

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SABBATICALS

### What is a sabbatical?

A sabbatical gives a full-time Calvary ordained staff member the opportunity to step away from day-to-day responsibilities for an intentional season of rest to concentrate on renewal and learning. It is an opportunity to rest and rejuvenate, take a fresh look at one's ministry, gain new understanding of the dynamics at work in one's life, counsel with colleagues about their experiences with certain aspects of their ministry, and/or renew their spiritual and mental health. Sabbatical leave may be used for study, educational travel, spiritual development, collaboration with colleagues, and generally recuperative activities in order to engage with God in new and different ways without the weekly routines of ministerial life. We will receive the benefit on their return of a spiritually refreshed and more energetic pastor.

### Why are sabbaticals important?

Church leadership expert Thom S. Rainer gives these five reasons why churches should grant pastors sabbaticals:

1. A pastor has emotional highs and lows unlike most other vocations. In the course of a day, a pastor can deal with death, deep spiritual issues, great encouragement, petty criticisms, tragedies, illnesses, and celebrations of birth. The emotional roller coaster is draining. Your pastor needs a break—many times a break with no distractions.
2. A pastor is on 24-hour call. Most pastors don't have an "off" switch. They go to sleep with the knowledge they could be awakened by a phone call at any time of the day. Vacations are rarely uninterrupted. It can be an exhausting vocation, and a sabbatical can be a welcome time to slow down.
3. Pastors need time of uninterrupted study. It doesn't usually happen in the study at church or home. There is always the crisis or need of the moment. Church members expect sermons that reflect much prayer and study. The pastor's schedule often works against that ideal. The sabbatical can offer much needed, and uninterrupted, study time.
4. Pastors who have sabbaticals have longer tenure at churches. Though my information is anecdotal, I do see the trend. And while I cannot prove a cause-and-effect relationship, I feel confident that pastors who have sabbaticals are much more likely to stay at a church because they are less likely to experience burnout.
5. Pastors who have sabbaticals view the time off as an affirmation from their churches. I have heard from many pastors who share with me a sentence similar to this one: "I know my church loves me because they give me a sabbatical." Pastors need affirmation. Sabbaticals can accomplish that goal.

In an article by Vanderbloemen, the three reasons given for sabbaticals are for:

- 1) Physical rest
- 2) Mental and creative rejuvenation
- 3) Replenishment

Short and to the point – they have a difficult job and need periodic breaks in order to continue to serve us well in the future!

**Who may take a sabbatical?**

Full-time ordained staff members who have served Calvary for six continuous years of service are eligible to take a sabbatical during the seventh or succeeding years.

**How long are sabbaticals?**

Each sabbatical may not exceed a period of three months. Accrued vacation time may be added to the time of sabbatical to allow for participation in a specific study or travel program of longer than three months' duration or to address other extenuating circumstances. Some pastors may choose to break their sabbatical into smaller time segments.

**Can more than one staff member be on sabbatical at the same time?**

Only one ordained staff member may be on sabbatical at a time.

**Will Calvary continue to pay the staff member on sabbatical?**

Full salary, retirement, and health benefits will continue during the time of sabbatical. Also, vacation time will accrue during the sabbatical.

**Who decides whether staff may take a sabbatical?**

Each staff member will prepare specific, formal plans for a sabbatical and submit their plans for the approval of the Staff Relations Committee and the Church Council. The plans must include the purpose of the sabbatical, outlined schedules and activities, proposed learning objectives, intended outcomes and benefits for themselves and for the congregation, and coverage of their duties during the sabbatical.

**Will staff members return to Calvary after their sabbaticals?**

Yes, of course! It is expected under the sabbatical policy that they will serve Calvary for at least one full year after their sabbaticals, but there is no reason they won't continue beyond that. Anne Scalfaro just completed her second sabbatical after being at Calvary for over 14 years!

**Are staff members available to help with congregational needs during the time of their sabbaticals?**

No. They need to fully disconnect from Calvary in order to get the full benefits of this time of renewal and learning.