

Pastoral Sabbatical Policy
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, East Bethel
Recommended by Mutual Ministry 10/25/01

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work” (Genesis 2:2 – NIV). The practice of sabbatical comes from the Hebrew word *Shabbat* or Sabbath which literally means seventh and to stop or cease. In the New Testament Jesus often stopped what he was doing and went away into the wilderness or off to another land. It was necessary for his spiritual renewal and for the strength he would need in ministry. It is also necessary for us to take a break from our day-to-day activities in order to refresh ourselves and cast off the burdens of everyday life. The third commandment “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy” is the root of our weekly practice of stopping the routine and pausing for a time of refreshment and renewal. Sabbatical takes an extended break to lift the burdens of daily life and allow a person to be spiritually refreshed and strengthened for continued ministry. It is a means to combat burnout and to renew one's sense of call.

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church offers a pastoral sabbatical policy in order to provide extended study and renewal time to equip pastors to better serve the congregation's future mission and ministry. Sabbatical time shall be used for study and learning, renewal and reflection and attention to wellness issues.

The sabbatical plan will be developed in consultation with Mutual Ministry Committee and subsequently forwarded to the Church Council for approval. The program may include travel, prayer, writing, reading and/or study.

Out of respect to the entire staff and congregation, planning for a sabbatical shall begin 12 months prior to the expected beginning of the sabbatical and a proposed plan shall be approved by council 6 months prior to the expected beginning of the sabbatical. In addition, only one pastor can be on sabbatical at a time.

Pastoral staff are eligible for a 3 month sabbatical every 5 years. Full salary and benefits will be continued during the sabbatical. Any additional expenses related to the sabbatical are the responsibility of the individual taking sabbatical. Annual continuing education funds may be applied to the sabbatical expenses. The cumulative value of two years of continuing education funds is the maximum that may be applied. Pastors are encouraged to pursue additional grants from appropriate sources.

Remaining members of the pastoral staff will be expected to cross-cover duties and obligations of the pastor on sabbatical. In addition, gifts and skills of lay members of Our Saviour's shall be utilized. In this way, the anticipated budget impact for Our Saviour's Lutheran Church of a pastor on sabbatical should be revenue neutral.

Following completion of the sabbatical period, the pastor agrees to serve the congregation for at least one additional year.

Within 90 days of completion of the sabbatical, the pastor will share with the Mutual Ministry Committee and Church Council reflections from his/her sabbatical.