

**POLICY ON SABBATICALS**  
**of the**  
**WEST VIRGINIA-WESTERN MARYLAND SYNOD**  
Adopted by the Thirteenth Annual Synod Assembly on June 2, 2000,  
and amended by the Fourteenth Annual Synod Assembly on June 8, 2001.

The 1997 Churchwide Assembly adopted the study titled, "Life-long Learning and Development for Rostered Leaders." This includes the recommendation that all rostered persons (Pastors, Associates in Ministry, Deaconesses, and Diaconal Ministers) be given the opportunity for an extended study and renewal period, which serves to equip both the rostered person and the congregation/agency for future ministry. **It is not a reward for past service. The median length of call is only three years. The extended study and renewal period is intended to boost morale and encourage longer ministries.**

**The ELCA recommendation is that rostered persons be granted time for a sabbatical after 3 - 5 years in a congregation/agency. For our purposes, we recommend that all calls be granted sabbaticals after six years in a parish/agency. This includes full-time, part-time, and first call rostered persons.**

**A sabbatical leave is a significant amount of time away from ministry responsibilities to be used for professional growth and personal renewal. It is intended to sharpen the rostered person's skills and renew his/her enthusiasm so that both the rostered person taking the sabbatical and the congregation/agency are enriched by the experience.**

- 1. Sabbatical Rest - This is a time for education and in-depth study to benefit both rostered person and congregation/agency, a time for rest and relaxation, a time to refresh the soul and a time to travel.**
- 2. A rostered person is eligible for a sabbatical after having served the same parish for six consecutive years. The rostered person will agree to serve the congregation/agency for at least one year from the date of her/his return. The rostered person shall consult with the bishop early in the process by submitting a Sabbatical Leave Application.**
- 3. The rostered person should notify the congregation/agency at least one year prior to taking the sabbatical, so that it may make the necessary financial preparations. It is well for the congregation/agency to plan for sabbaticals by making provisions in the budget, setting aside funds annually, to cover the expenses during the time the rostered person is away. During the time of sabbatical leave the congregation shall provide and pay for pulpit supplies each Sunday, and take care of the needs of the members. The rostered person shall make arrangements within his/her respective conference for emergency pastoral care during his or her absence. The bishop may be consulted as necessary.**
- 4. The West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod expects the sabbatical leave of three (3) months to include a period of time for education:**
  - A. Spiritual growth of the rostered person**

**B. Enhancement of the congregation/agency ministry. It is expected that at least one month be used for the rest and relaxation of the rostered person and his/her family. The sabbatical should not be used as a time to do similar professional work in another setting.**

**5. During the year the sabbatical is taken, only two (2) weeks of vacation will be allowed.**

**6. Continuing Education time will be limited to the two synodical education events that year.**

**7. Time of sabbaticals should be negotiated with the congregation/agency.**

**8. All compensation for the rostered person will be maintained at current levels during the sabbatical.**

**9. The rostered person shall make a full report of the sabbatical to the church council or board soon after her/his return to the parish or agency. The rostered person and church council shall devise a means to reevaluate the ministry in that parish and aid the rostered person to make re-entry into the active ministry.**

**10. The letter of call shall include that a sabbatical will be encouraged after six years in a call, and every six years thereafter.**

**11. When a rostered person is on sabbatical, he/she discontinues all duties within the congregation/agency.**

**12. All rostered persons who fulfill these requirements shall be eligible for such leave two years from the date of approval of this document.**

**“As a church engaged in mission, we believe that life-long learning will best serve the needs of rostered persons when there exists an environment in which those serving enjoy supporting partnership with their congregation/agency.” (Envisioning Statement)**

## **SABBATICAL LEAVE APPLICATION**

### **How to begin:**

- 1. Obtain policy and application from synod office.**
- 2. Receive approval of congregation or agency and bishop.**
- 3. Coordinate with rostered persons in conference.**
- 4. Submit application including evidence of congregational involvement.**

I. Background Information

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: HOME \_\_\_\_\_ OFFICE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF CONGREGATION \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS OF CONGREGATION \_\_\_\_\_

**NATURE OF THE SABBATICAL LEAVE (If additional space is needed, please attach a separate sheet.)**

A. Type learning objectives for your sabbatical. They should be specific and measurable. Include in your objectives how you will use the time to benefit yourself and the congregation.

B. Briefly describe what you plan to do.

C. Describe how you will share insights from your sabbatical leave with your congregation and/or agency.

D. Explain how this leave will benefit your current setting for ministry and your congregation and/or agency.

E. You will be responsible to arrange a post-sabbatical leave debriefing session with the bishop and the congregational council within six weeks of your return from the sabbatical. A short reflection paper about the sabbatical is also requested upon your return.

II. PREVIOUS LEAVES (personal leave; extended leave due to illness; on leave from call etc.)

DATES

SOURCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A. DATES OF SABBATICAL AND TIME REQUESTED \_\_\_\_\_

B. LOCATION (S) \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVAL OF CONGREGATION/AGENCY:**  
**PRESIDENT OF**  
**CONGREGATION/BOARD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_