

Yellowstone Presbytery

Sabbatical Guidelines

Policy Statement

The Presbytery of Yellowstone and its Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) respectfully recommends to the Sessions of its Churches that Ministers of the Word and Sacrament be granted a compensated sabbatical of at least three months following not less than seven continuous years of service to that respective church.

Rationale

Sabbatical leave has its beginning in the Biblical concept of the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year. Biblical leaders such as Moses, Elijah, Paul, John the Baptist, etc., spent significant time in rest and reflection in preparation and continuation of their service to God. Jesus, Himself, sought time away for his own spiritual renewal and preparation during His earthly ministry.

Old Testament passages such those found in Exodus and Leviticus speak of Sabbath days and the Sabbath year. Every seven years the land itself was granted a Sabbath when the ground was untilled so that it could replenish itself.

A sabbatical will enable the minister to be renewed through the vital pursuit of continuing education, extended time spent in spiritual formation and fresh mentoring by respected teachers. A sabbatical enables a minister to return to the responsibilities of the parish with renewal: energy, dedication, spiritual vision, health, and effectiveness.

Through preparation and prayer, a Sabbatical leave can also provide the congregation growth opportunities, as well as, the potential for new life as leaders and volunteers assume greater responsibility for the life and wellbeing of the Church.

(Biblical References: Exodus 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1-11; Matt. 11:28-30; & Mark 6:31)

Pastoral Ministry Team Responsibilities

- I. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the minister
- II. Serve as mediator in any concerns of Session or Minister relative to the sabbatical.
- III. Determine who will Moderate the Session in the minister's absence.
- IV. Provide guidance to the respective church in working through this process.

Minister Responsibilities

- I. Prepare and bring the sabbatical proposal before the Session (at least in outline form) a minimum of six months before the proposed commencement of the sabbatical.
- II. Secure the approval of the Session for the sabbatical, as proposed, and work out the necessary coverage of the pastoral and pulpit responsibilities.
- III. Assure the Session of continued services to the church for at least one year from the conclusion of the sabbatical.

- IV Bring current all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the Session before departing on the sabbatical.
- V. Submit to the PMT the formal, finalized plans and timetable for the sabbatical.
- VI. Maintain a journal of the sabbatical experiences and upon return present an oral and written overview of the sabbatical to the Session, congregation and to PMT.

Session Responsibilities

- I. Receive for approval the minister's proposal for a sabbatical at least six months prior to the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
- II. Communicate to the congregation the importance of a sabbatical and its values to the church, and secure their concurrence as well as input.
- III. Request a written and oral overview of the sabbatical from the minister upon his/her return.
- IV Discuss thoroughly with the Pastoral Ministry Team how the church leadership is prepared to meet the challenges presented by the exigencies of a sabbatical leave.

****** A compensated sabbatical implies that the church would maintain the minister's contracted compensation package intact through the sabbatical period. It does not imply that the church would be obligated for the costs of the sabbatical itself or any of the ancillary expenses associated with the sabbatical. However accumulated Study Leave or Study Leave dollars could be incorporated into the sabbatical funding process.

Suggestion: Several private institutions as well as the General Assembly offer grants for sabbatical purposes. Before the minister makes such a request or formulates such a plan, PMT recommends that those funding sources for sabbatical assistance be explored.

The Pastoral Ministry Team of Yellowstone Presbytery, on review of all of the above requirements to its satisfaction, approves the sabbatical plans and outline for the Reverend/s _____ serving the _____ church.