

## BC Baptist Conference Recommendations

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**Title: Sabbatical Recommendations to Churches**

**Approved by: Church Health &  
Development Team**

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this recommendation is to offer all of the congregations within the British Columbia Baptist Conference a recommended standard for providing appropriate sabbatical leave for all Pastors.

Just as Sabbath periods were established and practiced throughout scripture, we highly value periods of rest and believe that when we are practicing Sabbath well, we get more of God and more of our ourselves.

As such, it's recommended that pastoral staff members shall qualify for a sabbatical period not to exceed 12 weeks every 7 years of employment for the purpose of allowing the individual to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth in cooperation with the Holy Spirit that may combine study, travel, relaxation, education and research.

It is important to note that a sabbatical is not just a reward for longevity of service, more importantly, it is an opportunity for those who have given consistently of themselves in teaching and ministry to refill their own hearts and resources in order that they might continue to lead the congregation within their area(s) of ministry and serve the Lord in their calling.

Pastoral staff should have the opportunity for renewal, to be re-energized and quickened to hear from God as they lead God's people. Freedom from regular ministry demands provided through a sabbatical leave is intended to facilitate a fresh encounter with God.

## Scope:

1. This recommendation includes all BCBC Pastors employed in a full-time position
2. A sabbatical is not to be used by a pastor as a means of severance. It's recommended the Pastor seeks to return for a minimum of one year following a sabbatical.
3. The church board should work with the Pastor in developing a sabbatical plan that will result in the Pastor returning rested and refilled.
4. The church board is responsible for the maintenance and health of the church while the Pastor is away, but the church board should not make any policy changes in the case of the Senior Pastor's absence.

## The Sabbatical Plan:

A sabbatical plan, including the rationale for the anticipated benefit to be derived from the requested leave, should be provided to the Board within six months prior to the requested leave period, and where possible, the plan should make provision for backfilling duties and maintaining full staffing levels. The sabbatical plan should then be approved by the Board and is contingent on fulfillment of both the aforementioned and the following criteria as well as the church's ability to accommodate the request (eg. Ministry staffing needs, financial capacity, provision of recent staff benefits such as education policies).

The duration of the sabbatical will depend on factors, including but not limited to, the ministry position, the action plan and previously granted educational or ministry benefits and the provisions of other leaves.

Full salary and benefits will be paid throughout the leave. Costs incurred for travel, accommodation and related expenses will not be covered under this policy unless negotiated before the sabbatical begins.

A Sabbatical leave is inclusive of a proportionate period of paid vacation depending on the length of the leave. For example, in the case of a four month leave, one month of that leave would be considered paid vacation.

In order to remain true to the intent of this recommendation, and in recognizing that full salary and benefits are received while on leave, outside paid ministry/work should not be engaged in except on a *'one off'* basis. Honoraria received, up to but not to exceed \$1000, would be acceptable.

Sometimes a Pastor may choose to complete part of their education during a sabbatical, such as write a thesis for a masters, or a doctoral dissertation, or take a

mission trip, etc. Sometimes these things can be restful. If, for example, a Pastor has had a large assignment outstanding, such as a thesis, it can be quite restful to get that assignment finished.

At the conclusion of the sabbatical leave, Pastors will provide a report on activities undertaken, including a synopsis of benefits derived.

The application for study and refreshment should follow the outline below and should be 2 to 4 pages in length. The information should include:

1. Name of applicant:
2. Staff position:
3. Years of service (start date to current date):
4. Last Study and refreshment leave taken (if any):
5. Brief description of previous leave and how it benefited you personally and the impact it had on your ministry (if applicable):
6. What form will your present leave take? Please breakdown the study and refreshment components including time frames:
  - Study Component:
  - Refreshment Component:
7. How is this leave going to affect your family both positively and negatively? (spouses' work, kid's school, financially, marriage etc.):
8. How do you foresee this will benefit your ministry?
9. What plans are in place to cover your ministry responsibilities while you are away? (please be specific)
10. What are anticipated costs of study component of your leave? (books, courses, travel for study portion)

The sabbatical request should include evidence of a trusted accountability partner willing to journey with the Pastor to assist in reaching predefined goals.

NOTE: If the leadership of the church would like to meet with a representative of the Church Health and Development Team in order to plan for a sabbatical leave or answer any questions, this can be arranged.