

Sabbaticals Guidelines for Stipendiary Clergy

The purpose of a sabbatical

A sabbatical is an expression of Shabbat. It is an extended period of time which is neither work nor holiday, an opportunity to live differently, to study and explore, to look again at ministry, work and lifestyle, to let God speak to us afresh.

People who have taken a sabbatical usually return considerably refreshed, re-energised and re-envisioned for their work.

Eligibility

Stipendiary clergy are eligible to apply for a sabbatical of up to three months (possibly augmented by a week or two of annual leave) if:

- they have been ordained for at least ten years;
- it is at least seven years since any previous sabbatical;
- they have been in their current post for at least three years;
- they are at least one year from retirement.

The shape of a sabbatical

A sabbatical plan should include significant elements of three transforming aspects:



- **Personal and vocational renewal** – time and space to reconnect deeply with God, to refresh our spiritual roots, to renew our calling in ministry, to consider markers for the future. One or more retreats are likely to be built into the sabbatical; we particularly recommend a retreat at the beginning to mark the transition into Shabbat.

- **Ministry-related study and experience** – time and space to equip you further in ministry, making the most of opportunities that you may not find in ordinary work time. It could relate to your present role, to a parallel interest, or something you'd like to explore with future ministry in mind. For example: a self-determined research project, a short study course, or a ministry placement in an unfamiliar environment.
- **Recreation and play** – time and space simply to do what brings you well-being, joy, fulfilment, with no immediate link or outcome in your ministry; especially perhaps something you wouldn't be able to consider in the normal pattern of work and life. For example: cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats, or a language course in St Petersburg with the opportunity for significant time in the art galleries.

In the best sabbaticals these are likely to overlap and reinforce each other: for example, a cycling challenge could link key sites of Celtic Christianity as part of a study project, and include a retreat at one of them; the visit to St Petersburg could be part of a sabbatical exploration of the Prodigal Son (through Rembrandt's painting).

Process

1. The possibility of a sabbatical may be raised first in the context of your Ministry Development Review. Alternatively, clergy may wish to contact their Suffragan Bishop directly in the first instance. Whatever the genesis, the first full step in the process must be consultation with and provisional agreement from your Suffragan Bishop. **It is the suffragan bishop, who gives permission to proceed.**
2. Having received this permission, Clergy then work with the CMD Officer (Rev Tim Evans) to shape a meaningful and realistic sabbatical plan that should include all three elements above, and to work through practical implications for the parish and deanery. A pro-forma for the sabbatical proposal can be found in Appendix 1.
3. When the plan is sufficiently in place, the CMD Officer will liaise with the suffragan bishop to get final approval and for the sabbatical grant to be authorised.
4. After the sabbatical, clergy meet again with the CMD Officer to debrief and evaluate the time. They are asked to write a brief report for the records and so that good ideas are made available to others.

Although sabbaticals have been planned in less time, you should allow 12-18 months for plans to develop and take shape and also to make practical arrangements for funding, the parish or deanery, etc.

Funding

A sabbatical grant of £500 is available for ten clergy each year. In addition, any unused CMD allocation can be used for specific retreats, courses etc. Currently the annual CMD allowance is £240.

A small number of bursaries are awarded by Ecclesiastical Insurance Group for clergy sabbaticals, usually for more ambitious projects with a well-presented rationale. They have to be applied for by September in the year before the sabbatical is due.

There are very few other sources of possible grant-funding. In practice, most clergy draw on their own funds for an opportunity which may arise only once in the course of their ministry. The CMD Officer has a list of possible additional sources of funds.

Sabbatical elements – some recent examples

- Visiting and/or working alongside mission partners or projects (Namibia, India etc.)
- A week 's solitude on Bardsey Island
- A 30-day Ignatian Retreat
- Visiting Messy Church projects in the UK
- Peace studies in Israel / Palestine
- A 2-3 day course on watercolour or landscape photography
- Learning Welsh language – a one-week course
- Short study courses at e.g. St John's Nottingham, Sarum College, St George's House
- Private research / writing e.g. at Gladstone Library, St Deiniol's
- Living and working with a religious community (a week / a month)
- Volunteering with Greenbelt partner festivals in Scotland and/or USA

For further information or an informal discussion please contact:

Rev Tim Evans (Training Officer, Continuing Ministry Development)

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Appendix 1

Sabbatical – Initial Planning Form

This is an initial planning form to help you plan the outline of your sabbatical and to prepare with your meeting with me. You should already have approval in principle from your Suffragan Bishop before you meet with me.

It's not expected that your ideas will be fully formed at this stage; we will start from wherever you are and work from there. Whatever the shape of your sabbatical, it will need to contain elements of the three dimensions described on page 1: Personal and vocational renewal; Ministry-related study and experience; Recreation and play. I can hopefully advise on possibilities for shorter or longer courses of study, retreats, contacts, etc. to help you in your research.

I will need to check some practical aspects with you (e.g. planning parish cover; arrangements for a curate in training). I can also advise you on possible sources of funding, in addition to the diocesan grant (£500) and your CME allocation (up to £240 p.a.) which may be used for certain aspects.

After the meeting, assuming that you have agreement in principle from your Suffragan Bishop, and that sabbatical grants are not fully allocated for the year of your planned sabbatical, you can usually start to go public in order to get planning underway, although there may be a lot of research and planning still to do.

I am always glad to continue to work with you as your plans take shape.

Rev Tim Evans (Training Officer, Continuing Ministry Development)

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Office use only

Date of meeting:

Next steps:

Final agreement given by + Mark A / + Mark D

Further meeting/s:

Report back to + Mark A / + Mark D:

Name: _____

Parish: _____

Date of proposed sabbatical: _____

Brief description of sabbatical project / plan:

What value / benefit do you think the sabbatical would bring to you and to your ministry?

What opportunities would this give for:

Personal and vocational renewal

Ministry-related study and experience

Recreation and play

Estimate of Cost: _____

Have you discussed the possibility of a sabbatical yet with the following:

- Suffragan Bishop YES / NO
- Area Dean YES / NO
- Churchwardens YES / NO
- Local Ministry Colleagues YES / NO