

## SABBATICAL LEAVE GUIDELINES

The Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Long Island recommends to churches that Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Certified Christian Educators be granted a compensated Sabbatical Leave of up to three (3) months after the completion of six (6) continuous years in an individual congregation within the Presbytery of Long Island.

### **Preamble:**

Sabbatical Leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of renewal through the Sabbath day and Sabbath year. The model for Sabbatical Leave is Jesus Christ, who took time to be in prayer away from his own community of disciples on the mountain, on the road, and out on the water. Sabbatical leave is a time of "... holy leisure, leisure that is for holy things, leisure that makes the human more human by engaging the heart and broadening the vision and stretching the soul."<sup>1</sup> Sabbatical Leave 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."<sup>2</sup>

### **Definition:**

The Sabbatical Leave for a Minister or Certified Educator is qualitatively different from an academic sabbatical, study leave, or vacation. The Sabbatical Leave frees the Minister/ Certified Educator from the ongoing pressures of deadlines, pastoral duties, and being constantly on call, and replaces that with a plan that encourages activities such as rest, travel, study, and reflection while allowing for the possibility of seizing the moment when opportunities not planned present themselves. A renewed and refreshed pastor would be expected to bring new energy and insight to the life of the congregation.

The Sabbatical Leave is also for the congregation. It is an opportunity for the congregation to reflect on the whole nature and meaning of ministry and the place of the congregation in that ministry; to renew and strengthen congregational lay leadership; and to continue to grow in faith through different perspectives and preaching styles which supply preachers may bring.

### **Establishment of Leave:**

We strongly encourage that a Sabbatical Leave be a part of the initial terms of Call for a Minister/ Certified Educator beginning with a congregation in the Presbytery of Long Island. Making this provision well in advance will allow ample time for the Minister/ Certified Educator to plan the time away from the church as well as for the congregation to set aside funds in the budget each year to cover expenses projected for the period of leave. In the event the Sabbatical Leave was not part of the initial Terms of call, the Minister/ Certified Educator and Session are urged to work together on a proposal for Sabbatical Leave, which would be a part of the subsequent Terms of Call to be approved by the congregation. The congregation should have at least six (6) months notice prior to the beginning of Sabbatical Leave.

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Chittister, Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today. Harper San Francisco, 1991, pg 101.

<sup>2</sup> A. Richard Bullock, Sabbatical Planning for Clergy & Congregations. The Alban Institute, Inc, 1998, pg 5.

## **Sabbatical Leave Guidelines**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Minister or Educator Responsibilities**

1. The sabbatical candidate should submit a proposal to the session, through its Personnel committee, for approval at least six (6) months prior to its commencement.
2. The proposal should contain the dates, location, and general design of sabbatical time.
3. The candidate and the session, working together, should ensure the coverage of church-related responsibilities during the candidate's absence.
4. Normally, the candidate should assure the session of continued service to the church for at least one full year from the conclusion of the sabbatical, although it is recognized that calls from God do not always fall into neat patterns.
5. The candidate should submit to Committee on Ministry the session-approved sabbatical proposal.
6. Within the (3) months of returning, the candidate should present a written overview of the sabbatical experience to the session.

#### **Session Responsibilities**

1. A sabbatical, by its nature, requires a change to the Terms of Call. Therefore, after the session has received and approved the candidate's proposal, the session must call for a congregational meeting with the minimum purpose of changing the terms of Call.
2. After the session has approved the proposal, the session shall communicate to the congregation the importance and value to the church of a sabbatical.
3. Sabbatical Leave shall not exceed (3) months. Sabbatical Leave may be combined with vacation so that the total time away with full salary and benefits is no more than four (4) months.

#### **Committee on Ministry Responsibilities**

1. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the minister.
2. Determine who will moderate the session in the minister's absence.
3. Provide support to the session, including a moderator to the session, a list of potential supply preachers, a list of PC(USA) ministers to administer the sacraments and assurances of pastoral care in the event of an emergency or crisis.
4. Serve as a mediator in any concerns of session, educator or minister relative to the sabbatical.

## Sabbatical Leave Guidelines Appendix B

### Addressing Financial Concerns

One of the unfortunate realities for most ministers and churches is that the church simply cannot afford to pay for ministerial services while their pastor is away on sabbatical leave. “Creative financing” is counseled for these circumstances. This might include some combination of the following:

1. Going it alone: using of lay preachers, Women’s Sundays, Men’s Sundays, Youth Sundays, etc. for pulpit supply; relying on elders, deacons, Stephen Ministers, etc. for pastoral care.
2. Hiring seminary interns or inquirers for preaching and pastoral care.
3. Making part-time temporary supply arrangements with hospital chaplains, pastoral counselors, minister members-at-large, etc.
4. Applying for funding from the Pastor’s Salary Supplement Fund.
5. Offering “mini-Sabbaticals” on a more frequent basis (e.g. six weeks sabbatical for every four years of service.)
6. Applying for Sabbath Sabbatical grant from the Board of Pensions (for churches with fewer than 200 members)
7. Providing a Sabbath reserve line item in the church budget, perhaps saving an amount equal to 1/24 of the pastor’s salary for six years, to support a sabbatical in the seventh year of that minister’s service.

## RESOURCES FOR PLANNING CLERGY SABBATICALS

### Appendix C

#### **Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning**

*A. Richard Bullock, Richard J. Bruesehoff*

Planned time away from the parish for study, rest, and spiritual renewal can be beneficial—and often necessary—for any pastor, as well as for the congregation. In this thoroughly revised and expanded edition of Alban's popular *Sabbatical Planning for Clergy and Congregations*, Bullock and Bruesehoff provide the definitive guide to putting together refreshing pastoral sabbaticals that can help keep ministry vital and growing for the long term.

#### **Journeying toward Renewal: A Spiritual Companion for Pastoral Sabbaticals**

*Melissa Bane Sevier*

Sabbatical leaves are becoming an increasingly common part of pastoral life, as both pastors and congregations recognize the renewed vitality that these times away can bring to their common ministry. Yet many pastors are still wary of seeking the opportunity for renewal leave, often because of a fear of the unknown—potential negative effects, an unexpected transformation of their call, anxiety about finding out they are not indispensable, or simply the uncertainty that comes in “letting go.”

Melissa Bane Sevier has used her own sabbatical leave time to create a spiritually nourishing resource that helps to shepherd pastors through the unknowns of renewal leave. Drawing on her own journal entries and her own and others' experiences of sabbatical, *Journeying toward Renewal* is a deeply personal guide that demonstrates powerful insight into the joys and stresses of pastoral ministry. Sevier not only provides engaging reflections on the experience of being on sabbatical, but also includes numerous thought-provoking exercises, activities, ideas, and other resources to help readers get the most out of their renewal leave.

#### **Why You Should Give Your Pastor a Sabbatical (Video, VHS)**

*Roy M. Oswald*

A sabbatical offers clergy an opportunity for renewal and lay leaders a time for discovery and growth in their ministry. Given those benefits, why wouldn't every congregation encourage its pastor to take a sabbatical? Roy Oswald, author of *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* and leader of several popular Alban work-shops on clergy renewal and development speaks directly to lay leaders and members of faith communities. He makes the compelling argument that a sabbatical, one aspect of spiritual nurture, is an excellent strategy to help pastors maintain vitality in their work and in communicating the gospel. A pastoral sabbatical can also be the occasion for lay leaders and members to take a new level of responsibility for pastoral care, congregational oversight, planning and logistics, and other aspects of congregational life traditionally handled by clergy. The video format is two 25-minute segments plus a leader guide.

#### **Congregations: The Alban Journal.**

Four articles on sabbaticals focusing on pastors' experiences of sabbaticals in the July/August 2000 issue; two more in the July/August 1995 issue. The latter includes an article by L. Dale Richesin on "How Can a Small Church Afford a Sabbatical?"

**National Clergy Renewal Program (Organization)**

This program of Lilly Endowment Inc. provides financial support for a time of rest and renewal by pastors of Christian congregations. Grants of varying amounts are awarded through the program, and some portion of these grants can be used for congregational expenses. The grants are made to congregations, not individual clergy. Successful proposals will include a sense of purpose, a sense of balance, evidence that the congregation understands and affirms the value of a renewal program for its leader, and benefit both the pastor and the congregation. Deadlines for proposals are usually sometime during the summer, and announcements of grant awards are usually in December. Contact Lilly Endowment for additional eligibility requirements.

National Clergy Renewal Program

Lilly Endowment Inc.

P.O. Box 88068

Indianapolis, IN 46208

(317) 916-7302

<http://www.clergyrenewal.org/>

**The Louisville Institute Sabbatical Grant for Pastoral Leaders**

The Sabbatical Grants for Pastoral Leaders Program provides pastoral leaders with sustained periods of time for reflective engagement with their life and work and issues related to contemporary religious leadership. Grants of \$10,000 or \$15,000 support sabbaticals of eight or twelve weeks respectively.

<http://www.louisville-institute.org/Grants/programs/sgpldetail.aspx>

**PC(USA) Sabbatical Information**

<http://www.pcusa.org/ministers/ministrydevelopment/sabbatical.htm>