

West Salem Foursquare Church  
**Sabbatical Leave Policy**

I. PURPOSE

To establish and define the sabbatical policy for West Salem Foursquare Church, henceforth, referred to as WSFC.

II. OVERVIEW

Definition:

A sabbatical is a period of leave for clergy of this church that will allow for personal renewal, formal or informal study, and recreation. It is a planned time, which should reflect a balance of physical rest, personal recreation, intellectual stimulation, spiritual renewal and time for family strengthening.

Historical Perspective:

The word sabbatical is derived from the word “Sabbath”. Sabbatical leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of a Sabbath Day and a Sabbath year for renewal. Historically, clergy have been given a sabbatical observing that, after a number of years of ministry, clergy became so weary from the cumulative effect of their pastoral duties and constant responsibility, that they needed a dedicated time for rest, recovery, renewal, and re-education.

Sabbatical Principles:

1. Giving support to the pastor through the sabbatical benefits the individual, the congregation, and the church at large. It is a time for reflection, perspective, and thanksgiving.
2. The time can open up new opportunities for church members to grow in service and be a blessing for the congregation and the church at large.
3. A pastor who practices good self-care remains healthier and may extend his/her life and ministry.
4. A sabbatical strengthens the pastoral home and reduces the vulnerability to inappropriate escapes.
5. The sabbatical is a time for renewed sensitivity to the Word of God and the working of the Holy Spirit. It is a season for new experiences and relationships, intellectual growth, decision-making, travel, and family time. It is an opportunity to receive a fresh touch from God.

## Sabbatical Guidelines

1. The sabbatical leave is an ongoing part of church policy and not a reaction to a crisis.
2. A sabbatical is not a reward for good work nor is it intended to be a “perk.” The sabbatical period is separate from the pastor’s yearly vacation time.
3. The Church Council should be apprised of what the dreams and aspirations are for the pastor and should be advised as to the potential benefits.
4. The sabbatical period is not a time to continue preaching, teaching, or continue to do normal ministry in the church. A firm understanding should be made that the pastor on sabbatical will not visit church property unless an extreme emergency exists, such as a funeral of a church member, or situation deemed outside the normal activities of the church.
5. The sabbatical shall be planned to include the entire family as much as possible. The family should also be included during the time of re-entry.

## III. ENTITLEMENT

### Senior Pastor

It shall be the policy at WSFC that the senior pastor will be entitled to a two (2) month sabbatical upon the completion of seven (7) years continuous and satisfactory service at WSFC. The senior pastor will be eligible for a subsequent sabbatical leave of up to three (3) months after every seven (7) additional years of satisfactory service. The Church Council will determine satisfactory service.

### Pastoral Staff

It shall be the policy at WSFC that associate pastors (including youth, children, etc.) will be entitled to a one (1) month sabbatical upon the completion of seven (7) years continuous and satisfactory service at WSFC. Associate pastors will be eligible for a subsequent sabbatical leave of up to two (2) months after every seven (7) additional years of satisfactory service. The Church Council will determine satisfactory service.

This policy will apply to long term part time paid pastoral staff as well as full-time pastoral staff.

## IV. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Salary and Benefits

The pastor’s full wages and benefits will continue for the duration of the sabbatical period. A pastor will not be compensated for unused sabbatical time, and sabbatical leave time will not accumulate. The pastor’s paycheck will be mailed to him or set up for direct deposit to eliminate the need for him to visit the church in order to receive it.

### Related Expenses

It may be desirable to assist in financial matters if the sabbatical involves significant expenses such as travel, conferences or care of the family. Such expenses would have to be approved by the Church Council.

### Pulpit Supply

It will be the pastor's responsibility to make the necessary arrangements for the coverage of the pulpit or other primary teaching/leading responsibilities during his/her absence. Funds for pulpit supply will be a part of the annual budget.

## V. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is unethical for pastors to use the sabbatical leave to explore other job options, petition, or apply for or become a candidate for other pastoral positions, or accept a new church position within a year after their return from sabbatical leave. It is equally important that WSFC not use the sabbatical time to review our relationship with the pastor.

## VI. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

### Advanced Planning

Advanced planning is a requirement when considering sabbatical leave. The pastor who is seeking sabbatical should bring a proposal to the Council not less than six (6) months before the intended commencement of the sabbatical. Other pastoral staff shall bring their written proposal first to the senior pastor following the same guidelines. The senior pastor will submit the proposal to the Council.

### Pending Responsibilities

The pastor must provide an outline of and any updates on all known responsibilities which may require coverage during his/her absence.

### Written Proposal

The proposal should include the following:

1. Expectations and the focus of the sabbatical.
2. Type of ministry-related activity planned for sabbatical.
3. Plans for physical rest, personal recreation, family responsibilities, intellectual stimulation, and spiritual renewal.
4. Strategy for coverage during the sabbatical that include preaching, teaching and all other routine and emergency duties.
5. Commitment by the pastor for continued service at the church.

The Church Council and the petitioning pastor shall agree to the final proposal.

#### Sabbatical Timetable

The applicant must submit a timetable and an outline of plans as accurately as may be determined. It is desirable that there be at least a three month gap between the acceptance of a sabbatical request and the implementation of it in order to allow for proper notification and communication with the congregation.

#### Summary of Sabbatical Experience

The applicant must indicate that he is aware that a summary of the sabbatical experience must be submitted in writing to the Council upon the conclusion of the absence.

#### Approval

The Council will have the authority to approve, modify, or reject the plan.

### VII. COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY

The Council will remain responsible for all financial matters in the church, and will be responsible for ministry commitments during the senior pastor's absence. The Council will also be responsible for the day-to-day decisions not specifically assigned to the Church Staff. All administrative requirements will remain in effect.

### VIII. STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

A Church staff member appointed by the senior pastor will keep a journal of events that have taken place during the sabbatical period. This will assist the senior pastor during the re-entry period to quickly get up to speed on the developments in the church while he has been away.

### IX. WSFC OWNERSHIP

#### Congregation

The sabbatical is an important event in the life of a pastor and the church. For it to be successful, the church must "own" the sabbatical. It is unhealthy when the sabbatical is thought of simply as something the congregation "gives" pastors to do with as they please. The leave should not be given begrudgingly. The sabbatical is a church program and must be funded as any other program of the church and be designated to benefit the congregation as well as to enrich the pastor's ministry.

Church Council

The Church Council will assist the pastor in planning the sabbatical, assist in the debriefing process, and coordinate a re-entry plan. The purpose of this plan is to update the pastor on developments and issues related to the church during his absence and to facilitate the gradual assumption of his full duties as pastor. The Church Council will be asked to mediate any situations that may arise regarding a lengthy absence of the senior pastor.

X. EFFECTIVE DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

This policy is effective this date and will remain in effect until revised or canceled by the Church Council.

WSFC Council Members:

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