

Sabbatical Leave Policy and Guidelines for the Presbytery of Great Rivers

Approved by the Presbytery of Great Rivers August 19, 2025

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Sabbatical Policy Statement

The Presbytery of Great Rivers recommends to the sessions of its churches that Ministers of Word and Sacrament (MWS), Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE), and Certified Christian Educators (CCE)—serving full time or part time—ordinarily be granted a compensated sabbatical of three (3) months after six (6) years of continuous service within a specific ministry context. If agreed upon by the session and the minister, the sabbatical might be combined with study leave.

A sabbatical will enable the minister/educator to be renewed through such vital pursuits as continuing education, extended time spent in spiritual formation, and fresh mentoring by respected teachers. A sabbatical enables a minister/educator to return to the responsibilities of the parish with new energy, spiritual vision, and effectiveness.

While churches are not compelled to grant sabbatical time to their MWS, CRE, or CCE, if they do, all parties are bound by the Sabbatical Leave Guidelines below.

Sabbatical Leave Guidelines

A. Minister or Educator Responsibilities

1. Bring the sabbatical proposal before the session—at least in outline form—a minimum of six months before the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Secure the approval of the session for the sabbatical proposal and work out the necessary coverage of pastoral and pulpit responsibilities.
3. Assure the session of continued service to the church for at least one full year from the conclusion of the sabbatical.
4. Bring up to date all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the session before departing on a sabbatical.
5. Submit to Commission on Pastoral Leadership (PGRCPL@greatrivers.org) in writing the sabbatical timetable and a detailed written plan of study with clearly identified goals and expected outcomes for CPL's approval.
6. Upon return from the sabbatical, present an overview of the sabbatical experience to the session and the Commission on Pastoral Leadership.

B. Session Responsibilities

1. Receive “for approval” the minister’s proposal for a sabbatical, at least six (6) months in advance of the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Continue terms of call commitments to the minister during sabbatical leave.
3. Communicate to the congregation the importance and value to the church of a sabbatical.
4. Request a written overview of the sabbatical from the minister upon return.

C. Commission on Pastoral Leadership Responsibilities

1. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the minister.
2. Serve as mediator in any concerns of session, educator, or minister relative to the sabbatical.
3. Determine who will moderate the session in the minister’s absence.
4. Provide direction to MWS, CREs, and CCEs on funding sources for their sabbatical.