

# **GUIDELINES FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE**

PRESBYTERY OF GLACIER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

## **Introduction:**

These guidelines are meant to help churches and professional staffs implement policies for Sabbatical Leave. Sabbatical Leave is beneficial, both to ministry professionals, and to the churches they serve. Sabbatical Leave can help individuals to refocus their vision, and find renewed sense of call. Often, Sabbatical leave is needed to find a new or intensive continuing educational experience not made possible in a shorter time period. Sabbath is the call from God in a busy world, and in the busy church. Sabbatical leave can offer valuable refreshment and rejuvenation for those who labor continuously for God's people, new vision for continued service, and renewed compassion for the beloved children of God who comprise the church.

Sabbatical offers the church a time to reflect on their future, a time for members to exercise new gifts for service in the church, and for the church as a whole to renew its call as part of the priesthood of all believers.

## **Definition**

Sabbatical Leave is a planned time of study and renewal by which one seeks personal and professional growth. It is an opportunity for an individual to disengage from regular and routine tasks so that their ministry may be viewed from a new perspective, and their soul renewed to serve refreshed. It is not a prolonged vacation. Through reflection, prayer, rest, study and travel, one finds the promise of God who sustains us through a period of reflection, leading to the renewal of energy upon the return to the permanent call.

## **Suggestions**

Churches and their professional staff (ordained clergy, CREs and Christian educators) are encouraged to dialogue together to come up with suitable forms of leave that will benefit all involved, and not place too much of a burden on the church, nor ignore the full need of the staff member. The most viable avenue of assuring a Sabbatical is to incorporate this benefit in the Terms of Call. If not included in the initial terms, Sabbatical can be incorporated in an annual update to the Terms of Call.

1. **Eligibility:** Sabbatical Leave is a benefit offered at the discretion of the church, by the authority of the Session for Teaching Elders, Commissioned Ruling Elders and certified Christian Educators. When Sabbatical leave involves a change in the Terms of Call, it is subject to the approval of the Session, the congregation and the presbytery. Full time staff should be eligible for Sabbatical Leave after seven (7) years of service within that congregation. The Session may decide to give credit for previous full time service by the staff member at other positions, should it see fit to do so.

2. The staff member should bring a proposal to the appropriate committee and/or the Session at least six months prior to the beginning of the proposed leave.  
Proposals prior to approval of the church budget for the calendar year when leave is to be taken are preferred. The proposal should include details on how the time will be used, proposed arrangements for covering the staff member's congregational duties, and any cost associated with the proposed leave.
3. Continuing Education money that has accrued for up to three (3) years may be used for the cost of Sabbatical.
4. The time of Sabbatical should be no less than three (3) months. The year it is taken shall include continuing education time, so that the staff member's continuing education time is the Sabbatical time. It should not include vacation time, so that the staff member's vacation time shall be intact.
5. Well before the leave begins, the staff member and the Personnel Committee/Session should inform the congregation about the Sabbatical. If not included in the Terms of Call, the leave needs to be approved by the Congregation as a change in Terms of Call. An explanation of the policy and the accepted plans for the leave period is appropriate. The timing and execution of this communication should be determined at the time of approval.
6. The church, no matter its size, should feel encouraged to contact the presbytery office for encouragement and for support before and during the time of the leave. Grants from outside agencies or institutions may be available to support the Sabbatical leave, but are not widely available. The presbytery is a resource for helping with staffing issues, pulpit supply, and pastoral care.
7. Upon completion of the Sabbatical Leave, at an acceptable time, the staff member should report to the Session and the congregation about the leave, including the value of the leave.
8. Not more than one staff member should take a leave per calendar year. In the event that two or more staff members are eligible during the same year, the staff members shall converse openly with the Personnel Committee to determine an acceptable resolution.

Sabbatical Leave Guidelines: Courtesy of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, The Board of Pensions, and the Lilly Endowment

*Revised May 2016*