

## **Sources & Resources:**

*Creative Disruption-Sabbaticals for Capacity Building & Leadership Development in the Nonprofit Sector*

*Developing a Sabbatical Policy, Christian Reform Churches*

*Policy for a Sabbatical Leave for Pastors of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Norfolk MA*

Northeast Baptist Conference: *Guidelines for a Sabbatical leave*

Dallas Theological Seminary: *Sabbatical, Helpful Hints for a successful sabbatical*

Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba: *Guidelines for Sabbatical Study Leave*

Alberta & North West Territories District, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada: *Sabbatical Policy*

Peterson, Eugene. *Desert and Harvest a Sabbatical Journey*. Leadership Journal, Winter Quarter 1998, Vol VIII, No I.

Bullock, A. Richard. *Sabbatical Planning for Clergy & Congregations*. An Alban Institute Publication.

*Sabbaticals... The necessary option: A guide to planning and implementing a sabbatical leave that will benefit both the pastor and the church*. Pinnacle Ministries, Inc. Mosinee, WI (2009)

Roberts, Wes. *Support Your Local Pastor*. NavPress-Colorado Springs, CO. 1995.

## **What is a Sabbatical?**

- The goals of a sabbatical are renewal, restoration and longevity. The reasoning for the sabbatical is the belief in upholding the principle of the Sabbath.

The Scriptures have a pattern for taking a time of rest and renewal:

- a. God rested on the seventh day after creation, Genesis 2:2
  - b. Pattern of Sabbath rest for God's people, Exodus 120:8-11, Leviticus 23:3
  - c. Pattern of Year of Jubilee on 7<sup>th</sup> cycle of Sabbath years, Leviticus 25:13
  - d. Jesus spent 40 days away before beginning His earthly ministry, Matthew 4, Mark 1:12
- 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
  - A sabbatical is a time for Rest and Personal Reflection.
  - A sabbatical should be Proactive, not Reactive
  - Without a pattern of Rest and Renewal, FATIGUE occurs
    - Physical: Functioning may become sluggish, depression can occur
    - Emotional: Evaluations of people and circumstances may become cloudy
    - Mental: Loss of the ability to focus and to see problems clearly

*Just as the sabbatical year was a biblically based provision to restore a farmer's depleted field after six (6) years of planting and harvesting, a sabbatical period for those in the ministry provides time for rest and renewal.* Peterson, Eugene. Desert and Harvest a Sabbatical Journey. Leadership Journal, Winter Quarter 1998, Vol VIII, No I.

## **Sabbaticals are not:**

- It is not a vacation. Unlike vacations, “sabbaticals involve a plan, a goal and accountability.” Sabbaticals “should be taken in addition to earned vacation time.”
- It is not academic leave. Theological education is extremely demanding and does not allow for emotional, spiritual, and relational renewal.
- It is not escape. A sabbatical is not a way for pastoral staff to escape a troubled ministry. They must face such troubles and deal with them before true rest is possible. Similarly, a sabbatical should never be viewed as a time to search for a new place of ministry.

## **Are Sabbaticals Needed?**

One survey of Pastors revealed the following:

- 90% work more than forty-six hours per week, and often more than sixty.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry is affecting their family negatively.
- 33% say that, "Being in ministry is clearly a hazard to my family."
- 75% have reported a significant crisis due to stress at least once every five years in their ministry.
- 50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 90% feel they were not adequately trained to cope with the ministry demands placed upon them
- 40% report having a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- 37% have been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.
- 70% have a lower self-image after they've pastored than when they started.

Roberts, Wes, *Support Your Local Pastor*, (NavPress-Colorado Springs, CO. 1995) page 19.

- Clearly in Scripture there is a work/rest design, both for a short-term cycle (weekly) and an extended cycle (the year of Jubilee). In fact, the extended cycle was taken so seriously that that Lord commanded the return of land to its original owners after fifty years ("In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property." Leviticus 25:13).
- In the New Testament two important examples exist to help us see the pattern (although we don't often see them in that light). After thirty some years of living, and just before entering the most demanding and stressful time of His life, Jesus spent forty days alone to fast, pray and reflect. Further, the Apostle Paul, following his conversion and earliest ministry, spent time in obscurity in his home area before Barnabas sought him out for his "life's work" (Acts 11:25).
- While neither of these episodes could be called a sabbatical in any contemporary sense of the word, they illustrate a point. An investment in reflection and renewal only serves to enhance a servant of Christ's ministry. If the contemporary church is truly interested in productivity for the Kingdom, and not just in hours clocked in, we would do well to consider the example.

## **Things to consider when coming up with Sabbatical Policy:**

- 1) **Qualification:** A Pastor will be eligible for sabbatical leave after completing \_\_\_\_\_ years of services. Only one Pastoral staff may be on a sabbatical during any calendar year. First full year after sabbatical becomes year 1 of the next \_\_\_\_\_ years of service
- 2) **Term:** The duration of a sabbatical leave may be flexible depending on needs and objectives. It should be a minimum of \_\_\_\_ month, up to a maximum of \_\_\_\_ months. The sabbatical will not affect vacation time.
- 3) **Activities:** The activities, during sabbatical, will be for the improvement of the physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of the Pastor as well as the congregation he serves.
- 4) **Status after sabbatical:** It will be understood that the Pastor is expected to continue in his position up to one year after his sabbatical is completed, otherwise, the Pastor may be expected to repay the church, part or all costs incurred for, and during, his sabbatical.
- 5) **Request:** The Pastor may request a sabbatical leave, giving ample time for needed planning and education of the congregation. The request for a Sabbatical and a written plan must be submitted to the deacons at least six (6) months before it is to begin. Plan must also be submitted to Deacons before budget has been determined for fiscal year in which sabbatical is to be taken
- 6) **Plan:** Proposals for sabbaticals shall be presented by the pastor to the Deacon Board and should include the following:
  - a. Personal objectives and program objectives
  - b. A description of the major elements of the sabbatical leave
  - c. Proposed beginning date and end date
  - d. Suggestions of how current job responsibilities will be handled during the leave
  - e. A description of any anticipated budgetary implications
- 7) **Accountability:** The Pastor will seek out and be accountable to a spiritual / accountability partner, who is approved by the Deacon Board, for the duration of the sabbatical.
- 8) **Finances & Funding:** Normal compensation will continue during the sabbatical (salary, housing, medical insurance, staff development, expenses and books). If additional expenses are to be incurred during the sabbatical these must be worked out with the Deacons and if necessary approved by the church membership
- 9) **Approval:** The sabbatical will be approved by the Deacon Board
- 10) **Education / Communication:** It is the responsibility of both the Pastor and the Deacon Board to educate the congregation about the sabbatical and why it is being considered. This should include, at minimum, the rationale for a sabbatical, the plan for the sabbatical, and the proper response of members of the congregation to the Pastor during sabbatical.
- 11) **Reporting:** An analysis / report will be given to the Deacon Board no more than two (2) months following the sabbatical completion, and disseminated to the congregation as appropriate.