

SAMPLE: Sabbatical Leave Policy

**Alberta Baptist Association (ABA)
Pastoral Staff Sabbatical Leave Policy and Procedure
Recommendation**



Purpose

It is the purpose of this policy to provide a means by which longevity in pastoral service can be celebrated and to provide the opportunity for refreshment, development and renewal that is spiritual, physical and emotional in nature for the pastor.

What follows is intended to help local churches address the issue of sabbatical in a thoughtful and effective way. While this document contains a number of recommendations and proposed process steps, it is understood that each church may make any number of changes or adjustments that will reflect the concerns and decision-making patterns of the church.

Presuppositions

1. Although the current practice of providing a sabbatical leave may vary from church to church or denomination to denomination, the concept is rooted in the Biblical teaching regarding both the Sabbath and sabbatical year.
2. Whereas sabbatical leave is encouraged it is not assumed. Such a provision is often identified as a benefit or condition of employment, however engagement may be influenced by conditions that exist in the church, such as finances and ministry circumstances.
3. A sabbatical leave is seen as a benefit to both the pastor and the church and is designed to encourage the continuation of the ministry relationship between the pastor and the church.
4. A sabbatical leave is not for the purpose of candidating in another context or preparing to leave the present context of ministry. While exceptions to this assumption may exist, continuation of the ministry relationship is the desire.

Recommended Policy

Within or following the seventh year of consecutive service a pastor will be granted a sabbatical leave for the purpose of renewal, refreshment and development, according to approved terms and conditions.

Recommended Terms and Conditions

1. Eligibility and scheduling of a sabbatical leave will be determined on a per case basis.
2. The leave must contribute directly and strategically to the mission fulfillment efforts of the church.
3. The leave will be three or four months at full salary unless otherwise negotiated.
4. The leave shall not take place of normal vacation provisions. In some cases vacation time will be added to the sabbatical period extending the leave.
5. The sabbatical request and related details will be negotiated between the pastor and board.*

6. The sabbatical leave period should be divided into three parts and engaged as follows:
 - Rest – Approximately one third of the sabbatical leave should be dedicated to rest that is physical in nature.
 - Renewal – Approximately one third of the leave time should be dedicated to spiritual and emotional renewal, personal development and/or a ministry related project.
 - Revisioning – Approximately one third of the time should be dedicated to developing and clarifying a vision for the ministry and preparing for ministry re-engagement.
7. Aside from the use of education or professional development allowances provided by the church, all sabbatical related expenses are typically borne by the pastor.
8. Typically the pastor will commit themselves to a minimum of one year continued ministry following the sabbatical leave, unless negotiated with church leadership.

Recommended Procedure

1. Twelve months prior to the intended sabbatical leave, the pastor should engage a preliminary conversation with his/her supervisor (sr. pastor or board) in order to initiate contingency planning. Such planning should include but not be limited to:
 - Budget planning
 - Interim ministry leadership needs
 - Sabbatical plan development and date for submission
2. Six months prior to the start of the sabbatical leave the pastor shall submit a request and sabbatical plan, which shall include:
 - Approximate dates
 - Proposed use of time in relation to rest, renewal and revisioning
 - Desired personal results
 - Anticipated benefit to the church
3. It is recommended that the pastor arrange a sabbatical coach, preferably not from within the present church, who will provide accountability for and counsel toward fulfilling the sabbatical plan.
4. It is recommended that the pastor keep a sabbatical journal in which they will keep track of sabbatical activity, but more importantly what God is teaching them during the leave.
5. Upon completion of the sabbatical the pastor shall submit a report to the board related to activities, results and benefits.

** Church leadership structures and terminology will differ from church to church. Unless otherwise stated in the governance documents of the church, sabbatical requests are generally negotiated with the direct reports.*