

Introduction to Clergy Sabbaticals

A sabbatical (also known as Sabbath rest or sabbatical leave) is a resource for pastors and their families. It is an extended time away from the routines of normal ministry and daily life. The sabbatical is to be given as a separate time away from the local assignment and not to be considered as the pastor's vacation time.

It is a time of special renewal for the pastor that will bring personal nourishment to his/her soul, a deeper relationship with the Lord, and a clearer understanding of God's vision for the church. A sabbatical helps to prevent ministry burn-out and may give the pastor a fresh perspective for his/her ministry.

Each church can create its own individual policy regarding sabbaticals. The length of the sabbatical is based on the tenure of the pastor. The following is the policy for the General Church of the Nazarene as outlined in the Manual 129.10: "In order to encourage the lifelong learning of the pastor in spiritual, emotional and educational dimensions, the church board may consider supporting a sabbatical/study leave for the pastor during the seventh consecutive year of service in one congregation."

If a pastor meets the requirements for a sabbatical as stated above, we strongly encourage all parties to consider giving this time of renewal to the pastor. Many benefits will be reaped by both the pastor and the local church through the pastoral sabbatical program.

For further information, we have included sabbatical policies and programs from various sources explaining how a sabbatical can be designed, including definitions, responsibilities for both the pastor and the local church, important questions to be asked, examples of various types of sabbaticals, scriptural references, etc.

National Clergy Renewal Program

The Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program contacted us recently. This organization awards "up to \$45,000 to support their congregations in renewal activities as well. This program is open to . . . congregations that are served by a pastor having a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited theological seminary." You can download additional information from Lilly's web site: http://lillyendowment.org/religion_ncr.html

EXAMPLE
Pastoral Sabbath Rest Implementation

Implementing the Sabbath Rest shall come under the office of our district pastor (superintendent).

1. The district pastor shall correspond to each local board concerning pastoral Sabbath Rest prior to his/her annual visit.
2. The district pastor will preach the Biblical principles of the Sabbath Rest at his/her annual church visit.
3. The district pastor will meet with the local church board to present the "Pastoral Sabbath Rest" document.

The policy shall read as follows:

We are called by God to observe the Sabbath Rest (Hebrews 4:9-11; Leviticus 25: 1-7). Therefore as your district pastor and District Advisory Board we recommend the following: That all full-time ministerial staff and bi-vocational pastors consider participating in Sabbath Rest. Translated in practical terms, this means:

- 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
- That in cooperation with the pastor, church board, and district pastor; a Sabbath Rest Committee be appointed for the following purpose:
 - To manage and coordinate congregational work in the absence of the pastor.
 - To ensure quality care of the congregation in the absence of the pastor.
 - The committee will meet with the pastor prior to the time of the Sabbath Rest:
 - To develop a plan as to how ministry plans and goals will be met.
 - To develop an understanding of the plan, purpose, and procedures of pastor's Sabbath Rest.
 - To develop orientation plans to prepare the congregation for the pastor's Sabbath Rest
 - To develop exit and reentry orientation for pastor and family. Reentry orientation would include such items as financial update, new names, faces, attendance, etc.
 - To develop an evaluation of the pastor's Sabbath Rest (e.g., congregational impact), and present to the congregation and the district pastor.

EXAMPLE
Pastoral Sabbath Rest
Planning and Preparation

We recommend the following as steps of planning and preparation for the pastor, prior to the Sabbath Rest.

1. Allow six months to a year to plan the seven-week Sabbath Rest.
2. Develop a plan in which the Sabbath Rest Committee and church board mutually agree upon.
3. Timing is vital---There's a time to work and there's a time to rest.
4. Use a consultant or mentor to help/assist you in planning and evaluating objectively.
5. Search out program resources.
6. Ask for congregational and church board input for the development of your plan.
7. Organize your financial arrangements. Extra expense may be incurred during Sabbath Rest.
8. Plan to keep a daily journal.
9. Make travel plans that will remove you from your normal routine.
10. Ask yourself the following:
 - What do I want to happen to me personally?
 - How do I want the Sabbath Rest to affect my family/spouse?
 - How would I like the congregation to benefit?

Hope builds on the dreams God reawakens in us
as we walk in pilgrimage with Him
and renews us to lead again the people committed to our charge.