

Relationship of sabbatical to other forms of compensation (e.g., vacation, severance pay/time).

- Commitment by the pastor for future service.
- Resources or funding available for supporting sabbatical activities.
- Plan for coverage during the sabbatical.
- Qualification of other types of ministry as sabbatical activities: e.g., professor-in-residence, chaplaincy training, special projects or missions.

SABBATICAL POLICY

1. It is recommended that a pastor receive two months of sabbatical leave for every five years of service to the local church he currently serves.

2. Sabbatical is not to be taken prior to five years of consecutive service at that local church. After five years, the pastor would accumulate one week for each additional year of service. The maximum length of a sabbatical would be sixteen weeks.

3. Churches, at their discretion can give credit for the pastor's years of service at a prior church, especially if no sabbatical time was given.

4. Pastors must submit a sabbatical proposal to the Board, outlining in general terms how the

sabbatical time would be invested. In a multiple staff church, the proposal should first be cleared by the Senior Pastor. Sabbatical proposals should reflect a balance of physical rest, personal recreation, intellectual, stimulation and spiritual renewal. Sufficient time for family should be included.

5. Sabbatical time is separate from the pastor's yearly vacation time.

6. The pastor should report to the Board after the completion of the sabbatical, to indicate how the time was invested and what benefits were realized.

7. The pastor's full wages and benefits should continue for the duration of the sabbatical. No compensation should be given for unused sabbatical time.

8. Pastors should covenant with their church to serve at least two more years with that congregation after the sabbatical.

9. The church should give appropriate recognition to both the commencement and conclusion of the sabbatical period.

10. The understanding of a "sabbatical" is that the pastor is relieved from all routine and emergency duties during the time granted. The local church leaders will handle routine and emergency matters.

NORTHERN PLAINS DISTRICT

EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

SABBATICAL POLICY FOR PASTORS



Northern Plain District
318 W. Apollo Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58503-1412

Telephone/Fax: 701-223-3007

E-mail:

office.npd@midconetwork.com

While pastors and other ministers are responsible to God and to their churches, Evangelical Free Churches are also responsible for the care of their pastors and staff members.

Pastors often work six days per week, rarely get an entire weekend off, seldom get a three day weekend, and generally find that Christmas, Easter and other holidays are among their busiest times of the year. There may be days off during most weeks, and two to four weeks of vacation a year. These however, are often subject to interruption by church-related calls and emergencies.

The demands of pastoral ministry can drain a person's physical, emotional and spiritual energy. Over a period of years, pastors can find themselves tired, apathetic, spiritually cold and in some cases embittered against their congregation and disillusioned with the ministry.

A strong sense of call to ministry and loyalty to their flock will enable most pastors to persevere in spite of these hardships. However they often function with diminished effectiveness. Others seek and accept the call to another church. Unfortunately, the problems are often merely forgotten temporarily. Burnout often catches up with the pastor. Tragically, the cumulative result can sometimes be a pastor's departure from pastoral ministry altogether.

While pastors should be responsible for their own rest and refreshment, the nature of ministry as well as the makeup of many pastors, combine to the effect that pastors often do not invest sufficient time and energy in

developing themselves personally. Sometimes pastors do not take needed personal time, feeling responsible for ministry 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. Short-term urgencies can crowd out long-term necessities.

To prevent this situation, every congregation should develop a policy of regularly-scheduled sabbaticals for each of its full-time pastoral staff. A sabbatical is a reminder that it is "God's church" and that the pastor is "God's sheep" just as much as are the other members.

Such a policy carries some potential dangers. Pastors should obviously not use sabbaticals for candidating or preparation for departure from their churches. Therefore pastors should commit to remaining at the local church once they return from a sabbatical for a stated period, perhaps two years.

Pastors may fear that their congregations may get along "too well" or "not at all" without them. Obviously, such a pastor overestimates his own significance in God's church. However, a pastor should, likewise, be assured that such an action is no threat to his position.

However, the proven benefits far outweigh the potential, remote dangers:

*A grateful pastor who returns to God's calling will do so with renewed vigor, insight, appreciation, humility and understanding.

*A probably even more grateful Pastor's wife.

*Pastor's children who may be thoroughly delighted at the change that has come over their father.

*A pastor better prepared for service in and to the local church, whose gifts are also enhanced for serving the entire kingdom of Christ.

*A witness to the community of the love and trust with which a Free Church congregation esteems their pastor.

*Sabbaticals also allow churches to draw on other resources, perhaps formerly unexpressed, when the pastor was present.

PREPARING A SABBATICAL POLICY

Churches may include sabbatical policies in church bylaw, call letters, separate documents or policy manuals or all the above. They may further be negotiated as part of a pastor's call or ongoing compensation arrangements.

In formulating sabbatical policies, churches should specify:

- Who is eligible?
- When is one eligible?
- Length of sabbatical.
- Basis of accruing sabbatical time.
- What activities are permitted?
- What activities are not permitted?
- What plans and reports will be required?