



**EASTERN SYNOD** of the  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**

**SABBATICAL GUIDELINES**  
for  
**ROSTERED PERSONS OF THE EASTERN SYNOD**

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**Preface:**

Ezekiel 20:12

*Moreover I gave them my Sabbath, as a sign between me and them, so that they might know that I the Lord sanctify them.*

Leviticus 25:1-7

*The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a Sabbath for the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land, a Sabbath for the Lord; you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the after growth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine; it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. You may eat what the land yields during its Sabbath-you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound labourers who live with you; for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.*

Matthew 14:23

*And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.*

Clergy are subject to many pressures and stresses which are unique to the ministry. The concept of wholeness and wellness in ministry is an important principle in the life of the church. A healthy and effective congregation requires a healthy pastor. To help promote health and wholeness in our Synod, we have developed (extended study leave) sabbatical guidelines which provide the opportunity for our rostered clergy to be refreshed bodily, socially, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and professionally.

A sabbatical provides an opportunity for the pastor to reflect on the call to ministry and her/his relationship with God and all of God's creation. The sabbatical is expected to be of benefit to both the pastor and the congregation/institution which she/he serves, as well as to the Synod and the wider Church. While continuing education provides regular shorter opportunities for growth in learning, a sabbatical provides not only opportunities for more in-depth learning and renewal, but also rest from labour. A sabbatical should be holistic, in that it includes time for prayer, reflection, rest, and care of the body, as well as developing gifts for ministry.

These guidelines are intended to provide assistance to those congregations considering a sabbatical leave program for its pastor(s). It should be seen as a resource for developing a thorough support system for the spiritual leader(s) of their congregation. It is understood that not all congregations have the resources to provide such a support. Where the provision of a sabbatical leave is a viable option, the synod offers the following suggestions to assist the congregation.

**Definition:** A sabbatical leave is a paid leave granted in recognition of the need for, or the beneficial effects of, time away from the regular duties of a call following a time of continuous service in that call.

## **Guidelines**

### **Eligibility:**

1. Six continuous years in a full-time call in the same setting, or a proportionally longer period in a part-time call. Following a sabbatical leave, eligibility would start again for, another leave.
2. Consideration should be given to offering a sabbatical leave of less than three months following periods of eligibility of less than six years.
3. Consultation with the responsible Bishop, the salary-paying source, and the calling body.
4. Availability of suitable replacement service to the calling body
5. Development of a covenant between the recipient and the calling body outlining the plans for the leave and the anticipated benefits to both the recipient and the calling body.

### **Duration:**

1. From three months up to one year.
2. A sabbatical leave may be extended by regular study leave or vacation up to a maximum of one year.
3. In any calendar year, any annual vacation entitlement shall be reduced in proportion to that part of the year spent on sabbatical leave.

### **Purpose:**

1. A sabbatical leave is a time for professional growth and personal renewal and should include time for both.
2. The recipient and the calling body should be free to develop their own covenant, but it is strongly recommended that a leave should include at least one month of total rest and relaxation, at least one month of learning for personal growth, and at least one month of learning or preparation to directly meet the needs of the calling body. Travel may be seen as an appropriate way to meet any of these three needs.
3. It may be important for a recipient to change roles as part of the sabbatical experience – a worship leader may need to become a simple worshiper, or a teacher become a student, or a spiritual director receive spiritual direction, etc.
4. It is strongly recommended that the recipient move away from the location of call (where possible) for the duration of the leave.

### **Funding:**

1. Full salary should be paid for the duration of the sabbatical leave.
2. In some situations, less than full salary may be appropriate, but any leave for which less than half salary is paid should not be considered a sabbatical leave.
3. In addition to salary paid, any regular ELCIC study funds may be accessed, if appropriate.
4. Apart from the provisions of item 3, the expenses associated with a sabbatical leave should be met by the recipient.

### **Benefits:**

1. All benefits other than travel allowance shall continue in full during a sabbatical leave.
2. The amount of the travel allowance paid during a year in which a sabbatical is taken should be determined prior to the sabbatical.
3. The cost of housing may present some difficulties for the recipient of a sabbatical leave even though housing allowances shall continue. The possibility of subletting parsonages, or other arrangements could be considered.
4. All contributions to ELCIC plans will be deducted based on the amount of salary paid during the sabbatical leave, as allowed by those plans.
5. Income tax, CPP, and EI deductions and payments will be made according to the regulations governing those payments.

### **Return:**

1. The recipient and the calling body shall agree to return to the regular duties of the call for at least one year following the sabbatical leave.
2. Within three months of the end of the sabbatical leave the recipient shall present a written report and reflections on the sabbatical leave to the calling body.
3. The return conditions may be waived or modified by mutual consent of the recipient, salary-paying source, and calling body.

### **Preparation and Application:**

1. Written application to the salary-paying source and the calling body, with a copy to the Bishop's office, shall be made at least six months prior to the proposed start of the leave.
2. The Synod office shall provide an application form that will require the applicant to outline a "Sabbatical Program".
3. The calling body and the applicant shall develop a covenant outlining the plans for the sabbatical leave and the anticipated benefits to both the recipient and the calling body.
4. The salary-paying source, the calling body and the applicant shall develop a funding agreement.
5. The Bishop may appoint a consultant to help the applicant, salary-paying source and calling body in the planning and covenanting of a successful implementation of the sabbatical leave, and in the on-going ministry to the calling body.
6. The approval of a sabbatical leave is the responsibility of the salary-paying source and the calling body.

### **Recommendations for Implementation**

1. It is not necessarily the recipient of a sabbatical leave, who initiates the process.

2. It may be beneficial to establish a “sabbatical committee” to handle the planning for, supervision of, and “recovery” from a sabbatical leave.
3. By making a regular budgetary allotment to a sabbatical fund, the financial concerns of providing a sabbatical leave can be considerably reduced – (i.e. \$50 a month will provide \$3600 plus interest to help pay for supply, extra expenses, etc. during the sabbatical leave.)
4. It is important that a sabbatical leave be considered as part of the call, not a break in it. The recipient should play a central role in planning for the lay and ordained supply to the calling body.
5. It is important to realize that a sabbatical leave can place an extra load on other called and employed people. Compensation for these people or extra help should be planned.
6. Return from sabbatical leave has proven to be a possibly stressful time for the recipient. Carefully kept records or a journal of what has happened during the absence of the recipient can help alleviate this stress. The return should be carefully prepared for in the covenant and by the sabbatical committee.

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## APPLICATION FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

To be completed by a rostered person of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, with a copy to the Bishop's office, at least six months prior to the proposed start of the leave.

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Office \_\_\_\_\_ Home \_\_\_\_\_

Calling Body Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Salary-paying Source Name (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Sabbatical leave dates requested from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Sabbatical Program Outline attached: Yes \_\_\_\_\_

Arrangements are made in accordance with Eastern Synod Guidelines: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If "No", the arrangements contain the following variance(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_