



## SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

The Diocese of Niagara encourages clergy and licensed lay workers to take periodic sabbatical leaves. Our understanding of the importance of and need for sabbatical leaves is rooted, in part, in the Genesis stories of creation and the Ten Commandments, exhorting us to observe Sabbath rest. Our purpose in granting such leaves is to bring renewed energy and enhanced knowledge and skill to the practice of ministry to benefit both the employee and the church.

### *Eligibility*

Clergy, licensed lay workers, and certain diocesan staff (as per their letters of appointment) are eligible for a two month leave which can be combined with vacation time [usually resulting in a combined total of three months for sabbatical leave purposes], once every seven years of active (non-retired) ministry, provided that they have been in the position from which they are taking leave from for at least two years. Notice should be given at least eight months prior to the start of the proposed leave, preferably enabling budget planning where possible. Appropriate coverage must be arranged by the person seeking the sabbatical in order to be eligible. The person taking a leave is required under normal circumstances, to commit to returning to their position for at least one (1) year after their sabbatical.

### *Planning Requirements*

1. The person requesting a leave shall initiate a preliminary conversation with the bishop (or their designate) to discuss the possibilities for a sabbatical and its timing.
2. With the bishop's endorsement, the person requesting a leave shall consult with their regional archdeacon and regional dean about coverage possibilities.
3. The person requesting a leave shall then submit a written proposal to their wardens, regional archdeacon and the diocesan human resources coordinator for review and feedback. The written proposal should be one to two pages in length, outlining the key dates and details, the purpose and elements of the sabbatical leave, including possible outcomes which will be of benefit to the employee, parish and diocese and the relevance of those benefits to the diocesan vision for ministry, and coverage plans. In light of the biblical Sabbath tradition and the fact that vacation time is often part of a sabbatical leave period, a proposal should incorporate significant aspects of rest.
4. A written statement of support for the proposal is received from the wardens.
5. A final proposal, along with a statement of support, shall be provided to the bishop for review and written approval of the proposed sabbatical plan.
6. A written description of the final arrangements for replacement coverage is submitted to the bishop (or designate), wardens, and regional archdeacon, not less than three (3) months prior to the beginning of the leave. If funds are being requested, this plan should include a request for a Sabbatical Replacement Coverage grant and a simple budget outlining how replacement coverage funds will be used.

### *Costs and Resources: Employee*

The study and any accommodation and travel costs for the sabbatical leave are borne by the employee. Some or all of these costs may be defrayed through successful applications to the General Synod's Continuing Education Plan Sabbatical Grants; the employee's own, employer-funded, Continuing Education Plan account; and diocesan Education and Training Grants provided that the distinctive guidelines, timelines and eligibility requirements for the particular granting programme are met. It should be noted that the greater the lead time in making application for Sabbatical Grants, the greater the likelihood that funds may be available.

### *Costs and Resources: Employer*

Replacement coverage will rarely cover all of the responsibilities exercised by the person taking a sabbatical leave. The non-financial costs of reduced staffing capacity during a sabbatical leave are acknowledged and borne by those in the parish and diocese who are not taking the leave. Replacement duties for urgent pastoral care coverage might be carried out by clergy in neighbouring parishes, honorary assistants, deacons, and lay leaders.

The financial costs of replacement coverage of clergy are borne by the parish. Since sabbatical leaves will normally include the use of a month of the employee's vacation, the cost of clergy supply during that month will have been already anticipated in the normal budgeting processes of the parish. The cost of clergy supply for regular worship services will be borne by the parish at the usual clergy supply rates.

Parishes may apply for a grant of up to \$2,500 from the diocese to support clergy coverage. Any additional costs for pastoral or administrative assistance as required by the particular parish are borne by parishes.

### *Post-Leave Requirements*

- The person taking a leave will submit a brief written report to the bishop, wardens, archdeacon, and human resources coordinator outlining the degree to and manner in which the original proposal's intentions were realized.
- The person taking a leave will, in consultation with the regional archdeacon, executive officer and wardens, follow through, adjusting as necessary, on the plans for sharing the benefits of the leave with the Church.

### *Communications*

The diocese shall proactively communicate that the goal of realizing a beneficial impact on the practice of ministry for both employee and church is at the core of our rationale for granting sabbatical leaves. Eligibility of individual employees for sabbatical leaves should be monitored, anticipated, publicized and known by parish leaders. Letters of appointment and annual performance and development reviews should systematically remind all parties of the eligibility (including timelines) for sabbatical leaves.