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healthy

Take a Break Sabbatical Examples

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Take a Break!

Try these ideas to get started

Sabbatical opportunities are being offered to a growing number of EFCA pastors. This is a very positive thing. The observance of the “work/rest” cycle contributes a great deal to being a healthy pastor. A series of sabbath experiences are described in the scriptures.

The Cycles:



Daily

Work / Sleep

Limit the number of evenings you aren't home with your family (spouse) to no more than 3 in a row.

- 1 evening of ministry - Of course
- 2 evenings in a row - Ok
- 3 evenings in a row - Ok, but ask your family (spouse) for their specific permission
- 4 evenings in a row - NO! There's a better way.



Weekly

6 days labor / A “Sabbath” day

- I don't take one at all! - Start obeying the Word and take a day off!
- I find it less than restful! - Read either of these books by Richard Swenson, (NAVPRESS)
 - “The Overload Syndrome, Learning to Live Within Your Limits”
 - “MARGIN, Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives”
- I try but it disappears! - Select a wiser day that let's you do it better.
- I have to do something! - Ok, then plan your day but include a variety of things unlike the stuff required of you the other 6 days of the week. Change the pace!



Seasonally

Routine Weeks / “Holy-Days” (Holiday)

Establish a monthly Personal Retreat Day (PRD) away from your office and centered on God's agenda. A growing number of EFCA leaders and pastors are regularly doing so. Suggestions for a meaningful PRD are available on the Pastoral Care Ministries page of the EFCA website.

Get into the habit of making holidays a fun event for your family. Think of the memories generated as families celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles by building tents and living in them for a week. Think of the depth of the relationship Job had with his sons and daughters (and their families) by having them over to the house for a meal and taking time to pray for each one.



Seasons of Life

Routine Years / Restorative Sabbatical

Review the wide variety of Sabbatical options presently being experienced by other EFCA pastors. One of them is likely to be acceptable to you and the church leaders.



Year of Jubilee

First half of life / Second half of life

Instead of preparing for a Mid-life crisis, prepare for a Mid-life transition. Bob Buford urges us to “Change Your Game Plan from Success to Significance” in his book “Half Time”.

Use the EFCA Pastoral Care Ministries “Pursuing Excellence” material to outline a 3 year personal growth plan designed especially for this time of life. You'll be surprised how far you have come and how much more you can still do.

The point is this. A person, even one with a highly productive personality, will experience fatigue in the midst of a demanding ministry unless time is set aside to rest and realign ourselves with God and His agenda. Sadly, what we do not observe willingly is often imposed upon us woefully.

Don't wait to begin practicing the work/rest cycle until you can arrange a restorative sabbatical. Start by honoring the daily, weekly, and seasonal call to rest. No one but yourself has to give you permission to do that. A monthly Personal Retreat Day (get out of your office!) has proven to be valuable to many of us.

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Monthly Personal Retreat Day

I am sure that you have heard of a personal retreat day, but if you are like I was, the concept of a personal retreat day seems too mystical, too undefined, or too hard to work into your schedule. For years I heard people tell me about the value of a personal retreat day, but I had never been able to pull it off consistently. I wasn't even sure what I was supposed to try to pull off. Let me try to give you some help.

There is nothing mystical about a personal retreat day. It is just a time to spend a day alone with God. It is a chance to re-align your spiritual and ministry lives. It is a chance to clear the cob webs from your life and ministry. Most importantly, it is a chance for you to talk to, and listen to, God.

When I tried my first personal retreat day I didn't make any plans. I took my Bible, notebook, a pen, and a hymnal and went to a quiet place to spend the day. After a couple of hours I was going nuts. I'm not the kind of person that can just sit quietly and "wait" for a revelation from God, especially not on my first try at a personal retreat day. The next time I took a personal retreat day I over-reacted the other way. This time I carried along half of my library and a variety of music and worship tapes. I felt like I had an agenda to accomplish, and I didn't have the freedom to listen to God. I think I have now found a middle ground that works for me. Here is what I currently do on my personal retreat day:

Part One - I spend the first part of the day reading and meditating on a whole chunk of the Scriptures. Often I will read an entire book of the Bible in a couple of different versions to gain a better understanding of a whole segment of God's Word. When I read I am looking for glimpses of who God is, and what I feel He is saying to me about my life and my ministry. These insights become a focus for prayer and meditation during the next month. Many times I will take the next month to study the specific book in detail during my quiet times.

Part Two - During this time I review the month that has just concluded and I preview the coming month. I pull out my yearly goals and ask God to continue to refine them and show me which ones need attention in the coming month. This is the time when I do the mundane task of changing from the current month calendar to the next month's calendar. This is when I schedule ministry and family opportunities on my calendar.

Part Three - After putting together my monthly calendar I am able to share specific prayer requests with my monthly prayer team. I spend time writing a monthly prayer letter that I distribute to people who are committed to my life and my ministry. This prayer letter is very simple and is organized around the key areas of my ministry. With each of these areas I highlight a variety of praises from previous requests, and list the new requests for the coming month. As I put this prayer letter together I am also able to pray through my ministry for the following month.

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Part Four - I am usually able to accomplish the first three parts of my personal retreat day in the morning. After a lunch break I turn to some concentrated prayer time. To help me in the area of prayer I look forward to reading some of the great books that have been written that help motivate me to pray. I have especially enjoyed books like *Prayer* by Richard Foster, *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds On Prayer*, *Courage to Pray* by William Brownson, *The Prayer Factor* by Sammy Tippit and *Daring to Draw Near* by John White. After reading a couple of chapters in a motivational book on prayer I spend the next few hours talking and listening to God

My personal retreat day format won't necessarily work for you, but it can give you a start. The key is to find a way of spending a day with God that will encourage you to talk to Him and listen to Him. It is a day to refresh your soul and to refocus your priorities. It is an investment of time that will help make you more effective in your life and ministry for the rest of the month.

Here is a grocery list of issues to get you started on your personal retreat day:

1. If you don't schedule it, it will not happen. Start with a quarterly retreat day and then try to have one every month. I have my personal retreat day in the last couple of days of the month so I can review and preview what God is doing in my life and ministry.
2. A personal retreat day is not a catch-up day. Leave the piles of work on your desk and get away with God. If you come back refreshed and renewed, you will have greater insight and wisdom in dealing with the piles of work on your desk. Don't succumb to the temptation to use the personal retreat day to catch up on all of the work that you are involved in.
3. Find a location for your personal retreat day where you will not be constantly interrupted. If you have a spouse, children or a computer that continually calls for your attention, find a location other than your home. Don't hold your personal retreat day at your church. Secretaries, other pastoral staff, janitors, and other program workers that are in the building will have an uncanny need to have to speak with you repeatedly. You will also be tempted to wander back to your office and be distracted by the phone, the pile of mail, next month's calendar, tonight's small group, etc. I have held my personal retreat day in a variety of locations. One location that has worked well for me has been at another pastor's church. I can pop into an empty classroom and no one knows me or bothers me. I have also spent my personal retreat day in a quiet corner of the local library. In the summer I will head to a park.
4. Plan your personal retreat day. You don't have to develop a detailed agenda but you need to have some ideas of what you are going to do during this time. During the current month I am always jotting notes to myself regarding portions of Scripture I would like to take a look at. I am also noting books that have been recommended that might help me in my time with God. I pull all of my yearly goals, previous month's prayer letter, books I am going to read etc. together before I leave the office the evening before my personal retreat day. That way I have everything together and can start my personal retreat day first thing in the morning without having to wander into the office where I can get side tracked.

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A Sabbath Experience *Jim Anderson, Facilitator*

Sabbath *A Time to Release*

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (NIV 1 Peter 5:7)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanks-giving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV Philippians 4:6-7)

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens. (NIV Psalm 68:19)

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." (NIV Mark 2:27-28)

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." 15 The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? 16 Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" 17 When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing. (NIV Luke 13: 10-17)

Exercise for Releasing Concerns:

- 1. List your Concerns in your journal.*
- 2. From that list make a second list of actions you might take for given situations.*
- 3. Make another list concerning what only God can do. (prayer)*

Serenity Prayer

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference." (Reinhold Niebuhr)

This portion of the four hour weekly exercise should take at least one hour.

Sabbath *A Time to Review*

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. (NIV Lamentations 3:40)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (NIV Psalm 139:23-24)

How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (NIV Matthew 7:4-5)

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“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.” (NIV Matthew 23:25-26)

Exercise for Reviewing One's Life:

- 1. Read over passages of Scripture which call for self-examination. Make them your prayer.*
- 2. Read any Scripture passage which comes to mind that pertains to you. Remember, this is not a time to analyze others; you are the subject at hand. Record your thoughts and prayers.*
- 3. Review your past week of activities, accomplishments and frustrations. Pay particular attention to any feelings or emotions.*
- 4. Study any passages of Scripture which speak to your situation and record any discoveries regarding yourself, i.e., actions, attitudes, etc..*
- 5. Take careful notes and do not be surprised if you find yourself incorporating many of your insights into devotionals to share with others.*

This portion of the four hour weekly exercise should take at least one hour.

Sabbath A Time to Remember

But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. (NIV Deuteronomy 8:18)

"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. (NIV Jonah 2:7)

Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, (NIV I Chronicles 16:12)

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"--(NIV Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, (NIV 2 Timothy 2:8)

He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: (NIV Luke 24:6)

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. (NIV Deuteronomy 5:15)

Exercise for Remembering the Lord

- 1. Read passages of Scripture which bring to mind both the work and person of God. Record your thoughts and prayers.**
- 2. Praise God with words, songs, and prayers. Find a place where you will not be inhibited.**
- 3. Do that activity which is an expression of your appreciation of God.**

This portion of the four hour weekly exercise should take at least one hour.

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SABBATICAL EXAMPLES

Examples collected from EFCA pastors

SABBATICALS – A BIBLICAL BASIS // A BALANCED RATIONALE

Biblical References:

Attitudes and actions of the church body

- 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13 - "hold them in highest regard in love because of their work".
- 1 Timothy 5:17-19 - "Elder worthy of double honor, esp. those who preach & teach"
- Hebrews 10:24 - "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."
- Proverbs 11:24, 25 - "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."
- Luke 6:38 - "Give, and it will be given to you. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Attitudes and actions of the pastor

- 1 Timothy 4:15, 16 - "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers"
- Luke 6:12 - "Jesus went out into the hills to pray, and spent the night praying to God."
- Mark 6:31, 32 - "He (Jesus) said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."
- Matt. 11:28, 29 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
- Matt 14:13, 22, 23 - "When Jesus heard . . . he withdrew . . . to a solitary place.. he went up into the hills to pray there alone."
- Luke 5:16 - "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."
- John 11:54 - "Therefore Jesuswithdrew to a region near the desert.....where he stayed with his disciples."

Rationale and References:

Pastors often work six days per week, rarely get an entire or 3-day weekend off, and generally find that holidays are among their busiest times of the year. There may be days off during most weeks, but even these are not exempt from interruption by church-related calls and emergencies.

The demands of pastoral ministry can drain a person's physical, emotional, and spiritual energy. Over a period of years, pastors can find themselves tired, apathetic, spiritually cold and in some cases embittered against their congregation and disillusioned with the ministry.

Even if a strong sense of call to ministry and loyalty to their flock enables most pastors to persevere in spite of the above hardships, they often function with ever-decreasing effectiveness. Accepting a call to another church, burn-out, or leaving the ministry altogether can also be some unnecessary and costly results.

While pastors should be responsible for their own rest and refreshment, the nature of ministry as well as the makeup of many pastors combines to cause pastors not investing sufficient time and energy in developing themselves personally. Sometimes pastors do not take needed personal time, feeling responsible for the ministry 24 - 7. Short-term urgencies can crowd out long-term necessities.

The expense of and the lack of coverage during sabbaticals are real and a challenge for a church body. A helpful comparison for both of these issues is that of a pastor moving on. The expense and time of searching for another pastor who doesn't know the ministry as well as the last pastor for several years brings the sabbatical expenses into perspective. Also, when a pastor moves on, the church body finds the coverage it needs for routine and emergency duties until a new pastor comes aboard, and that is usually a longer time than that of a sabbatical.

Some possible benefits of sabbaticals:

1. A grateful pastor who returns with renewed vigor, insight, humility, and understanding.
2. A probably even more grateful pastor's wife and children thoroughly delighted at the change in dad.
3. A pastor with gifts enhanced for serving the body and the entire kingdom of Christ.
4. A witness to the community of the love and trust the local body has for their pastor.
5. Sabbaticals can allow churches to draw on other resources not used when the pastor was present.
6. A longer tenure, allowing for a more effective ministry.

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SABBATICALS – ONE CHURCH’S ADOPTED POLICY

THE RATIONALE -

While pastors and other ministers are responsible to God and their churches, Evangelical Free Churches are also responsible for the care of their pastors and staff members.

Pastors often work six days per week, rarely get an entire weekend off, seldom get a three day weekend, and generally find that Christmas, Easter and other holidays are among their busiest times of the year. There may be days off during most weeks, and two to four weeks of vacation a year. These, however, are often subject to interruption by church-related calls and emergencies.

The demands of pastoral ministry can drain a person’s physical, emotional and spiritual energy. Over a period of years, pastors can find themselves tired, apathetic, spiritually cold, and in some cases embittered against their congregation and disillusioned with the ministry.

A strong sense of call to ministry and loyalty to their flock will enable most pastors to persevere in spite of these hardships. However, they often function with diminished effectiveness. Others seek and accept the call to another church. Unfortunately, the problems are often merely forgotten temporarily. Burnout often catches up with the pastor. Tragically, the cumulative result can sometimes be a pastor’s departure from pastoral ministry altogether.

While pastors should be responsible for their own rest and refreshment, the nature of ministry as well as the makeup of many pastors, combine to the effect that pastors often do not invest sufficient time and energy in developing themselves personally. Sometimes pastors do not take needed personal time, feeling responsible for ministry 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. Short-term urgencies can crowd out long-term necessities.

To prevent this situation, the congregation of the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji should have a policy of regularly scheduled sabbaticals for each of its full-time pastoral staff. A sabbatical is a reminder that it is “God’s church” and that the pastor is “God’s sheep” just as much as are the other members.

The proven benefits to a sabbatical policy include:

- *A grateful pastor who returns to God’s calling with renewed vigor, insight, appreciation, humility and understanding.*
- *A probably even MORE grateful pastor’s wife.*
- *Pastor’s children who may be thoroughly delighted at the change that has come over their father.*
- *A pastor better prepared for service in and to the local church, whose gifts are also enhanced for serving the entire kingdom of Christ.*
- *A witness to the community of the love and trust with which a Free Church congregation esteems their pastor.*
- *Sabbaticals also allow churches to draw on other resources, perhaps formerly unexpressed, when the pastor was present.*

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THE POLICY ITSELF –

- 1. A pastor shall receive three months of sabbatical leave for every seven years of service to the church.*
- 2. Sabbatical not to be taken prior to seven years of consecutive service at the church. Length of the sabbatical not to exceed six months.*
- 3. Our church, at its discretion, can give credit for the pastor's years of service at a prior church, if no sabbatical time was given. Time allowed for additional education may be considered in the decision.*
- 4. Pastors must submit a sabbatical proposal for approval to the Senior Pastor and the Elder Board, outlining in general terms how the sabbatical time would be invested. Sabbatical proposals should reflect a balance of physical rest, personal recreation, intellectual stimulation and spiritual renewal. Sufficient time for family should be included.*
- 5. Sabbatical time is separate from the pastor's yearly vacation time. However, the Pastor's vacation time during the sabbatical year will be prorated.*
- 6. The pastor will report to the Elder Board and the congregation after the completion of the sabbatical, to indicate how the time was invested and what benefits were realized.*
- 7. The pastor's full wages and benefits will continue for the duration of the sabbatical. No compensation should be given for unused sabbatical time.*
- 8. Pastors will covenant with the church to serve at least two more years with the congregation after the sabbatical.*
- 9. The church should give appropriate recognition to both the commencement and conclusion of the sabbatical period.*
- 10. The understanding of a "sabbatical" is that the pastor is relieved from all routine and emergency duties during the time granted. The church leaders will handle routine and emergency matters.*
- 11. Elder Board discretion will be applied for individual circumstances.*

SABBATICALS – ANOTHER CHURCH’S POLICY

Sabbatical Policy Evangelical Free Church

Purpose: This policy provides opportunity for personal renewal and refreshment so as to sustain the quality, multiply the impact, and ensure the longevity of our pastoral staff.

Eligibility: Full-time pastoral staff after 1 year of service.

Duration: Normally the period of sabbatical shall be one week after one year of service and an extended period (5 weeks) after 6 years of service and every 7 years thereafter. Variations will be considered by the elders on a case-by-case basis.

Scheduling: May be scheduled, with elder approval, any time during the year. Sabbaticals are not vacations and should not be taken with vacations. In most cases, the full amount accumulated would need to be taken at one time.

Compensation: All compensation and benefits shall continue for the duration of the sabbatical. Compensation will be negotiated if a special case sabbatical is being considered.

Project Expenses: Each applicant shall identify the non-compensation (conferences, courses, travel, accommodations, research, equipment, material, etc.) of the project; these expenses may be paid for by the church.

Applications:

- A. Recommended to be submitted to the Elder Board at least 12 months in advance of the extended sabbatical.
- B. Will include a detailed plan for the sabbatical
 1. Sufficient information to assure the leadership that the time away contains a balance of rest, spiritual renewal, and time for family
 2. Focus of study or ministry project (i.e.: improving skills, completing a project, education, research, writing)
 3. Possible budget impact of the project expenses above
 4. Coverage suggestions of staff supervision and ministry responsibilities
- C. The Elders will approve sabbaticals
- D. Associate pastors must have approval of the senior pastor prior to submitting an application to the elder board.
- E. No more than 1 person may take an extended sabbatical per calendar year, with only 1 person at a time being absent from normal responsibilities.

Recognition: Appropriate recognition to both the commencement and conclusion of the sabbatical period should be initiated by the elder board and planned by the church.

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Coverage: The Elder Board will be responsible to plan the coverage of the pastor's normal and emergency duties in his absence. The pastor is relieved from all such duties during the time granted. If the pastor is personally interested in covering a special event during this time, this duty will be negotiated between that pastor and the leadership.

Review: A summary report will be submitted to the elders within 30 days following the sabbatical, summarizing the experience and its benefits.

Accrual: Unused sabbatical leave is not compensational should a pastor leave the full-time ministry of our church body.

Acknowledgments: This policy was taken from policies or articles listed below:

Sabbatical Policy for Valley Evangelical Free Church

Central District Sabbatical Policy for Pastors

Refreshment for the Road Ahead by Diane McDougall (Beacon)

Pastoral Staff Sabbatical by Dr. Gene Swanstrom,

First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton Organizational and Policy Manual

NIV Study on Pastors, Care of Pastors; Rest and Renewal

SABBATICALS — ANOTHER LOCAL CHURCH'S POLICY

Sabbatical Leave – an extended leave of absence for renewal and rest after six (6) full years of service for pastors.

Purpose:

A sabbatical leave provides an extended opportunity for the renewal of vision calling, purpose and hope. Our ministers of the gospel are expected to minister from a deep spiritual base, and a clear calling. Regular sabbaticals provide the opportunity to renew, refresh, recharge and restore the souls of those we've called to feed and lead us. Sabbaticals are a way in which we honor God and the pastors who serve us. With this in mind, _____ Church has established the following:

1. Sabbatical leave is available to all pastoral staff after each six full years of continuous service at .
2. Eligible pastors shall be allowed to take a sabbatical of up to 12 contiguous weeks (preferably May-August) at their current salary. Vacation time may be attached on either side of the sabbatical but the sabbatical is normally not to extend beyond 13 weeks. No part of the sabbatical may be carried over. Bona fide expenses associated with sabbatical leave (ongoing education, travel expenses, etc.) will be reviewed and approved by the Elder Board.
3. The Elder Board will appoint an ad hoc Sabbatical Team at least four months ahead of time to meet with the sabbatical candidate to establish a Sabbatical plan to include:
 - ❑ Goals for the sabbatical
 - ❑ Plan for fulfillment of pastoral duties in his / her absence
 - ❑ Financial arrangements
 - ❑ Travel arrangements
 - ❑ Human resources to assist pastor
 - ❑ Communication plan during the leave
4. Goals and timing for the sabbatical should be agreed upon by the Senior Pastor, Sabbatical candidate, Sabbatical Team and Elder Board.
5. Upon return, a report on the sabbatical shall be given to the congregation.

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SABBATICALS — AN EVERY 3RD YEAR APPROACH

This following schedule can be applied to any sabbatical policy agreed to by a church and a pastor. It provides an alternate approach and addresses the value of a more frequent sabbatical experience.

Restorative Sabbatical:

Pastoral staff members are given a one month sabbatical following their 3rd year of ministry. The pastor may add one week of personal vacation to extend the time if so desired. This sabbatical experience does not require a pre-approved project or set of activities. The primary purpose is for personal and spiritual refreshment, reflective thinking, and restorative rest.

Sabbatical Leave:

Pastoral staff members are given a two month sabbatical following their 6th year of ministry. The pastor may add up to two weeks of personal vacation to extend the time if so desired. This sabbatical leave requires an approved sabbatical project or desired outcome along with time for personal and spiritual refreshment.

The 3 year cycle of a restorative sabbatical followed by a sabbatical leave is repeated throughout the tenure of the pastor.

SABBATICALS — ONE DISTRICT'S PROPOSED POLICY

REASON AND PURPOSE FOR SABBATICALS

The sabbatical is intended to provide district staff who have served for an extended period in our district with a gift of time away from normal responsibilities and locations to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth that combines study, travel, relaxation, education and research. The sabbatical is not just a reward for longevity of service and commitment. More importantly, it is an opportunity for those who have given consistently of their service to refill their own hearts and resources in order that they might continue in effective service to the Lord in this district.

Eligibility:

The sabbatical is available to all full-time district staff i.e. Superintendent, Director of Church Planting and other Assistant Superintendents. Eligibility begins after completing six years of service. If a staff member leaves the staff before taking the sabbatical, there is no compensation for that unused sabbatical.

Length of Sabbatical:

The maximum length of a sabbatical is three months. After six completed years of service, a three month sabbatical will be granted to be taken only during the next year. Thus, during every seventh year of service, three months of sabbatical is granted. Exceptions as to the time table for a sabbatical will be reviewed by the Superintendent and approved by the District Board. Further, the sabbatical must be taken all at once, not divided into smaller increments of time during the year.

When applying for a sabbatical, a staff member needs to schedule his vacation at a time that is appropriate to the situation. This is done under the advisement of the District Superintendent. The final granting of a sabbatical comes from the District Board at the request of staff. The District Board, in consultation with the District Superintendent shall be responsible for seeing that the ministry responsibilities of the staff member on sabbatical are fulfilled.

Accountability for Sabbatical Plan:

The sabbatical proposal shall be presented to the District Board at least six months before the beginning of the sabbatical, outlining in general terms the plans for the sabbatical. The staff has the freedom to spend their sabbatical as the Lord leads them. However, it is recommended that sabbatical proposals reflect a balance of physical rest, personal recreation, intellectual stimulation and spiritual renewal. Sufficient family time shall be included.

Sabbatical time will be considered as separate from yearly vacation time and personal ministry days. The staff will report to the Board after the sabbatical has been completed. Full wages and benefits will continue for the duration of the sabbatical.

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SABBATICAL —

SENSING THE NEED/REAPING THE BENEFIT ONE MAN'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY

After a particularly grueling 3 years of ministry (as a youth pastor), I Requested to be sent to the Nat' Network Forum, in Jan. of 2003. While there, I realized that I needed to recover essentials to ministry -- like joy, vision, hope for success, etc. I had been doing ministry, but the raw issues of the previous years had all but drained me of those essentials. I called the Sr pastor from the conference (who had been kept abreast all long of the ministry difficulties), and asked him for some time away. He arranged for a presentation to our Board (which I had also kept apprised of the ministry difficulties) on the day I returned from the forum. The Board granted me 2 months of paid leave. I was the first item on the agenda that meeting. The Board told me to create the sabbatical "that would work," then sent me away from the Board meeting, as I was now on sabbatical. I put in one day, to make sure that my leadership team had the needed "stuff" to carry the ball in my absence. The secretaries were given specific instructions to leave me alone, and to handle issues/questions without me.

I used the time to catch up on home projects, to do personal study and reflection, and to pray. I spent time away, alone. I spent a weekend with my wife away. And my whole family spent time away together. God granted a restoration of my vision and passion for ministry to students. I was gone for 2 months, came back to lead an event that the team had orchestrated in my absence (a 3 day trip to a conference). My time away gave me a chance to replenish my resources for the ministry work that lay ahead. Over the following year, I began a process of work toward healing and a restoration of vision in ministry. I recruited a team of parents, hosted nearly 15 parent meetings, and created a "Student Ministries Advisory Board."

The sabbatical allowed me to recover my sense of calling and vision on a very personal level. The paid sabbatical time helped me continue to take care of my family during this process. I am grateful to our church leaders for having the compassion for us, and for having the vision to let me have this recovery time.

SABBATICALS — ANOTHER PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I have been at this church for _____ years. About year 4, our personnel committee wrote into the personnel manual that the church would grant 5 weeks sabbatical to pastoral staff after 5 years of ministry. (This was, incidentally, headed up by a person who had been in education - business people are not as supportive).

I communicated to the elder chairman my desire to take advantage of the policy, and the felt need I had for some "renewal time" beyond basic vacations. He was extremely supportive and in a matter of 1 or 2 meetings brought the entire elder board on board to the idea. . . . Since it was still a year off, they even wrote into the budget a \$1,000 line item to help towards sabbatical expenses. Thus I received 5 full weeks, plus not preaching the first Sunday back, so 6 Sundays out of the pulpit. I received my full salary and benefits and the (a certain \$ amount) towards expenses.

The sabbatical program consisted of the basic breakdown suggested by _____. That is 1/3 family reconnecting; 1/3 physical rest, and 1/3 some 'input'. We visited family for the first 2 weeks, and then spent the 3rd week at the Pastor's Retreat Network facility in _____. This was a marvelous "God thing" of renewal, interaction with other people in ministry, and quality time with my wife and the Lord. The last 2 weeks we spent at a relative's house in _____. During that time I spent the mornings walking, praying, studying, dreaming and reading (6 particular books, related to specific areas I wanted to grow in - leadership, church discipling etc.). Then the afternoons my wife and I "played" doing the various tourist kinds of things one does in _____.

The church had very few expectations of me during this time. I outlined the basic plan (only a paragraph) and then reported back to the 2 boards, and the congregation with a ½ page insert in the bulletin when I returned, and that was it.

But many, many people have commented on how different I seem after returning (it has been nearly 3 months). More rested, more dynamic in preaching and just..... "different". Perhaps the best testimony to the time is that even after the 3 months of being back, I'm still glad to be back!

I should say that I was feeling some 'weariness' in the ministry a couple of years before the sabbatical, and so last year (the year before the sabbatical) my wife and I spent 8 days at _____ - a pastoral renewal facility in _____. That was a tremendous "pre-Sabbatical" for me, in identifying some of the hidden issues that were "driving" me and leading to the weariness. Had I not had the insight of that time, I probably would have come back from the sabbatical experience relatively unchanged, and fallen back into the old patterns. So the insight gained from the (pastoral renewal center) experience provided the "prerequisite" for me to benefit most from a relatively unstructured sabbatical. Others who don't have that opportunity might need more structure and insight time during the sabbatical itself. I would encourage a pastor to answer the question: "Why do I feel I need a sabbatical?" To answer that will help him identify what kind of sabbatical time he should structure and plan for.

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SABBATICALS — INTENTIONAL / CREATIVE / ONE MAN'S PERSONAL JOURNEY

The Lord willing, I plan on taking a sabbatical in 2006. In the past, I've had 5 sabbatical years:

1983 - 1st full year sabbatical: Deut 24:5 says the first year of marriage a man shall be from business and war and shall stay home and cheer up the wife he has taken. I prayed and planned for this by saving nearly 20% of my income as a single young man, praying for a free home to live in for a year (which was provided), and arranging a 3 day a month fundraising consulting job.

1990 - 2nd full year sabbatical year: My wife and I prayed and planned for several years to take a sabbatical year. I arranged to be an adjunct staff member for a Christian camp 3-4 days per month and I attended _____. We also bought a home during this year and I was involved as the general contractor for building a 1000sf addition.

1997 - 3rd half-time sabbatical year: I arranged with the _____ to only work in the afternoons. They allowed me to be at home in the mornings for personal priorities, rest, renewal, and reflection (which was greatly needed).

1999 - 4th 1/2 time sabbatical year: During transitions at _____ I worked from home for 1 year (fully salaried) while researching future plans for a national public ministry role. The strange twist on this sabbatical focus was that it led to my moving from _____ to _____.

Planned for 2006 - my 7th year at _____ : I believe the church has some history of allowing pastors to be "gone from ministry" for 3 months of renewal and reflections. I am interested in trying to find a home or a house swapping arrangement somewhere overseas where I can take my entire family. I hope it can be near a seminary or Bible school that will allow me to take some courses.

In my 5 sabbaticals I have discovered...

- * They are a great gift from God.*
- * They are a great source of renewal in one's life (i.e. a breath of fresh air that reinvigorates you for the future God has for you).*
- * They show you and others that you are not as indispensable as you may think or that they may think!*
- * God shows Himself faithful in creatively providing "whatever" is needed in order to go on a sabbatical (finances, housing, schooling, others to step in, etc.)*
- * They significantly shape your future plans and ministry (sometimes in very different ways than expected).*

For 20+ years, I have also practiced the "secret to a victorious Christian life" (i.e. a Sunday afternoon nap!!! and truly taking a day off a set day each week from ministry responsibilities)

I trust this is helpful.



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