

**CARING FOR PASTORS
AN EDUCATIONAL LEAVE PROGRAM
FOR PASTORS IN ALBANY PRESBYTERY
(APPROVED 6/14/05)**

Introduction

An effective educational leave program enables pastors to be renewed through extended time spent in study, spiritual formation, and mentoring in order to maintain and improve pastoral skills. Working closely together through annual conversations, all pastors and church sessions are strongly encouraged to develop appropriate educational leave programs. Three types of leave as defined below are typically included in an educational leave program. Guidelines and examples of how the various types of leave might be combined in a program along with the responsibilities of pastors, church sessions, and the Committee on Ministry (COM) in the development and implementation of a program are provided below.

Definitions

Continuing Education Leave – short-term (1 or 2 weeks) annual opportunities for advanced study and/or spiritual development to help a pastor and the congregation keep abreast of current developments and sharpen skills for the benefit of the congregation.

Scholastic Leave – 1-month or longer courses of study at a recognized academic institution or its equivalent for professional growth.

Sabbatical Leave – 3-month or longer courses of study (*e.g. work towards a degree*) or extended time spent in spiritual formation, perhaps being mentored by respected teacher(s), in order to enable a pastor to return to parish responsibilities with new energy, spiritual vision, and effectiveness.

Guidelines

The following are guidelines intended to help pastors and church sessions develop effective educational leave programs for their unique circumstances. However, these are only guidelines, and appropriate exceptions may be made if the necessary arrangements are made among the pastor, the church session, and the COM acting on behalf of the Presbytery.

1. A pastor shall be eligible for 2 weeks of compensated leave annually for continuing education. Continuing Education Leave time normally should not be accumulated and carried forward from year to year, because one of its chief values is to encourage pastors to use regular, short-term study opportunities (see Example **A** below). An exception to this guideline may be considered if a pastor contemplates taking a Sabbatical Leave during or after the sixth year of service in a church (see Examples **F** and **G**).
2. After having served a church for 3 years, a pastor shall be eligible for compensated Scholastic Leave (see Examples **B** through **E**). If desired, Scholastic Leaves may be accumulated and combined into a Sabbatical Leave during or after the sixth years of service (see Examples **F** and **G**).
3. A Doctor of Ministry program may be considered as the equivalent of three consecutive 1-month Scholastic Leaves (1 month per year) and should not be entered until after 3 years of service in a church (see Example **D**).
4. The total amount of leave (continuing education, scholastic, and sabbatical) used during a 6-year period should not normally exceed 18 weeks. Typically the 6-year cycles repeat with no carry-over, although it might be appropriate to carry over time if a Sabbatical Leave is postponed past Year 6, perhaps until Year 7, 8, or 9.

Educational Leave Program Examples

The following are several examples of how the various types of leave might be combined within a 6-year period. The number below each year is the number of weeks of educational leave taken in that year. **Bold** numbers indicate Scholastic Leaves, and **Underlined Bold** numbers indicate Sabbatical Leaves.

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
A	2	2	2	2	2	2	12 weeks
B	2	2	2	4	2	2	14 weeks
C	2	2	2	4	2	4	16 weeks
D	2	2	2	4	4	4	18 weeks
E	2	2	2	2	8	2	18 weeks
F	0	2	1	2	0	<u>13</u>	18 weeks
G	1	1	1	1	1	<u>13</u>	18 weeks

Responsibilities

Pastor:

1. Present proposed plan before the church session – at least in outline form – a minimum of 6 months before intended commencement of a Scholastic or a Sabbatical Leave.
2. Secure church session's approval of plan and work out necessary coverage for pastoral responsibilities in consultation with the session.
3. Assure church session of continued service to the church for at least 1 year after the conclusion of a Scholastic or a Sabbatical Leave.
4. Bring up to date all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the session before departing on a Scholastic or Sabbatical Leave.
5. Submit to COM in writing the proposed timetable and usage plan.
6. Upon return, present an overview of the Scholastic or Sabbatical leave experience to the session and the COM.

Session:

1. Receive for approval the pastor's proposed plan.
2. Continue terms of call commitments to the pastor during Continuing Education, Scholastic, and Sabbatical Leaves.
3. Communicate to the congregation the importance and value to the church of Continuing Education, Scholastic, and Sabbatical Leaves.
4. Request a written overview of Scholastic and Sabbatical Leaves from the pastor upon return.

COM:

1. Review and approve proposed timetable and usage plan submitted by a pastor for all Scholastic and Sabbatical Leaves. COM approvals are not required for Continuing Education Leaves.
2. Serve as mediator in any concerns of a session or pastor relative to a proposed timetable and/or usage plan, if necessary.
3. Determine who will moderate the session on the pastor's absence, if necessary.
4. Facilitate sharing of learnings from Scholastic and Sabbatical Leaves by pastors within presbytery and among congregations.

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COM 9.1.05