

## Appendix C.

### Sabbatical Policy - North/West Lower Michigan Synod

#### Introduction

It is important for congregations (or synod organizations), clergy (pastors), and deacons to realize the importance of life-long continuing education through workshops, seminary courses and personal study to maintain and improve their skills. From time to time, however, it is very beneficial to the pastor or deacon, as well as the congregation or synod organization, for there to be an extended period of time, a sabbatical, for planned study (via a formal academic program or under a tutor) and/or personal growth and renewal (self-directed or using a spiritual director) without the demands of daily responsibilities. Experience has shown that a congregation's or synod organization's ministry directly benefits from such study, growth, and renewal as long-term ministry is revitalized and stimulated.

#### Biblical Basis for a Sabbatical Leave

- EZEKIEL 20:12: "Moreover I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, so that they might know that I the Lord sanctify them." (NRSV)
- LEVITICUS 25:1-7: "The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a Sabbath for the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the after growth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of completed rest for the land. You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath – you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your beloved laborers also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food." (NRSV)

#### Recommendation

- A sabbatical leave is recommended to provide an opportunity for a full-time pastor or full-time deacon to take an extended period of time on sabbatical for renewal, enrichment, study, spiritual growth, travel, skill development and research.
- **Clergy:** A full-time pastor shall be eligible for a sabbatical once he or she has been in ordained ministry for seven (7) years and has completed five (5) years in the current call. The pastor is eligible for a sabbatical every five (5) years after that.
- **Deacons:** A full-time deacon shall be eligible for a sabbatical once he or she has completed seven (7) years in the current call. The deacon is eligible for a sabbatical every five (5) years after that.

#### Duration

- A sabbatical should be planned for up to three months (including the two continuing education weeks normally granted each year).
- Vacation is not to be included as sabbatical time.

## North/West Lower Michigan Synod - 2020 Compensation Guidelines

- As appropriate, the sabbatical leave may be continuous or split into multiple blocks of time. If split, all blocks of time should be taken within a 12-month period.

### Cost to the Congregation or Synod Organization

- The congregation or synod organization will continue to pay full salary and benefits (includes housing for pastors).
- Car allowance will not be paid during the sabbatical period.
- Accrued continuing education dollars can be used for the educational costs of the sabbatical – suggest limiting to an accrual of three years maximum.
- The congregation or synod organization is responsible for providing additional leadership support and service during the sabbatical time. This includes Sunday worship, teaching, leading the liturgy, confirmation camp, new member classes, visitation, funerals, weddings, etc., as applicable.
- The congregation or synod organization is not responsible to fund the sabbatical in any other way. However, the congregation or synod organization may consider gifting as a means of providing additional financial assistance.

### Planning

- There are several objectives to be considered by the pastor or deacon and the congregation or synod organization during planning of a sabbatical:
  - Will this be a time of renewal that will help “recharge” the church professional spiritually and professionally so that he/she will return with new energy for ministry?
  - What are they learning that can be shared upon their return? How will this benefit the congregation?
  - How will this help the church professional grow as a person and as a professional? How will it enhance her/his ministry skills?
- Planning should begin the calendar year before the sabbatical so the congregation or synod organization and pastors / deacons can plan for financial and ministry adjustments.
- The sabbatical leave plan is to be developed in cooperation with the congregation council or synod council as applicable. The parties shall seek the counsel of the bishop before finalizing an agreement.

### Commitments Following the Sabbatical

- Within six weeks of the completion of the sabbatical leave, the pastor or deacon shall present the congregation or synod organization with a written reflection on the experience and the implications for the ministry of the congregation or synod organization and ministry across the synod, as applicable.
- A copy of this written reflection shall be added to the pastor’s or deacon’s file in the bishop’s office.
- The pastor or deacon is expected to remain at least one additional year within their position in the congregation or synod organization following the sabbatical.
- The congregation council or synod council shall evaluate the benefits and costs of the sabbatical as a basis for planning future sabbaticals.