

Sabbatical Planning

Southeastern Iowa Synod ELCA

(Recommendations from the Commission for Rostered Leadership Support)

The annual “Minimum Compensation Guidelines” encourages sabbaticals for rostered leaders. This document is offered to those planning sabbaticals. Other fine helps include “The Parish and the Minister’s Sabbatical,” an article by Norman Helm (attached), and the Alban Institute booklet “Sabbatical Planning”.

“A sabbatical offers an opportunity to get off the treadmill and provides an opportunity for renewal of vision and hope. It is more than just a chance to recharge your batteries for another year. It can be a life and soul-changing time, a time when perspective and the Holy Spirit can come together.” (Alban Institute)

Eligible Staff: Rostered Leaders (pastors, associates in ministry, and diaconal ministers)

When a sabbatical is appropriate: The sabbatical may be offered after 6-8 years of continuous service in a particular ministry setting.

Length of sabbatical: Sabbaticals are usually for a period of no more than three months. Vacation time is neither a part of a sabbatical nor should it be used to extend a sabbatical.

Cost to the congregation:

- The congregation/employer continues to pay full salary and benefits for the rostered leader who is on sabbatical.
- Accrued continuing education dollars may be used for the educational costs related to the sabbatical.
- The congregation is responsible for making arrangements to cover the duties of the person who is on sabbatical. An interim, if engaged, should be compensated based on the Synod’s minimum compensation guidelines.

Planning for the sabbatical:

- Planning should begin at least one year before the sabbatical begins.
- A congregation may establish a reserve fund dedicated toward meeting expenses related to a sabbatical. These funds are held by the congregation for the purposes of the congregation.
- The rostered leader shall plan the sabbatical in consultation with the local congregation council or employer and in consultation with the Office of the Bishop. A written plan shall include: 1) the purpose of the sabbatical, 2) the hoped for outcomes, 3) a description of how this will benefit both the ministry setting and the rostered leader. A healthy balance for a sabbatical includes one-third of the time for rest and relaxation, one-third for the rostered leader’s own ministry development, and one-third for learning that benefits the ministry setting.

- The rostered leader may work with a staff support committee/mutual ministry committee to develop a sabbatical plan. A finalized copy is sent to the congregation council for action.
- A congregation council may consult with the Office of the Bishop with regard to providing ministry coverage during the sabbatical. Any arrangements made for interim assistance require consultation with the Office of the Bishop.

Commitments following the sabbatical:

- The rostered leader is responsible for reporting to the congregation regarding the sabbatical and possible ministry implications for the congregation.
- Rostered leaders are expected to serve at least one year in the ministry setting following a sabbatical. Any other arrangements need to be negotiated with the congregation council or employer.