

NCC's Pastoral Sabbatical Policy

1. Rationale:

According to God's Word, rest is an important part of the human experience. Mankind's first full day is a day of rest. A command to rest was written by God in His Ten Commandments. Later, God instructed the Israelite nation to take three additional rests. Namely, (1) rests in association with their religious holidays, (2) a rest every seventh year and (3) a rest every fiftieth year. On a number of occasions, Jesus took His disciples away from the crowds to rest. And as the author of Hebrews notes, "there still remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Let us be diligent to enter that rest." (Heb. 4:9,11).

Whereas, hard working Seventh-day Adventist pastors instruct others to keep God's weekly day of rest (Sabbath), they seldom experience this rest for themselves. Our church suffers the results of this lack of rest. For example, overworked pastors can too easily lack clarity of vision and purpose, they are more likely to inappropriately react in stressful situations, and too frequently experience professional "burn-out." Especially in today's high-stressed world, pastors need an extended time for rejuvenation. A sabbatical is a time to spend with family and for personal rest and enrichment.

2. Policy:

Pastors, who have served for ten years, with at least five years in this Conference, can apply for a sabbatical. This sabbatical shall be for three consecutive months, with full pay and benefits, and shall be separated by at least two months from any vacation time or continuing educational leaves. Thereafter, pastoral sabbaticals will be available after every seven additional years of continuous service. Pastors who comply with all Conference requests (e.g. completing their monthly reports on time, attending conference called meetings, etc.) will be considered first in regards to a sabbatical.

Pastors desiring a sabbatical, must apply at least six months in advance to the Conference Ministerial Director. During these six months, specific plans must be submitted outlining who will be responsible for various pastoral duties during the pastor's absence. These plans will first be approved by the local church board and then submitted to the Conference for final approval.

If the pastor requesting the sabbatical plans to take continuing education during this time, the costs will be covered in accordance to the existent continuing education policy.

3. Reintegration:

Following the sabbatical, the pastor must meet with the church board. During this meeting, the church leaders must report what happened of significance during the pastor's absence. Also, the pastor needs to report on what happened during his/her sabbatical as well as any insights gained from this experience. Within two weeks, a written report, listing at least those two items, must be submitted to the Conference Ministerial Department as well.