



# MUSKINGUM VALLEY PRESBYTERY

Journeying with Jesus to touch the World!

## GUIDELINES FOR PASTOR SABBATICAL LEAVE

The Committee on Ministry of Muskingum Valley Presbytery recognizes that church professionals and congregations can benefit when full-time pastors are granted a sabbatical leave. Some of the reasons to grant such leaves include: the grind of longer pastorates, the stresses of church work, and the opportunity to take advantage of new knowledge and approaches to ministry that may have developed since a pastorate began. These opportunities may require a longer period of study than the normal two weeks of study leave. The renewing power of sabbatical time allows for replenishment, revitalization, gaining of new ministry skills, new vision, and time for reflection and refreshment of the soul. Ordinarily sabbatical leave involves going out of the area and not maintaining weekly contact with the church.

The church benefits as well. It receives back a pastor who is revived and ready for further faithful service to the church. This can be a time when the church is also on sabbatical and experiences new leadership and new possibilities. The session may desire to include annual funding in the operating budget to be set aside over a number of years to pay for additional staff support during the sabbatical leave. Grant money may be available to pastor or church through organizations such as Lilly Endowment, Louisville Institute, *the Board of Pensions*, etc. to help pay expenses. With adequate planning the pastor and the church can smoothly navigate this period and ready themselves for the future plans that God has for them.

Credit for time served toward a sabbatical in one church does not transfer to a new position.

## SAMPLE CHURCH SABBATICAL AGREEMENT

1. A pastor is eligible to take a sabbatical leave after serving five to eight years in his/her position at \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church and ministers who are granted such time are ordinarily expected to serve at that church for at least one year following the sabbatical.
2. The pastor should submit a written request at least nine months prior to taking the leave indicating the foreseen benefits to the minister and to the church, and outline the program or plan of activity. S/he and the session (or a subgroup) should develop a clear plan about when the sabbatical will be taken, what the pastor will do with the time, and expectations of sharing a report upon his/her return.
3. At least three months prior to the sabbatical leave a detailed plan for study and renewal should be presented for approval by the Session.
4. The sabbatical period granted may be from two to four months in length and includes his/her available continuing education time. Annual vacation time is additional and may immediately precede and/or follow the sabbatical leave.
5. All costs to the pastor for the sabbatical leave will be borne by the pastor, but he/she may apply his/her study allowances to the cost. Expenses for substitute services of pastoral duties are not the responsibility of the pastor, but will be paid by the church.
6. Full compensation will be paid during the sabbatical leave, minus travel allowance.
7. Session will arrange to supply the pulpit and to provide for the handling of any emergencies. Committee on Ministry may be asked to assist in this planning.
8. Within a month of returning, the pastor is expected to submit a written report to the Session, providing an overview of the sabbatical experience, ways the purposes of the sabbatical have been fulfilled, and how his/her learning will be applied.
9. A pastor who takes a sabbatical leave is eligible to apply for another after serving 5-8 years.