

Sabbatical Leave Policy for The Presbytery of Northern Kansas

Background and Rationale for Sabbatical Leave

The contemporary model for sabbatical leave comes from the university and college systems in which professors may be granted study leave usually after seven years of teaching. The theological roots for the idea of sabbatical, however, run deeper than the academic model.

The term sabbatical has its roots in the Hebrew cultural-religious concepts of Sabbath, or rest after seven days or years. Genesis 2:1-3 states that God rested from the work of creation after seven days. Both versions of the Ten Commandments describe the Sabbath as a day of reflection on the blessings of God for creation (Exodus 20:8-11) and release from the bondage of slavery (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). Deuteronomy 15 describes a period after seven years in which release from several kinds of debt and labor are itemized. Finally, a cyclical fiftieth year jubilee (the year following seven times seven years) was celebrated. During the Jubilee, land was returned to its ancestral owners and slaves were freed from bondage.

Clearly, for a biblical perspective, sabbatical was a time of rest, renewal and recovery.

Sabbatical leave is a carefully planned period of time in which a pastor is granted leave away from his or her normal ministerial responsibilities in order to spend an extended period of time in study and reflection. Sabbatical leave is not vacation, nor is it only continuing education. Sabbatical leave can be a needed break from the long hours, high pressure, personal sacrifice, and 24 hour a day, seven day a week nature of pastoral ministry.

Sabbatical leave can be a time of prayer, rest, study and travel, either at home or abroad. It can provide the needed change of scenery and pace that can help prevent burnout for the pastor of a congregation. Sabbatical leave can also be beneficial for the congregation in that the pastor may return from sabbatical leave with renewed energy and rediscovered zeal for ministry.

Note on Terminology:

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- **Pastor** should be understood to include ministers of the word and sacrament, commissioned lay pastors, and certified Christian educators.
- **Church** should be understood to also include other ministry settings.
- **Session** should be understood to indicate the appropriate governing board for a ministry setting, responsible for overseeing the work of said professional.

POLICY

Full-time pastors and certified church educators shall be eligible for sabbatical leave after five years of service to an individual church. This policy shall be included in the Terms of Call for all Presbytery of Northern Kansas pastors.

The recommended length of the sabbatical leave is not less than 60 nor more than 90 days. Accrued vacation time and continuing education time may be attached to the sabbatical leave. Upon completion of the sabbatical leave, the incumbent pastor/educator would ordinarily, continue serving the same congregation for two years beyond the conclusion of such leave. In addition, congregations may limit sabbatical leave to one staff person per year, in multiple staff situations.

Planning for Sabbatical Leave

Eligible Program Activity and Judicial Review

To be eligible for sabbatical leave, the pastor 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 outcome(s), together with a personal statement as to why this sabbatical leave would be valuable for both the pastor and the church.

Upon approval by the session, the plan shall be forwarded to the Committee on Ministry for their review and recommendation. The church's plan for pastoral services during the period of the sabbatical leave will be included.

A Covenant Agreement will be signed between the session, the pastor and the Committee on Ministry. For educators, the covenant will be between the educator and the session.

At the completion of the sabbatical leave, the pastor should present to the session, a written report of activities and outcomes. This report also will be sent to the Committee on Ministry.

Support

Although on the face of it, the sabbatical leave may seem like yet another financial burden for the local congregation to bear, it is crucial for session and congregation to recognize the long-term benefits they as a church will reap from granting sabbaticals. For example, pastors/educators who have the opportunity to examine issues of professional growth and development as pastors within an existing pastorate are more likely to stay more years in a particular call.

Providing a sabbatical conveys a sense of support and caring on the part of the calling church. It also offers an incentive to both pastors and educators to commit to and think in terms of longer years of service in a particular church. The session should communicate to the congregation the importance and value to the church of a sabbatical.

The employing church will continue the terms of call commitments at the same level as those in effect at the time of the sabbatical leave.

The employing church will contract for substitute pastoral services during the period of the sabbatical leave. A pulpit supply list is available from the Presbytery.

Pastors and churches are encouraged to set aside funds each year so that resources will be available during the time of sabbatical leave. Churches that would have financial problems in providing for the sabbatical leave should consult with the Presbytery regarding application for a Sabbatical Support Grant.

The following are some potential sources for funding a sabbatical leave:

Sabbath Sabbatical Support Grants – The Board of Pensions has a program that allows small churches to receive a stipend of \$3,000 to use towards a sabbatical for pastors. More information can be found on their website at www.pensions.org.

Sabbatical Grants for Pastoral Leaders – the Louisville Institute awards grants of \$4,000 (four weeks), \$8,000 (eight weeks) and \$12,000 (twelve weeks) to provide time apart for pastoral leaders' study, reflection, and renewal. Grant applications can be requested by writing:

Sabbatical Grants for Pastoral Leaders
The Louisville Institute
1044 Alta Vista Road
Louisville, KY 40205-1789
Phone (502) 895-3411
Or on their website at www.louisville-institute.org

The Lily Foundation Clergy Renewal Program provides grants of up to \$45,000 of which \$15,000 may be applied to congregational expenses associated with the leave. For more information contact the program website at www.clergyrenewal.org or write to:

Lily Endowment
Religion Division
2801 N. Meridian Street
P.O. Box 88068
Indianapolis, IN 46208
Phone (317) 916-7302

The Presbytery of Northern Kansas Continuing Education/Sabbatical Leave Scholarship Fund offers scholarships of up to \$750 for clergy, lay pastors and educators for a sabbatical. Congregations are encouraged to plan ahead for sabbatical leaves by building a carry-over line into their annual budget for a least 10% of anticipated expenses.

Re-Entry

Upon re-entry, it is strongly suggested that the pastor share with the entire congregation the details of the leave as well as reflections on its value and benefit. The re-entry process provides a great opportunity to reflect upon the benefits that resulted from the sabbatical leave. Such expected benefits as:

- Discovering the strength of lay leadership heretofore under-utilized
- New understandings of the concepts of mission between pastor and congregation
- Reaffirmation of calling to ministry on part of pastor and congregation with both being reinvigorated and rededicated to the work of God's people.

The ideal result would be for the congregation to see this period of time not just as the pastor's sabbatical leave but also as the congregation's sabbatical leave.

GUIDELINES FOR A COVENANT AGREEMENT FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

Policy Statement

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Committee on Ministry Responsibilities

1. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the pastor.
2. Serve as mediator in any concerns of session or pastor relative to the sabbatical.
3. Determine who will moderate the session in the pastor's absence.
4. Provide support and information, including a pulpit supply list.

Pastor Responsibilities

1. Bring the sabbatical proposal before the session – at least in outline form - a minimum of six months before the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Secure the approval of the session for the sabbatical proposal and work out the necessary coverage of pastoral and pulpit responsibilities.
3. Assure the session of intent to continue service to the church following the conclusion of the sabbatical.
4. Bring up to date all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the session before departing on a sabbatical.
5. Submit to Committee on Ministry in writing the sabbatical timetable and outline of plans.
6. Present an overview of the sabbatical experience to the session and the Committee on Ministry upon return.
7. Sign a Covenant Agreement with the Session.

Session Responsibilities

1. Receive “for approval” the pastor’s proposal for a sabbatical, at least six (6) months in advance of the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Continue terms of call commitments to the pastor during sabbatical leave.
3. Communicate to the congregation the importance and values to the church of a sabbatical.
4. Request a written overview of the sabbatical from the pastor upon return.
5. Sign a Covenant Agreement with the pastor.

Signed:

_____, pastor _____, date

_____, clerk of session _____, date

_____, COM Moderator _____, date

Presbytery of Northern Kansas Continuing Education Policy

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I. CONTINUING EDUCATION

- A. The paramount purpose of continuing education should be the enhancement of personal and professional skills with relevance to the ministry to which the pastor is called. However, continuing education for acquiring and developing of skills for future calls and assignments should be considered. The Church has an obvious interest in developing a cadre of competent pastors.
 1. Ordinarily, the program for continuing education should be pursued away from the pastor's normal place of service. Continuing education opportunities sponsored by universities, seminaries, hospitals, clinics and retreat centers as well as conferences, seminars, workshops and mission study programs offered by the church (broadly defined) would normally fulfill the spirit of this policy.
 2. The content and purpose of the educational components of any continuing educational plan should be consistent with the Reformed tradition as represented in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Again, this should not exclude courses and experiences that contribute to the breadth and enrichment of the pastor's ministry.
 3. The following do not normally constitute valid continuing education programs for which absence from the ministry setting would be approved: unsupervised private study; extended vacations; leaves of absence or leading guided tours for remuneration.
- B. The Committee on Ministry of PNK will use this policy in considering applications for PNK Continuing Education scholarships.
- C. Procedures for Continuing Education
 1. Provision for continuing education in the terms of call or other contracts shall include:
 - a. A minimum of 14 days (to include 2 Sundays) per year, cumulative to 6 weeks
 - b. A minimum of \$500 per year (to be adjusted annually by the Committee on Ministry) financial support for continuing education cumulative up to three years of allowances

Note: Continuing education time not used at point of dissolution of a call will not be compensated. Continuing education expenses may not be paid except as actually

used for an approved event or process, that is, these are vouchered expenses and may not be converted to salary.

It is recommended that Continuing Education be separated from Professional Expenses in the *Terms of Call* as Continuing Education funds may be accrued for up to 3 years.

2. Pastors and sessions are encouraged to observe these guidelines in planning for continuing education time. A written continuing education proposal will be submitted to the session at least two weeks prior to the event, as well as a report following the event. (See forms on pages 4 and 5.)
3. Pastors Involved in Presbytery Sponsored Work Projects and Camps
 - a. The participation of pastors in international and national work/mission projects/trips shall normally be considered church service not requiring use of continuing education leave or vacation time. Continuing Education Funds may be used when deemed appropriate.
 - b. When clergy, commissioned lay pastors, youth directors, and church educators serve as a directors/leaders for summer camps or as adult advisors/leaders for national or regional meetings, this shall usually be considered a normal part of employment not requiring use of continuing education leave or vacation time.

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

The purpose of the Presbytery of Northern Kansas Scholarship Program is to encourage pastors, lay pastors, and educators within the PNK in their professional development and to have a positive impact on their work within their ministry settings and the presbytery. The guidelines listed below provide the criteria for the awarding of scholarships.

1. All of the pastors, lay pastors, and educators who are members of the Presbytery of Northern Kansas are eligible to apply for scholarship assistance for continuing education and/or sabbatical leave.
2. The event for which assistance is requested should be of benefit in three specific areas:
 - a) the individual pastor, lay pastor, or educator
 - b) the applicants ministry setting
 - c) the Presbytery of Northern Kansas
- 3) The applicants level of participation in the work and ministry of the presbytery will be an important factor in determining the amount of the scholarship awarded. Individuals who are not active in the presbytery may be asked to become more involved as a condition for being approved for a scholarship.
- 4) Special consideration will be given to pastors, lay pastors, and educators who have minimal continuing education benefits. The Committee on Ministry is aware of the needs faced by those who minister in small churches.
- 5) Applicants seeking assistance with advanced degrees, such as a Doctor of Ministry program, must reapply each year and continuing support is not guaranteed.
- 6) An individual is eligible for only one scholarship award per calendar year.
- 7) The maximum amount of any scholarship award will be \$500 for a continuing education event and \$750 for sabbatical leave.
- 8) Within 30 days of the completion of the continuing education event it is expected that the scholarship recipient will submit a form evaluating the event and addressing the value of the event for themselves, their ministry situation, and the presbytery.

12/04/07

APPLICATION FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION or SABBATICAL LEAVE SCHOLARSHIP AID

Complete the application below and return it to: Committee on Ministry, c/o Presbytery of Northern Kansas, 1823 So. Ohio, Salina, KS 67401

(All information will be held in confidence by the committee.)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Present Position: _____

Please answer the following questions using additional space as needed.

(If this application is for a scholarship for sabbatical leave, please include a copy of the Covenant Agreement for Sabbatical Leave between the Session and the Pastor and a copy of the Sabbatical Proposal, which may answer most of the following questions.)

Name, date, location of event you will be attending:

Explain what the event or program is, include a brochure (or copy) and explain what you expect to gain personally or professionally.

Describe personal goals for continued growth and how the above described experience will further your overall personal/professional development.

Name specific ways in which your participation in the above described experience will benefit the Presbytery of Northern Kansas and committees on which you serve.

What specific needs in your present position will be met by this program?

List your specific responsibilities in the Presbytery of Northern Kansas over the last 3 years.

Continued Education Cost:

Transportation _____

Tuition _____

Room and Board _____

Materials _____

Registration Fee _____

Other (specify) _____

Total Cost _____

Continuing Education income:

Amount of Con. Ed. Money you will receive for this calendar year _____

Portion of the cost the ministry setting with which you are affiliated will be contributing _____

Portion of the cost you will be Contributing _____

Portion of the cost you are requesting from the Presbytery of N. Kansas _____

Have you received scholarship aid from Presbytery in the past?
 If yes, when: _____ What amounts: _____

Dates of Event: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

The session (or responsible party if not in a Presbyterian Church) of the _____ approves the pastor's use of continuing education time for the dates listed above.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
 (clerk of session or _____)