

NWWA Synod Staff Sabbatical Leave Policy

Approved by Synod Council on September 21, 2024

It is the expectation that Northwest Washington Synod employees shall consider taking a sabbatical of three months after having served in the Synod Office for six consecutive years. Successive sabbaticals can be granted no more than once every six years. A request for a sabbatical outside the parameters of this policy will be considered on an individual basis by the bishop and the Executive Committee.

An optional one-month sabbatical may be granted to an Employee after 3 years of service in place of 6 years of service. Successive sabbaticals of one month would not be granted more than every 3 years. An employee could also qualify for a three-month sabbatical after 6 years of service following their one-month sabbatical.

Sabbaticals are available for the bishop and rostered and non-rostered Synod employees, hereafter referred to as employees. Full time and half-time employees, after six years of service, may be granted a three-month sabbatical.

The request for a sabbatical shall be made to the bishop for approval. In collaboration with the bishop, the Synod Finance Committee should budget for coverage of the employee's duties while on sabbatical leave. If the bishop is requesting a sabbatical, their request should be through the Synod Council Vice-President.

Requests for a sabbatical leave, including a description of how time will be spent, must be submitted in writing to the bishop at least six months in advance of the proposed start date or within a mutually agreed upon period of time prior to the sabbatical. The bishop will notify the Executive Committee of approval of a sabbatical.

An employee sabbatical will not be granted if it would overlap another employee approved sabbatical. In this case the bishop will work with the employee to identify another time that the sabbatical could be taken.

Employees on sabbatical will be provided full pay and benefits during the duration of their sabbatical leave. Expenses incurred during the sabbatical will be borne by the employee. Continuing education funds may be utilized for purchase of books, tuition and travel during a sabbatical.

Upon return from the sabbatical the employee will provide the bishop with a report summarizing sabbatical activities, professional growth experience and address rejuvenation benefits. This report should be presented to the bishop within the first month of the employee's return from the sabbatical. The bishop will share the report with the Synod Executive Committee.

Employees returning from a sabbatical are expected to continue to serve the synod for at least one full year unless otherwise agreed to by the bishop and Executive Committee. If an employee leaves the Synod prior to completing the one year, they are expected to pay back half of salary received during the Sabbatical unless otherwise agreed to by the bishop and Executive Committee. This understanding should be in writing.

NOTE: If an employee's employment status is affected by the election of a new bishop, they would not be expected to pay back any salary received while on Sabbatical.