



Cooperative Baptist
Fellowship North Carolina

SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY & EXAMPLES



DEVELOPING A SABBATICAL POLICY: *Options to Consider*

After reviewing a variety of sabbatical policies from CBF churches, the following suggestions are offered to churches who are considering adopting a policy for their pastoral staff. Under each heading are a number of points. The idea is not to use all of the options listed but to create a customized policy by choosing from them.

A minister serves in a unique position. The demands of pastoral ministry are great and despite vacation time and occasional continuing education, a pastor is often physically, emotionally and spiritually drained.

1. Definition of Sabbatical

- Extended leave for the purpose of continuing education
- Period of rest after seven years – Hebrew cultural-religious concept
- Period of time for professional development and spiritual renewal
- Opportunity to lie fallow for revitalization of the body, mind and soul

2. Purpose or Rationale

- Benefits
 - Renewed commitment to the church
 - Enhanced job performance
 - Staying current with professional developments
 - Opportunity to pursue an area of theological interest
 - Replenished energy stores
 - Renewed emotional health
 - Increased spiritual vitality
 - Acquisition of new skills
 - Rediscovered zeal for ministry
 - Personal growth and refreshment
 - Increased effectiveness in ministry
 - Improvement in one or more competencies
 - Rekindled sense of God's calling
 - Nurture of the body and soul
- Beneficiaries
 - Minister
 - Minister's family
 - Congregation
 - Councils

3. Activities on Sabbatical

- Teaching
- Writing
- Working on a special project
- Reflection
- Continuing education
- Personal refreshment
- Academic courses
- Spiritual retreat
- Receiving pastoral care
- Ministry related travel

4. Eligibility

- Full-time ordained ministers
- Ministry associates
- Full-time non-ordained ministry staff
- Minister must have continuously served the congregation for "x" years. (Most common time frame is 5 years.)
- Minister is encouraged to consider applying for a sabbatical on a regular basis.

5. Terms

- May be taken after "x" years of continuous service . (Most common time frame is 5 years.)
- First full year after sabbatical becomes year 1 of the next "x" years of service
- Following initial sabbatical, subsequent ones may be taken after "x" years of additional service
- For a period up to "x" months (Usual range is 3 – 6 months)
- To be taken all at once
- Maybe taken in segments
- In multi-staff setting, only one minister may take a sabbatical during a given year
- Separate and distinct from continuing education and vacation time
- Minister completely released from all duties during sabbatical
- Normally taken away from where church is located
- Sabbatical time may/may not be accumulated
- Minister will/will not receive continuing education time during year sabbatical is taken
- Minister will/will not receive full vacation time during year sabbatical is taken

6. Conditions

- Plan must be submitted to Council "x" months prior to the sabbatical (Six months is fairly typical)
- Plan must be submitted to Council before budget has been determined for fiscal year in which sabbatical is to be taken
- Plan must include: project proposal, time and work schedule, reporting schedule, budget, and description of benefits to both minister and congregation
- Course of study must lead/doesn't need to lead to an academic degree
- Minister provides additional "x" years of service after sabbatical (Most common time frame is 2 years)

7. Duties of Council

- Find replacements or an interim minister for the time of sabbatical
- Decide on visiting and/or pastoral care needed by congregation
- Check with classis for possible funds to offset expenses incurred by pulpit replacement or interim ministers
- Determine that sabbatical plan will benefit both minister and congregation
- Monitor minister's activities during sabbatical
- Encourage minister to consider shortfalls or gaps in his/her pastoral skill set to address during sabbatical
- Ensure minister is not contacted by congregants for ministry needs during sabbatical

8. Financial

- Minister receives full salary and benefits during sabbatical (Most common choice)
- Minister receives "x%" of his/her salary and benefits during sabbatical
- Minister is/is not reimbursed for tuition, living expenses, lodging and travel expenses incurred during sabbatical
- Special offering is taken to help offset minister's expenses during sabbatical
- Amount budgeted for continuing education for year in which sabbatical is taken will/will not go towards minister's expenses during sabbatical
- Minister encouraged to search out grants/donations/funds for expenses for sabbatical
- Minister may/may not earn income in addition to regular salary during sabbatical
- Minister may request grant from church's sabbatical fund for up to "x" dollars for expenses incurred during sabbatical
- Sabbatical not granted unless budget has sufficient funds

9. Reporting

- Minister sends monthly reports to Council/congregation during sabbatical
- Minister submits written report to Council within "x" months of returning after sabbatical (Most common time frame is 2 months)
- Minister gives oral report to the congregation within "x" months of returning after the sabbatical (Most common time frame is 2 months)
- Final evaluation of benefits received by congregation is conducted one year after end of sabbatical
- Upon return, minister and Council consider best course to be followed as minister re-enters life of congregation—allowing evaluation of minister's responsibilities, new opportunities, and adjustments to minister's job description



EXAMPLES OF SABBATICAL POLICIES

— CHURCHES —

First Baptist Church – Wilmington

The members of First Baptist Church-Wilmington are keenly aware of the accumulating pressures of sustained twenty-four hour ministry and the toll it can have on clergy and staff. This policy for sabbatical leave time is instituted for the purpose of providing a defined period of respite and to encourage physical and spiritual renewal.

Premise

Precedent for sabbatical leave comes from diverse sources. Genesis 2:1-3 refers to God's originating a seventh day of rest in the creation story. Leviticus 25:2-7 provided for a sabbatical year when croplands could rest. Universities have long offered sabbatical leave to tenured professors, and missionaries enjoy the privilege as well.

Purpose

At FBC-Wilmington, sabbatical leave is granted to Pastors and Ordained Staff and is encouraged as an opportunity for physical rest, spiritual renewal and professional development. Sabbatical pursuits may include, but are not limited to, physical and emotional rest, continuing education toward an advanced degree, travel, mission trips, research and writing, intellectual growth, personal and family enrichment.

Eligibility

All Ordained Staff are eligible for sabbatical leave in their seventh year of continuous service to FBC-Wilmington and every seventh year thereafter. Preference is given to the Pastor and Associate Pastor who are responsible for the ongoing preaching, counseling and care-giving ministries of the church.

Length of Leave

The Pastor and Associate Pastor become eligible for six weeks of sabbatical leave in their seventh year of continuous service. Other Ordained Staff become eligible for four weeks of sabbatical leave in their seventh year of continuous service. Up to two weeks of personal leave time may be taken in conjunction with sabbatical leave. Sabbatical leave may not be carried forward.

Funding

FBC-Wilmington will continue full pay and employee benefits for individuals who earn and take sabbatical leave. The church will bear the cost of a short-term interim replacement for that person, if needed. Additionally, the church will provide \$1,000 per week toward approved sabbatical expenses. The Pastor and Associate Pastor may receive a total of up to \$6,000 each, and the Associates/Other Ordained Staff may receive a total of up to \$4,000 each. Staff members are encouraged to apply for full or partial grants from denominational and philanthropic organizations.

Frequency

Sabbatical leave time is limited to one individual per year. In addition, there must be six months between leave times in separate years. Sabbatical leave can be deferred up to one year.

Approval Process

A written request for sabbatical leave is required at least twelve months in advance. The request should include the specific purpose and plan, start and end dates, cost estimates, a strategy for delegation of duties and expected benefits for the individual and the church. A request from the Pastor for sabbatical leave will be submitted to the Chair of the Diaconate. Requests for sabbatical leave from all other staff members will be submitted to the Pastor.

Contingencies

A staff person on sabbatical leave is relieved of routine responsibilities and will not be on call for weddings, funerals or other similar duties. Other employment while on leave is prohibited. It is expected that a staff member who takes sabbatical leave will remain in full employment with FBC-Wilmington for the twelve months following the leave time. Christian education leave time will be forfeited during the year sabbatical leave is taken. A detailed report is required at the end of the leave period outlining results and conclusions.

Zebulon Baptist Church

People work best when they periodically have the opportunity to re-tool for their occupation. Particularly in the area of religious ministry, the stress of constantly giving of themselves to others during times of stress, (even during times of stress in their own lives) has a cumulative effect. Recognizing the benefits to be derived by the church as well as the minister, Zebulon Baptist Church hereby establishes the following sabbatical policy.

Eligible Staff

Ordained ministers in a paid position that requires (30) or more hours of structured work each week.

Accumulation

- After five (5) years of full time service: 4 weeks
- After six (6) years of full time service: 7 weeks
- After seven (7) years of full time service: 10 weeks
- Part time ordained ministers, thirty (30) or more hours per week, will accrue time on a pro rata basis.
- A sabbatical taken after five (5) years but before six (6) years will be four (4) weeks. A sabbatical taken after six (6) years but before seven (7) years will be seven (7) weeks. When a sabbatical, or any part thereof, is taken, regardless of which time frame it falls, the ordained minister will start accruing time towards their next sabbatical as if they had just begun employment with Zebulon Baptist Church. An ordained minister will not accrue more than ten (10) weeks.

Application for Sabbatical

An ordained minister desiring to take an earned sabbatical will submit a plan for the use of such time by July 1 prior to the October/September church year in which they expect to take said sabbatical. The plan will outline the educational undertakings scheduled and explain how such experience will benefit both them and the church. Educational undertakings will not be limited to solely academic settings.

The Pastor Relations Committee of the Board of Deacons or the Personnel Committee may initiate a request for a staff sabbatical if they determine that it is in the best interest of the church and the ordained minister.

Approval

The Pastor Relations Committee of the Board of Deacons and the Personnel Committee will approve the Senior Pastor's sabbatical. The Senior Pastor and the Personnel Committee will approve all other sabbatical requests.

Ultimate approval will be exercised by the congregation as it approves the annual budget which may include interim assistance if it is not feasible for remaining staff to adequately fulfill the necessary responsibilities of the person on sabbatical leave.

Commitment

An ordained minister will make a good faith pledge to continue their ministry to Zebulon Baptist Church for a period of at least one year after completing their sabbatical.

Ardmore Baptist Church

Ardmore Baptist Church recognizes that the full-time ministerial staff at various intervals have need to renew and enhance skills through activities away from the responsibilities and stresses presented daily at Ardmore. It is the purpose of this policy to provide opportunity for this activity with minimal disruption and compromise to the mission and ministry of Ardmore Baptist Church. Further, the policy is established with the belief that Clergy Renewal, when thoughtfully and prayerfully structured, can greatly strengthen the total effectiveness of the church's mission and ministry.

Policy

A minister is eligible for an eight week Clergy Renewal after completing at least seven years of continuous full-time employment with Ardmore Baptist Church. A maximum of eight weeks of Clergy Renewal can be earned. When a Clergy Renewal has been taken, the seven year continuous service cycle begins again on the first date that the minister returns to work.

Guidelines

Clergy Renewal can be structured to include (but not limited to) study or teaching at a seminary, divinity school, or similar professional institution; writing projects where publication is the ultimate goal; special ministry collaboration with a colleague; temporary ministry service with a missions sending agency, etc. A Clergy Renewal must be structured to benefit the ministry of both the minister and the church. It must not be structured as an extension of vacation or simply a period of rest.

The minister's salary and allowances will continue during the Clergy Renewal. The minister will consult with the pastor as to the structure and timing of the Clergy Renewal. The pastor will consult with the Chair of the Personnel Council as to the structure and timing of the pastor's Clergy Renewal. If the Clergy Renewal is solely educational in nature and this policy alone does not provide adequate time, then upon recommendation by the pastor, this policy and the Extended Enrichment Leave policy may be combined. Only one minister may take Clergy Renewal leave each calendar year.

The pastor, the Personnel Council and the Deacon Council must approve a Clergy Renewal. Ministers will submit in writing to the pastor a request for Clergy Renewal. The pastor's request will be submitted to the chair of the Personnel Council. The request must be submitted at least 120 days in advance of the anticipated commencement date. The request should give in detail the purpose, structure and expected benefits of the Clergy Renewal. The pastor will forward the request to the Personnel Council with a recommendation. If the Personnel Council approves the request, it will be forwarded to the Deacon Council for concurrence or rejection. The Chair of the Personnel Council will respond with appropriate comments to the minister advising of the approval or disapproval of the request.

The church will cover expenses up to the amount budgeted. Ministers are strongly encouraged to seek as many sources of outside funding as possible.

Within 90 days after the completion of the Clergy Renewal, the minister will provide to the Personnel Council a written report of four pages or less that gives a summary of activities and benefits experienced during the Clergy Renewal. The report shall be filed in the church office and can be reviewed by any member requesting to see it.

Oakmont Baptist Church

This policy for sabbatical leave time is instituted for the purpose of providing a defined period of respite and to encourage physical and spiritual renewal. The Church Sabbatical Leave is granted to Pastors and ordained Staff, and is encouraged as an opportunity for physical rest, spiritual renewal, and professional development. Sabbatical pursuits may include, but are not limited to, physical and emotional rest, continuing education toward an advanced degree, travel, mission trips, research and writing, intellectual growth, and personal and family enrichment.

Eligibility

The Senior Pastor will be eligible for a three (3) month Sabbatical after five (5) years of continuous employment and every five years thereafter. All other ordained Staff are eligible for six (6) consecutive weeks of sabbatical leave after their fifth (5) year of continuous service to the Church and every fifth (5) year thereafter. Up to two weeks of leave may be added to their sabbatical subject to the approval of the Senior Pastor or Personnel Team; however, the six (6) week period cannot be divided.

Funding

The Church will continue full pay and employee benefits for individuals who earn and take sabbatical leave. The Church will bear the cost of a short-term interim replacement for that person, if needed. Additionally, the Church will provide \$1,000.00 per week toward approved Sabbatical expenses. The Senior Pastor may receive a total of up to \$6,000.00, and the Associates/Other Ordained Staff may receive a total of up to \$4,000.00 each. Staff ministers are encouraged to apply for full or partial grants from denominational philanthropic organizations.

Frequency

Sabbatical leave is limited to one (1) *other* individual during the year the Senior Pastor is on his three (3) month leave. In other years, two may be gone during that year; however, there must be at least three (3) months separating the two absences. Sabbatical leave may be deferred up to one year; however, the next five (5) year eligibility period begins when that person returns.

Approval Process

A notice requesting Sabbatical leave is required at least *six (6) months* in advance for budgeting and other staff members' leave plans. The request should include the specific purpose and plan, start and end dates, cost estimates, a strategy for delegation of duties and expected benefits for the individual and the Church. A request from the Senior Pastor for Sabbatical leave will be submitted to the Chair of the Diaconate through the Leader of the Personnel Team. Requests for Sabbatical leave from all other staff *ministers* will be submitted to the Leader of the Personnel Team *in consultation with* the Pastor.

Contingencies

Personnel on Sabbatical leave are relieved of routine responsibilities and will not be on call for weddings, funerals, or other similar duties. Other employment while on leave is prohibited. It is expected that a staff *minister* who takes Sabbatical leave will remain in full employment with *the Church* for the twelve (12) months following the leave time. Continuing education leave time will be forfeited during the year Sabbatical leave is taken. A detailed report is required at the end of the leave period outlining results and conclusions and any recommendations, changes, or improvements to the Sabbatical leave program.

Snyder Memorial Baptist Church

A minister desiring to take a sabbatical leave will first discuss the request with the pastor and then submit a written proposal to the personnel committee. A minimum of 7 years full time employment at Snyder is required and ministers are limited to one sabbatical per 7 year period of employment. Up to 9 weeks sabbatical leave may be requested. The minister will use one week of paid vacation for each two weeks of sabbatical leave granted. Sabbatical leave is intended for a minister's personal renewal and professional enrichment and should be designed to accomplish both purposes. Ministers will submit a written proposal for sabbatical leave that includes their specific plan, start and end dates, the plan for coverage of the minister's responsibilities while they are away, cost estimates beyond the minister's regular salary, and expected benefits to the individual minister and the church. Depending on finances, the church may reimburse expenses for professional development during the sabbatical (from the staff development/convention budget). While on sabbatical leave, the minister will be relieved of all routine responsibilities, including weddings and funerals. Other employment is prohibited while on sabbatical.

— OTHER BAPTIST ORGANIZATIONS —

CBF of North Carolina

Biblical Grounding

Sabbatical is a time for rest and renewal and supports future growth. "Sabbatical" means "seventh". 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.

Policy

1. A sabbatical leave is understood to be a time of release from normal duties in order that a coordinator may devote time to renewal and study. No coordinator is obligated to take a sabbatical leave.
2. A sabbatical leave is understood as an integral and important part of an overall strategy for enhancing the mission of CBFNC through coordinator renewal, development, and growth.
3. Ministry coordinators will be eligible for sabbatical leave of up to three months (13 weeks) after having continuously served CBFNC for six years. Thereafter, a coordinator will be eligible for further sabbaticals every seventh year.
4. Sabbatical leaves are not granted automatically, but will be evaluated, approved, and administered by the Coordinating Council in conjunction with the Personnel Committee.
5. No two coordinators may be on sabbatical leave during the same period of time.

Procedures

1. Sabbatical leave procedures are to be considered flexible so as to accommodate unusual opportunities that may develop.
2. Since all of CBFNC is ultimately enriched by the coordinator's sabbatical leave, it is expected that there be shared planning with the coordinator's colleagues and interested CBFNC council members.
3. Coordinators seeking sabbatical leave will submit a written proposal to the Coordinating Council providing adequate notice of the requested sabbatical so as to allow for necessary coordination and budgeting for the proposed leave. This proposal must be approved prior to the completion of the Finance Committee's responsibility for the budget process (usually December of the current budget year).
4. Proposals to the Coordinating Council should include the following:
 - Personal objectives and program objectives.
 - A description of the major elements of the experience.
 - Proposed beginning and end date.
 - Suggestions of how current job responsibilities will be handled during leave.
 - An estimate of any anticipated budgetary implications.
5. Sabbatical leave is separate and distinct from personal enrichment, continuing education, and vacation. However, due to the requirements placed upon CBFNC employees, personal enrichment and continuing education time will be forfeited during a sabbatical year. Vacation time will not be forfeited.
6. The coordinator will continue to receive normal compensation and benefits during the period of the sabbatical leave.
7. Expenses incurred by the coordinator associated with the sabbatical such as travel, tuition, etc. may be budgeted and paid by CBFNC upon review by the Coordinating Council. Non-covered expenses will be reimbursable up to 5% of the coordinator's salary.
8. Within a month of return from the sabbatical, the coordinator will submit a written report and evaluation of the leave to the Coordinating Council. The coordinator will also share with the CBFNC staff reflections upon the value and benefits of the sabbatical.

CBF of Georgia

The CBFGA Sabbatical Policy is designed to provide eligible CBFGA Staff with the opportunity for a time of study, renewal, and growth that will enable them to continue to best serve the mission and ministry to which they have been called.

Procedures for implementation:

*This policy directly supports two of our core values: Lifelong Learning and Effectiveness.

- Sabbatical Leave is available only at the Coordinator and Departmental Coordinator levels for purposes of study, renewal, and growth that will directly benefit CBFGA.
- The Coordinator and Departmental Coordinators will be eligible for up to a six month sabbatical for each seven years of service provided to CBFGA at the Coordinator level.
- The sabbatical must be approved in advance by the Personnel Committee. The officers will follow the below guidelines in regard to the Coordinator.
- Requests for the use of available sabbatical leave time should be submitted in writing to the Personnel Committee one year in advance of the beginning date for the requested sabbatical.
- A written proposal regarding plans for the sabbatical should be submitted at the same time as the request for the sabbatical. The sabbatical should provide personal growth opportunities as well as providing a benefit to the departmental coordinator's work of ministry within CBFGA.
- The Personnel Committee will meet with the departmental coordinator requesting the sabbatical to discuss the time frame, study topics, and plans for the department while the departmental coordinator is away. The departmental coordinator is responsible for having his/her areas of work covered while on sabbatical leave and budgeting appropriate resources to do this.
- The Personnel Committee will notify the departmental coordinator regarding approval of the sabbatical in writing within 30 days of the request.
- Not more than one departmental coordinator may participate in sabbatical annually.
- Sabbatical leave is granted with full salary and benefits and all costs incurred are the responsibility of the individual.
- Upon return to work, the employee will provide a report of his/her experience to the Coordinating Council with information regarding the specific impact the experience will have on his/her work.