

Developing a Sabbatical Policy

Becoming a Sabbath Community: A Guide for Churches

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Ideally, a sabbatical should be taken every seven (7) years. Accountability is a requirement and outcomes (as put forward with the leave application) need to be defined and met at the completion of leave. It is expected that when the person on leave returns to work a report will be given to the church's leadership team addressing the reached outcomes. Key to this is having a plan. We note that occasionally sabbaticals are taken reactively, when the leader is exhausted or close to burnout, however we recommend a practice of intentional Sabbath. Reactive sabbaticals can be helpful and may be necessary, but anecdotal evidence suggests the limitations of Sabbath to produce optimal health in these situations. If you go into the Sabbatical time exhausted with no planning, it is likely you will return the same. Hence the importance of promoting intentional Sabbath rest among our network!

The leader must develop a plan for sabbatical, in conjunction with the chair, elders or leadership Board, for the approval by the Eldership or Board. The plan should cover:

- The goals, purpose and timeframe of the sabbatical period for the leader, and how the details of the plan seek to refresh and rejuvenate the leader. For example, it should include details of specific rest and reflection opportunities, conferences or ministry partnership, time with family.
- Outline of any changes to living arrangements, travel or costs to attend conferences etc.
- Delegation of functions, in particular where there is role-specific accountability. The plans should consider whether an interim pastor is required to carry out certain functions, or whether additional duties will be required of other staff, including variation/s to their remuneration.
- A contingency plan outlining the types of events where the leader should be contacted and by whom. For example, a major incident/pastoral matter, or an allegation/moral failure, or building issue.
- How the leader is covered for any injury or accident whilst on sabbatical.
- Details of salary to be paid as normal while on sabbatical. The overall plan should also include the provision of funds for additional requirements like conferences and travel which need to be costed in advance. The Eldership or Board should approve this allocation with the plan.
- Where their usual residence is within close proximity to the church site, the leader may seek provision for their family to live elsewhere during the sabbatical.
- Provision for other staff to access additional allowances (like higher duties) for extra responsibilities over the period of sabbatical. Staff leave needs to be planned in advance to enable other staff to have periods of rest outside the sabbatical period.
- Consideration of additional mentoring and/or supervision support for any associate ministry staff who assume a senior role during the sabbatical. This is to provide direct support and coaching in assuming the additional responsibilities.

- Details of requirements for any visiting preachers or interim ministers, including indicative costs.

Planning for Sabbatical should be considered within the cycle of performance review, and the final plan agreed with the Elders no less than three months prior to the Sabbatical commencing.

Sabbatical is not regarded as a leave entitlement. As a spiritual and psychological wellbeing approach, it is intended that the churches make provision for this during the leader's tenure with the church, according to policy and with the agreement of the Elders.

Sabbatical leave is not paid out in any way upon departure.

It is anticipated the allocated resources are able to be combined with resources from churches of Christ in NSW & ACT via the grants portal according to the church's situation.

As a resource centre, churches of Christ in NSW & ACT suggests the allocation of funding (to be applied for via our existing Grants portal) be set aside for the purpose of leader sabbaticals. Each request can be assessed according to length of time both of service and planned leave, and appropriate to the resource capacity of the church. Most of our funding models in the Grants system are based on 50/50 model. In this case it would mean churches of Christ would contribute 50% of the cost of the Sabbatical, with exceptions for churches in significant financial trouble.