

Acts 12:24 Churches – Policy Guides – 6-26-2020

Sabbatical Guidelines

Acts 12:24 Churches holds that appointed full-time Free Methodist Elders should qualify for a sabbatical once every 7 to 10 years of appointment. This document explains the process for the pastor to be approved for their sabbatical as well as the expectation for the local church in this process. In the special circumstance of a part-time Lead/Senior/Staff Pastor & Staff Pastors that are not Ordained Free Methodist Elders, the Acts 12:24 Churches – Sabbatical Guidelines should be used to determine the pro-rata sabbatical provision.

Guiding Principles

The purpose of a sabbatical is for focused prayer, rest, and retreat for a pastor. A sabbatical generally lasts 4-6 weeks. The pastor is expected to return to their same appointment. The local church should pay the pastor their full salary and benefits during this time, however, the sabbatical time must not count against the pastor's paid time off from the local church. The church is to cover the expenses for substitute pastoral responsibilities and contribute toward the expenses for their pastor's sabbatical. The local board, delegate(s), and pastor should work together in advance of the sabbatical to cover preaching and pastoral care needs during the sabbatical. During a sabbatical, the pastor should worship at a different church and be unavailable for congregational needs until returning.

Process for Approval

1. When the pastor feels the need for a time of focused prayer, rest, and retreat, they should ask Jesus if the time is right for a sabbatical.
 - a. The pastor should keep their district leader and regional superintendent informed of the felt need and desire for a sabbatical.
 - b. The pastor should prepare a statement paper of 1-2 pages describing why they are feeling that a sabbatical is in order at that time.
 - i. This paper should include a loose plan for how the pastor would spend their time.
 - ii. This paper should also give some initial reflections on the future of the ministry at the local church upon returning from sabbatical.
 - c. If approved by the **Regional Superintendent**, the pastor will speak with both the **Regional MEG** and **local board** for approval.
 - i. Neither the Regional MEG nor the local board supersede the other in the approval process. They must both consent to the sabbatical.
 - d. The Regional MEG and Local Board will provide **advice** and **the consent** for the desired sabbatical.
2. Once the **Regional MEG, Regional Superintendent**, and **local board** have all approved of the sabbatical, the pastor may schedule this focused time of prayer, rest, & retreat.