

Ministries Department

Sabbatical / Study Leave

Context

The Ministries Department, at its meeting on December 3rd, 2018 approved a resolution from its Executive Committee to consider a distinction between Sabbatical Leave and Study Leave.

The Ministries Department believes that, as a break should be a requirement for all involved in ministry, the exact nature of that period should have more flexibility than that which is afforded by the Rules.

Sabbatical Leave

One author describes a *sabbatical* as, “a carefully planned period of time in which the individual is granted leave away from their normal responsibilities in order to spend an extended period of time in rest, renewal and refreshment.” This cessation of ministry is intended to provide physical rest, spiritual renewal, and overall refreshment. In the words of a sabbatical coach, “a sabbatical is an investment in an individual’s renewal.”

The word “sabbatical” comes from the Hebrew word *shabbat*, which means “to cease or rest.” In the Scriptures, Sabbath is observed after the six days of creation (Gen. 2:3), enshrined as a weekly day of rest and worship (Exod. 20:8), and prescribed as a year of release and debt forgiveness after seven years (Deut. 15). Jesus affirmed the importance of rest saying, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27-28) The Biblical example of Jesus’ own frequent withdrawal to a quiet place to meditate, pray and be renewed is a model for all involved in ministry. In Jesus’ ministry, the constant demands of people led him to step away on a regular basis.

In order to realise this, an opportunity should be provided for those involved in ministry in our Church, alongside constant encouragement, to establish a regular routine of Sabbath rest. This scheme does not preclude periods of rest / recovery under our Occupational Health procedures, or negate the authority of the General Secretary to authorise periods of leave if deemed appropriate.

1. Those involved in ministry should frame all their work with a view to ensuring a weekly pattern of labour and rest. Elders or line managers should ensure that sufficient time is given, and any appropriate training is provided to establish this as a responsible way of ‘doing ministry’.
2. An expected period of 6 weeks should be set aside every seven years for an extended Sabbatical period of rest, reflection, and refocusing.
3. The General Secretary should ensure that such periods are granted to those involved in ministry, and these should be ‘approved’ by the Ministries Department, and pastorates / steering groups informed. Approval will be based on submitting the application with the following information:

- a description of the desired sabbatical timetable
 - the dates selected for the sabbatical
 - a budget outlining sabbatical costs for things like: travel, retreats , counselling etc..
4. An opportunity to present an oral or written reflection will be afforded by the Ministries department to those who have taken such a Sabbatical period.
 5. The Ministries Department will consult with Presbyteries to ensure that the costs of making alternative arrangements for preaching etc are in place. While we would hope that there are sufficient leadership resources in people in pastorates, the Ministries Department, in conjunction with the Presbytery will meet 'reasonable' costs for Sunday ministry up to £100 per Sunday during the Sabbatical period.

Study Break

All those involved in ministry are called to mission and ministry in the context in which they serve. They are called to grow in God themselves and to enable those amongst whom they minister to grow in God. They have a responsibility to teach and to preach the Gospel. Their flourishing, both in terms of their personal and professional well-being, and in terms of ministerial outcomes, is crucial for the outworking of this calling. To ensure, therefore, that it is nurtured, the Church should offer periods of Study Leave which can stimulate fresh perspectives in ministry and renew a sense of vocation, health and wholeness. During these periods, it is expected that the individual will step back completely from their usual ministry or role.

This will usually be a project exploring a topic to resource the individual's ministry. For example, it might be of a more theological nature – an aspect of church history or doctrine and its relevance today, or of a more practical, applied nature such as preaching, faith development, transforming church conflict, or managing change. It might be the study of a biblical theme, or a look at an aspect of mission such as rural ministry, ministry with young people, chaplaincy, pioneer ministry. It might include going on a course, theological reading, writing and reflection, visits to relevant places and conversations with practitioners. It is expected that the Academic Director will supervise all study leave, and he will encourage the individual in their thinking and reflections on their learning, recommend reading if appropriate, and support and hold them to what they agreed to do during the time.

In order to realise this, an opportunity should be provided by the Candidates and Training Department to enable those involved in ministry in our Church to take 'Study Leave'.

1. The Candidates and Training Department should provide an opportunity for those involved in ministry in our Church, to take a two week period of Study Leave once every two years, and to take an extended period of three months study leave every ten years.
2. Individuals will not be permitted to take two weeks of Study Leave within 18 months of Sabbatical Leave, and will not be permitted to take 3 months of Study Leave within 3 years of Sabbatical Leave.
3. Applications for Study Leave should be directed to the Secretary of the Candidates and Training Department for the Department's approval. The Department should

inform the Ministries Department to ensure that pastorates / line managers are aware of applications.

4. An application should only be submitted following consultation and an agreed framework of study with the Academic Director. This will include the following information:
 - a description of the desired Study Leave aims
 - the dates selected for the Study Leave
 - a budget outlining costs for things like: travel, courses, books etc..
5. Individuals taking a short Study Leave will meet with the Academic Director at the end of the two weeks, and individuals taking an extended Study Leave will submit a short (max 500 words) summary of the outcomes of the Study Leave to the Candidates and Training Department. They may also be invited to prepare a presentation / training session based on their study.
6. The financial implications of Study Leave should be defrayed by the Candidates and Training Department in the same way as they are defrayed by the Ministries Department in the case of Sabbatical Leave. In the case of short Study Leave, expenses should be limited to a maximum of £500, and in the case of extended Study Leave, costs should be limited to £2,500.
7. The Candidates and Training Department will consult with Presbyteries to ensure that the costs of making alternative arrangements for preaching etc are in place. While we would hope that there are sufficient leadership resources in people in pastorates, the Candidates and Training Department, in conjunction with the Presbytery will meet 'reasonable' costs for Sunday ministry up to £100 per Sunday during any Study Break period.