



## Sabbatical Information for Pastors and Church Leaders

What is a sabbatical?

The word Sabbatical literally means, "to cease". The goal is for the pastor to release ministerial duties for a period of 4 to 6 weeks so they study, reflect, pray, listen, set personal goals, plan, and prepare for the next season of ministry.

Why is a sabbatical necessary?

Most pastors are on call 24/7, and most pastor's do not know how to separate themselves from ministry. Pastors experience the best and worst circumstances of the people in their congregations. Thom Rainer says, "In the course of a day, a pastor can deal with death, deep spiritual issues, great encouragement, petty criticisms, tragedies, illnesses, and celebrations of birth. The emotional roller coaster is draining. Your pastor needs a break - many times a break with no distractions."

What does the Manual say about sabbaticals?

Manual 129.10: "In order to encourage the lifelong learning of the pastor in spiritual, emotional and educational dimensions, the church board may consider supporting a sabbatical/study leave for the pastor during the seventh consecutive year of service in one congregation." The timing and duration of the sabbatical shall be determined in consultation with the pastor, church board and district superintendent.

When should a sabbatical be given?

During every 7<sup>th</sup> year in ministry. The NCO District recommends every church provide a plan for their pastor(s) to receive 1 week sabbatical for every year they serve. These weeks would accrue for 6 years with the ability to take a 6-week sabbatical on every 7<sup>th</sup> year.

How does a sabbatical benefit the congregation?

Most ministers who are granted a sabbatical are much more likely to stay at the church they pastor for another 7 years. In many cases, ministers who are not granted sabbaticals typically are gone within 3 years from their current assignment due to burnout. Additionally, pastors come back to their congregations having spent long times with the Lord allowing them fresh insight and directives from the Spirit of God for their congregations. *The bottom line is: Churches who grant pastors sabbaticals keep their pastors longer and experience fresh spiritual insight from the pulpit.*

Should a pastor be paid during the sabbatical?

Yes! We want this experience to be one of rest for the pastor, not worry.

Who arranges pulpit supply in the pastor's absence?

The Pastor does as a part of their sabbatical plan; the church should budget to cover pulpit supply expense in the pastor's absence.

Should the church provide additional funds to help make a sabbatical a reality?

Yes, we urge each church to set aside an agreed upon amount each year for six years so that funds are available to aide the pastor in this much needed opportunity. Funds should be determined based on church's financial situation.

Steps to an approved Sabbatical:

1. Church Board approve granting a sabbatical in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of pastoral service for a duration of no more than six weeks, and approves an amount, if financially possible, to assist the pastor(s) in achieving his/her sabbatical.
2. Pastor develops a sabbatical plan. The district recommends that the sabbatical plan include the following elements:
  - Detaching (Phone/Conversation/Accessibility)
  - Determination (Determine the things you take for granted and do them...Stop and Smell the Roses)
  - Discovery (Learning from others through study/interview/reading)
  - Discernment (Prayer/Reflecting/Listening to the Voice of God)
  - Development (Planning for Return)

Additional care should be given to include who will provide pulpit supply in pastors absence.

3. Plan is presented to District Superintendent and approved
4. Plan is presented to Church Board and approved.
5. Plan is celebrated publicly with the church, and asking church to pray.