

Sabbatical Leave Policy for Pastors and Certified Educators in Shenandoah Presbytery

Policy statement:

The Presbytery of Shenandoah requires that all new calls for full-time, installed pastors and fulltime Certified Christian Educators include a compensated Sabbatical of at least three (3) months after six (6) years of service to a particular position.

Minister or Educator responsibilities:

1. To bring at least six (6) months prior to the Sabbatical a written proposal including a detailed description of the Sabbatical, the goals to be achieved and the expected benefits for the person and for the congregation along with a personal statement as to why this Sabbatical would be valuable.
2. Consult with the Session in bringing up to date all pending responsibilities before departing on a Sabbatical and participating with the Session in preparing the congregation for the Sabbatical period.
3. Upon return, to remain in the present position at least one year and to join with the congregation in reflecting upon the value and benefit.

Session Responsibilities:

1. To budget from the first year of service, money that can be accrued for the use of the session in meeting any additional expenses required to provide alternative leadership for the church during the Sabbatical.
2. To receive the minister or educator's proposal for a Sabbatical at least six (6) months in advance of the intended commencement of the Sabbatical.
3. Upon receipt of the proposal for a Sabbatical, to begin developing a congregational plan for the Sabbatical, listing their goals and the financial implications.
4. Consult with the minister or educator in bringing up to date all pending responsibilities before a Sabbatical and taking responsibility in preparing the congregation for the Sabbatical period.
5. Upon completion of the Sabbatical, to join with both the pastor/educator and congregation in reflecting upon the value and benefits of the Sabbatical.

Additional guidance is provided in the attached "Shenandoah Presbytery Sabbatical Policy Details and Rational"

Shenandoah Presbytery Sabbatical Leave Policy Details and Rational

Sabbatical is a time for rest and renewal and supports future growth. “Sabbatical” means every seventh years. 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 vial energies.

In Shenandoah Presbytery the normal Sabbatical shall be three months with allowance made for extending that period by adding accrued vacation and study leave.

Purpose: For the minister, Sabbatical leave is a carefully planned period in which a pastor is granted leave away from normal ministerial responsibilities in order to spend an extended period in study and reflection. Sabbatical leave is not a vacation, nor is it expressly continuing education.

For the congregation, Sabbatical leave can allow the people to re-establish their corporate memory or clarify their identity as a congregation. Without the normal relationships and patterns of reliance that a pastorate can create, the congregation recovers their own sense of ministry to the church and to each other. The Sabbatical is an opportunity to identify new patterns that can strengthen the church.

The desired purpose for any Sabbatical should be clearly defined in writing by the minister or educator upon requesting the Sabbatical and by the Session in making plans for the congregational Sabbatical.

Eligibility: A Sabbatical shall be a part of every new call for installed full-time pastors in the Presbytery and Certified Educators working full-time. The minister or educator may take Sabbatical in the seventh year of service in that position or at another time agreed upon by the pastor/Certified Educator and the session. It is expected that a minister or educator will remain in their present position at least for one year following a Sabbatical.

Funding: During the Sabbatical, the church will continue the minister or educator’s salary, pension/medical benefits, book and study allowance at the same level as those in effect at the time of the Sabbatical leave. The Church will also contract for substitute pastoral or educational ministry during the period of the Sabbatical.

Although on the face of it, the Sabbatical may seem like yet another financial burden for the local congregation to bear, it is a minor investment in long ministries and the future health of the congregation. Clergy, educators and churches are encouraged to set aside funds each year in anticipation of the Sabbatical leave. A number of resources in the Presbytery, Synod and denomination are available to assist church professionals in funding Sabbatical projects.

Sabbatical Request Process: A request for Sabbatical must be made in writing to the Session at least six months before the Sabbatical is to begin. The request should include a detailed description of the Sabbatical, the goals to be achieved and the expected benefits for the person and for the congregation along with a personal statement as to why this Sabbatical would be valuable.

The Session would then begin to create their own plan for the Sabbatical, listing their goals and the financial implications. It is the responsibility of the Session, along with the minister or educator, to build support among the congregation in preparation for the Sabbatical.

Re-Entry: Upon return from Sabbatical, it is strongly suggested that the clergy or educator, along with the congregation, share together the details of the leave as well as reflections on its value and benefit.