

Sabbatical Guidelines

Accepted by the Elders of GFC

February 17, 2014

Values of a sabbatical:

- The demands of full-time ministry are notoriously draining physically, emotionally and spiritually. Historically, many pastors and other full-time staff reach a point where they feel that burn-out is imminent, and the only recourse seems to be moving on to another congregation or ministry assignment. In many cases, what really may be needed is a season of refreshing and restoration, a time when vision and purpose can be renewed and clarified. As sabbatical leaves have become more common in the Evangelical Free Church, the average length of tenure has increased from 3 years to 5-6 years and longer. Sabbaticals are a benefit that leads to longer retention and a greater sense of loyalty.
- Sabbatical leaves are intended to be a blessing to full-time pastors and Directors, who have served an extended period with Grace Fellowship Church by providing a gift of time away from normal responsibilities.
- The sabbatical leave is more than just a reward for longevity of service and commitment. It is an opportunity for the congregation at Grace Fellowship Evangelical Church to honor those who have served us over the years with a season of spiritual, physical and mental refilling and reinvigoration.

Eligibility for a sabbatical:

- A Pastor or Director is eligible after seven full-time, exemplary, continuous years of shepherding within GFC.
- The shepherding includes accomplishing their normal responsibilities excellently, along with serving as a Small Group Leader and a Counselor through the GF Counseling Center.

Benefit:

- The sabbatical is to benefit the person in an area that is not practical within their normal responsibilities. A sabbatical plan can include such things as study, travel, education and research. Each person receiving a sabbatical is encouraged to use the sabbatical to pursue a plan of personal rest, refreshment, renewal and growth.
- The sabbatical is to be 8 weeks of time away from their normal responsibilities of service to GFC.
- The person on sabbatical will not be responsible for their normal GFC related activities.
- Salary and benefits continue during the sabbatical. Vacation time is not affected by sabbaticals.

Administrative details:

- One staff member per year may schedule a sabbatical. Priority for scheduling will be the most time since employment at Grace Fellowship Church or last sabbatical. From time to time, exceptions may need to be considered to this guideline.
- Application for sabbatical must be made to and granted by Pastoral Executive Team, PET, and Elders. The PET will provide accountability for the activity unless a member of PET is taking the sabbatical. Then accountability will be by the Elders. The church body should be informed of the beginning and end of the sabbatical.
- Sabbatical must be continuous time off. Unused sabbatical time will not be paid in lieu of time off.
- The person taking a sabbatical must agree to two additional years of service following the sabbatical. Once a sabbatical is taken, seven years must accrue again, before a sabbatical can be taken.