**Guidelines for Sabbaticals**

A Sabbatical leave is a resource for pastors and their families to experience an extended time away from the routines of normal ministry and daily life. It is intended to be a separate time away from the local church and is not considered part of the pastor’s vacation time. Pastors need to replenish and restore what has been depleted by day-to-day giving of oneself and ministry demands. The Sabbatical leave is intended to provide an avenue of special renewal for the pastor in a different context and at a different pace from pastoral ministry. It is our hope that a deeper relationship with the Lord, a clearer understanding of God’s vision for the church and a fresh perspective for his/her ministry should be realized from taking a Sabbatical.

Recognizing that normal routines often do not provide for reflection and renewal of the vision and mission of the pastor’s ministry, the church may provide a Sabbatical leave for pastoral staff in keeping with the following guidelines:

1. The Senior Pastor or any member of the church’s pastoral staff, in consultation with the local church board may be granted a Sabbatical leave as follows:
   1. Up to a three-month Sabbatical leave after six years of continuous service with the present local church.
   2. Up to a further three-month Sabbatical leave after four more years of continuous service with the same local church.
2. In the case of a multi-staff (pastor) situation, only one pastor may be on Sabbatical leave at the same time except where the spouse is a member of the pastoral staff.
3. The pastor’s proposal and plan for the Sabbatical leave shall be drawn up by the pastor and approved by the church board prior to the Sabbatical leave being granted.
4. On return from the Sabbatical leave, the pastor shall report in writing to the church board, describing to what extent his/her planned activity was met, the immediate personal and professional benefits that he/she obtained and the anticipated impact on his/her ministry in the coming two years.
5. Vacation time cannot be reduced because of the Sabbatical leave nor should it be used to extend the Sabbatical leave.
6. The timing of the Sabbatical leave shall take into consideration the needs of the congregation, the scheduling needs of the pastor, the reliability of the stated objectives, the probable relevance of the pastor’s future ministry and needs of his/her church.
7. There must be no hiring of permanent pastoral staff or major shift of ministry focus during a Senior Pastor’s Sabbatical leave.
8. The church board, in consultation with the Senior Pastor shall arrange for an Interim Pastoral or pastoral staff member to assume the responsibilities of the Senior Pastor while he/she is on Sabbatical leave.
9. The financial support of the pastor during the Sabbatical leave will include full salary and benefits. Where financial hardship exists in smaller congregations, a reduced period of Sabbatical leave or a prorated mutually agreed upon financial package approved by the pastor and the church board may have to be considered. At least four months of advance notice for a planned Sabbatical leave must be given to allow the church board ample time to prepare a financial plan and present it to the congregation for approval.
10. In the case of a crisis situation in the life of a pastor, some of these guidelines may be waived or altered at the discretion of the local church.