

Metropolitan Bible Church Sabbatical Policy

Rationale

While pastors and other ministers are responsible to God and their churches, churches are also responsible for caring for their pastors and staff members.

Pastors often work six days per week, rarely get an entire weekend off, seldom get a three-day weekend, and generally find that Christmas, Easter, and other holidays are among their busiest times of the year. There may be days off during most weeks and two to four weeks of vacation a year. These, however, are often subject to interruption by church-related calls and emergencies.

The demands of pastoral ministry can drain physical, emotional, and spiritual energy. Over a period of years, pastors can find themselves tired, apathetic, spiritually cold, and, in some cases, embittered against their congregation and disillusioned with the ministry.

A strong sense of call to ministry and loyalty to their flock will enable most pastors to persevere in spite of these hardships. However, they often function with diminished effectiveness. Others seek and accept the call to another church. Unfortunately, the problems are often merely forgotten. Burnout often catches up with the pastor. Tragically, the cumulative result can sometimes be a pastor's departure from pastoral ministry altogether.

While pastors should be responsible for their own rest and refreshment, the nature of ministry often means that pastors do not invest sufficient time and energy in personal development. Sometimes pastors do not take needed personal time because they feel responsible for ministry 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Short-term urgencies can crowd out long-term necessities. To prevent this situation, the congregation of Metropolitan Bible Church should have a policy of regularly scheduled sabbaticals for each full-time pastoral staff member.

Biblical Basis

Attitudes and actions of the church body

- 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13 - "Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work."
- 1 Timothy 5:17-19 - "Elders are worthy of double honor, esp. those who preach & teach."
- Hebrews 10:24 - "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."
- Proverbs 11:24, 25 - "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."
- Luke 6:38 - "Give, and it will be given to you. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Attitudes and actions of the pastor

- 1 Timothy 4:15, 16 - "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."
- Luke 6:12 - "Jesus went out into the hills to pray, and spent the night praying to God."
- Mark 6:31, 32 - "He (Jesus) said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."
- Matt. 11:28, 29 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
- Matt 14:13, 22, 23 - "When Jesus heard . . . he withdrew . . . to a solitary place.. he went up into the hills to pray there alone."
- Luke 5:16 - "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."
- John 11:54 - "Therefore Jesuswithdrew to a region near the desert.....where he stayed with his disciples."

Benefits

- A grateful pastor who returns to God's calling with renewed vigor, insight, appreciation, humility, and understanding.

- A possibly MORE grateful pastor's wife.
- Pastor's children may be thoroughly delighted at the change that has come over their father.
- A pastor better prepared for service in and to the local church, whose gifts are also enhanced for serving the entire kingdom of Christ.
- A witness to the community of the love and trust with which a congregation esteems their pastor.
- Sabbaticals allow churches to draw on other resources when the pastor is absent.

Policy

1. Qualifying for a sabbatical:
 - 1.1. Only full-time pastors are eligible for a sabbatical.
 - 1.2. Eligibility for a sabbatical is achieved by completing at least seven continual years of ministry service (five of which are at Metropolitan).
 - 1.3. At its discretion, the elder board can give credit for the pastor's years of service at a prior church if no sabbatical time was given. Time allowed for additional education may be considered in the decision.
2. Length of time for the sabbatical:
 - 2.1. A typical length of a pastor's sabbatical will be three months per five to seven years of service.
 - 2.2. Sabbatical length may vary depending on the length of service, the needs of the pastor, and elder board discretion.
3. Approval Process:
 - 3.1. Pastors must submit a sabbatical proposal for approval to the Senior Pastor and the Elder Board describing how the sabbatical time would be invested. Sabbatical proposals should balance physical rest, personal recreation, intellectual stimulation, and spiritual renewal. Sufficient time for the family should be included.
 - 3.2. Eligible pastors must submit sabbatical plans to the Senior Pastor and Elder Board at least six months in advance. However, extenuating circumstances can be evaluated by the elder board.

- 3.3. Eligible pastors should not schedule sabbaticals during the same calendar year.
4. Compensation and Benefits:
 - 4.1. Sabbatical time is separate from the pastor's yearly vacation time.
 - 4.2. The pastor's full wages and benefits will continue for the duration of the sabbatical. No compensation should be given for unused sabbatical time.
 - 4.3. Sabbatical expenses (i.e. ongoing education, travel expenses, etc.) may be reviewed and approved by the Elder Board for reimbursements. However, all requests should be included in the sabbatical proposal.
5. Miscellaneous:
 - 5.1. After completing the sabbatical, the pastor will report to the Elder Board and the congregation to indicate how the time was invested and what benefits were realized.
 - 5.2. During the sabbatical, the pastor is relieved from all routine and emergency duties during the time granted. The church leaders will handle routine and emergency matters.
 - 5.3. The Elder Board reasonably assumes that, upon completing the sabbatical, the pastor will continue fruitful ministry at Metropolitan Bible Church.
 - 5.4. Elder Board discretion will be applied for individual circumstances.