

Commission on Ministry
APPROVED December 5, 2013

POLICY ON Pastors' Study Leave

Teaching Elders and Commissioned Ruling Elders shall continue their education through regular study leaves included annually in their employment contract.

- (1) Eligibility. Any Teaching Elder or Commissioned Ruling Elder serving a church in any capacity, or serving the PGR, shall be eligible.
- (2) Implementation. All calls or contracts with a Teaching Elder or Ruling Elder must include study leave. The only exception is if the person requests an exemption that must be approved by COM.
- (3) Accumulation of Leave. In addition to vacation, a Teaching Elder or Commissioned Ruling Elder shall be eligible for two weeks of study leave each year after one full year of service. No more than six (6) weeks of leave may be accumulated except by mutual agreement. Accumulated study leave shall not be made part of a termination of relationship agreement.
- (4) Financial Arrangements. The church or Council shall assume any costs of Pulpit Supply and continue the Teaching Elder or Commissioned Ruling Elder salary while he/she is on study leave. Churches and Council are encouraged to assume part or all of the study leave costs.
- (5) Use of Study Leave. Study leave must be used for professional development. The course should be approved by the session or local governing board and shall be used to guide the individual for specific needs of the congregation or him/herself. An evaluation of the study leave will be presented to the session or local governing body by the minister or Commissioned Ruling Elder at the conclusion of the study.
- (6) *Continuing Education Grants. The PGR has a grant fund used to share the costs of approved programs of professional development with the minister and the participating church. Teaching Elders and Commissioned Ruling Elders may apply for Continuing Education Grants of up to \$500 in one year, but may only receive \$500 every three years. Teaching Elders who are pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree may request a total of \$500 over the course of their entire degree program, but may not receive more than \$250 in a calendar year. Grants are designed to help Teaching Elders and Commissioned Ruling Elders continue their education in ways that will support their ministry in their current contexts and are designed to assist those who are in the greatest financial need of grants. Continuing Education Grants are a way for the Presbytery of Great Rivers to partner with churches,*

Teaching Elders and Commissioned Ruling Elders in ministry. Those who receive grants can partner with the presbytery to share their knowledge. Those receiving grants shall share their education experience in some way. This could be done by giving a brief presentation at an assembly meeting, writing a brief article for the Newsletter, leading a seminar, or in some other creative way.

- (7) COM recommends that calls address a sabbatical leave.
- i. Churches are encouraged to provide for sabbatical leave for a pastor, in the terms of call or a policy statement of the session/congregation (which may be incorporated into the terms of call by reference). A congregation may want to include these provisions:
 1. · Eligibility. This usually requires five to seven years of service with the church prior to the sabbatical leave and one year of service after completion.
 2. · Purpose. Sabbatical leave should focus on a particular program of study or growth that cannot be accomplished in normal study leave. Purposes might be work toward an advanced degree, research project, theological enhancement, spiritual or personal growth, or participation in a mission program.
 3. · Procedures. A proposed plan should be approved in advance by the session. This proposal should require COM consultation about development of the proposal, that the sabbatical takes the minister away from the home church, that a report be submitted to the session and PGR, and that the knowledge gained will be shared with the church and/or colleagues.
 4. · Replacement. The session may replace the pastor on sabbatical with a temporary supply or any other appropriate arrangement. Such arrangement, and the financing thereof, must be a part of the sabbatical proposal.
 5. · Service. The pastor will remain on the field for one year after a sabbatical leave is completed.