Diocesan Sabbatical Policy

On the seventh day of creation, God rested. God's commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy," is a call to His people to rest with and in Him. A periodic time of sabbatical leave, traditionally every seven years, is a means for clergy to rest from their labors as they disconnect and step away from their pastoral responsibilities and duties.

The Diocese regards sabbaticals for full-time clergy as a generous gift from a congregation to their priest. Congregations and clergy should regard a sabbatical as an important part of the priest's continuing personal and vocational growth. Sabbaticals provide time and space for renewal and refreshment in body, mind, and spirit. The time away allows clergy to gain new knowledge and new skills for ministry and to sharpen existing skills.

While the benefits to their priest are clear, congregations often experience renewal during a sabbatical, as the ministry of the laity is enhanced. Also, a rested and renewed priest brings new creativity and energy to his/her vocation, as well as new learning. With careful planning and good communication, clergy sabbatical leave can become a source of renewal for the whole congregation.

Eligibility
A full-time priest becomes eligible for a sabbatical leave when these conditions have been met:

1. The priest has served at least seven (7) full years in ordained ministry within the Diocese; AND
2. The priest has served at least five (5) full years with the same congregation.

Note: A priest who "forgoes" a sabbatical to take a call elsewhere in the Diocese after at least five (5) years of service, may request provision be made for sabbatical leave by the new congregation serving less than the five (5) years. This arrangement should be made in the letter of agreement for the call.

Financing
Sabbaticals are an expense to the congregation, but with careful planning well in advance (minimum of a year), the burden can be light, even as the benefit is great. Churches are encouraged to make financial provisions in their annual budget.

- The congregation will provide the priest with his/her normal pay and benefits during the sabbatical.
- The congregation will provide funding for the sabbatical, which includes the expense of supply clergy during their priest's time away.
- As with each year's continuing education for clergy, the Continuing Education Committee will provide a grant of up to $1,500 in support of the educational portion of the sabbatical, upon the priest's completion of the application requirements.
- The priest is encouraged to help off-set some of the cost for the sabbatical by applying for grants.

Implementation
Clergy who are eligible for a sabbatical are encouraged to follow the diocesan Clergy Sabbatical Guidelines to plan and implement their sabbatical.

When a congregation is preparing to call a new rector (or to receive a new vicar), the Bishop's Office will provide guidance to that congregation on making financial provision for a sabbatical. Also, when a priest begins planning for a sabbatical, the Bishop's Office is available to assist.

Adopted by the Executive Board: November 19, 2020