

Pastor Sabbatical Policy

Open Door Church

Definition and Purpose

A sabbatical is a period of time granted for professional development and spiritual renewal, away from normal ministerial responsibilities. It is to be a time to receive spiritual nourishment, a change of perspective, to deepen the Pastor's relationship with God and his family.

A sabbatical leave attempts to apply the Biblical principles of "Sabbath" to insure the good health of the Pastor and the church.

A sabbatical for a Pastor is intended to:

- nurture and feed the body and soul for renewed ministry
- rekindle spiritual vitality and the sense of God's calling
- provide time for reconnecting more deeply with the Scriptures
- encourage professional development in the areas of ministry practice and theology
- permit time for intellectual reflection
- provide exposure to current ideas and the improving of ministerial skills

A sabbatical not only benefits the Pastor's professional development but also the ministry of the church. A well-planned and responsibly carried-out sabbatical will:

- help maintain leadership that is strong, effective, and long-term
- provide fresh input and increased levels of creativity
- expose the Pastor to new approaches to specific congregational needs
- renew enthusiasm, energy, and commitment for the work of the Church

Eligibility

The Pastor is eligible for a sabbatical of up to three months after the first five years of full-time continuous service at Open Door. Subsequent sabbaticals will be considered after each five additional full years from last sabbatical completion.

Sabbatical Guidelines

1. The Senior Pastor will submit a sabbatical proposal to the Deacons outlining in general terms how the sabbatical time will be invested. To allow for adequate planning and budget consideration, the Senior Pastor is required to present the proposal at least two months before the annual church budget is prepared for the year in which the sabbatical is to be taken. Scheduling of a sabbatical will need to be made considering needs of church and other staff schedules. Other pastoral staff will submit a proposal first to the Senior Pastor, and then to the Deacons.

2. Upon consideration of a sabbatical, Deacons will be responsible for providing feedback and encouragement to the Pastor to help identify potential needs, focuses, and activities for the Pastor while on sabbatical. Deacons will review, provide feedback, and approve the Pastor's sabbatical plan, and communicate effectively with the congregation regarding the details of the sabbatical before, during, and afterwards. Deacons will secure coverage for all aspects of the Pastor's role (preaching, pastoral care/visitation, meetings, leadership, classes, etc.) during the sabbatical time. Other pastoral staff will report to the Senior Pastor, and then to the Deacons.
3. Sabbatical time is separate from vacation time and should not be taken consecutively with vacation time.
4. The Pastor will communicate informally but regularly with a church representative throughout the sabbatical.
5. The Senior Pastor will give an oral report to the church at the first scheduled business meeting after the completion of the sabbatical to indicate how the time was invested and the benefits realized. Other pastoral staff will report on their sabbatical to the Senior Pastor.
6. Full wages, benefits and vacation allocation will be provided during the year of the sabbatical.
7. The sabbatical is to be taken all at once and not segmented. Unused sabbatical time cannot be accumulated for future use, nor will extra compensation be given for it.
8. Travel, education, living and other costs incurred in a sabbatical may be considered for reimbursement by the church on a case-by-case basis and dependent upon church approval in annual budget.
9. In the event of multiple Pastors, only one Pastor may take a sabbatical during a given year.
10. The Pastor is expected to refrain from seeking additional work opportunities and income during the sabbatical (e.g. preaching, pulpit supply, weddings, etc.).