

SABBATICAL POLICY PRESBYTERY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

RATIONALE:

Clergy burnout, short-term pastorates, and stressful relationships between pastors and their congregations are becoming significant problems for churches within our denomination and within the church at large. Recent studies have shown that one positive way to alleviate these problems is for churches to provide pastors with a sabbatical leave after several years of continuing service to the congregation. This sabbatical leave allows the pastor an extended time for reflection, relaxation, research, study, and an opportunity to seek out spiritual enrichment that is not possible during the few weeks of the year normally allowed for vacation or study leave. These studies have also shown that following such a sabbatical leave, pastors return to their congregations refreshed and with a renewed enthusiasm for their ministry. The result of this renewed energy is that pastors tend to remain at the same church for a longer period of time and have a more meaningful ministry with their congregations. Thus, we believe that it is far more beneficial for a church to offer its pastor a sabbatical leave after several years of continuous service than it is for the church to seek a new pastor every five or six years.

POLICY:

After a Pastor or Associate Pastor has completed his or her sixth year of service with the same congregation, the Committee on Ministry shall initiate conversation between the Pastor or Associate Pastor and the Session of the church in order to make the necessary arrangements for a sabbatical leave of not less than three (3) months (inclusive of any annual continuing education leave, but exclusive of vacation leave) to be concluded within two years of the initial conversation between the COM and the Session. The design of the sabbatical leave will be determined by the Pastor or Associate Pastor in consultation with the COM or the executive Presbyter, and must be approved by the Session.

Compensation for the Pastor or Associate Pastor during the sabbatical leave will continue according to the annual Terms of Call.

It will be normally expected that the pastor who has taken a sabbatical shall return to the church and serve at least one year before accepting a call to another church.