



Episcopal Diocese of Albany

Disciples Making Disciples

GUIDELINES & RESOURCES FOR SABBATICAL PLANNING

BACKGROUND:

In 2000 the Episcopal Diocese of Albany received a gift from the estate of The Rt. Rev. Wilbur Hogg, the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Albany. The gift was designated to fund sabbaticals for priests of the diocese. For several years the fund was administered by a member of the diocesan staff. Upon that individual's retirement, the Standing Committee appointed a committee to draw up guidelines, review applications, and award grants in consultation with the diocesan bishop (or Ecclesiastical Authority.)

Each year interest from the Bishop Hogg Sabbatical Endowment will be set aside to fund grants. If the funds for a given year are not all allocated, the remaining balance shall be rolled over into funds available for the following year.

PURPOSE:

Sabbatical leave is a carefully planned period of time, usually three months after the first six years of service in a diocesan-related ministry, in which the priest is granted leave away from normal duties in order to spend an extended period of time in study, reflection, and renewal.

Sabbatical leave is not a vacation, nor is it only continuing education. It is to promote spiritual, intellectual, and emotional renewal and growth. Sabbaticals are also a time to reflect on one's life, ministry, mission, call and goals for the future, in order to be a more effective minister of the Gospel and shepherd God's people.

ELIGIBILITY:

Following a sabbatical leave, the individual is expected to commit to a minimum of one (1) more year of service in their present position. (If these procedures conflict with Rector covenants in place before the release of these guidelines the covenant takes precedence. Future Rector covenants should reference these guidelines.) Specifically, a sabbatical is not to be used as a period of time to discern and/or pursue alternative employment opportunities. Doing so may result in a requirement to reimburse the congregation or ministry granting the sabbatical leave.

FINANCING:

The costs typically covered during a sabbatical include*:

- Continued full salary and benefits for the individual on sabbatical
- Costs incurred during sabbatical including travel, books, tuition – as mutually agreed upon by leadership prior to the engagement of the sabbatical
- Cost of supply clergy
- Most of these issues are more easily dealt with when:

- The sabbatical leave is agreed upon in the initial Letter of Agreement
- Funds are escrowed on a regular (annual) ongoing basis to cover sabbatical costs

**Financial costs of a sabbatical can vary widely depending on the ministry setting, the expectations of a congregation and the finances of a congregation or ministry. Financial support for a sabbatical is an additional benefit and should be regarded as such rather than a right or necessarily an expectation. Early and intentional planning will assist all involved to ensure that the individual proposing a sabbatical will be fully supported and encouraged to make plans that refresh the body, mind and soul benefitting the whole of the ministry and not just the individual.*

PLANNING A SABBATICAL:

Pre-sabbatical:

Not less than a year prior to the sabbatical, the individual should meet with the Senior Warden (or other leadership if not a parochial setting) to discuss issues and questions involving a sabbatical leave.

The bishop (or Ecclesiastical Authority) likewise must be informed of these intentions.

The sabbatical proposal needs to address:

1. The reason for taking sabbatical
2. A description of the proposed activities during sabbatical, not limited to but including opportunity for retreat and for study
3. Ministry benefits from sabbatical for the individual and the congregation or other ministry setting
4. A plan through which the duties of the clergy person will be met during sabbatical including:
 - a. Appropriate staffing during the sabbatical
 - b. Concerns about the life of the congregation/ministry during the sabbatical
 - c. Needs of the clergy during sabbatical
5. A detailed financial plan for funding the sabbatical and the possible extra expense of hiring supply clergy or additional personnel*
6. A description of the way in which the sabbatical time will be assessed at its conclusion
7. Six months prior to sabbatical, the Vestry (or other leadership if not a parochial setting) should have a negotiated plan in writing so that the appropriate planning may take place. The plan, signed by the priest and one of the wardens, must also be submitted to the Sabbatical Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany (580 Burton Rd, Greenwich, NY 12834) and the Bishop's office (or Ecclesiastical Authority) for information and review as necessary

**As a general rule, it is expected that the cost of the sabbatical will be funded by the individual, the congregation or ministry setting, and a grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Albany. We understand that it may not always be possible for each party to contribute one third of the cost. The members of the Sabbatical Committee will be flexible in reviewing applications. The Sabbatical Committee will review applications twice a year: during the first week of June and the first week of December.*

During Sabbatical:

- The wardens meet regularly with staff, key volunteers, or other clergy as appropriate
- Wardens and members of the Vestry should determine the protocol for dealing with any unforeseen, major events in the life of the congregation
- Communication with the priest on sabbatical will be limited to those regarding significant pastoral concerns. The communication will take place through ecclesial channels, not through the cleric's family.
- The wardens (or other leadership if not parochial) will communicate regularly and intentionally with the congregation/ministry
- During sabbatical leave, the wardens will remain in office until the return of the priest

Post Sabbatical:

- A reflection upon the sabbatical is written by the priest and submitted to the vestry with a copy sent to the Bishop (or Ecclesiastical Authority)
- The wardens and vestry evaluate the congregation's experience and submit this report to the priest

CONCLUSION:

These guidelines are provided as a basic template for incorporating a sabbatical plan into a parish ministry. The following resources may prove helpful in further developing that plan. For further assistance, please contact the Diocesan office.

RESOURCES:

There are many resources currently available to assist an individual in thoughtfully and intentionally planning time away as well as introducing the benefits and logistics to a congregation/ministry.

Grant & Scholarship Sources for Sabbatical Leave:

The Lilly Endowment, Inc.-National Clergy Renewal Program

2801 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46208

317-916-7350

www.lillyendowment.org

Louisville Institute

1044 Alta Vista Road Louisville, KY 40205

502-992-5432

www.louisville-institute.org