



## **OLD NORTH CHURCH - PASTORAL SABBATICALS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Personnel Committee at Old North Church outlines the issues of Sabbaticals under the following headings: ***Biblical Foundation, Definition, Need, Sabbatical Policy.***

### **THE SABBATICAL PRINCIPLE: BIBLICAL FOUNDATION**

*Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.* (Ex. 20:8-11)

The Hebrew word “Sabbath” means to “cease or rest”. Its biblical context is the Genesis account of creation. The Sabbath is the seventh day in which “He (God) rested (or ceased) from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:3 NIV). From the beginning God gave the command to rest. David wrote “He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul” (Ps. 23:2—3 NAS). A literal translation of “quiet water” is “waters of rest”.

In addition to the Sabbath being a rest, it is to be devoted to God – “Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God holy.” (Ex. 20:9) This passage not only reminds us that we rest in the work that the Lord has done – a prophetic reminder of the work done at the cross, in which we rest – no work required, but it also reminds us to dedicate the time to the one who did the work – keep it holy. We do not merely rest, but we devote that time to a reflection of God’s character, His calling in our lives, and His instruction.

Additionally, after a prolonged period of ministry Jesus called his disciples to “come apart and rest”. Not only did they rest, but the disciples had a time of reflection and additional learning as they spent time with the Lord. They were renewed by His words and His work, ready once more to take His message to the world.

### **DEFINITION**

A sabbatical is an opportunity for a pastor to step away for a period of time, in order to renew vision and hope, as well as life and soul searching. The Pastoral Sabbatical is intended to provide pastoral staffs that have served for an extended period at Old North Church, a gift of time away from normal responsibilities and routines, to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth in cooperation with the Holy Spirit that may include study, education, research and travel related to Old North ministries.

At Old North Church, a sabbatical is not narrowly defined as relating to academic pursuit, nor is it in the context of a rigid length of time. For the purpose of Old North Church, a Sabbatical should extend over a range of time usually between one and three months; however, the time period will be determined on an individual basis for each pastor as determined by the elders of the church for the purpose of providing an extended rest as well as for life and soul searching.

The sabbatical is an opportunity for those who have given consistently of themselves in teaching and ministry to refill their own hearts and resources in order that they might continue to lead the congregation and serve the Lord in this calling.

## **NEED**

### **Renewal**

A sabbatical is first of all pro-active in that it is a preventative measure that in some forms is to be a part of ongoing renewal and health for people in ministry. A sabbatical is viewed as a nourishing pilgrimage, and provides an opportunity for sharpening of focus before a crisis situation develops. It does not guarantee that personal or ministry crisis will not happen, but that when it does, there is a strength and health that will help the pastor deal with these issues more clearly and wisely.

### **Restoration**

The church recognizes that one of the most pressing issues among pastors is that of “*burnout*”. While there is a great deal of misconception, generalization and abuse of this term, the fact remains that it is a real issue to be dealt with. It is an area that cannot be ignored. The pressures and expectations of pastoral ministry are intense and often destructive. It is the belief of at Old North Church that Sabbaticals will help facilitate long-term ministry for its Pastors.

## **SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY**

### **Purpose & Parameters**

The sabbatical is intended to allow the individual to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth that may combine study, education, research and travel related to Old North ministries. It is a time to refill their own lives and calling after having given of themselves consistently so they might continue to be effective in service to the Lord and their constituents. It is not an opportunity to work another job during sabbatical to supplement personal income. Personal renewal, refilling inner resources is the focus.

### **Eligibility**

A sabbatical will be considered for a member of the Old North pastoral staff who has served minimum of (6) years of service, is in good standing according to the annual pastoral staff evaluation process and has completed a Sabbatical Leave Application Form. The application will be reviewed by the elders of the Old North Church who will issue all approvals for sabbaticals.

Upon returning from the sabbatical, the pastor is required to serve a minimum of (1) one year of service or remunerate the church for any and all expenses paid for by the church for such sabbatical leave. Furthermore, the church is not required to compensate any pastor who is eligible, but has not taken or been granted a sabbatical and leaves the church willingly or unwillingly, for any reason whatsoever.

### **Limitations**

It is understood that certain limitations may prevent the granting of a sabbatical leave for a pastor even though the pastor may be eligible for such leave. These limitations include, but are not limited to the following: financing, budget constraints, adequate substitution of responsibilities, church resources, timing and security.

### **Financing:**

Normal salary and benefits will be provided during a sabbatical leave providing the church is able to substitute existing human resources within the church to assume day to day responsibilities. In the event

an interim pastor is required, an accrual of wages is required for the church budget and a decision will be made whether or not the church can provide the normal salary and benefits based on the availability of funds in the church budget. The selection of the interim pastor should be a mutual agreement between the senior pastor, the elders and Church Board.

The church may elect to set aside funds in a Sabbatical Reserve fund leading up to future sabbaticals and will include a line item during the fiscal years that the sabbatical is/are implemented. The amount of funding provided for a sabbatical leave and the manner in which the sabbatical is funded will of course be determined by Old North Church at its sole discretion. The pastor must serve a minimum of (1) one year of service upon completing his/her sabbatical; otherwise, the Church may, at its sole discretion, require reimbursement for all W2 wages, benefits and other out of pocket expenses that may have occurred during the leave.

### **Length of Sabbatical**

Sabbaticals normally extend over a range of time usually between (1) one and (3) three months; however for the intended purpose at Old North, a time period will be determined on an individual basis for each pastor as determined by the elders of the church for the purpose of providing a personal renewal and spiritual growth. A Sabbatical leave will not impact vacation time; thus an individual does not lose vacation days in the same year of the Sabbatical. In addition, the current policy for personal and/or sick days will still apply.

### **Scheduling & Priorities**

The Church will typically grant no more than one sabbatical leave per year. If more than one pastor requests a sabbatical leave in a given year, the elders will determine the church's ability to grant multiple requests in a given year based on financing, budget constraints, availability of adequate substitution of responsibilities, church resources, timing and security. If the determination is made that only one (1) pastor be granted a sabbatical in a given year, the decision as to who will be granted the leave will be based on the decision of the Elders as they determine the needs of the Old North Church.

### **Accountabilities**

A pastor is required to complete a Sabbatical Leave Application Form for review and approval by the elders of the Church. A pastor who wishes to apply for a sabbatical leave must provide a minimum of (6) six months advanced notice to allow for proper planning required to substitute pastoral responsibilities.

The Elders will, at their sole discretion, accept or deny any application based on the eligibility requirements listed above and financing, budget constraints, adequate substitution of responsibilities, church resources, timing and security. The application approval process requires acceptance by a minimum two thirds vote from the elders of the Church.

Upon returning from a sabbatical, the pastor is required to submit a written report regarding the experience and how this sabbatical will impact the pastor's goals and ministry at the Old North Church.