

Sabbatical Leave Policy 2

Becoming a Sabbath Community: A Guide for Churches

This is a real example of a church or NGO sabbatical leave policy and is reflective of its own organisational context. It is provided not to be copied but to help you to create your own policy.

Sabbatical Leave Policy 2

123 Church	Meeting:
Board	Agenda No.:
Sabbatical Leave Policy Document	For Discussion

Overview

For the Board to confirm and adopt a Sabbatical leave policy to support the emotional and spiritual health of the pastors.

Background

Following feedback from the Senior and Executive Pastors and with broader guidance from (name) regarding the physical, emotional and spiritual fatigue experienced by pastors across churches, the Board explored the biblical and practical context of Sabbatical leave. A discussion paper was put forward to the church Board meeting on ????, along with proposals to reconsider annual leave and long-service leave entitlements for the SP/EP.

Existing Situation

- Standard work week is from Tuesday–Friday, and Sunday.
- Pastoral care and other church activities tend to fall outside standard work hours.
- Pastors do not get a two-day weekend
- As of August 2015 annual leave for SP and EP was 20 days per annum.
- Sick/personal leave is 2 weeks per annum.
- As of August 2015 long service leave for SP and EP was 90 days after 10 years which can be taken pro-rata after five years' continuous service.
- As of August 2015 123 CHURCH leave policy did not provide for Sabbatical Leave.

Guiding Principles/Key Points for Consideration

- The Biblical reference is in Leviticus 25 where it talks about seven-year cycles without which the ground becomes exhausted. Parallel to this idea there is an intellectual, spiritual and emotional type of exhaustion and depletion that can occur in people if appropriate times of rest and refreshment are not included in their schedules.
- Ministry is relationship-intense and it is regularly at the extremities where burdens are shared. Often there are no borders and there is an expectation of attending to calls, church activities and other matters outside of standard work hours and at weekends.

- The role of pastor has a strong sense of calling. There is performance pressure over a wide skill area but it is hard to measure effectiveness. There are frequently tight financial constraints and an expectation that the pastor will 'hold it all together' and persevere even when at breaking point. Preaching can have a draining impact even for the experienced. A pastor does not hold a place of honour or even trust in Australian society.
- It is critical for there to be a good relationship between the Board and SP/EP to establish a culture of regular and open discussion to avoid pastors becoming burnt out and emotionally drained. This should focus on their spiritual, emotional and physical well-being, ensuring that both annual leave and long service leave can be taken in a timely manner for effective refreshment.
- Sabbatical leave can be part of the solution. It is a time focused on spiritual, emotional and physical refreshment and can involve retreating, reading, attending a course overseas, or even attending external counselling if appropriate. During this time the person does not attend to their regular duties. There is no expectation for the person to produce anything or achieve a list of activities but, in the spirit of accountability, it will be important to have transparency as to how the time will be utilized, in line with the purpose of the leave.

Approved Position of Board

The Minutes from (meeting), the 123 CHURCH Board meeting show that the Board adopted the paper presented and agreed that SP/EP were entitled to:

- 25 days of annual leave
- 90 days of long-service leave after seven years
- Additional capacity for the Board to grant paid Sabbatical leave when required by SP/EP for extra times of refreshment in light of the additional burden they carry. Each application is to be considered on a case-by-case basis and can be initiated by the Board or the Executive. It is underpinned by the Guidelines in Appendix A, and an open and honest discussion about the emotional and spiritual 'tank' of the team member applying for Sabbatical leave. This leave would be non-cumulative and will not create any added entitlement during or at end of employment.
- SP/EP may adopt a similar system for the Ministry Leaders, staff and broader team, following these principles as they see fit, and inform the Board if they do so. This should involve regular and honest individual discussion focused on spiritual, emotion and physical well-being, and the effective management of all leave options.

Prepared by: (name)

Date:

Position: Board Chair / Board Member

Appendix A - Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave (For Executive)

To be used as a guide and reference in the execution of the Sabbatical Leave policy. Recognising that each application may have different drivers and therefore need different approaches, these guidelines allow both the Board and the Executive to work within certain parameters without prescribing a specific approach.

Scope

This is applicable to the Executive Team – Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor. For future, this may apply to other Board appointed church leadership roles.

Who can apply

The formal application for Sabbatical Leave can be initiated by either;

- The Executive Team member – Senior Pastor or Executive Pastor
- The Board

This application is underpinned by open and honest discussion between the parties in recognition of the persons' emotional and spiritual 'tank'. It is acknowledged that either party has an option to 'decline' the application.

The EP/ SP and Board are encouraged to foreshadow the opportunity for Sabbatical and not take it as a "reactive measure". This needs to be incorporated at least during the yearly performance and development discussions.

The application

It is expected that a formal application be presented to the Board, initiated by either party, but involving consultation with each other. In the application, some key points are:

- background and trigger for action,
- anticipated duration of leave, and
- general plan of how the leave will be used, including how the leave will be managed/ funded by the current budget.

Sabbatical leave may be used in conjunction with other leave entitlements (accumulated annual and/or long service leave).

The duration

The Board will exercise discretion based on the above to approve the length of the leave applied for.