

Diocese of Colorado

General Policies regarding Sabbaticals

Though the term sabbatical is most often understood in terms of the university and scholarship, it does, in fact, find its roots in the heart of Judeo-Christian traditions. Beginning with the account of creation in Genesis, we are introduced to the importance of the Sabbath. Sabbath is not just time “off work.” It is a time for rest, renewal and inspiration. Sabbath time is time for us to reflect upon the mission and meaning of our lives and to be re-united with God and our fellow human beings in an intentional way. In short, the understanding of sabbatical for us finds its meaning in the root word Sabbath.

Bishop O’Neill believes strongly in the value of Sabbath time and a well planned and organized sabbatical. He expects every clergy person to be engaged in continuing education and sabbaticals. Every letter of agreement between parish and clergy should include provision for a sabbatical according to the following guidelines.

Definition of Sabbatical: A set, intentional time for rest, renewal, inspiration and re-creation. Sabbaticals are to be tailored to the needs and interests of each individual but generally include four points:

1. Learning (Not to be confused with continuing education. Sabbatical may include scholarship, skill training, reading, writing).
2. Rest (Sleep, recreation, play)
3. Inspiration (Silent Retreat, pilgrimage, prayer, worship)
4. Family (Vacation, travel, enrichment, relaxed time to strengthen family relationships)

Those planning a sabbatical are cautioned not to plan every moment with a frenetic schedule of events, conferences and deadlines. Allow for unstructured time to be present in the gift of the moment. Slow down and rest.

Time of Sabbatical

A sabbatical should occur every 5 years of active ministry and should last for at least 3 months. It should be carefully and thoughtfully scheduled being sensitive to the events and stresses of congregational life. Further, it is expected that following sabbatical time the clergy person will continue in his or her current ministry and location for at least one calendar year.

Funding Sabbaticals

In addition to paying clergy compensation during the sabbatical, the vestry is expected to also contribute financially toward the sabbatical and the contribution should be addressed specifically in the letter of agreement. Ideally, funding will be shared by at least three sources (clergy, parish, Diocese). The parish would put aside each year not less than \$500 for the clergy sabbatical. The clergy would match that money and perhaps the diocese would also contribute. The clergy person is encouraged to secure grants and scholarships. The parish would want to consider taxable income reporting requirements and methods for income versus pass through to cover expenses.

(The diocese hopes to develop a sabbatical fund to help support individual clergy and congregations during sabbatical time. It does not now exist.)

General Information

(For the Parish)

Sabbaticals are mutually beneficial for the clergy and the congregation. They inspire new hope, vision, perspective and vitality. Every level of the church is blessed and enriched. Sabbaticals are not viewed as perks or earned time off. They are a necessary component to healthy ministry. They help provide much needed balance, perspective and grace to the minister and ministry.

(For Clergy)

Sabbaticals must be carefully planned in advance (1 year in advance). Talk to the diocese and colleagues about grants and funding. Beware of possible tax implications regarding use of financial support. Also, we strongly encourage you to gather with other clergy taking sabbaticals for support, encouragement and information. The Commission on Ministry can assist you with possible groupings and direction. Further, we encourage thought and provision for sabbaticals of associates and long term assistants.