



GUIDELINES & RESOURCES FOR SABBATICAL PLANNING

Purpose:

Sabbatical leave is a carefully planned period of time, usually three months after the first seven years service in a diocesan-related ministry, in which the lay professional or clergy is granted leave away from normal duties in order to spend an extended period of time in study, reflection, and renewal.

Sabbatical leave is not a vacation, nor is it only continuing education; it is to promote spiritual, intellectual and emotional renewal and growth. Sabbaticals are also a time to reflect on one's life, ministry, mission, call and goals for the future, in order to be a more effective minister of the Gospel and shepherd God's people.

Eligibility:

See current EDOMI Employee Handbook Guidelines for details.

- Following a sabbatical leave, the individual is expected to commit to a minimum of one (1) more year of service in their present position. Specifically, sabbatical is not to be used as a period of time to discern and/or pursue alternative employment opportunities and doing so may result in a requirement to reimburse the congregation or ministry granting the sabbatical leave.

Financing:

The costs typically covered during a sabbatical include*:

- Continued full salary and benefits for the individual on sabbatical.
- Costs incurred during sabbatical including travel, books, tuition – as mutually agreed upon by leadership prior to the engagement of the sabbatical.
- Cost of supply clergy or job coverage (for lay professionals)

Most of these issues are more easily dealt with when:

- The sabbatical leave is agreed upon in the initial Letter of Agreement
- Funds are escrowed on a regular (annual) ongoing basis to cover sabbatical costs

**Financial costs of a sabbatical can vary widely depending on the ministry setting, the expectations of a congregation and the finances of a congregation or ministry. Financial support for a sabbatical is an additional benefit and should be regarded as such rather than a right or necessarily an expectation. Early and intentional planning will assist all involved to ensure that the individual proposing a sabbatical will be fully supported and encouraged to make plans that refresh the body, mind and soul benefitting the whole of the ministry and not just the individual.*

There have been instances in the diocese where a time of sabbatical leave has been granted in portions over an elongated period of time; an example includes a month of study and

refreshment over the course of three consecutive years allowed for a cleric to use the time and not burden the operating budget beyond the church's ability to sustain such a leave.

Planning a Sabbatical:

Pre-sabbatical:

Not less than a year prior to the sabbatical, the individual should meet with the Senior Warden (or other leadership if not a parochial setting) to discuss issues and questions involving a sabbatical leave.

The bishop likewise must be informed of these intentions.

The sabbatical proposal needs to address:

1. The reason for taking sabbatical
2. A description of the proposed activities during sabbatical, not limited to but including opportunity for retreat and for study
3. Ministry benefits from sabbatical
4. A plan through which the duties of the clergy person or lay professional will be met during sabbatical including:
 - a. Appropriate staffing during the sabbatical
 - b. Concerns about the life of the congregation/ministry during the sabbatical
 - c. Needs of the clergy or lay professional during sabbatical
5. A financial plan for funding the sabbatical and the possible extra expense of hiring supply clergy or additional personnel
6. A description of the way in which the sabbatical time will be assessed at its conclusion
7. Six months prior to sabbatical, the vestry (or other leadership if not a parochial setting) should have a negotiated plan in writing so that the appropriate planning may take place. The plan must also be submitted to the Bishop's office for information and review as necessary.

During Sabbatical:

- The wardens meet weekly with staff or other clergy as appropriate.
- Communication with the priest on sabbatical will be limited to those regarding significant pastoral concerns. The communication will take place through ecclesial channels, not through the cleric's family.
- The wardens (or other leadership if not parochial) will communicate regularly and intentionally with the congregation/ministry.
- During sabbatical leave, the wardens will remain in office until the return of the priest.

Post Sabbatical:

- A reflection upon the sabbatical is written by the priest and submitted to the vestry.
- The wardens and vestry evaluate the congregation's experience and submit this report to the priest.

Conclusion:

These guidelines are provided as a basic template for incorporating a sabbatical plan into a parish ministry. The following resources may prove helpful in further developing that plan. For further assistance, please contact the Diocesan office.

**Resources:**

There are many resources currently available to assist an individual in thoughtfully and intentionally planning time away as well as introducing the benefits and logistics to a congregation/ministry.

Clergy Renewal the Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning, Alban Institute,
<http://www.alban.org/bookdetails.aspx?id=516>

Grant & Scholarship Sources for Sabbatical Leave:

The Lilly Endowment, Inc.:National Clergy Renewal Program
2801 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46208
317/916-7350
www.lillyendowment.org

Louisville Institute
1044 Alta Vista Rd.
Louisville, KY 40205
502/992-5432
www.louisville-institute.org