

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Sabbatical Plan Guidelines

We highly recommend the Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning by Bullock and Bruesehoff (Alban). The person planning a sabbatical should provide the COM with a written plan and meet with the team to discuss those plans prior to COM approving them. The purpose of this process and set of guidelines is to help the sabbatical pastor find a real focus, understand that it's okay for the focus to change and still be successful, and also realize they will come back and share two or three months afterwards. Those things help to keep the sabbatical focused and intentional and knowing there will be a time to "report in" after helps folks consciously to process their time away.

In reviewing and approving your plans, COM looks specifically for:

- Well planned and thought out, clearly defined purpose/s or goal/s
- A balance of down-time and sabbatical purpose of clergy renewal
- Thought about how the fruits of your time away will be shared with the congregation on your return

We strongly suggest:

- Journal keeping
- A "guide" or mentor as one to whom the person can be accountable for keeping on or switching tracks ... someone to help maintain focus, serve as a midcourse correction aid, and to theologically reflect with you on the experience.

We look hard at what preparation has been done for the church during this time, especially if the sabbatical is for a solo pastor or head of staff:

- Have you planned for coverage for preaching/pastoral care/other responsibilities?
- Have you thought through issues of remuneration? If so, this needs COM approval at a certain point.
- How have the session and the church been prepared? Are they on board with your plans and if not, how will that happen?
- Have guidelines been set up to keep the sabbatical time intact if the person spends some time at home?
- Have you planned communications with the congregation (letters/newsletter articles/etc.) re: the purpose of the sabbatical for a pastor?
- Have the pastor and session given thought to how the congregation can best use this time for their own sabbatical study?
- Have they discussed re-entry issues for both pastor and congregation?
- Has there been any discussion of a "sending off" and welcome back" (to serve both the pastor and congregation?)

Upon your return we ask you to come to COM and give an oral and written evaluation of the sabbatical, including:

- o Did you find renewal in the time away? How?
- o What "worked?" What didn't?
- o What effect has the sabbatical time had on you, your walk with God, and your ministry?
- o How about the congregation's sabbatical experience -- was it helpful?

We ask you to track what books you read and ones you might strongly recommend to both