



SABBATICAL



WHAT IS A SABBATICAL?

A sabbatical is an extended time away from usual work for the purpose of study, career development, personal renewal and/or spiritual development. The term sabbatical has its roots in the concept of Sabbath, or rest after six days or years.

Sabbatical leave is not a vacation, nor is it only continuing education. It is a needed break from the long hours, high pressure, personal sacrifice and the 24-hour nature of pastoral ministry. It is a time for prayer, rest, continuing education and travel. A pastoral sabbatical provides the pastor with opportunities to invest in research that time would not normally allow.

WHY PURSUE A SABBATICAL?

Recent statistics from The Fuller Institute, Barna Research, Lifeway, and the Schaeffer Institute of Leadership Development reveal startling realities for ministers in the United States.

- 84% of pastors feel they are on call 24/7.
- 80% of pastors and 84% of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors
- 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families.
- 70% of pastors report they have a lower self-image now than when they first started.
- 35% of pastors battle depression or fear of inadequacy.
- 28% of pastors report they are spiritually undernourished.
- 26% of pastors report being over fatigued.
- 1 out of every 10 pastors will actually retire as a pastor.

The objective of a sabbatical is to provide an opportunity to step away from the congregation and focus on personal renewal in order to benefit both the pastor and congregation. This also will positively impact what God is doing in the life of the church outside of the pastor's ministry. Any inconvenience experienced by the church during their pastor's sabbatical will be outweighed by the blessing of having a healthier pastor.

Serving a church calls for the opportunity to invest a greater proportion of the minister's life than is required in most professions. Beyond skills and knowledge, a pastor's duties draw from the inner being, and without care, a draining will occur. To minister to these needs of the pastor, a sabbatical for extended rest, reflection, rejuvenation and renewal is an incredible blessing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MN DISTRICT CHURCHES

A senior pastor and staff pastors may request up to a three-month sabbatical after every six years of continuous service with one congregation. All requests for a sabbatical must be approved by the local church leadership board who also serve as the sabbatical committee (Deacons, Elders, etc.). A written agreement should be made between the pastor and the leadership board, outlining the details of the approved sabbatical.

Sabbatical leave is not a vacation, and should not be counted as such. The pastor is to continue receiving full wages and benefits over the course of the sabbatical. Reimbursement for expenses during a sabbatical must be approved by the leadership board. (For example: attendance at a seminar or retreat and travel expenses)

Sabbaticals should be scheduled a minimum of six months in advance, to allow for proper scheduling, filling the pulpit, handling church business and emergencies. It is recommended that the Sabbatical leave be taken continuously. If divided up it must be no more than two segments with the shortest segment being a minimum of one month.

A sabbatical must never be used by a pastor to seek another position, nor used by the church to seek a different pastor. Upon completion of the sabbatical, the pastor should submit a general report of the benefits gained by the sabbatical to the leadership board and complete at least one further year of service to the church.