

**GUIDELINES FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE**  
**PRESBYTERY OF CHICAGO**

Sabbatical leaves are frequently granted to people working in various settings including academia, business, and church-related institutions. Establishing leaves on the Biblically based Sabbath concept, institutions recognize that people who have worked in their positions for a prolonged length of time frequently could benefit from an extended time away from their work, time usually devoted to study, personal growth, renewal, and reflection. Most Christian denominations as well as many local churches and presbyteries are beginning to implement sabbatical leave policies for clergy, educators, denominational staff and other full-time church professionals. Accordingly, the Professional Development Committee and the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Chicago, after much thought, consultation with national staff people and after examining various examples of sabbatical leave policies, propose these Sabbatical Leave Guidelines for the Presbytery of Chicago.

The Presbytery of Chicago recognizes that church professionals and congregations could greatly benefit if full-time church professionals could have the opportunity to negotiate and be granted a sabbatical leave. Some of the reasons for wishing to grant such leaves include: the grind of longer pastorates, the stresses of church work, and the opportunity to take advantage of new knowledge and approaches to ministry that may have developed since a pastorate began. These opportunities may require a longer period of study than the normal two weeks of study leave. Such opportunities will allow one to learn new ministry skills, to gain new information, to find new perspectives on ministry, to acquire new procedures for doing ministry, to become familiar with new resources, and to have time for reflection and spiritual renewal.

**We offer these guidelines for a sabbatical leave:**

**GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Sabbatical leave should be considered in any new or renegotiated call.
2. The study undertaken during a sabbatical leave shall ordinarily be of a practical nature, designed to increase the skills of the church professional and to benefit his/her current call, although theological study or spiritual renewal are considered to be legitimate goals for such a leave as well.
3. Written notice and a written plan shall be given to the church's personnel committee, to the church's Session, and to the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry for approval. Ideally, this plan shall be submitted a year prior to the taking of the leave. This plan shall include the foreseen benefits to the church professional, the foreseen benefits to the church, the goals and objectives of the study time, the location of the study, and the particulars about how the church professional's duties will be covered during the time of the leave.
4. Before the church professional goes on leave, provision shall be made to cover the duties of the person on leave.
5. Upon returning from sabbatical leave, the church professional shall present to the personnel committee and to the session, a written summary statement of the sabbatical leave experience, including what was learned and how that learning will be applied.

**TIME CONSIDERATIONS:**

6. Sabbatical leaves shall be granted no sooner than the completion of six years of service, nor sooner than six years after a previous sabbatical leave.
7. Sabbatical leaves shall normally be no longer than three months.
8. Ordinarily, the normal study leave time that is due in the sabbatical year shall be a part of the sabbatical leave time, not in addition to it. An exception to this may be negotiated.
9. The church professional shall normally pledge to stay in his/her position for no less than one calendar year after a sabbatical leave. If the church professional chooses to leave the congregation within one year after the completion of a sabbatical leave, that person shall refund to the church the salary paid to him/her during the sabbatical leave.
10. It is recommended that any church that has made a provision for a sabbatical leave, beginning at least six months prior to the start of the leave, fully inform and educate the congregation about the leave, its rationale and the foreseen benefits.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

11. During a sabbatical leave, all salary and benefits except travel allowance, shall continue to be paid by the church.
12. While the church professional is on sabbatical leave, the employing church shall provide for payment of the expenses of whoever covers the duties of the person on leave.
13. All costs to the church professional for the sabbatical leave shall be borne by the church professional, but he/she may apply his/her study allowances to these costs. Costs borne by the church professional shall not include the costs to cover the duties of the person on leave.
14. If a church wishes to put a sabbatical leave provision in the terms of a call, the Presbytery encourages them to begin a savings account that would accumulate over the six year time requirement to help defray the additional costs that having a church professional on sabbatical leave would incur.

These guidelines are written with specific reference to church professionals serving within a congregational setting, but they may also be used as a guide to agencies employing specialized clergy members of this Presbytery.