

North Cape Lutheran Church

Policy and Practice No# 1-10 Sabbatical Leave - Pastors

Date Accepted: 2-9-17

Date Revised: _____

Policy Statement:

North Cape Lutheran Church is firmly committed to a clergy working environment that supports work, life balance, personal growth, and health for all clergy leadership. Sabbatical leaves are granted to provide an opportunity for the pastor to take an extended period of time for personal enrichment, study, spiritual growth, travel, skill development, research, and/or experimentation.

Sabbatical Intent and Overview:

It is important for both rostered ministers¹ and the congregation² to realize the importance of the Pastor's life-long continuing education through workshops, seminary courses, and personal study. Congregations of the ELCA have long been encouraged to provide time and financial assistance to enable Pastors to maintain and improve their skills. From time to time, however, Pastors need and require an extended period of time for study, personal growth, reflection, and renewal without the demands of one's regular employment -- a sabbatical leave. Experience has shown that the congregation's ministry directly benefits from such study, growth, and renewal; long-term ministry is revitalized and stimulated. All parties benefit from allowing a Pastor to recharge his/her batteries to provide for longer term care of the congregation.

These guidelines are provided to assist ministers and the congregation in the contemplation and implementation of such sabbatical leaves. It is also intended that the congregation and ministry would to continue to work and grow during the Sabbatical leave.

Practice:

A leave should be Board approved based upon a specific proposal that indicates how the planned activities will benefit the pastor, the congregation, and/or the wider church. All provisions should be negotiated well in advance (at least three months) of the sabbatical and clearly stated in writing. The proposal/agreement should define how the congregational ministry is to be handled during the absence following the practice outlined below. Only one pastor may be on sabbatical at any one time or during a calendar year.

Eligibility

- a. Full time Pastoral employees of the church
- b. A sabbatical may be taken after every seventh full year of service in a given parish. Years cannot accumulate between calls (unless agreed at the time of call).
- c. Planning should begin the calendar year before the sabbatical so the congregation and minister can plan for financial and ministry adjustments involved.

¹ The terms "rostered ministers" or "ministers", for the purpose of these guidelines, refer to those persons on the ELCA's roster of Word and Sacrament Ministry and roster of Word and Service .Ministry. .

² These guidelines are written for congregations, recognizing that a rostered leader serving in another setting is guided by the policies of that employing body. These other agencies and institutions are also encouraged to consider sabbatical policies.

Duration

A sabbatical will normally be for 12 consecutive weeks (including continuing education weeks normally granted). Vacation should not be included as sabbatical time. The Church Board may consider alternative time lines at their discretion with discussion and planning with the requesting Pastor.

Cost to the Congregation

- a. The congregation will continue to pay full salary and benefits (base salary, housing allowance, retirement and insurance coverage). Car allowances and other ministry expenses are normally not paid during sabbatical time.
- b. Accrued continuing education dollars can be used for the educational costs of the sabbatical. Continuing education dollars can only be accrued for three years.
- c. The congregation will need to provide for their ministry needs to be covered during the sabbatical time. In most cases, these needs are met in ways other than finding full-time replacement during the sabbatical. Considerations involve:
 - i. Sunday worship/preaching. Normally done by a pastor engaged at the normal supply preaching rate of reimbursement .
 - ii. Teaching, visitation, occasional services (funerals, weddings, etc.). The minister, congregational leadership, and the synod office can work together to arrange for these needs to be met during the sabbatical time. Another minister can be contracted for certain responsibilities, other staff may adjust responsibilities, and/or neighboring ministers may agree to cover certain responsibilities.
 - iii. In some cases all coverage of duties can be handled by a second pastor within the church and its lay leadership with a clear plan agreed to in advance by the pastoral staff and church board.
- d. The congregation is not responsible to fund the sabbatical in any other way. However, it may choose to provide additional financial assistance.
- e. If additional costs are projected to be incurred the Church Board and Finance team may have to adjust annual budget plans and communicate to the congregation those changes.

Planning

Planning should begin at least a year before the sabbatical is to take place.

Normally the Pastor provides an outline of the planned use of time to the Church Board or responsible committee before the sabbatical is approved.

Commitments Following the Sabbatical

The Pastor will submit a report of the sabbatical time, and find occasion to share with congregational members reactions, learnings, insights, etc.

The Pastor is expected to remain at least one year in the Church following a sabbatical.

An illustrative checklist/timeline (to be used along with the synod's Sabbatical Resource Packet)

- _____ Church Board and/or Responsible Committee encourages a Pastor to consider a sabbatical.
- _____ Pastor and Church Board determines interest and what he/she might like to do with the 12 weeks.
- _____ Church Board receives request/proposal, approves sabbatical leave.
- _____ Church Board and/or Personnel committee with Finance team adjusts budget to allow for additional staff coverage.
- _____ The Worshiping and Praising Cluster Coordinator and/or Church Board Member with Pastoral consultation contacts the synod office regarding pastoral assistance requirements identified in the Sabbatical plan
- _____ All arrangements with persons involved should be in place a minimum three months in advance.
- _____ The Pastor requesting Sabbatical leave makes all necessary arrangements for his/her course of study, travel, etc.