

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

The Committee recommends to Presbytery to approve the:

Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave

I. Definitions

Sabbatical Leave for pastors and church educators is a planned time of intensive enhancement for ministry and mission. Sabbatical Leave follows precedents in the academic community and among a growing number of private sector groups. This “extended time” is qualitatively different from “vacation” or “days off.” It is an opportunity for the individual to strategically disengage from regular and normal tasks so that ministry and mission may be viewed from a new perspective as a result of a planned time of focus.

Sabbatical Leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of a Sabbath day and a Sabbath year for renewal. It is both an act of faith that God will sustain us through a period of reflection and changed activity and an occasion for recovery and renewal of vital energies.

Sabbatical Leave is recommended for all full-time pastors and educators serving churches in the National Capital Presbytery who have served in their present position for six (6) continuous years. The recommended length of the Sabbatical Leave is three (3) months. Accrued vacation time and study leave may be attached to the Sabbatical Leave. It is further recommended that this Sabbatical Leave be built into the call Process. Upon completion of the Sabbatical Leave, the incumbent pastor/educator would normally continue serving the same congregation for a period of at least four times the length of the Sabbatical Leave plus accrued vacation, if any. In addition, congregations may limit Sabbatical Leave to one staff person per year, in multiple staff situations.

II Funding

The employing church will continue the pastor/educator salaries, pension/major medical benefits, and book allowance and, at the discretion of the Session, auto and continuing education allowances at the same level as those in effect at the time of the Sabbatical Leave.

The employing church will also contract for pastor/educator services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave.

II Eligible Program Activity and Judicatorial Review

To be eligible for a Sabbatical Leave, the pastor/educator shall present, in writing, to the Church Session for their approval, a program (“the Plan”) of activity for the Sabbatical Leave at least six (6) months prior to the proposed beginning of the Sabbatical Leave. This program of activity and meditation shall include a detailed description of the plan, the goals to be achieved and the expected end-product(s), together with a personal statement as to why this Sabbatical Leave would be valuable for both the pastor/educator and the church.

Upon approval by the Session in the year prior to the Sabbatical Leave, the Plan shall be forwarded to the National Capital Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry, for their review and recommendation. Included in this Plan will be the church’s plan for pastoral/educator services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave.

At the completion of the Sabbatical Leave, the pastor/educator should present to the next regular meeting of the Church Session, a written report of activities and findings. This report will be forwarded to the Committee of Ministry immediately following the Session meeting when it is presented.

Resources: Bullock, A. Richard, Sabbatical Planning for Clergy and Congregations, 1987 (revised and reprinted in 1991), The Alban Institute, Washington, DC
Helm, Norman G., “The Parish and the Minister’s Sabbatical,” “Why Clergy Should Have a Sabbatical...How to Put It Together,” Jan/Feb, 1993, Congregations, a periodical of the Alban Institute, Washington, DC

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