

GUIDELINES FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE For Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

1. DEFINITIONS.

Sabbatical Leave for ministers is a planned time of reflection and enrichment 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 during the seventh year for all full-time ministers serving the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia, who have served in their present position for six continuous years. The recommended length of the Sabbatical Leave is three months. Accrued vacation and study leave may be attached to the Sabbatical Leave or used separate from 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 minister would normally continue serving the same congregation/agency for a period of at least four times the length of the Sabbatical Leave. In addition, Sabbatical Leave may be limited to one staff person per year in multiple staff situations.

2. FUNDING

The employing church or hiring agency is expected to continue the minister’s salary/housing allowance, pension/major medical benefits, and at its discretion, part or all professional expenses at the same level as those in effect at the time of the Sabbatical Leave.

The employing church or agency should provide for interim supply services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave.

3. ELIGIBLE PROGRAM ACTIVITY AND JUDICATORY REVIEW

To be eligible for a Sabbatical Leave, the minister is expected to present, in writing, to the church or other hiring agency for their approval, a program of activity for the Sabbatical Leave six months prior to the proposed beginning of the Sabbatical Leave. This program should include a detailed description of the plan, and the goals to be achieved, together with a personal statement as to why this Sabbatical Leave would be valuable for both the minister and the church/hiring agency.

Upon approval by the church or hiring agency to the Sabbatical Leave, the program shall be forward by the minister to the Committee on Ministry (COM) for their review and recommendation. Included in this plan should be arrangements for interim supply services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave.

At the completion of the Sabbatical Leave, the minister should present to the next regular meeting of the church or hiring agency* a written report of activities and findings. The minister shall forward this report to the COM immediately following the meeting when it is presented.

* For ministers serving a congregation, the Session and the COM are the appropriate bodies involved.

For non-parish ministers, the final judicatory review of both the requested program and its written report upon completion lies with the agency or committee that supervises the minister. The COM serves to advise those groups as to the consistency of such Sabbatical Leaves with others. Further, the COM is charged with the overall oversight of all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and thus needs to be aware of the nature and results of all Sabbatical Leaves.