Church Funded Plan

This option is very similar to the Self-funded plan. The major differences are that the institution/church funds the sabbatical and administers all funds. The institution/church may opt to set aside funds in a Sabbatical Reserve fund leading up to future sabbaticals, It may choose to include a line item during the fiscal year's that the sabbatical/s are implemented. The manner in which the sabbatical is funded will of course be determined by the institution/church at its sole discretion. This option creates a natural incentive favoring the institution for the individual to remain in service after the sabbatical. Should the individual not remain for the required time and the individual is solely responsible for their leaving, the institution/church could include in its policy a requirement to be reimbursed on some pro-rata basis. The table for the Self-funded plan may be helpful with the calculations for determining costs.

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**Bellevue Christian Center
Bellevue, Nebraska
Sabbatical Policy**

Serving the Lord in full-time pastoral ministry is serious work and over many years can be wearying. Sustaining a vibrant pastoral ministry requires planned seasons of rest and refreshing away from ministry responsibilities. To encourage healthy ministry and better serve the church body, pastoral staff may take a Sabbatical according to the following schedule:

After 10 years on BCC Pastoral Staff, 1 month;
After 15 years, 2 months;
After 20 years, 3 months;
Up to 3 months each 5 years thereafter.

Sabbatical is paid leave and is not counted as vacation. Sabbaticals must be approved by the Senior Pastor six months in advance. It is important to understand that Sabbatical is intended for personal renewal and spiritual enrichment. While on Sabbatical, the pastor is encouraged to travel, relax, read, take a class, or other activities to enrich his or her personal spiritual life and ministry.

CHRIST'S PLACE
Lincoln, Nebraska
SABBATICAL POLICY
Amended June 1, 2000

Sabbatical is derived from the word Sabbath, which means *rest*. A sabbatical, as defined for the church's purpose, is a leave of absence with pay *which may be granted* every seventh year for travel, research, or rest. This policy applies to all *ministerial* staff (full and part-time*). The extra time is in addition to vacation time and could be taken in conjunction with vacation time. . A sabbatical *is to be used* for personal spiritual, mental and physical enrichment; a time of worship and rest. *The staff person is responsible to confer with the overseer and submit a proposal in writing to the Personnel Committee for consideration.*

After 7 years: 3 weeks

After 14 years: 5 weeks

After 21 years 7 weeks

*Note: Part-time pastoral staff may submit a sabbatical proposal, in writing, based upon the proportionate hours worked, as determined by the personnel committee.

The following applies to all full-time, credentialed pastoral staff.

After 7 years: Pastor and spouse may lead tour to Holy Land and then take an additional two weeks after the tour group have returned.

After 14 years: Pastor may take three weeks for project to be worked out between themselves and the Personnel Committee

After 21 years: Pastor may take five weeks for project to be worked out between themselves and the Personnel Committee.

The granting of a Sabbatical is based upon:

1. a proven record of effective ministry
2. the merit of the sabbatical proposal
3. the personal need for a sabbatical break

It is not to be viewed as an automatic extension of time off to be used as a vacation. It is a purposeful use of time with thoughtful design and with preparation for future investment and commitment.

Monetary assistance for special sabbatical plans may be possible.

SABBATICAL POLICY

First Church of the Nazarene
Sierra Vista, Arizona ¹

Recognizing that normal routines often do not provide for reflection and renewal of the vision and mission of the Pastor's ministry, the congregation will provide a sabbatical for the pastoral staff.

The benefits of the sabbatical for the pastoral staff member and congregation are to:

- Express gratitude and high value to the pastoral staff member.
- Share in the building of the pastor for continued service.
- Strengthen the relationship between Pastor and Congregation.

POLICY ON MINISTERIAL SABBATICAL

The Senior Pastor shall be entitled to a three month leave after six years with this congregation and entitled again after every four years.

The timing of the **sabbatical leave** shall take into consideration the needs of the congregation, the scheduling needs from the pastor's proposal, and other pertinent concerns as may be established.

A written proposal shall be presented to the church board at least six months prior to the beginning of the desired sabbatical. The proposal shall include the expectations of the leave, focus of the leave, travel plans, and a listing of the church tasks to be cared for in the absence of the pastor.

During the year of the **sabbatical**, time ordinarily allotted for the continuing education will not be used. Vacation time will not be reduced because of the sabbatical leave, nor will it be used to extend the sabbatical period.

The financial support of the pastor during the **sabbatical** period will include full salary and retirement benefits, insurance and social security. Travel and entertainment allowance will be suspended during this period. A stipend will also be provided, with the amount to be determined by the board after the consideration of the application and proposal.

A **Sabbatical** Committee will be formed, with the compositions determined by the pastor and church board.

To allow for congregational and pastoral benefit from the leave, the pastor will be expected to remain in employment with this congregation for a period of at least 12 months plus the amount of time of the **sabbatical** after the conclusion of the leave. Financial arrangements for repayment of expenditures to the church will be made between the church board and the pastor if a shorter period than this is considered.

No two members of the pastoral staff may be on **sabbatical leave** in the same church year.

Any additional hiring of permanent personnel will be decided on and arranged for prior to the **sabbatical** departure of the pastor.

Mutual communication between the pastor and the **Sabbatical** Committee during the leave period will be on a regular basis occurring monthly, or as needed.

An evaluation of the **sabbatical leave** will be viewed in terms of the ministerial impact and of the congregational impact. The pastor and the Sabbatical Committee will each prepare an initial written review about one month after the completion of the leave period. Topics will address the favorable as well as any unfavorable aspects of this period. An additional written report will be prepared by both about six months after the leave. A copy of each of the reviews will be forwarded to the district superintendent for him to review along with a copy of the evaluation.

¹ Sierra Vista, AZ First Church of the Nazarene, *Sabbatical Leave Policy*, Accessed 4/1/2006 online at <http://www.nazarenepastor.org/sabbatical/sabsierra.html>.

PASTORAL SABBATH REST

From the Arizona District of the Church of the Nazarene¹

In our culture busyness is a badge of usefulness and exhaustion the proof of efficiency. In the midst of such a culture, the Church of Jesus Christ must once again hear the call to "**Sabbath Rest.**"

It has been said that:

The **foundation** of ministry is **character**
The **nature** of ministry is **service**
The **motive** for ministry is **love**
The **measure** of ministry is **sacrifice**
The **authority** of ministry is **submission**
The **purpose** of ministry is the **glory of God**
The **tools** of the ministry are the **Word of God and prayer**
The **privilege** of ministry is **growth**
The **power** of ministry is the **Holy Spirit**
The **model** for ministry is **Jesus Christ**

As our model for ministry, Jesus Christ frequently found **Sabbath Rest** necessary. Indeed, it is clear this is how He kept perspective on ministry.

There is nothing that will put an end to effective pastoral leadership more quickly than a loss of perspective. Perspective is gained, maintained, and sharpened in the reflective process known as **Sabbath Rest.**

For the Church, the recognition of God's call to **Sabbath Rest** is a ready and honest admission that there is not an inexhaustible supply of adequate pastoral leadership.

One of the church's chief stewardship challenges is to maintain a high level of proficiency among its leadership.

The concept of **Sabbath Rest** is a God-ordained, Biblically mandated, cyclical season of renewal for the minister and the ministry.

God's Word says:

Hebrews 4: 9-11 (NIV)

*"There remains, then, a **Sabbath Rest** for the people of God; for anyone who entered God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience."*

Leviticus 25: 1-7 (NIV)

*"The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land I am going to give you the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a **Sabbath of Rest** a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields during the Sabbath year will be food for you, for yourself, your live among*

you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten."

We are called by God to observe the **Sabbath Rest**. We do so:

- To obey His command
- To maximize ministerial effectiveness of both pastor and people
- To enhance the joy and fulfillment of ministry
- To encourage relational renewal at all life levels (marriage, family, church, and community)
- To develop a deeper intimacy with God and hence a deeper trust in Him

Sabbath Rest is a time to receive, to be nurtured, to dig deeper into oneself, into one's relationship with God.

All full-time ministerial staff and bi-vocational pastors should participate in the **Sabbath Rest**.

Taking as a point of reference the Biblical idea of a seventh rest, we believe that the following should serve as a guideline for the **Sabbath Rest**. Thus it would translate:

Every seventh day a **Sabbath Rest**

Every seventh month a week of **Sabbath Rest**

Every seventh year (at a local church) a seven-week **Sabbath Rest**

ⁱ Arizona District Council of the Church of the Nazarene, Sabbatical Statement, <http://www.nazarenepastor.org/sabbatical/sabaz.html>, Accessed 4/1/2006.