

*The Leadership Discipling Team Presents:*

# GOING ON SABBATICAL TOGETHER

***O sing to the Lord a new song.  
Psalm 96:1***

***So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,  
because on it God rested from all the work done in  
creation. Genesis 2:3***

*Sabbatical = any extended period of leave from one's  
customary work, especially for rest, to acquire new skills  
or training (dictionary.com)*

# **Six Really Good Reasons to Offer Sabbatical Leaves:**

## **1. Encouraging a longer pastorate/service**

It is very difficult for a congregation to realize long-term goals without long-term service on the part of its pastors, rostered leaders, and program staff persons. A sabbatical leave policy is one proven strategy for encouraging longer service to congregations. If you currently have a pastor, rostered person, or program staff person who is serving you well, adopting a sabbatical leave policy is one way to increase your chances for encouraging them to continue their ministry with you.

## **2. The nature of a spiritual leader**

Sometimes congregations lack a deep understanding of how one develops into a leader with spiritual depth. Spiritual deepening does not take place when one is consumed by a never-ending list of pastoral situations or programmatic needs. When we observe some of the spiritual giants of our age, such as Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Gerald May, or Billy Graham, we note one clear pattern. They all consciously arranged to have quality chunks of time to read, pray, keep a journal, study Scripture, and connect with other spiritual leaders—attending workshops, listening to sermons, or simply enjoying quality one on one conversation.

## **3. Personal/Professional development**

Ordained pastors, rostered leaders, and program staff are not only spiritual leaders, but in some cases, corporate leaders as well. An astounding array of skills is necessary in order to be an effective leader -- group processes; conflict resolution; parish administration; supervising, coaching, supporting, and evaluating staff members; public speaking; and pastoral counseling. Pastors, rostered leaders, and program staff also need to pay attention to their own physical, spritual and emotional health. Sabbatical leaves provide opportunities for rest, reflection, renewal, growth and study, which will assist leaders for the Church in finding support and resolve in all of these areas of life and ministry.

## **4. Preventing burnout**

Allowing pastors, rostered leaders, and program staff a "fire escape" from the unending demands of ministry is a way to ensure that they remain vital and healthy. It is very difficult for an exhausted, cynical, and disillusioned person to be an agent of the Gospel.

## **5. The paradox of congregational ministry**

Clergy and other professional leaders are constantly invited to overextend. Few can go to bed at night knowing they did everything they were "supposed" to do that day. Yet, when our leaders do overextend, they undermine one of the most important gifts they bring to their ministry -- vitality. A sabbatical provides time for clergy to take a break from the pressure to overextend and perhaps to establish new patterns for ministry and self care. For other rostered persons and program staff, many of these same concerns are the basis for providing sabbatical leaves.

## **6. Congregational self-sufficiency**

Congregations that become overly dependent on clergy and rostered leaders are clearly more vulnerable than those that have developed the capacity to manage the needs of ministry for several months at a time in the absence of their professional leader. Effective congregations exhibit a good balance between clergy and lay leadership. Granting a sabbatical leave is a great way for congregants to once again claim certain roles within a congregation that correspond with the gifts they have been given by God. When a pastor, rostered leader, or program staff person returns from sabbatical leave the congregation will also have a much better understanding of the ways the needs of the congregation are met on an ongoing basis and their gifts for ministry.

## **Sabbatical Leaves:** **Rationale and General Information**

**Definition:** A sabbatical leave is a period of extended leave away from a congregation which a pastor, rostered leader, or program staff person uses for intensive continuing education, for development of her or his leadership and pastoral skills, and for spiritual renewal.

**Purpose:** The purpose of a sabbatical leave is the strengthening and growth of a congregation's ministry by increasing the knowledge, skill, and leadership ability of its professional staff. Providing time away and financial support for education in this manner will provide the professional leaders of a congregation the opportunity to learn new ideas and directions for leadership. It will also provide opportunities for stimulating growth experiences and spiritual renewal for both the congregation and its professional leaders.

**Recommendation of the E.L.C.A.:** Many synods in the E.L.C.A., including the Sierra Pacific Synod, strongly recommend that when a pastor has been under Call for over seven years in a particular congregation, that he or she be granted a sabbatical leave. This recommendation is based on the observation that sabbatical leaves are a key component of effective and long-term pastorates. The Sierra Pacific Synod encourages congregations to include a sabbatical leave in every letter of call for pastors and other rostered leaders.

**Benefits for the Congregation:** Congregations naturally and directly benefit from any increase in the ability, enthusiasm, and/or knowledge on the part of their professional leaders. Moreover, a sabbatical leave can give recipients specific insights into strategies to grow and strengthen the congregation. It also provides the laity opportunities for discovering new gifts and growth in ministry.

**Benefit to the Pastor/Professional Leader:** Longer calls can sometimes lead to "burnout" on the part of pastors and other professional leaders. Often our professional leaders become so occupied with the daily tasks of parish ministry that they are left with little time to meet their need for enrichment and growth, both personally and professionally. In short, sabbatical leaves are often a critical factor in the vitality and effectiveness of longer pastorates (pastorates lasting seven years or longer).

**Some Common Misunderstandings:** A request for a sabbatical leave is not a sign that a pastor or other professional leader is planning to leave a congregation or is desirous of another Call. On the contrary, a congregation's support of its pastoral/professional leadership through the adoption of a sabbatical leave policy is often viewed as an encouragement to provide effective, vibrant ministry in the years that lie ahead. Another common misunderstanding is that a sabbatical leave is nothing more than an extended vacation. In addition to the classes and lectures attended, there is also time devoted to reading, studying, writing, renewal, and reflection during the sabbatical time (See Covenant Agreement).

**Parish Needs During a Sabbatical Leave:** All the pastoral/professional leadership needs of the congregation that arise during the course of a sabbatical would be fulfilled by an associate pastor and/or an interim pastor or other professional, depending on the staffing and other specific needs of the congregation. Additionally, another congregation's pastor can be called upon to provide assistance if needed.

**Approval Process for a Sabbatical Leave Policy:** The Mutual Ministry Committee of a congregation is usually the place where the discussion of a Sabbatical Leave Policy begins. If approved by the Mutual Ministry Committee, the Church Council would next hear the proposal. If a recommendation to adopt a Sabbatical Leave Policy is approved by the Church Council, it would then be forwarded to the congregation for approval at a Congregational Meeting.

**Proposal for a  
Sabbatical Leave Policy  
for \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church**

- Whereas, many synods in the E.L.C.A., including the Sierra Pacific Synod, strongly recommend that when a pastor, rostered person, or program staff person has been under call for over seven years to a congregation, that she or he be granted a twelve-week sabbatical leave, and,
- Whereas, congregations naturally and directly benefit from any increase in the ability, enthusiasm or knowledge on the part of their pastor, rostered leader, or program staff person, and,
- Whereas, a Sabbatical leave is a period of extended leave away from a congregation which a pastor, rostered leader, or program staff person uses for intensive continuing education, development of her or his leadership and/or pastoral skills, and spiritual renewal, and,
- Whereas, the purpose of a sabbatical leave is for the strengthening and growth of a congregation's ministry by increasing the knowledge, skill, and leadership ability of its pastoral and professional staff, as well as the ability of congregation leadership to assume new roles of leadership in the pastor's absence, therefore, be it
- Resolved, that the Congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church hereby establishes a "Sabbatical Leave Policy" for all pastors, rostered leaders, and program staff called to this ministry who have served \_\_\_\_\_ years or longer at \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran, and be it further
- Resolved, that the Congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran, through its Mutual Ministry Committee and Congregation Council, establish the terms and conditions of the Sabbatical Leave Policy and make such terms and conditions a part of each Letter of Call that is extended to pastors and rostered leaders who will serve this ministry.

# **Sabbatical Covenant**

(A specific description of the Sabbatical leave)

**Duration:** The proposed Sabbatical Leave would last for twelve weeks, beginning May 24, 1999, and concluding on August 16, 1999. Pastor Mark will be contributing two weeks of his own continuing education time toward this sabbatical leave. Therefore, the additional time away, which is being requested, is ten weeks.

**Schedule:** The Sabbatical Leave would be directed to the following continuing education/spiritual growth opportunities:

Study, Reading, and Reflection  
Clergy Development Institute, Estes Park, CO  
Holden Village, Lake Chelan, WA  
Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA  
Visitation to other congregations

*Study, Reading, and Reflection:* A part of the sabbatical will be spent reading five books during the sabbatical leave: "The Missional Church," "The Church's Bible," "How Your Church Family Works," "Generation to Generation," and "Discover Your Spiritual Type." Upon the completion of the reading of each book, Pastor Mark will write a brief report on how the book may apply to his ministry and on the insights he has gained from reading the book. These reports will be made available to the congregation at the conclusion of his sabbatical leave. Additionally, this time is to be used to reflect on the continuing education opportunities of which Pastor Mark will avail himself while on sabbatical leave. Finally, he will also use this time to reflect on his visits to other congregations and to discern from these visits how he will apply his learning to the needs of Zion's ministry.

*Clergy Development Institute:* The Alban Institute, a highly respected Continuing Education resource for clergy of all denominations, offers this unique ten day workshop where participants will learn the latest theories in church leadership and have an opportunity to develop a sense of one's own gifts and the need for spiritual disciplines. In particular, attention will be given to key components of effective long-term pastorates and the integration of the learning experience provided by the Institute for personal and professional growth.

*Holden Village:* This is a remote Lutheran retreat center in the central mountains of Washington. Professors, pastors, and lay people come from all over the world to join in the worship and educational life of Holden. There is an extensive library of books and tapes from nationally known authors and speakers who have visited Holden in the past. Time with Debbi, community building, faith renewal, and spiritual enrichment will be the focus of time spent at Holden Village.

*Graduate Theological Union:* Classes are offered throughout the summer at the "GTU" in Berkeley. Pastor Mark will enroll in two courses: "Bonhoffer on the Renewal of Christianity" and "The Luther Seminar," taught by Dr. Timothy Lull.

*Sundays:* Pastor Mark will spend every Sunday during his sabbatical leave lying around in bed, reading the funnies, and watching "Hour of Power" with Robert Schuller. OK, OK -- Pastor Mark will visit other congregations each Sunday for worship and reflect on the styles of worship used, ministries of hospitality, and opportunities for study.

## **Proposed Financial Cost**

During the time of his Sabbatical Leave, Pastor Mark would be paid his normal compensation. The following is a description of expenses that will be incurred during the sabbatical.

<b>Clergy Development Institute</b> - Tuition, Room and Board:	\$1,500.00
<b>Holden Village</b> - Tuition, Room and Board:	\$700.00
<b>Graduate Theological Union</b> - Tuition:	\$400.00
<b>Travel Expenses:</b>	<u>\$1,000.00</u>
<b>COSTS:</b>	<b><u>\$3,600.00</u></b>
<b>Grants and Allowances</b> - Lutheran Brotherhood GEM Grant	- \$600.00
Continuing Education Funds	- <u>\$500.00</u>
<b>TOTAL "UNFUNDED" COSTS:</b>	<b><u>\$2,500.00</u></b>

\* A designated fund may be established for these additional costs to which the members may contribute.

### **Sabbatical Leave Schedule**

May 24 - May 30	"Decompression" Time
May 31 - June 12	Travel time - Reading, Rest, Reflection
June 12 - June 20	Stockton - Family Time, Reading, Rest, Reflection
June 21 - June 25	GTU, Berkeley - "Bonhoffer on the Renewal of Christianity"
June 25 - July 5	Travel, Holden Village and Environs
July 6 - July 17	Clergy Development Institute, Colorado, Travel
July 17 - July 23	Stockton - Reading, Rest, Reflection
July 23 - August 1	Lake Tahoe - Family Time
August 2 - August 6	GTU, Berkeley - "The Luther Seminar"
August 7 - August 16	San Diego - Reading, Rest, Reflection – "Recompression" Time

## **Resources for Sabbatical Leave Planning:**

Print:

Bass, Dorothy. *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time*. Hoboken, N.J.: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Bullock, A. Richard and Bruesehoff, J. Richard. *Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning*. Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2000.

Dawn, Marva. *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1989.

Oswald, Roy. *Clergy Self-Care: Finding the Balance for Effective Ministry*. Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1991.

Oswald, Roy. *Why You Should Give Your Pastor a Sabbatical*. Video. Bethesda, Md: Alban Institute, 2001.

Sevier, Melissa Bane. *Journeying toward Renewal: A Spiritual Companion for Pastoral Sabbaticals*. Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2002.

Sevier, Melissa Bane. *The Need for Clergy Renewal*. Alban Weekly. Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2006. Available at:

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=2928&terms=sabbaticals>

Sorge, Sheldon W. *What Difference does a Pastoral Sabbatical Make?* Resources for American Christianity, 2009. Available at:

<http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/clergysabbatical.aspx?CLSID=d0036936-f6da-4d3d-a7e0-2aebc77d3fef>

Websites: General Information/resources for sabbaticals:

Alban Institute: [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)

Duke University: Resources for Sustaining Pastoral Excellence:

<http://www.divinity.duke.edu/programs/spe/articles/200509/resources-sabbath.html?printable=true> (borrowed from the Eastern North Dakota Synod, ELCA)

Grants: Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program: [www.clergyrenewal.org/](http://www.clergyrenewal.org/) (clergy only; currently, not CA; up to \$50,000)

Louisville Institute Grant for Pastoral Leaders:

<http://www.louisville-institute.org/Grants/programs/sgpldetail.aspx>

(ordained & lay in positions of pastoral leadership; \$10,000/ 8 wks & \$15,000/12 wks)