

## **ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 14**

### **Sabbatical Leave Policy\***

Heartland Presbytery recommends that the covenanting process between teaching elder and congregation include provision for a Sabbatical Leave. The typical arrangement of the sabbatical is three months after six years of service in a particular position. Planning and resources for funding must be considered (by the calling congregation), including a plan to set aside funds in advance and to explore such resources for funding as may be available through the presbytery, synod, General Assembly, or other sources.

#### **Rationale for a Sabbatical Leave**

Based upon the biblical concept of “Sabbath Day” or “Sabbath Year,” sabbatical leave is a time set apart from both vacation and study leave. This time may be utilized for professional development, spiritual renewal, and/or in-depth study. The benefits of a sabbatical may include the following:

- For the teaching elder
  - nurture of the body and soul;
  - time for fun and relaxation with family and friends;
  - increased spiritual vitality;
  - renewed commitment to ministry and the church;
  - improvement in one or more competencies;
  - enhanced job performance;
  - replenished energy stores;
  - personal growth;
  
- For the congregation
  - When properly timed, prepared for, and attention given to re-entry, teaching elders and congregations can expect a longer and more effective partnership together in ministry.
  - Congregations may benefit from opportunities to strengthen lay leadership. Without the normal relationships and patterns of reliance that the presence of a teaching elder can create, the congregation may recover their own sense of ministry to the church and to each other.

#### **The Proposal for a Sabbatical Leave**

Proposal for such a sabbatical leave would be designed by the teaching elder in consultation with the (session or sub-committee) and submitted in writing for session action no less than 6 months in advance of the proposed beginning of the sabbatical leave. The proposal should include:

1. listing of all pastoral services and duties to be covered during the sabbatical;
  
2. proposal for how all pastoral services and duties listed in #1 will be covered during the sabbatical;

3. method of reporting/communicating between the pastor and the congregation/session/sub-committee during the sabbatical;
4. method by which the teacher elder will re-enter the life of the congregation (i.e., reporting upon the sabbatical, re-evaluation of job description.)

It is strongly encouraged that the proposal not be finalized without consultation with the Commission on Ministry of the presbytery. Appropriate proposals will take into account the needs of the teaching elder, personally and professionally, as well as the needs of the congregation.

### **Expectations Related to a Sabbatical Leave**

It is expected that the teaching elder remain in service to that congregation a minimum of one year following a sabbatical leave. It is expected that the session actively join with the pastor in the process of orienting the congregation to the purpose, goals, and rationale for the sabbatical, and enlist the support of the congregation. As is the case with all teaching elder absences, it is expected that the session and congregation would be responsible for providing coverage for teaching elder duties during the absence, with assistance from the Commission on Ministry. Upon completion of the sabbatical, the teaching elder will share with the congregation details of the leave, including goals met. The teaching elder and the congregation should assess together the value and benefits of the leave for both the teaching elder and congregation. Additionally, upon return, the pastor and session/subcommittee should set aside time to re-evaluate the teaching elder's job description in light of the anticipated renewed sense of calling.

### **The Sabbatical Leave as Related to Vacation or Continuing Education**

The sabbatical is neither a substitute for, nor to be equated with, annual vacation or continuing education. The session and teaching elder may together agree for vacation or continuing education time to be taken as appended to the sabbatical leave.

\*This AP was developed in consultation with sabbatical policies from the Shenandoah Presbytery, Central Florida Presbytery, Salem Presbytery, and the Christian Reformed Church.