

## **SABBATICAL (MINISTRY RENEWAL LEAVE) POLICY FOR BENSON BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **DESCRIPTION:**

#### **What is a ministry renewal leave (sabbatical)?**

A ministry renewal leave is an extended time of unplugging from ministry responsibilities that allows a pastor to recharge their spiritual batteries and get new energy and focus for the next years of a church's ministry.

#### **What does the Bible say?**

The Scriptures teach God's plan for God's people to take time for rest and renewal:

1. God stopped God's work on the seventh day after creation and blessed the day of rest (Genesis 2:2).
2. God passed on the principle of stopping work when God established "Sabbath rest" (Exodus 20:8-11, Leviticus 23:3)
3. Jesus took time to get away from his daily ministry for spiritual refreshment: "But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray." (Luke 5:16)
4. Jesus invited his disciples to "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (Mark 6:31).
5. The Apostle Paul encouraged the New Testament churches to be a blessing to their pastors: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17).

#### **Why is a sabbatical leave important?**

1. The Gospel ministry is spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically demanding like few other occupations.
2. Without a rest and renewal, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual fatigue occurs.
3. What a ministry renewal leave is not:
  - A. It is not vacation: Unlike vacations, ministry renewal leaves involve a plan, a goal and accountability. Ministry renewal leaves should be taken in addition to vacation time.
  - B. It is not time away to pursue additional study: Theological education does not allow for spiritual, mental, and emotional renewal.
  - C. It is not an escape: A ministry renewal leave is not a way for a pastor to escape a troubled ministry, nor is it a time to search for a new place of ministry.

## **PROCEDURE**

**1. Term:** The duration of the ministry renewal leave is flexible depending on needs and objectives, with a minimum of one month, up to a maximum of three months. The ministry renewal leave will not affect vacation or Continuing Education time.

**2. Activities:** The activities, during ministry renewal leave, will be for the improvement of the physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of the ministerial staff member as well as the church.

**3. Request:** The ministerial staff member may request a ministry renewal leave, giving ample time for needed planning and education of the congregation. The request for ministry renewal leave and a written plan must be submitted to the minister's reporting committee and the Diaconate no less than four (4) months before it is to begin. Approval for the sabbatical request comes from those bodies.

**4. Status after ministry renewal leave:** It will be understood that the ministerial staff member is expected to continue in their position up to one year after their ministry renewal leave is completed, otherwise, the ministerial staff member may be expected to repay the church, part or all costs incurred for, and during, their ministry renewal leave.

**5. Plan:** Proposals for ministry renewal leaves shall be presented by the ministerial staff member to the church leadership and should include the following:

- A. Proposed date
- B. Plans/goals
- C. Activities/learning that will take place
- D. Outline of benefits for the ministerial staff member
- E. Outline of benefits for the church
- F. Detailed explanation of how the ministerial staff member's work will be carried out during their absence
- G. Cost to the church (if any)

**7. Finances:** Normal compensation will continue during the ministry renewal leave (salary, housing, medical insurance, staff development, expenses, and books). If additional expenses are to be incurred during the ministry renewal leave these must be approved by the church.

**8. Approval:** The ministry renewal leave will be approved by the church. They will consider these factors:

- A. Needs of the individual and/or church;
- B. Satisfactory provisions for carrying out the staff member's responsibilities during their absence. There should be no expectation that the minister on sabbatical return for any non-emergency reason during sabbatical leave.

**9. Reporting:** An analysis/report will be given to the church no more than two (2) months following the ministry renewal leave completion.