



Sabbatical Policy and Guidelines

Policy

It is the policy of the Gulf Atlantic Diocese to encourage and support Sabbatical leave for all clergy and key lay employees who are under the constant pressure of parish and diocesan responsibilities.

Purpose

"A sabbatical gets one off the treadmill and provides an opportunity for renewal of vision and hope. It can be a life and soul changing time - a time when perspective and the Holy Spirit can come together." (Clergy Renewal, The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning an Alban Institute Publication by A. Richard Bullock and Richard J. Bruesehoff)

Eligibility and Accountability

Sabbaticals are not automatic, but rather tied to need and potential professional and personal benefits. Generally sabbatical leave is appropriate for Bishops, clergy and key lay employees who have executive responsibility who are often "on call" in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

Parish and mission clergy shall be accountable to the Vestry. Diocesan staff shall be accountable to the Diocesan Council, which shall consider sabbatical leave upon the recommendation of the Bishop.

Years of Service and Length of Sabbatical

The Vestry of each parish should grant the Rector and other ordained and key lay employees a planned Sabbatical time away for refreshment, renewal and study after a significant period of service, usually every 5-7 years. A useful standard is 1.5 - 2 weeks for every 12 months served. The Rector will work with the Vestry to provide for adequate clergy coverage and requisite finances during the sabbatical time. Sabbatical time should be taken within a 12 month period in consultation with the Vestry.

The Diocesan Council will use a similar formula for determining diocese staff time away.

Readiness for sabbatical leave is as important as years of service in determining when a sabbatical should be considered. Other factors to be considered are responsibilities and growth opportunities available to the person and sponsor.

Elements of the Sabbatical

No two sabbaticals will be exactly alike, but they will typically include time for study, spiritual discipline and reflection, travel and rest. It is important at least to alter established routines and the person granted leave shall not to be available for their normal duties except in extreme circumstances.

Finances

While on sabbatical, full compensation and benefits should continue. As deemed necessary, compensation for an interim replacement should be borne by the sponsoring body. Cost for the sabbatical itself, including course work, room and board, and travel should be shared by the person and sponsoring body, preferably on a 50/50 basis. The appropriate governing board must plan for and approve the specific budget.

It is recommended that parishes budget an appropriate amount each year to be held in escrow for parish clergy and key lay employees. They should also consider savings for operational expenses incurred resulting from the absence of the individual.

The Diocese shall appropriate an amount each year to accumulate in escrow each year for each clergy member and for key lay employees on the Diocesan staff. For church plant clergy, the Diocese will set aside an appropriate amount each year with the expectation that the planted congregation will set aside a like amount.

Resources

Sabbaticals are a time of change, growth, risk, and listening for God's calling on one's life. In order that the sabbatical be most beneficial both parties should set and agree to specific goals, learning objectives and anticipated benefits. The use of consultants and/or mentors is encouraged.