Indian Nations Presbytery

Committee on Ministry

Guidelines for Sabbaticals for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

And Certified Christian Educators

**Introduction**

Sabbath rest is built into the fabric of creation and is necessary for the well-being of community, for it reminds persons who they are and who God is. Jesus offered this invitation to his disciples: “Come away… and rest awhile.” (Mark 6:31) Amidst the constant demands of ministry, Jesus knew the need for Sabbath time. Sabbatical 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. Sabbaticals often allow a minister to commit to a longer term of service, which benefits the life and mission of a congregation.

Indian Nations Presbytery strongly recommends that pastors be granted a compensated sabbatical of at least three (3) months after six (6) years of full-time, continuous service to an individual church. At least six years must have elapsed since any previous extended sabbatical leave. Upon completion of the sabbatical leave, it is required that the minister continue to serve the same congregation for at least one year. Failure to fulfill this requirement will result in the minister reimbursing 50% of any sabbatical expense to the congregation.

**Definition**

A Sabbatical Leave is a break and change from the everyday routine and therefore would include a balance of reflection and prayer, rest, study, and travel. A Sabbatical Leave is taken in partnership between the Minister of Word and Sacrament or Certified Christian Educator and their ministry context. A written plan proposing how the sabbatical would fulfill the purpose of a sabbatical to the benefit of both parties should be submitted to the Session or governing body overseeing the work of the Minister of Word and Sacrament or Certified Christian Educator. The plan should include study plans (conferences, seminars, reading lists, advanced degree work relevant to the ministry context, etc.), plans for renewal and rest, and travel plans relevant to the purpose of the sabbatical.

Sabbaticals are not vacation or ordinary study leave. They are also not intended to be used as a chance to escape difficulties within the local church. While the Committee on Ministry encourages congregations and ministry settings to make provisions for Sabbatical Leave for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Certified Christian Educators, the decision rests with Sessions and governing bodies overseeing the work of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Certified Christian Educators. Ideally, Sabbatical Leave provisions will be discussed when calls and contracts are first being discussed, based on a clear Sabbatical Leave Policy of the Session or governing body.

**Financial Implications**

During the period of the Sabbatical Leave, full salary and benefits will be provided by the Session or employing organization. Payments under the terms of call for travel expenses and other administrative expense would ordinarily be suspended during the period of the Sabbatical Leave and adequate funding of the Sabbatical Leave plan should be included in the annual budget for the year the Sabbatical Leave occurs.

Below are links to possible sources of grants for funding for Sabbaticals. For example the 2020 Lilly Endowment [National Clergy Renewal Program](http://www.cpx.cts.edu/renewal/apply/national-program) and the 2020 Lilly Endowment [Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations](http://www.cpx.cts.edu/renewal/apply/-indiana-program), eligible congregations will be able to apply for grants of up to $50,000 each to support a renewal program for their pastor. Up to $15,000 of the grant may be used for congregational expenses associated with the renewal program.

**Responsibilities of The Minister**

1. A minimum of six months prior to the proposed commencement of the sabbatical, bring a proposal to the Session for its approval. The proposal shall include a detailed description of the plan, the goals to be achieved, the expected results, and a personal statement of how the sabbatical will be beneficial to the minister and to the church.
2. In cooperation with the Session, make any necessary arrangements for coverage of pulpit, pastoral, and other responsibilities during sabbatical leave.
3. Upon return, present an overview of the sabbatical experience with the Session. Sharing of the experience with the entire congregation is strongly encouraged.
4. Commit to serving the congregation for at least one year after returning from sabbatical.

**Responsibilities of The Session**

1. Review/approve the sabbatical proposal with the minister and negotiate any necessary clarifications or changes. After approval submit the proposal to the COM within one month.
2. Communicate to the congregation the importance and value to the church of the sabbatical leave.
3. Continue terms of call/financial commitments to the minister during sabbatical leave. Consider taking on or delegating responsibilities for pastoral care and routine administrative functions.
4. Commit to employing the minister for at least one year after his/her return from sabbatical.
5. Other responsibilities may be agreed upon between the Session and the minister.

**COM Responsibilities**

1. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the session.
2. Provide someone to moderate the Session during sabbatical leave, if necessary.
3. Develop a team of ministers/CRE’s willing to provide services for congregations while their minister is on sabbatical.
4. Serve as a resource to the minister and congregation in planning and carrying out the sabbatical.

**Links for possible grant funding**

The Lilly Foundation <https://lillyendowment.org/for-grantseekers/renewal-programs/pastors/>

The Louisville Institute <https://louisville-institute.org/programs-grants-and-fellowships/grants/>

Board of Pensions <https://www.pensions.org/your-path-to-wholeness/assistance-program/receiving-assistance/sabbath-sabbatical-support-grants>

Approved by COM – April 14, 2021