



**SNU Policy: Pastor Sabbatical Leave**

**SNU Policy ID: Benefit Information D-16**

**Policy Reviewed by: Director of Human Resources**

**Approval Authority: Vice President for Business and Finance**

**Approval Date: August 12, 2025**

**Next Review Date: August 12, 2030**

This policy articulates the requirements for a campus pastor(s) to qualify and apply for sabbatical leave. Ordained ministers in the Church of the Nazarene who are a full-time campus pastor at Southern Nazarene University, are in good standing and who have served in the Campus Senior Pastor capacity for seven consecutive years are eligible to apply for a pastor sabbatical leave of up to 8 weeks. Subsequent sabbaticals will be permitted seven years after the last sabbatical leave taken.

The approval of sabbatical leaves will be subject to the following conditions:

A. Ordained ministers in the Church of the Nazarene who are full-time campus pastor at Southern Nazarene University who has served in the Campus Senior Pastor capacity for seven consecutive years or more, is eligible to apply for a sabbatical leave for the purpose of rest in God, renewal, recall and reinvest for future ministry which will promote professional growth and enhance personal service to the University.

1. The first and perhaps longest phase of the sabbatical should be **resting** in God. This sabbath rest is important because it sets the stage for all the other movements of a sabbatical. Sufficient rest is necessary to have the clarity of mind and spirit needed to really connect with God on a deep level. During this phase of rest the mind, body, and soul are healing from the stress (and even trauma) of ministry.
2. The **renew** phase is all about living in the love of God until it becomes our foundational reality. During this phase the pastor should begin to live in such a way that every day is shaped by their identity as a child of God who is deeply loved. Learning how to live as Father and child again. Renewal is all about building a relationship with God that will reframe and sustain life. Learning to live from their rest in God instead of resting from their work for God. Experiencing the fullness of God's life – to be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 4:14-19). This presence of God within transforms how one approaches life



and ministry. The pastor should be learning how to minister from a place of power through dependence on God (Ephesians 4:20-21). Only then are they ready to recall God's purposes for their life.

3. During the **recall** phase the pastor would ask God, "What do you want to do through my life?" This question should not be asked lightly. To truly ask it rightly one needs to be fully abandoned to God's will.
4. The **reinvest** stage of the sabbatical is all about planning and practicing a new way of living. Many find it helpful to establish a rule of life during this phase. A rule of life is a plan of daily living that emphasizes relationship with God at various points of the day. It also includes plans for self-care, which can be so easy to neglect. Caring for the body, mind, emotions, soul, and family must come before ministry or ministry becomes self-destructive.

B. The Pastor personnel file must be complete and up to date.

C. Applications for sabbaticals (See Appendix A) are submitted to the administration in the fall for the following academic year when the leave is to begin. The application must include the purpose of the leave and a statement setting forth the benefits of such activities to rest in God, the professional growth of the applicant and the general strengthening of the University. Although some measure of freedom will be permitted in planning for such activity, the nature and the quality of the proposed activities must be approved by the appropriate area University Senior Leadership Member and the President. Sabbaticals which include employment or assistantships in other institutions/churches will not be approved except in special cases where the merit of the total leave clearly satisfies the purposes of the University's sabbatical policy.

D. As a rule, not more than one Pastor will be granted sabbatical leave of up to 8 weeks with the approval from the area Vice President and the President. Approval will be based in part upon the possibility of making adjustments within the department involved. Job duties which would normally be performed by the Pastor during the leave designated for the sabbatical leave should, wherever possible, be performed by other staff members available.

Arrangements for meeting the workload needs of the department must be worked out with the appropriate Senior Leadership Team member before final approval can be recommended to the Board of Trustees. The University would prefer the pastor's sabbatical to be taken during the summer months.

E. The Pastor on leave for up to 8 weeks will receive full salary. Any Pastor accepting sabbatical leave will be asked to agree to continue service at Southern Nazarene University following such leave (see agreement below). This agreement in writing will provide that, in the event the Pastor on leave does not return to



the University, the amount of salary received during the sabbatical will be refunded to the University. If the Pastor withdraws from the University by choice within one year after a sabbatical leave, one half of the amount received will be refunded. If the Pastor continues service for two years, the refund obligation will be discharged. Paid time off may not be used to extend the duration of the sabbatical.

F. Once the Sabbatical Application is approved by the Senior Leadership Team, the President will present it to the Executive Committee or the full Board of Trustees for final approval.

G. A written report on experiences and insights, must be submitted to the appropriate area Senior Leadership Team Member and President.



## **Appendix A -Pastor Sabbatical Leave Agreement**

The Pastor on leave for 8 weeks will receive full salary. Any Pastor accepting sabbatical leave will be asked to agree to continue service at Southern Nazarene University following such leave for two years. This agreement in writing will provide that, in the event the Pastor on leave does not return to the university, the amount of salary received during the sabbatical will be refunded to the university. If the Pastor withdraws from the university by choice within one year after a sabbatical leave, one half of the amount received will be refunded. If the Pastor continues service for two years, the refund obligation will be discharged. A written report on experiences and insights, must be submitted to the appropriate Senior Leadership Team member and President.

I have read the above statements and accepting sabbatical leave for the \_\_\_\_ number of weeks during the SPRING/Fall/Summer term, (year), I agree to return to my present assignment at Southern Nazarene University for at least two years following the sabbatical or to fulfill the obligations clearly stated in the above quoted paragraph E.

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Pastor Signature

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Date

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Area Vice President

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President

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Date

For office use only:

Received \_\_\_\_\_