

HEALTHY congregations

## **BUILDING CLERGY HEALTH FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

*In our post-Christendom and post-modern age, ministry in the Pacific NW demands spiritually mature, relationally vibrant, and emotionally resilient pastors. NWC Presbytery's Commission on Ministry (COM) encourages all minister members of our presbytery to grow in spiritual, physical, emotional and relational fitness for ministry. In conjunction, we encourage personnel committees and sessions to actively promote and encourage their pastors to grow in personal, professional, spiritual, and fiscal health.*

## **DEVELOPING PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SPIRITUAL BALANCE**

Here is an evaluation list for ministers to ask yourselves about how well you're growing your fitness for ministry. This is from Rev. Jill Hudson's book, *When Better isn't Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21st Century Church* (2004). The book is a helpful roadmap for evaluating ministry and includes 11 areas in addition to "personal, professional and spiritual balance" for evaluation.

## **SPIRITUAL HEALTH (MATURING IN CHRIST)**

*Ministers are expected to be growing spiritually, maturing in Christ.*

1. How often do I engage in the following?
  - Personal prayer not related to role or function of ministry
  - Bible study not related to the practice of ministry
  - A private spiritual retreat
  - The practice of faithful stewardship
2. How often do I participate in worship where I am not the leader?
3. Do I have a spiritual director or spiritual friend with whom I meet at least monthly for prayer and reflection on my own spiritual journey? If you would like to get connected with a spiritual director and/or spiritual friendships, please contact Corey Schlosser-Hall, Executive Presbyter.
4. Do I participate in an accountability/support group? If you would like to join or begin an accountability/support group you can contact Corey Schlosser-Hall, Executive Presbyter, to learn about existing groups and others who would like to start a group.

## **SABBATH KEEPING/SABBATICALS**

*NW Coast Presbytery COM encourages pastors to practice weekly Sabbath-keeping, take vacations annually, and take a sabbatical every 7 years. We encourage all congregations and pastors to have a mutually agreeable sabbatical policy and plan. Resources for developing a sabbatical policy and providing sabbaticals are included in the appendix to this publication.*

1. How many "days off" do I consistently take each week?
2. Do I take all my vacation? Do I take at least one portion of it in a two-week block?
3. Am I making adequate preparation of myself and the congregation for an upcoming sabbatical?



### **RELATIONAL HEALTH**

1. How much time a week is reserved for home life?
  - Four nights a week?
  - Two nights a week?
  - Saturdays?
2. For married pastors: How often do I have “date” nights or other regular opportunities for special time with my spouse?
3. For single pastors: Do I spend time with friends or other family on a weekly basis?
4. Do I have friends who are not members of the congregation?
5. Do I have a personal therapist or pastoral counselor identified for times of need?  
*You can contact Corey Schlosser-Hall, Executive Presbyter for connections to therapists or pastoral counselors.*

### **PHYSICAL HEALTH**

*Ministers are expected to be nurturing their physical health. Physical, spiritual and emotional health mutually influence each other to create balance.*

1. Do I have an annual physical?
2. How often do I engage in physical exercise lasting at least 30 minutes?
3. How balanced is my current diet?
4. Am I more than 10 pounds over the recommended weight for my height?
5. Do I take a nutritional supplement daily?

### **FISCAL FITNESS**

*Functioning with fiscal soundness promotes healthy ministry and diminishes anxiety that frees up vision, and encourages the leadership and risk-taking that is fundamental to strong spiritual leadership.*

1. Do I and my family have a realistic budget that informs our monthly spending, saving, and investing?
2. Am I and my family financially debt free except for mortgage debt? If not, do I have a plan for paying down debt?

### **OTHER**

1. Do I have interests or hobbies outside the church?
2. Am I enjoying and energized by my ministry, life, and family life?
3. Do I annually review these questions and discuss them with my review committee?

### **QUESTIONS FOR PERSONNEL/REVIEW COMMITTEE TO ASK ANNUALLY**

*Effective pastors maintain a good balance in their personal, professional, and spiritual life. The signs of this balance may include taking days off, taking vacations, spending time with family, and participating in events such as a personal spiritual retreat. A pastor review committee should be concerned about the pastor’s overall well-being.*

1. How effective is our session and personnel/review committee in encouraging the overall health of our pastor?
2. How effective is our pastor in demonstrating a balanced lifestyle?

## APPENDIX: SABBATICAL RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

*These guidelines are meant to help churches and professional staff implement policies for Sabbatical Leave. (We hope churches will develop and implement this in their own setting.) Sabbatical leave is beneficial, both to ministry professionals, and to the churches they serve. Sabbatical leave can help individuals to refocus their vision, and find renewed sense of call. Often, Sabbatical Leave is needed to find a new or intensive continuing educational experience not made possible in a two-week time period.*

**Sabbath is the call from God in a busy world, and in the busy church. Sabbatical Leave can offer valuable refreshment and rejuvenation for those who labor continuously for God's people, new vision for continued service, and renewed compassion for the beloved children of God who comprise the church.**

**Sabbatical offers the church a time to re-focus on their future, a time for members to find new gifts for service in the church, and for the church as a whole to renew its call as part of the priesthood of all believers.**

### DEFINITION

Sabbatical Leave is a planned time of study and renewal by which one seeks personal and professional growth. The concept of a sabbatical comes from the seasons of life affirmed in the Jewish Bible/Old Testament. There is the commandment to honor the seventh day and to keep it Holy, in that same spirit there is a call to have a seventh year where the land and the laborers are given a rest. The idea of a Sabbatical every seventh year to study, grow, and recharge is of tremendous benefit for the pastor and for the church. It is an opportunity for a minister to engage from regular and routine tasks so that their ministry may be viewed from a new perspective, and their soul renewed to serve refreshed. It is not a prolonged vacation. Through reflection, prayer, rest, study and travel, one finds through this temporary vocation, the promise of God who sustains us through a period of reflection, leading to the renewal of energy upon the return to the permanent call.

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## NWC PRESBYTERY SABBATICAL GUIDELINES

The Presbytery of Northwest Coast recommends to the sessions of its churches that Ministers of the Word and Sacrament be granted a compensated sabbatical of at least three (3) months each seven years of service to an individual church.

### RATIONALE

A sabbatical will enable the minister to renew through the vital pursuit of time away from ministry, continuing education, extended time spent in spiritual formation, and fresh mentoring by respected teachers. A sabbatical enables a minister to return to the responsibilities of ministry with new energy, spiritual vision and effectiveness.

### MINISTER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Bring the sabbatical proposal before the session – at least in outline form – a minimum of six months before the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Secure the approval of the session for the sabbatical proposal.
3. Work with session to establish a plan for pastoral leadership and administrative leadership that will be used during the absence of the minister.
4. Assure the session of continued service to the church for at least one full year from the conclusion of the sabbatical.
5. Bring up to date all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the session before departing on a sabbatical.
6. Submit to COM in writing the sabbatical timetable and outline of plans.
7. Upon return, present an overview of the sabbatical experience to the session and the Committee on Ministry.

### SESSION RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Receive “for approval” the minister’s proposal for a sabbatical, at least six (6) months in advance of the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Work with the minister to establish a plan for pastoral leadership and administrative leadership that will be used during the absence of the minister.
3. Continue terms of call commitments to the minister during sabbatical leave.
4. Communicate to the congregation the importance and values to the church of a sabbatical.
5. Request a written overview and personal reflection/learning from the sabbatical from the minister upon return.
6. The session is encouraged to contact the presbytery office (425.355.0922) for encouragement and support before and during the time of the leave. The presbytery is a resource for helping with planning, staffing, pulpit supply, and pastoral care.



### **COMMISSION ON MINISTRY RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Consult with congregations and pastors planning for a sabbatical and assist with resources to make the sabbatical a positive experience for to pastor and congregation.
2. Serve as mediator in any concerns of session or minister relative to the sabbatical.
3. Determine who will moderate the session in the minister's absence.

### **FUNDING A SABBATICAL**

The employing church will continue the pastor/educator salaries, pension/major medical benefits, book allowance, and, at the direction of the Session, auto and continuing education allowances at the same level as those in effect at the time of the Sabbatical Leave.

The employing church will also contract for substitute pastor/educator services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave. Although on the face of it, the Sabbatical Leave may seem like yet another financial burden for the local congregation to bear, it is crucial for Session and congregation to recognize the long-term benefits they as a church will reap from granting Sabbaticals. For example, ministers/educators who have the opportunity to examine issues of professional growth and development as ministers within an existing pastorate are more likely to stay more years in a particular call. The sabbatical provision conveys a sense of support and caring on the part of the calling church. It also offers an incentive to both ministers and educators to commit to and think in terms of longer years of service in a particular church.

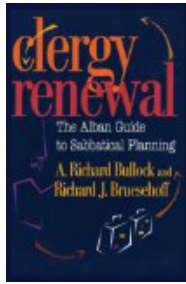
It is helpful for a congregation to annually budget an additional amount of 2-2.5% of salary and housing to accumulate funds for congregational costs during the sabbatical.

### **RESOURCES FOR FUNDING A SABBATICAL**

1. Clergy renewal grant from the Lilly Endowment's National Clergy Renewal Program (<http://www.cpx.cts.edu/renewal>). For approved sabbatical proposals, the Lilly Endowment provides significant funding (up to \$40,000) for a sabbatical. The grant also provides funding to the congregation for pastoral leadership while your pastor is on sabbatical. This is an excellent program. Revs. Dan Holland, Doug Bunnell, Stephanie Hankey, Ann and Charlie Lewis, and Neil Trainer are recent recipients of this award and offer to assist any ministers and congregations in applying for the grant.
2. The Louisville Institute, a Lilly Endowment Program housed at Louisville Seminary, provides study grants for pastoral leaders. Contact Rev. David J. Wood at 1044 Alta Vista Rd., Louisville, KY 40205-1798. Their e-mail address is [info@louisville-institute.org](mailto:info@louisville-institute.org).
3. PCUSA Board of Pensions ([www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org)) occasionally provides pastors of small churches – those serving congregations of fewer than 200 members – to receive a stipend of up to \$3,000 towards a sabbatical.



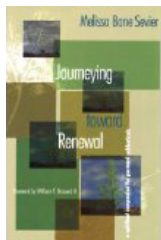
## OTHER RESOURCES FOR PREPARING FOR A SABBATICAL



*Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning*

**A. Richard Bullock and Richard J. Bruesehoff**

*Planned time away from the parish for study, rest, and spiritual renewal can be beneficial- and often necessary- for any pastor, as well as for the congregation. In this thoroughly revised and expanded edition of Alban's popular Sabbatical Planning for Clergy and Congregations, Bullock and Bruesehoff provide the definitive resource.*



*Journeying toward Renewal: A Spiritual Companion for Pastoral Sabbaticals*

**Melissa Bane Sevier**

*Sabbatical leaves are becoming an increasingly common part of pastoral life, as both pastors and congregations recognize the renewed vitality that these times away can bring to their common ministry.*

## MINISTERS WILLING TO CONSULT

These ministers have recently taken sabbaticals and are willing to help a pastor and session setup a sabbatical:

- Rev. Doug Bunnell, Bellingham First PC
- Rev. Dan Holland, Mount Vernon PC
- Rev. Stephanie Hankey, Westminster PC in Anacortes, WA
- Rev. Neil Trainer, Calvin PC in Shoreline, WA
- Rev. Kurt Helmcke, North Creek PC in Mill Creek, WA
- Rev. Alan Dorway, First PC of Everett in Everett, WA
- Rev. Luke Hyder, Cascade View PC in Everett, WA