

APPENDIX C

SABBATICAL GUIDELINES

Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA

Approved as a Guideline at Synod Council Meeting January 15, 1998

Introduction

It is important for both rostered ministers¹ and the congregation² to realize the importance of the minister's life-long continuing education through workshops, seminary courses and personal study.

Congregations of the ELCA have long been encouraged to provide time and financial assistance to enable ministers to maintain and improve their skills. From time to time, however, ministers need and require an extended period of time for study, personal growth, reflection and renewal without the demands of one's regular employment -- a sabbatical leave. Experience has shown that the congregation's ministry directly benefits from such study, growth, and renewal. Long-term ministry is revitalized and stimulated. All parties benefit.³

These guidelines are provided to assist ministers and congregations in the contemplation and implementation of such sabbatical leaves.

Purpose

Sabbatical leaves are granted to provide an opportunity for the minister to take an extended period of time for renewal, enrichment, study, spiritual growth, travel, skill development, research, and/or experimentation.

Eligibility

- a. Full time pastors, Associates in Ministry, and Diaconal Ministers.
- b. A sabbatical may be taken after every sixth full year of service in a given parish. Years cannot accumulate between calls (unless agreed at the time of call).
- c. Planning should begin the calendar year before the sabbatical so the congregation and minister can plan for financial and ministry adjustments involved.

Duration

A sabbatical will normally be for 12 weeks (including the two continuing education weeks normally granted). Vacation should not be included as sabbatical time. The sabbatical leave may be split into two blocks of time, which do not have to be consecutive, but shall be taken within a twelve month period from the beginning of the first block of time.

¹ The terms "rostered ministers" or "ministers", for the purpose of these guidelines, refer to those persons on the ELCA's roster of ordained pastors, Associates in Ministry, or Diaconal Ministers.

² These guidelines are written for congregations, recognizing that a rostered minister serving in another setting is guided by the policies of that employing body. These other agencies and institutions are also encouraged to consider sabbatical policies.

³ For comments about such benefits from both ministers and congregational leaders, see the sabbatical resource packet available from the synod office.

Cost to the congregation

- a. The congregation will continue to pay full salary and benefits (base salary, housing allowance, pension and insurance coverage). Car allowance, a ministry expense, is normally not paid during sabbatical time.
- b. Accrued continuing education dollars can be used for the educational costs of the sabbatical. Continuing education dollars can only be accrued for three years.
- c. The congregation will need to provide for their ministry needs to be covered during the sabbatical time. Specific examples can be found in the Sabbatical Resource Packet available from the Synod office. In most cases, these needs are met in ways other than finding full-time replacement during the sabbatical. Considerations involve:
 - (1) Sunday worship/preaching. Normally done by a pastor engaged at the normal supply preaching rate of reimbursement (see page 15).
 - (2) Teaching, visitation, occasional services (funerals, weddings, etc.). The minister, congregational leadership, and the synod office can work together to arrange for these needs to be met during the sabbatical time. Another minister can be contracted for certain responsibilities, other staff may adjust responsibilities, and/or neighboring ministers may agree to cover certain responsibilities.
- d. The congregation is not responsible to fund the sabbatical in any other way. However, it may choose to provide additional financial assistance.

Planning

- a. Planning should begin at least a year before the sabbatical is to take place.
- b. A congregational sabbatical policy should be in place before any other planning begins. This policy may be this synod guideline or a locally adapted version.
- c. Normally the minister provides an outline of the planned use of time to the Council or responsible committee before the sabbatical is approved.

Commitments following the sabbatical

- a. The minister will submit a report of the sabbatical time, and find occasion to share with congregational members reactions, learnings, insights, etc.
- b. The minister is expected to remain at least one year in the parish following a sabbatical.

An illustrative checklist/timeline (to be used along with the synod's Sabbatical Resource Packet)

- _____ Mutual Ministry Committee or its equivalent encourages staff to consider a sabbatical.
- _____ Staff determines interest and what he/she might like to do with the three months.
- _____ Council receives request/proposal, approves sabbatical leave.
- _____ Council or committee adjusts budget to allow for additional staff coverage.⁴
- _____ Staff or Council consults with the synod office regarding pastoral assistance.
- _____ All arrangements with persons involved should be in place three months in advance.
- _____ Staff makes all necessary arrangements for his/her course of study, travel, etc.

Please call the synod office if you have questions.

⁴ How much time will the interim need to work? Full time? Part time? Will regular office hours need to be kept? Who will be responsible for pastoral needs that arise - crisis counseling, weddings, funerals, etc.?