



Sabbatical Leave for Clergy *Policy*

A. Purpose

Sabbatical leave is a period away from parochial / congregational responsibilities, normally of two to three months duration. The fundamental purpose of a sabbatical is to have a time for rest, renewal and re-creation so as to return refreshed in one's ministry. It is not simply the same as extended study leave, although there will be elements of study in a sabbatical; nor is it a simple ministry exchange. It should *combine* the following elements:

1. Study and development
2. Space for reflection – time for self and for God
3. Refreshment

The overall orientation is that it should be a help to ministry, either directly (if the emphasis is on study or skills), or indirectly (if the emphasis is more on personal development). This leave period may be initiated through the process of Ministerial Review.

B. Eligibility

Sabbatical leave should normally be available, after consultation with the Director of Training, the relevant Archdeacon and the Suffragan Bishop, to licensed clergy over the age of 38, providing:

1. He or she has normally completed 15 years of licensed ministry overall
2. He or she has not had a similar period of extended study leave in the previous 10 years
3. He or she has been at least five years in their present post, and
4. He or she is not actively looking for a move during the planning period
5. He or she has not had a CME grant for a major academic course within the previous 5 years.

C. Factors to be considered

1. family and personal circumstances
2. the needs of the congregation or chaplaincy: this should be discussed at an early stage with churchwardens and have their support
3. the availability of locum cover over the period of leave
4. the ability of the congregation or chaplaincy to cope with locums, in particular, the housing of locums.

D. Finance

It is expected that the congregation or chaplaincy will continue to pay the stipend and pension contributions of the applicant. A funding package for the sabbatical will likely come from these sources:

1. Contribution from CME fund
2. Congregation or Chaplaincy contribution. This will include covering locum costs
3. Personal contributions, according to circumstances
4. Other possible sources of funding from grant-awarding trusts and charities

E. Planning

The following elements need to be addressed satisfactorily during the planning process and in discussion with one or more of the Director of Training, the relevant Archdeacon or the Suffragan Bishop:

1. clarification of aim of the sabbatical (i.e. what is to be done, and why)
2. timing and length. A sabbatical leave is over and above annual holiday entitlement.
3. place or places where the sabbatical will be spent
4. main focus of study
5. other activity/ies
6. tutor/mentor/supervisor
7. reporting back

F. Request

After planning is complete a formal request should be made in writing to the Suffragan Bishop. This request will include:

1. A statement of the aim of the sabbatical period
2. A reasonably detailed sabbatical itinerary showing exact dates of the proposed leave, how and where the time is to be spent, and the proportions of the sabbatical dedicated to study, reflection/retreat and refreshment
3. a budget, including the sources of funding
4. (for stipendiary clergy) the assurance that the chaplaincy or congregation has agreed to pay stipend, pension and expenses during the leave
5. details of the locum cover arranged including details of how the chaplaincy or congregation will cover any additional expenses related to the cost and housing of locum priests.
6. who has or is advising on the use of sabbatical time, as a mentor.
7. An agreement to write a short reflection on the sabbatical, once completed to be shared with the Suffragan Bishop, the Director of Training, and if appropriate, the Church Council, and to be included in the ministerial file.

In respect of clergy taking Sabbatical Leave

During a sabbatical leave of the priest the roles and responsibilities of the Church Council and the Churchwardens continue as outlined in the document *Church Structure Explained*. The Church Council does not assume the role of the parish priest; its main function remains to *co-operate with the minister* in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Therefore, in the absence of the priest during a sabbatical period, nothing should be undertaken by the Council that would obscure such spirit of co-operation.

The following guidance is offered with regard to specific parochial matters:

1. Chairing of Council Meetings: by the appointed lay vice-chair
2. Frequency of Council Meetings: only 4 are required each year; in a 3 month sabbatical it is reasonable to expect that there would be at least 1 meeting.
3. Subcommittees: these can continue their work as normal.
4. Financial affairs: The Church Council is responsible for the collection and administration of all moneys raised for Church purposes and the keeping of accounts, as normal. The Annual Budget should be agreed at a Council Meeting prior to the beginning of the sabbatical.
5. Fabric, buildings, goods, property and ornaments belonging to the Church: The Churchwardens are responsible for insurance and maintenance of these. There should be no purchase of major items not previously agreed in the budget. This of course does not pertain to the routine Church supplies such as bread and wine for the Eucharist. There should be no sale of any property that has not been previously agreed at a Council meeting at which the incumbent was present. If there is any question or doubt in these matters, the Churchwardens must consult the Area Dean or the Archdeacon.
6. Forms of service (i.e. the liturgy used at public worship): These continue as agreed by the Council and the incumbent prior to the commencement of the sabbatical. During the sabbatical, any changes that are required in the *non-variable parts of the liturgy* must be approved by the Area Dean.
7. Worship leaders: A complete rota of those who will lead worship and preach during the sabbatical period must be agreed by the incumbent prior to the commencement of the sabbatical. Those who lead worship and preach must be clergy or readers duly authorised in this diocese, or congregational worship leaders who are approved according to the diocesan guidelines or by other episcopal consent. Only those who are ordained priest can preside at the Sacraments of the Church, *with the exception of emergency baptism*. If there is to be the administration of Holy Communion by extension (from the Reserved Sacrament) this provision must be approved by the Archdeacon prior to the commencement of the sabbatical period, according to the guidelines of the diocese. If the agreed rota needs to be varied, this can only be done after consultation with the Area Dean or Archdeacon.
8. Pastoral services: guidance must be sought from the Area Dean or Archdeacon with regard to any marriages, wedding blessings or funerals.
9. General questions not covered in the guidelines: these are referred to the Area Dean or Archdeacon and their guidance followed.