

## SABBATICAL LEAVES

\*Any Clerk of Session of a congregation granting a Sabbatical Leave to a pastor **must** submit this information in writing to COM six months in advance of the leave in order to ensure pastoral coverage is in place.

The Committee on Ministry recommends to churches and other ministries that Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and full-time Christian Educators be granted a compensated Sabbatical Leave of no less than two months after the completion of six continuous years in one ministry within the Presbytery of the Peaks.

Sabbatical Leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of renewal through the Sabbath day and Sabbath year. In the Sabbath year, the land was allowed to lie fallow to replenish itself. Scripture also abounds with illustrations of God's leaders (Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Paul, and Jesus) spending significant time in rest, solitude, and reflection for continuation of ministry. Jesus spent 40 days in preparation for his ministry and other times away in prayer and rest. Ministers bear the burdens, the anguish, the pain and hurt of their parishioners on a 24 hour basis. As a result, many, if not all, experience symptoms of emotional distress, stress related illnesses, and burnout adversely affecting the minister's personal, family, and parish life, and greatly diminishing effectiveness and personal well-being. Sabbatical Leave is time for the minister to refresh, nourish, and replenish body, mind and soul for ministry. It is a time of rest, travel, study, & re-creation, a time away from the responsibilities of pastoral ministry. A renewed and refreshed pastor would be expected to bring new energy and insight to the life of the congregation.

Sabbatical Leave is also for the congregation. It is an opportunity for the congregation to reflect on the whole nature and meaning of ministry and the place of the congregation in that ministry; to renew and strengthen congregational lay leadership; and to continue to grow in faith.

A minister or educator on sabbatical leave would receive compensation, including salary and benefits. While it is not vacation, vacation time and study leave may be attached to the sabbatical, as agreed. It is not a time for a minister or staff person to seek a new call. The minister or staff person would be expected to stay in the present position for at least a year after the sabbatical. The Session or other governing body and the minister or educator would work together to plan for the leave time, including purposes of the leave, interim arrangements, in consultation with the Committee on Ministry, division of responsibilities during the leave, and planning for re-entry, which may include sharing of learnings and benefits to future ministry together. Congregations are encouraged to set aside funds each year so that resources are available during the time of Sabbatical Leave.

Presbytery strongly encourages that a Sabbatical Leave be part of the initial Terms of Call for a minister or full-time educator beginning a new ministry within the Presbytery of the Peaks, in consultation with the Committee on Ministry. In the event the Sabbatical Leave was not part of

the initial terms of call, the minister or full-time educator and Session are urged to work with the Committee on Ministry of presbytery on a proposal for Sabbatical Leave, which would be a part of the subsequent Terms of Call to be approved by the congregation. The congregation should have at least six months notice prior to the beginning of a Sabbatical Leave.