

## Information on a Pastor's Sabbatical from the Western Iowa Synod compensation guidelines

### Sabbatical

A rostered leader is eligible for a sabbatical after 6 full years of service in the same congregation. The concept of sabbatical is grounded on the biblical idea of Sabbath rest. The example of Jesus, who frequently sought out a quiet place where he could meditate and pray, away from the constant demands of the crowds, is a strong model for a sabbatical. Unlike a vacation, a sabbatical is intended for purposeful reflection and restoration. A sabbatical also provides the opportunity for the congregation to experience the freshness of a break in the rhythm of parish life and leadership. Conversation about a sabbatical could begin with the Mutual Ministry Committee, the church council or a task force formed for this particular assignment. The following guidelines give some helpful information.

1. A sabbatical provides the professional leader a measured time to step aside from congregational responsibilities in order to pursue opportunities for a renewal of vision and perspective. It creates space for creativity, rest and renewal, and may include continuing education, travel, a concentrated time to study or read, reconnection with immediate or extended family, and time away for spiritual renewal. Rested and energized pastors may well result in longer and healthier calls in a congregation. Sabbaticals give congregations the opportunity to provide and experience new leadership opportunities. A sabbatical leave is a way for a congregation to express how much it values the rostered leader.

2. A sabbatical may be taken after six full years of service in a particular parish. Years cannot accumulate between calls (i.e., four years at Trinity and two years at St. Paul does not qualify) unless agreed upon at time of call. A sabbatical will normally be for 12 weeks and should not be less than 8 weeks. The full 12 week sabbatical may include up to two weeks of vacation, a 10 week sabbatical may include up to one week of vacation, and an 8 week sabbatical would normally not include vacation time. Regardless of the length, the sabbatical needs to be consecutive weeks of time away. Clergy are expected to continue ministry in that congregation for at least one year after the sabbatical.

3. The congregation will continue to pay full salary and benefits for the rostered leader who is on sabbatical. Auto expense may be negotiated. The congregation will need to cover the cost and find people to fulfill the ministry duties of the rostered leader. There are a variety of options for leadership including members of the congregation assume new leadership roles, a retired pastor, a neighboring ELCA or full communion partner pastor and your pastor take a sabbatical at different times and exchange pastoral coverage, the bishop authorizes a well-qualified lay person of their choice for word and sacrament ministry for this specific time and place. The reimbursement rate for interim ministry can be found in Part VI of this document. Congregations are encouraged to begin putting money aside for a sabbatical when a newly called rostered leader begins. Grants are available through Wheat Ridge Ministries at [www.wheatridge.org](http://www.wheatridge.org) or the Lilly Foundation at [www.lillyendowment.org](http://www.lillyendowment.org).

4. The congregation is not under obligation to fund the cost of the sabbatical itself. Continuing education dollars, which can be accrued up to three years, can be used for the educational costs of the sabbatical.