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**Addition to  
The Harvest Conference  
Policy Manual**

**Sabbatical Policy**

AC23

June 9-10, 2023

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## Harvest Conference Sabbatical Policy

### **Intention of Sabbatical Policy**

It is the intention of the Harvest Conference to educate and guide its churches and pastors in the importance of establishing a "rhythm of rest." This includes consistent use of a Sabbath day, allotted vacation time, and a Sabbatical leave. Recommendations regarding a regular Sabbath day and vacation are outlined in separate policies, and as such, only the Sabbatical Policy is outlined below.

### **Purpose of Sabbatical**

The purpose of the sabbatical is for each eligible pastor to receive a time away from his/her regular duties to pursue a period of personal renewal, formal or informal study, and personal or professional learning. This time away should be viewed as mutually beneficial for both the pastor and the local congregation, as increased clergy health is more predictive of congregational health.

The sabbatical should be viewed as a "proactive" approach to pastoral care/support, and thus should be planned accordingly. Pastors experiencing hardships that require immediate time away should consider the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) as a "reactive" response. The FMLA policy is outlined in the Harvest Conference Policy Manual. Because the Harvest Conference provides reimbursement for counseling fees, those requesting FMLA *may* be asked for documentation indicating *only* that they have been actively attending therapy sessions. Details of those sessions will not be disclosed.

### **Eligibility**

Ordained Elders appointed by the Harvest Conference to *at least a part time pastorate* are eligible for a sabbatical leave after a minimum of 5 years of appointed service. It is recommended that 5 years of that service is continuous in one church, but allowances can be made at the discretion of the Superintendent and Ministerial Education and Guidance Board for those who have less than 5 years of continuous service. (After the initial sabbatical, eligible pastors are then permitted a sabbatical every 6 - 7 years).

Conference Ministerial Candidates who are appointed *at least part time*, who have also met the above criteria, *may* be eligible for sabbatical leave after consultation with Superintendent and Ministerial Education and Guidance Board.

All pastors meeting these criteria may be considered for up to a **3-month sabbatical** upon completion of attached application. A pastor's use of a regular Sabbath and vacation time may also be considered when determining approval of a sabbatical leave.

### **Compensation**

Eligible pastors will receive their full remuneration (salary and benefits) during their sabbatical. The local church is also responsible for compensating those providing pastoral duties (preaching, visitation, etc.) during the sabbatical.

Eligible pastors should plan accordingly to use their Ministry Expense accounts to cover expenses during their sabbatical leave so as not to further burden the local church.

Local churches are encouraged to follow steps outlined in **Recommendations** to prepare for a sabbatical leave.

### **Expectations**

#### **Eligible pastors...**

- will receive allotted vacation *in addition to* sabbatical
- WILL NOT use the sabbatical leave to explore other job opportunities
- Will ideally return to current appointment from sabbatical to end of conference year.
- will not actively attend church he/she is appointed to during sabbatical
- will not apply for a sabbatical that would occur at the same time as another church staff member
- will complete steps in **Application for Sabbatical Leave & Return** in its entirety

### **Recommendations**

- Local churches should normalize the sabbatical leave by discussing it frequently among leaders/attenders; clearly communicate as *Harvest Conference Policy, not local church decision*
- Schedule Pastoral Support Coordinator to speak at Local Church BOA / Informational Meeting to present Sabbatical Procedure *before* pastor requests sabbatical
- Local churches should budget \$50 per month from General Budget to "Sabbatical Fund" to prepare financially for expenses associated with Sabbatical
- Contact and work with Harvest Conference Pastoral Support Coordinator to ensure all details and plans are completed before/during sabbatical leave

## Plan for Sabbatical Leave

- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Harvest Conference Representation (Pastoral Support Coordinator and/or Superintendent) who will inform Ministerial Education and Guidance Board of desire to pursue sabbatical leave. Contact should ideally be made a minimum of 4 - 6 months before desired start of sabbatical to allow for proper planning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete **Application for Sabbatical Leave & Return** (attached) & submit to Ministerial Education and Guidance Board at least 4 - 6 months before desired sabbatical. Application must also be submitted *a minimum of 2 weeks before* scheduled MEG board meeting where it will be discussed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Once application is approved, work with Conference Representation to schedule date to present Sabbatical Application to Local Church Board of Administration / Leadership Team. Conference Representation ***will be present*** during meeting in which Sabbatical is discussed, and appropriate forms/paperwork will be presented at this meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor / Conference Representation will schedule Informational Meeting (not Society Meeting as no vote will occur) to make local church body aware of Sabbatical Leave.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor / Conference Representation will begin working with Local Church to complete all necessary forms to ensure proper coverage and compensation during sabbatical.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Forms must be completed and submitted to MEG Board for approval at least 2 months before sabbatical is set to begin. Pastor will also make arrangements to determine frequency and manner of contact with conference representative (MEG board member, approved mentor, Pastoral Support Coordinator) during sabbatical.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor will meet with MEG Board *after* Sabbatical to share progress / insights gained.

**Application for Sabbatical Leave & Return**

**Start Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**End Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Soft Return (Pastor back in church with no responsibilities):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Return (Pastor resumes all regular duties; one week after Soft Return):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Reason**

Please describe your reasoning for requesting a sabbatical at this time.

**Goal**

Please describe your plan for personal renewal, formal or informal study, and personal or professional learning.

**Personal / Family Benefit**

Briefly describe how this time away will benefit you and/or your family.

**New Learning (Personal)**

What is an area of learning that you will explore during your time on sabbatical?

**New Learning (Church)**

Is there an area the church could grow in during the sabbatical?

**Will you agree to provide a verbal or written (1 page) summary of your sabbatical to the MEG board or designated Conference Representative?**

### Weekly Planning Resource

<b>Week/Date</b>	<b>Key Contact for Church Emergencies &amp; other needs</b>	<b>Sunday Speaker &amp; Contact Info</b>	<b>Point Person for Sunday Service &amp; Contact Info</b>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
(Soft Return)			