

A Sabbatical for Pastors Genesis Conference

Purpose of Sabbatical Leave

We encourage our churches and pastors to work together to plan for sabbatical leave for their pastor(s). A sabbatical leave is a period of time away from the pastor's regular duties, offered to its pastors by the church, for the mutual benefit of the pastor and the local church.

A sabbatical is not a vacation, not a reward for good work, nor simply a perk to keep the pastor happy. It is a time for personal renewal, formal or informal study, and professional re-tooling. It is good for the teacher to become a student again and the professional clergy to become simply a worshipper and the benefits for the health and longevity of our pastors will be passed along as a byproduct to our congregations.

Eligibility

Genesis Conference elders appointed as lead pastors can apply for a three-month sabbatical leave after having completed six or more years of continuous, full time service in a local church. In some cases, allowances may be made for those with a minimum of six years continuous service in multiple local churches within the conference, in consultation with the Superintendent. Local churches are encouraged to consider establishing sabbatical policies for staff pastors.

Application Procedure

Application for a sabbatical leave is to be prepared by the pastor in consultation with the relevant Pastor-Church Relations Committee (Pastor's Cabinet, Personnel Committee, Human Resources Committee, Board of Administration, etc.) and submitted to the conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Board for approval. After approval, the plan will then be shared with the congregation for its information.

It is expected that the nature, duration, schedule, and financial and logistical arrangements for the leave will be worked out in consultation with the Pastor-Church Relations Committee as part of the application to Genesis Conference.

The application must contain the following:

1. a clear statement of the rationale for and goals of the leave;
2. an outline of the intended use and schedule of the leave time;
3. the envisioned benefit to the pastor's personal and professional development;
4. the benefit to the local church and the congregation's ministry; and
5. any other issues the church deems important.

In making an application, the pastor should allow sufficient time before the start of the leave for the necessary conference and local church approvals, and for the church to make suitable arrangements for covering the necessary pastoral duties and responsibilities.

Intended Use of the Leave Time

Since the primary purpose of the sabbatical leave is the professional development of the pastors while being relieved of their regular duties associated with their ministry to their church, the majority of the time spent on the sabbatical leave should reflect that purpose. Shorter periods of time spent in some public service to the community, in physical and mental relaxation (as in vacation), and/or in other spiritual renewal and refreshment are appropriate.

It is unethical for pastors to use a sabbatical leave to explore other job options or to accept a new church position within one year of their return from a sabbatical leave.

At the conclusion of a sabbatical leave the pastor should provide an oral (if requested) and a written report of the experience to conference and the local church, giving testimony to the developmental growth experiences and insights gained on the sabbatical leave that may be expected to benefit the pastor and the church.

Financial Arrangements

A sabbatical leave may not be used to accept other paid employment. Opportunities to preach or speak should only be accepted as part of the sabbatical leave proposal, but such opportunities should be minimized so that the full benefit of the time away may be achieved. Requests to officiate at weddings and funerals may be accepted, provided that they do not interfere with the approved sabbatical plan.

The church will provide full remuneration (salary and benefits) to the pastor while on sabbatical leave. The church will also pay the costs to cover preaching and other pastoral duties during the sabbatical. Financial assistance can be requested by the church if they are unable to provide for the full cost of a sabbatical leave. Churches in need of pastoral support are encouraged to consider Conference Ministerial Candidates.
