



Sabbatical Policy

- Local Church -

March 2008

Alberta & North West Territories District
The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
March 2008

Pastor's Sabbatical

Purpose:

The purpose of the sabbatical period is to allow the individual to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth in cooperation with the Holy Spirit that may combine study, travel, relaxation, education and research. The sabbatical is not just a reward for longevity of service. More importantly it is an opportunity for those who have given consistently of themselves in teaching and ministry to refill their own hearts and resources in order that they might continue to lead the congregation and serve the Lord in this calling.

The goals of a sabbatical are renewal, restoration and longevity. The reasoning for the sabbatical is the belief in upholding the principle of the Sabbath.

Parameters:

Pastors shall qualify upon application for a maximum 13 week sabbatical after every 7th year of employment.

- The sabbatical incorporates the current annual educational or professional development allotment of \$_____ (Budgeted Amount).
- The sabbatical does not incorporate the church's policy regarding mission trip strategy.
- The sabbatical plan will not be inclusive of personal vacation time. The participant has the privilege of requesting personal holiday time on either end of the sabbatical period.
- The sabbatical should contain at least elements of the following activities: personal development, vacation, and rest.
- The application for sabbatical should be received no less than six months in advance of the sabbatical.
- The written report following the sabbatical should be submitted to the Church Board and the Sabbatical Committee (if applicable) no later than 2 months following the sabbatical.
- The length of the sabbatical will depend on a number of different variables, including funding arrangements, decision of the Church Board, time applied for, and length of employment at the Church.
- A sabbatical is not an extended vacation nor is it an opportunity to work at another job during the sabbatical to supplement personal income.

Application:

The Pastor is expected to present a proposal to the Church Board that includes the following:

- Start date of the sabbatical
- Basic plan to accomplish the purpose stated above
- An accountability partner

An approved proposal will be forwarded to the accountability partner by the Church Board.¹

Funding:

Joint Funding	Church and Employee set aside funds during the duration of the Employees career. Once Employee is approved for sabbatical they draw on funds as required during there sabbatical.
Self Funded	Employee contributes to fund over the term of employment once eligible time has accumulated the employee applies for Sabbatical and draws on funds they have set aside.
Church Funded	Entire portion is covered by the Church. Funds can be accrued for the employee as they work or can be assigned once the application is filed.

Completion:

Upon completion, both the participant and the accountability partner will meet to debrief and report to the Church Board and if applicable to the Director of Leader Development and Care of the Alberta & NWT District. The report should include activities done while on sabbatical, a report on accountability during the allotted time and a synopsis of benefits the sabbatical has had on the individual and his future ministry.

¹ The District's Director of Leader Development and Care is available as a resource for Pastors and Churches looking for information in this area. As a District endorsed policy and upon approval by the Church board, the District Office will assist with the analysis and implementation of a Sabbatical proposal. The District may also provide a Sabbatical Committee that will assist to evaluate the Sabbatical proposal and its effectiveness at completion.



Appendix

Additional Resources

Recommended Reading

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(Excerpt from the Discussion Paper on Pastoral Sabbaticals prepared by the PAOC, 1994)

The Sabbatical Principle: Biblical Principle

No ministerial sabbatical is commanded in the Bible. Scriptures, nonetheless, uphold the sabbatical principle for renewal. Richard Bullock makes the observation that “over and over the stories of scripture point to the renewing power of ‘Sabbath time’. The Sabbath is more than an after thought of God’s action in creation. It’s a gift of rest from God, of renewal and hope”¹

It is important to provide a short biblical survey of the Sabbath principle.

Sabbath Rest

Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. (EX. 20:8-11)

The Hebrew word “Sabbath” means to “cease or rest”. It’s biblical context is the Genesis account of creation. The Sabbath is the seventh day in which “He (God) rested (or ceased) from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:3 NIV). From the beginning God gave the command to rest.

David wrote “He leads me beside quiet water. He restores my soul” (Ps. 23:2 – 3 NAS). A literal translation of “quiet water” is “waters of rest”.

After a prolonged period of ministry Jesus called his disciple to “come apart and rest”. Robert Randall commenting on this verse says: “Come apart and rest or simply come apart”.² Jesus proclaimed “the Sabbath was made for man” (MK 2: 27-28).

The Old Testament records Sabbath rest as a normal pattern in Israel’s history even before the Ten Commandments were given (Ex. 16:22, 29-30). The observance of the Sabbath:

- Demonstrated Israel’s faith in God. The Israelites trusted God not only to provide food miraculously but to also provide enough to eat on the Sabbath,
- became a reminder of how God delivered them out of captivity in Egypt (Duet 5:12-15),
- became a uniquely Jewish memorial distinguishing them from other nations. It became a sign of their covenant with God (Ex. 31:16-17).

God established not only a day of rest but a sabbatical year as well every seventh year (Ex. 23:10-12, Lev. 25:1-7). “... the land would rest” (Lev. 25:2 LSG). After seven observances of the sabbatical year came the year of jubilee (Lev. 24:8-25)

¹ Bullock, A. Richard. Sabbatical Planning for Clergy & Congregations. An Alban Institute Publication.

² Randall Robert. Time of Your Life. Wheaton, Il; Victor Books. 1986

Sabbath rest and Renewal

Just as the sabbatical year was a biblically based provision to restore a farmer's depleted field after six (6) years of planting and harvesting, a sabbatical period for those in the ministry provides time for rest and renewal.³

The created world affords an example of the renewing process in the seasons of the year. Before new life can begin, the cycle of rest needs to be reserved.

The pace of modern society and pressures of contemporary ministry can blind us to see the need for this rhythm of rest and renewal. Eugene Peterson explores this sense of rhythm in life:

"As we enter that sequence of days when God spoke energy and matter into existence, we repeatedly come upon the refrain 'and there was evening and there was morning, on day ... and there was evening and there was morning, a second day ... and there was evening and there morning' on and on six times.

This is the Hebrew way of understanding day and not ours; evening and morning, one day. More than idiomatic speech is involved here. There is a sense of rhythm.

Day is the basic unit of God's creative work; evening is the beginning of that day.

The Hebrew evening-morning sequence conditions us to the rhythms of grace. We go to sleep, and God begins his work. We wake and are called out to participate in God's creative action.

Evening: God begins without our help. His creative day.

Morning: God calls us to enjoy and share and develop the works he initiated."⁴

A Principle Observed

As a principle, a year of rest is allowed for deacons on The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada church boards after having served two three-year terms. This principle of sabbatical leave is also followed in many Christian organizations and secular institutions.

In keep with the biblical principle of Sabbath rest and renewal, opportunity for Pastoral Sabbatical should be thoughtfully considered.

³ Peterson, Eugene. Desert and Harvest a Sabbatical Journey. Leadership Journal, Winter Quarter 1998, Vol VIII, No I.

⁴ Peterson Eugene. God Gives to Us Even in Our Sleep. Leadership Journal, Spring Quarter 1985, Vol. No. 2

Facts Regarding Sabbaticals

- The most striking finding of the analysis is a remarkable shift between original purpose and benefit. For the most part, faculty enter their sabbaticals intending to enhance their research and scholarship. Only a small number appear to see effects upon teaching as an important, expected outcome. Upon return, however, a much higher number see effects upon teaching as a benefit worth mentioning. Five percent at Urbana and 3% at Chicago cited curriculum revision or enhancement of teaching as a purpose; a full 36% at Urbana and 41% at Chicago cited these as outcomes. Several commented on the inevitability of this link: new research, new scholarship, new professional contacts lead naturally to renewed curricula and teaching methods.⁵
- Sabbaticals have been part of the fabric of higher education for over 100 years and are now becoming common place in corporate America. It is estimated that approximately 14 – 24 percent of corporate America have established sabbatical programs.⁶

⁵ http://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/reports_retreats/sabbatical.asp?bch=0. Sabbatical Study, February 27, 1996.

⁶ Helen Axel, Redefining Corporate Sabbaticals for the 1990's, The Conference Board Report No. 1005, 1992.

Recommended Reading & Recommended Resources

Articles:

Hybels, Bill. Reading your gauges. Leadership Journal, Vol. 12, Number 2 Spring 1991.

Peterson, Eugene. Desert and Harvest a Sabbatical Journey. Leadership Journal, Winter Quarter 1998, Vol VIII, No I.

Pastoral Sabbaticals (A Discussion Paper). Prepared for the 1994 General Conference of the The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Available for distribution through the AB & NWT District Office.

Books:

Bullock, A. Richard. Sabbatical Planning for Clergy & Congregations. An Alban Institute Publication.

Peterson, Eugene H. The Contemplative Pastor. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

Randall Robert. Time of Your Life. Wheaton, Il; Victor Books. 1986

Sevier, Melissa. Journeying toward Renewal: A Spiritual Companion for Pastoral Sabbaticals. The Alban Institute, 2002.

Sabbatical Funding Programs:

Louisville Institute's Study Grants for Pastoral Leaders Program (www.louisville-institute.org)

Sabbatical Retreat Centres:

See Focus on the Family Canada, Clergy Care Network at www.clergycares.ca or phone 1.888.525.3749.