

Schedule out 1yr.

Sabbatical Guidelines

Sabbatical Guidelines for the Northwestern Minnesota Synod (ELCA)

Action by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly

At the 1997 Churchwide Assembly a document entitled, "Life-Long Learning and Development for Faithful Leaders" was adopted. In part, this document says, "All persons in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America engage in a holistic and systemic approach to life-long learning and development. For rostered persons, this includes:...Extended study and renewal of a minimum of one to three months every three to five years in present call. For rostered persons involved in the First Call Theological Education program, this three to five year period begins upon completion of that program."

Recommendation of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod Council

At its meeting on September 10, 1999, the Northwestern Minnesota Synod Council passed the following resolution, "While recognizing that pastors taking a period of extended study and renewal (sabbatical) is new to some congregations in our synod, we support the 1997 action of the Churchwide Assembly related to life-long learning, and encourage congregations and rostered persons in our synod to work toward rostered leaders taking a one to three month sabbatical every three to five years in the same call."

The Nature of a Sabbatical

A sabbatical should include the following characteristics:

1. A sabbatical should include extensive learning related to the ministry of the rostered person in his/her current call. The sabbatical should enlarge theological perspective and increase effectiveness in ministry.
2. A sabbatical should include spiritual renewal. In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther says the meaning of the commandment, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy", is, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect his word and the preaching of it, but consider it holy and gladly hear and learn it." A sabbatical should include disciplines that allow one to hear and learn God's word.
3. A sabbatical should include time for rest and refreshment. Beginning with the first chapters of Genesis, the scriptures clearly teach that sabbath is a time for rest and re-creation. Travel, personal meditation, reading or reflection that are structured and accountable are appropriate activities to undertake during a sabbatical.

A Plan for Developing a Sabbatical

1. Rostered persons and congregations/agencies contemplating a sabbatical should consult with the synodical bishop early in the process.
2. Sabbatical planning should occur in the year prior to its beginning and involve extensive conversation between the rostered person and the congregation/agency.
3. A specific proposal for the sabbatical should be presented to the congregation council or supervisor four months before the sabbatical is to begin. This proposal should include specific goals and objectives, and detail activities designed to achieve these goals and objectives. A copy of this proposal should be sent to the synodical bishop.
4. During the sabbatical the congregation/agency assumes essential leadership roles or provides for interim leadership while the rostered person is away. If the rostered person is a pastor, the congregation's leaders and the pastor should work together prior to the sabbatical to arrange for necessary pastoral coverage during the sabbatical.
5. The congregation continues to pay salary and all benefits except mileage during the sabbatical. A sabbatical is not vacation and sabbatical time should not be counted as vacation time.
6. The rostered person agrees to serve with the congregation/agency for at least one year following completion of the sabbatical.
7. When the sabbatical begins, the rostered leader discontinues all leadership roles in the congregation/agency.
8. Within 90 days after the completion of the sabbatical, the rostered leader files a written report on the sabbatical with the bishop and the congregation/agency. This written report should include
 - A. a restatement of goals and objectives,
 - B. a listing of activities undertaken to reach these goals and objectives,
 - C. a summary of what was learned and achieved related to the goals and objectives.
9. It is understood that the sabbatical serves as all the continuing education time for the year in which the sabbatical is taken.