

Christ Lutheran Church in Pacific Beach

Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave Policy

I. Introduction: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America encourages congregations to allow sabbaticals for clergy and full-time associates in ministry. St Mark recalls Jesus telling his disciples to "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile," noting that "many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." (Mark 6:31). Life-long continuing education for rostered leaders is important for sustained vitality for ministry. Congregations of the ELCA have long been encouraged to provide time and financial assistance to enable pastors to maintain and improve their skills. From time to time leaders need extended time for study, personal growth, spiritual growth, reflection and renewal, without the demands of a regular schedule. The ELCA recommends sabbatical leave at regular intervals. Experience shows the congregation's ministry directly benefits from such study, growth, and renewal. All parties benefit. Throughout Holy Scripture accounts of sabbath are clearly set apart by rest, quiet places, and time for restoration. God gives the sabbath pattern as a time of renewal, a time to be reminded of whose we are and what we are called to do, a time of rest that refreshes us for life.

Therefore, for the good of our community, the council recommends this Rostered Leader Sabbatical Policy.

II. Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave Policy

A. Definition

A Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave is a time away from the Congregation. It is a time of release from normal pastoral duties in order that a Rostered Leader may rest, renew and revitalize through prayer, reflection, travel and/or study. The purpose of such a leave is to afford an opportunity for Rostered Leaders and the Congregation alike to grow in their respective ministries.

B. Eligibility

Only Rostered Leaders of Christ Lutheran Church in Pacific Beach (CLC) shall be eligible for the Rostered Leaders Sabbatical Leave Policy.

C. Prerequisites

In recognition that the Congregation fully appreciates the intense demands placed on Rostered Leaders, and the spiritual, mental and physical tolls exacted over the years, each Rostered Leader is encouraged to take a Sabbatical Leave after completing five (5) continuous years of ministry with CLC. By the mutual agreement of the Council and Rostered Leader, the Sabbatical Leave may be taken in the fifth year of ministry, or it may be deferred to a later year. Subsequent Sabbatical leaves are encouraged after an additional five (5) years of continuous ministry at CLC following the completion date of prior Sabbatical

Leave. Only one Rostered Leader will be on Sabbatical Leave at any time. Should two Rostered Leaders be eligible at the same time, the order in which the Sabbatical Leaves are taken will be determined by mutual agreement of the Rostered Leaders, subject to approval by the Church Council. Under exceptional circumstances (e.g. extended medical leave, under performance), the council may recommend postponement of Sabbatical Leave. Only one sabbatical leave will be granted by CLC per fiscal year. CLC Church Council shall take into consideration the financial and other impacts upon the congregation before approving the request for sabbatical leave from a Rostered Leader. If those impacts are deemed to be too burdensome for the congregation, a discussion with the Rostered Leader will be held to plan for when a sabbatical leave could be granted.

D. Duration of Sabbatical Leave

Sabbatical Leave will normally not exceed twelve (12) weeks in length, to be taken between Easter and Labor Day. With the approval of the Church Council, the Rostered Leader can extend the Sabbatical Leave up to two additional weeks by applying unused continuing education leave and/or vacation leave. Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave will afford Rostered Leaders ample opportunity for study, research, growth and travel. Variations of this policy may be made by the Church Council to take advantage of unique opportunities where circumstances warrant.

E. Congregational Expectations for the Rostered Leader

1. Notification and Scheduling. Unless the Church Council determines otherwise, the Rostered Leader shall (i) notify the church Council at least fifteen (15), but preferably eighteen (18), months prior to the anticipated start date of a Sabbatical Leave of his or her intent to apply for such leave and (ii) request the Church Council's approval thereof at least twelve (12) months prior to the actual start date of the requested Sabbatical Leave. At that latter time, the Rostered Leader shall submit a tentative overview to the Church Council of what he or she intends to do during the Sabbatical Leave. Six (6) months prior to actual departure, the Rostered Leader shall notify the Church Council of his or her definitive plans for the Sabbatical Leave. If the Sabbatical Leave is granted by the Church Council, the Pastor(s) and Church Council shall address any scheduling matters that are anticipated to arise during the course of the Sabbatical Leave so as to minimize the leave impacts upon the Congregation and maximize the benefit of the leave.

2. Desired Activities. Activities to be pursued during the Sabbatical Leave shall be at the Rostered Leader's reasonable discretion. It is the hope and desire of the Congregation that Rostered Leaders will seek spiritual, mental and physical renewal through combinations of prayer, reflection, rest, travel and/or study. A Sabbatical Leave is not an opportunity for a Rostered Leader to engage in alternative gainful employment, unless the Church Council otherwise agrees in writing.

3. Feedback. Within thirty (30) days of completion of a Sabbatical Leave, the Rostered Leader shall give a brief report to the Church Council of the Sabbatical Leave experience.

4. Return to Ministry. As a condition precedent to the granting of any such Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave, the Rostered Leader must agree that upon completion of the Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave, the Rostered Leader will continue to serve the Congregation for a period of not less than twelve (12) months following the conclusion of such leave, unless this requirement is waived by the Church Council, whenever it determines that the best interest of the congregation may be served thereby.

F. Rostered Leader's Expectations of the Congregation

1. Salary and Benefits. During the period of the Sabbatical Leave, the Rostered Leader's full salary and benefits, except for automobile expense reimbursement, will continue to be paid by the Congregation. This would include salary, housing allowance or use of parish house, benefit contributions, insurance, vacation and continuing education.

2. Payment of Related Expenses. To the extent a Rostered Leader utilizes continuing educational leave to extend a Sabbatical Leave, any regularly budgeted continuing education funds applicable to such educational leave may be used to defray the cost of continuing education which a Rostered Leader undertakes during such Sabbatical Leave. If a Rostered Leader does not extend the Sabbatical Leave, a Rostered Leader may alternatively combine continuing education leave with the twelve (12) weeks Sabbatical Leave by applying budgeted continuing education funds to defray costs of continuing education undertaken during the Sabbatical Leave. These expenses may include books, conference fees, retreat fees, enrollment fees at centers for education, and other expenses of a similar nature. The congregation encourages the Rostered Leader to submit grant applications to other organizations to assist with additional sabbatical expenses. The Rostered Leader may submit a proposed budget for consideration by Church Council to cover additional expenses if the grant application(s) is/are denied.

G. Coverage of Ministry to Congregation During Sabbatical Leave

The Rostered Leader(s) who is (are) not on a Sabbatical Leave shall have the primary responsibility of ministering to the Congregation during the leave period. It is the general expectation that pastoral care for the Congregation will be substantially available for the duration of any Sabbatical Leave, without significant interruption of pastoral absence. Accordingly, the remaining Rostered Leader(s) shall work with the Church Council to schedule vacation or other voluntary time off in such manner so as to achieve this expectation. During the period of the Sabbatical Leave, the remaining Rostered Leader(s) shall be entitled to receive the maximum car allowance reimbursement that is being paid by the Church to its rostered leaders. The Church Council in conjunction with the Pastor and the Synod Office shall make all the necessary arrangements to provide for the ministry to the Congregation during such Sabbatical Leave including, but not limited to, services provided by other staff, lay people, and the engagement of other rostered leaders if needed.

H. Congregational Support of Rostered Leader During Sabbatical Leave

As a supportive community, we recognize that the rostered leader on sabbatical is away from congregational responsibilities in order to be renewed, refreshed and revitalized. To that end, members will contact the Rostered Leader(s) who is (are) not on a Sabbatical Leave for all pastoral care during the leave period.

I. General Provisions

1. **General.** A Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave is not a benefit that accrues during the course of employment of a Rostered Leader. Rather, Sabbatical Leave for rostered leaders is a ministry of the whole congregation, a ministry that helps both the congregation and rostered leaders find rest and renewal and benefits the mission, ministry and vision of the whole Church, often in surprising and Spirit-led ways. The decision to grant such leave should be taken within the year following completion of five (5) continuous years of ministry with the Congregation, unless deferred to a later year with prior approval of the Church Council.
2. **Administration.** The Church Council shall have all reasonable and necessary authority and power to administer this Rostered Leader Sabbatical Leave Policy on behalf of the Congregation.
3. The Church Council should establish a Sabbatical reserve account and fund it each year, to provide for outside needed help in maintaining the full services of the church.
4. CLC is not under obligation to fund the Sabbatical in any way. However, CLC may choose to provide addition financial assistance with council approval.