



# TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

---

## SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY

### A. Purpose of Sabbatical Leave:

1. Trinity recognizes that full-time church work demands constant giving, and it is necessary to allow workers to recharge and renew periodically before burnout reduces their effectiveness. Trinity also recognizes that some continuing education cannot be completed while working full-time, and a sabbatical leave offers a wider opportunity for professional growth.
2. The purpose of the sabbatical leave is to allow time for self-directed growth and to improve professional skills of the individual while at the congregation. Some possible uses for sabbatical leave may include:
  - (a) Graduate Study
  - (b) Professional Study
  - (c) Writing
  - (d) Research
  - (e) Mission related work
  - (f) Or other purposes as approved by the Congregation Council
3. As sabbatical leave provides time for pastors and rostered leaders to grow, congregational leadership should also plan for the growth of lay leaders and the congregation during this time. While ordained pastors may be hired to cover clergy responsibilities, it may be in the best interests of congregational growth to allow members of the congregation to take these responsibilities (especially care, visitation, visioning, and planning).
4. Sabbatical leave may not be used to find other employment.
5. Trinity may modify this policy as deemed necessary to meet the needs of individual rostered ministers per Synod guidelines.

### B. Eligibility for Sabbatical Leave:

1. Pastors and full-time rostered leaders may request sabbatical leave.
2. Leave may be taken after every sixth consecutive year of service at the congregation.

### C. Scheduling of Sabbatical Leave:

The following guidelines are suggested to assist rostered ministers and ministries in the consideration of sabbatical leaves:

1. Rostered ministers and ministries contemplating sabbatical leaves should consult with the Office of the Bishop early in the process. Realizing that the congregation will be without the services of its rostered minister during the sabbatical, the rostered minister should seek the counsel and consent of the Office of the Bishop before finalizing the agreement.



# TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

---

2. Sabbatical leaves are intended for in-depth study or personal growth related to the regular call of the rostered minister and should include time for personal and familial reflection.
3. Sabbatical leaves will normally be for a period of not less than three months and not more than twelve months.
4. 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.
5. The use of vacation time during sabbatical leave:
  - (a) Leave of 3-6 months should include at least one-half of the time normally granted as annual vacation leave.
  - (b) Sabbatical leave may include the two weeks of continuing education for that calendar year.
6. Proposals for sabbatical leaves should be presented to the Congregation Council or other governing body not less than six months prior to the beginning of the leave. Careful consideration should be given to all aspects of the proposal and implications for the ministry and the rostered minister.
7. Staff members must take leave while employed at the congregation and cannot accrue leave time.
8. No reimbursement will be given for unused sabbatical leave time.
9. Sabbaticals cannot take place within twelve months after the date of hiring a new pastor and/or rostered leader.

## **D. Planning for Sabbatical Leave:**

1. Responsibility for planning is left to the individual requesting leave.  
For a three-month sabbatical, the Rocky Mountain Synod encourages one month of total rest and relaxation, one month of learning for the sake of learning, and one month of learning that will directly benefit the congregation.
2. Plans should be presented to the Exec Committee and approved by the Congregational Council.
3. Planning should take place as part of the budget process so that additional costs can be anticipated and planned for accordingly.
4. Plans should provide a rationale for sabbatical, including personal goals and potential value to the congregation.
5. Plans should provide a detailed outline of the intended course of study and use of time.
6. Plans should outline the potential for congregational leader growth.

## **E. Financing Sabbatical Leave:**

1. The congregation shall pay only the full salary and benefits for rostered leaders while on sabbatical leave unless other dedicated funding has been approved by the council.



# TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

---

2. Continuing education funds from the budget year of the sabbatical may be spent for educational costs during the sabbatical.
3. The congregation may hire professionals to cover the duties of pastors; and members of the congregation can volunteer to cover many of the needs.
4. A sabbatical proposal from Trinity's clergy will include a coverage plan with specific details of who will be responsible for oversight, staffing, communications, etc.
5. The Office of the Bishop may be a valuable resource in identifying available rostered ministers to provide pastoral services during the time of the sabbatical.
6. Financial considerations for the sabbatical should be negotiated by the rostered minister and the ministry. It is recommended that salary, housing allowance and the ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Plan be maintained at the current level, with the rostered minister assuming responsibility for other expenses.

**F. Post Sabbatical Expectations:**

1. When a sabbatical leave is granted, a pastor should be expected to serve the congregation for a minimum of one year following the completion of the sabbatical leave.
2. Within six weeks of the completion of the sabbatical leave, the rostered minister should present to the ministry and the Office of the Bishop a detailed reflection on the experiences of the leave.

Draft 10/23

Reference: Rocky Mountain Synod, Compensation Guidelines Published Oct 2014, Updated Nov 2016  
Trinity Sabbatical Leave Policy Rev. Oct 2023