

SABBATICALS

"You must arrange to live with deep contentment, joy, and confidence in your everyday experience of life with God." Dallas Willard

Introduction.....	3
Definition:	3
Modern Day Application of Sabbatical’s History:	3
Why are Sabbaticals Important?.....	4
Sabbaticals in the Bible	6
Types of Sabbatical Leaves:.....	7
Duration and Frequency.....	8
Who should qualify for it.....	8
What should happen on Rest Sabbatical?	9
Church’s Responsibility.....	12
Lessons learnt from sabbaticals	12
Common pitfalls of sabbaticals	13
Policy: Common Ground's Staff Sabbatical	14
Terms.....	16
Policy: Marketplace Elders Sabbatical and Rest.....	18
Marketplace Elders Sabbaticals	19
Marketplace Sabbatical Duration and Agreements:.....	19
Marketplace Sabbatical Considerations.....	20
Appendix A.....	21
Proposed: Sabbatical Request Form	21
Appendix B	24
Learning’s from CGC Sabbaticals.....	24

INTRODUCTION

Definition and History

DEFINITION:

Sabbatical (Latin: sabbaticus, Greek: sabbatikos (σαββατικός), Hebrew: shabbat (שבת) i.e., Sabbath, literally a "ceasing") is a rest from work, or a break, often lasting from two months to a year. The concept of sabbatical has a source in shmita (to release), described in several places in the Bible. For example, in Leviticus 25, there is a commandment to desist from working the fields during the seventh year.

The main scripture passage for sabbatical concepts is Genesis 2:2–3, in which God rested (literally, "ceased" from his labour) after creating the universe, and it is applied to people (Jew and Gentile, slave and free) and even to beasts of burden in one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8–11, reaffirmed in Deuteronomy 5:12–15). All agriculture was stopped during these periods, so even the land itself was given a Sabbath.

MODERN DAY APPLICATION OF SABBATICAL'S HISTORY:

The sabbatical tradition began in the universities at the time when the university was part of the church. The idea was that the university professors needed one year in every seven to become students again and to refresh their spiritual calling. That tradition still exists in secular as well as church-related universities today.¹

In recent times, "sabbatical" has come to mean any extended absence in the career of an individual in order to achieve something. In the modern sense, one takes sabbatical typically to fulfill some goal, e.g., writing a book or travelling extensively for research.

Some universities and other institutional employers of scientists, physicians, and academics offer the opportunity to qualify for paid sabbatical as an employee benefit, called sabbatical leave.¹¹

A more intentional ministry Sabbatical, however, is not considered a long vacation. It's not a time to read books on leadership or visit successful churches to learn from them. It's not a time to write a book, do research, or work on some other special project. These are good things to do and it's not that you can't do any of them on a Sabbatical, but they in fact work against the concept of the Biblical Sabbath rest.²

¹ <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/pastor-ministry-guidelines-successful-sabbatical-vacation>

² <http://www.soulshpherd.org/2016/04/sabbatical-guide-pastors/>

Proper rest is learning to be with God as the ultimate aim. Dallas Willard, when helping his friend, John Ortberg, prepare for his sabbatical said, "First, you need to train in extended solitude and silence with Jesus."

Ortberg had asked Dallas, "How do I help the church grow spiritually?" His mentor's response was: "You must arrange your life so that you're experiencing deep joy, contentment, and confidence in your everyday life with God. The truth is, if you're a pastor, you will always reproduce your own life. Because the people who are closest to you, if they see a discrepancy between what you say and how you live, they know what you really believe is how you live. To believe something means to be ready to act as if it's true, so we never act in violation of our genuine beliefs."

As part of his sabbatical and reflecting on being coached by Dallas Willard, Ortberg concludes that the sabbatical was realigning himself with being deeply contented with God in his everyday life. And achieving this is through having a focused attitude to this end.

WHY ARE SABBATICALS IMPORTANT?

"I can state without wavering that the single greatest need of the church today is the restoration of ministers. What is required is a quite different approach to their life and work. It is a matter of leading them into a massive shift of the dynamics of their personality under God, and one that cannot be done by more books and conferences. They need to be taken out of the circulation for a sufficiently long time to re-vision and re-structure their lives in communion with Jesus and his kingdom."

(Dallas Willard)

James O. Davis, president of Global Pastors Network, has stated that³:

- 1,600 pastors in US churches quit or resign from their jobs every month
- 20% of pastors suffer stress or burnout
- 50% of pastors become divorced

Leaders in many major churches have noted that fatigue seems to set in after about six years and ministry staff tend to become restless. Unconsciously, pastors and/or staff know they need a change and a renewal; so many decide the way to meet these

³ <https://www.crcna.org/SPE/resources/sabbaticals>

needs is to change situations/jobs. Therefore, individual's may leave ministry more for personal reasons like fatigue more than because they feel God is calling them away from full time ministry. Several studies (mainly in the States) have been done to explain the reasons for this trend.

LifeWay⁴ surveyed 734 former senior pastors who left the pastorate before retirement age in four Protestant denominations (The Assemblies of God, Church of the Nazarene, the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, and the Southern Baptist Convention): the survey indicates that issues can be identified sometimes even before a ministry member accepts employment. In the study, 48% of the former pastors indicated that the church search team didn't accurately describe the church before their arrival. Other contributors showed that churches did not have a list of counselors for referrals (27%), clear documentation of the church's expectations (22%), a sabbatical plan (12%), a lay counseling ministry (9%), or a support group for the pastor's family (8%). Almost half say their church had none of these (48%).

"Almost half of those who left the pastorate said their church wasn't doing any of the kinds of things that would help," Ed Stetzer said about the studies. "Having clear documents, offering a sabbatical rest, and having people help with weighty counseling cases are key things experts tell us ought to be in place."

LifeWay⁵ concluded from their study that ministers and church leaders should not see the sabbatical as a reward for good work or simply a benefit to keep the minister happy. Neither should they view it as an extension of the normal vacation period.

Rather it should be an important part of the programme of the church and the working relationship between the church and its ministers from which both will draw benefits.

These findings suggest that a good HR process and personnel, ministries such as CGC's Redemption Ministries, a list of professional counselors (and budgeted funding to utilize this) as well as an extended rest plan (Sabbaticals) could be some of the biggest contributors to the long-term retention of ministry staff, as well as active engagement in the role they play.

⁴ <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/pastor-ministry-guidelines-successful-sabbatical-vacation>

⁵ <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/pastor-ministry-guidelines-successful-sabbatical-vacation>

SABBATICALS IN THE BIBLE

Six verses that speak about extended rest:

Exodus 23:10-11: You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Leviticus 25:4: but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

Leviticus 26:34: Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

Nehemiah 10:31: As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego the crops the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

Deuteronomy 15:1: At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts.

Leviticus 25:8: You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years.

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus modeled this reality through his own life and indicated a deep understanding and appreciation for the rhythms of life and the requirement for Sabbath rest (rest towards God). His own ministry (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16, 6:12) showed times of withdrawal for prayer and spiritual solitude.

We're made to live and to work while continually resting in and relying on God. "There remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest (Hebrews 4:9-11).⁶

Research indicates that after a church leader has served a congregation for five years or more, they have a tendency to take God and one another for granted, often falling into frustrating patterns rather than finding a faithful and creative future⁷.

A sabbatical for the pastor can provide time to focus on reading, writing, preaching, and prayer, and forces church members to exercise their ministries for the good of one another and the gospel⁸. In this way, church leaders taking extended rest breaks every

⁶ <http://www.soulshpherd.org/2016/04/sabbatical-guide-pastors/>

⁷ <https://www.rca.org/resources/leadership/sabbatical>

⁸ <https://www.rca.org/resources/leadership/sabbatical>

few years can have positive effects on both the individual and the congregation. Often the result of a sabbatical leave is that the leader returns to the church with renewed focus and energy to fulfil God's calling.

TYPES OF SABBATICAL LEAVES:

A sabbatical leave may include one or more or a combination of the types of leaves listed below.

1. Study Leave – to focus on a particular learning goal such as completion of a defined academic course/programme, seminar or study. The purpose needs to be defined in advance and reporting should be provided by the individual regarding the progress and results of the study. The length of the leave may range from a few weeks to several months or a full year.
2. Rest and Spiritual Renewal Leave – While spiritual renewal and rest should be a component of every type of leave, at times leave may be necessary for this purpose alone. If there has been an extended or particularly intense time of pouring themselves out for the church (or extended personal circumstances that have led to fatigue/burnout), an individual may need an extended time to replenish spiritual resources through prayer and reflection. There should be clear goals set for the purpose of the leave and accountability established through formal reporting of outcomes at the conclusion of the leave.
3. Service Leave – On occasion a pastor may have specific expertise or interest that may be needed by a partner Church or organization on a short-term basis. This may include interim teaching, administrative support, or helping to start a new ministry. The length of this type of leave varies depending on the situation, however, it should be defined in advance.
4. Special Circumstances – at times there may be a special case where an extended rest is required for the health and flourishing of the individual. This could be for physical health, mental/emotional health, or marriage health (there are times when marriages need extended times of focus to ensure ongoing health and flourishing). This is seen as separate from the normal sabbatical rhythms and is granted at the discretion of the key leaders of Common Ground. Usually this is not applied for, but rather when recognized as necessary by Common Ground leadership.

DURATION AND FREQUENCY

Each sabbatical situation should be assessed by CGC and the individual concerned to define timing, nature and length of sabbatical and consider the unique circumstances of each situation⁹.

The duration of the leave will be determined by the nature of the leave. The start and end date should be formally documented along with the application. The leave should be scheduled at a time where minimal disruption to the ministry will occur due to the individual's absence nor undue pressure put on the staff remaining.

The length of the sabbatical leave may vary. A length of two to four months ought to be given serious consideration by both parties.

Upon approval of the sabbatical leave the terms of the sabbatical, as outlined above, must be documented by the church to formalize the sabbatical arrangement between the church and the leader. Alternatively, the written application may serve as the formal agreement of terms.

By way of guidelines, to date, CGC has granted a period of 12 weeks for full time congregational elders and 8 weeks for other church leaders. As congregations grow and more spheres of CGC leadership emerge, a clear policy will be needed. Given how different situations may be across the organization, applications for sabbaticals makes much sense and allows the church to use discretion, wisdom and guidance to determine when and if a sabbatical is appropriate rather than an expectation or a given.

WHO SHOULD QUALIFY FOR IT

Typically, a congregational elder may be eligible for a sabbatical leave after 5 years of continuous service at the Church (however, this timeframe may differ depending on the situation, person and need for the leave). Given the reasons and scriptural backing for Sabbaticals, consideration should be given for accumulated years of service in ministry prior to joining the church at which the pastor is currently ministering.

The definition of who gets a sabbatical should not only apply to pastors (who, by CGC's theological stance can only be men, thereby potentially excluding both women and non-elder men who may legitimately qualify for sabbaticals).

⁹ http://www.agcofcanada.com/files/6514/6618/4648/AGC_Sabbatical_Policy_Guidelines.pdf

Likewise, Sabbatical Leave should not automatically be granted due to employment with the church or due to length of service and should not be included as part of an employment contract¹⁰. Rather, church leaders (marketplace and full time), should be made aware of the existence of a sabbatical leave and rest policy.

It may make more sense for an individual to apply for sabbatical leave in writing to their congregational leaders as well as CGC staff management (if full-time employed) well in advance of the intended start date, typically six months.

The written application should include:

- Nature of the leave
- Intended dates, duration and timing of the leave
- Specific goals and plans for the leave
- An outline of how time will be spent to achieve the goals and the outcome they expect to achieve

See end of document for application proposal.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN ON REST SABBATICAL?

The elders of our church gave me very explicit instructions—no work. No speaking, no writing, no teaching, no email, no counselling, no meetings, no calling in to check how things were going (John Ortberg).

Five guidelines for a successful sabbatical¹¹

1. Establish time parameters (based on agreement with CGC)
2. Plan the way you will spend it¹²

Disconnection

- Communication: it is expected that the individual on sabbatical will disconnect from all forms of communication (phone, text, emails, popping into office) with regards to their role at church and ministry. This is not extended to recreational friendships that exist within the church.
- Other ministry requests: it is expected that when on sabbatical, the individual will not engage in ministry in other contexts. The issue here is around

¹⁰ http://www.agcofcanada.com/files/6514/6618/4648/AGC_Sabbatical_Policy_Guidelines.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/pastor-ministry-guidelines-successful-sabbatical-vacation>

¹² Nick Saltas: The Aspects of Sabbatical Life

recalibrating identity. The sabbatical is a time for recalibration of the individual as a child of God. This is a time to ensure that one's identity is in God alone and not in what we do for God. Therefore, when on sabbatical, all forms of ministry are at rest.

- Social media: it is highly recommended that the individual disengages from social media for similar reasons as communication and other ministry requests.

Recalibration

- Recalibration means 'realigning an instrument, of making sure that it is brought back into the order it was when it was first designed.' The essence of a sabbatical is to check and see whether the individual is functioning within the parameters for which they were first designed. This includes:
 - The body: exercise and diet recalibration are an expected part of a sabbatical
 - The mind: the individual should agree with their sabbatical coach on what kind of intellectual activity (if any) should be pursued. These should not revolve around what their main tasks and responsibilities are as a leader. EG could include broad and general theology, a divergent interest, learning a new skill/area of interest they normally wouldn't have time for.
 - Your soul: while on sabbatical, the individual's self-esteem won't be propped up by their pastoral role, accomplishments, and peoples' appreciation. They will also have more ongoing time with family and some difficult conversations may finally have time to be had. Activities like solitude and silence are meant to evoke emotion. The sabbatical is there to make space for the individual to become more aware of internal distress, relational wounds, sin, unmet needs, and unfulfilled longings. The individual will need to process what the Spirit is revealing in their soul. The aim is for the individual to have a focused time on relating with God and recalibrating their soul towards him.
 - Healing prayer: this is a good time for the individual to tell their story to someone skilled in prayer, and together pray and wait on God to speak to them and then pray through the individuals response – forgiving others, denunciation and repentance, receiving and appropriating God's forgiveness and rejecting lies.

Reconnection

- Family: it is important for the individual to be intentional about spending this time reconnecting with spouse and children. This could include therapy/coaching sessions or just intentional uninterrupted conversations and

space to uncover and rediscover each other's dreams and aspirations. To recalibrate connection is important.

Rest and Recreation

- The individual should set aside time for activities that simply sooth the body, mind and soul. This may mean a section of the sabbatical is taken alone.

Recollection

- The practice of writing/recording what God has done and said over the years before the sabbatical. This is an exercise in gratitude, but also an opportunity to reflect on what the individual has learnt, mistakes they have made, successes they have had.

Re-envisioning

- Dreaming of a future with God. Dreaming some family goals with your family. Gaining perspective and faith for the next few years. This shouldn't be a strategy setting exercise for the church, it may inform that in time, but that is not what this time is for.

3. Make financial arrangements (based on agreement with CGC)

- CGC Sabbatical agreement includes a 13th cheque (normal tax applies) to empower the extra costs related with taking this sabbatical
- Further application for finances can occur if there are other learning opportunities they would like to attend

4. Develop a realistic plan to achieve the goals

- Often goals are too ambitious and the allotted time for the sabbatical does not allow enough time to achieve the goals. (a sabbatical accountability mentor/coach can be helpful, through the planning stages and for some communication during the time)

5. Planning the re-entry

- Returning from a sabbatical may be more difficult than going on one.
- It may be difficult to get back in touch with the total situation all at once.
- Consider an adjustment period when returning.

- One wise seminary professor once remarked, "It is not possible to board a moving train with a perpendicular leap." Therefore, the pastor needs to run alongside for a while to catch up with the church's momentum.
- While advance planning was necessary for embarking on the sabbatical, it is no less important for returning from it.

CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY

Sabbatical planning should include the church as well as the pastor. Some churches have found that forming a sabbatical committee is a good way to work together. The following suggestions for sabbatical planning are endorsed by the Reformed Church in America¹³:

- During a sabbatical, salary and benefits shall continue to be paid as during normal service.
- Unusual expenses (not previously agreed upon) incurred during a sabbatical leave (cost of tuition, travel, etc.) are the responsibility of the individual, who may choose to use funds set aside for continuing education if the CGC leadership team agrees that this is appropriate.
- Appropriate provision in the annual budget shall be made to ensure that when a plan for a sabbatical is agreed upon, the funds for supplementary role assistance (as needed) are available.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM SABBATICALS¹⁴

SoulShepharding.Org states that individuals should be careful with their expectations of the Sabbatical. Setting aside one's normal work and job responsibilities for Sabbatical rest doesn't automatically mean that one will feel relaxed, peaceful, and content. In fact, it may be the opposite:

Often our work distracts us from how we really feel and what's really going on in our relationships. Therefore, sabbaticals could be quite a reality check about how much work we need to do to restore relationships and ourselves. With more time and energy to be present to one's spouse and children one may get drawn into some difficult, and sometimes unexpected, conversations.

¹³ <https://www.rca.org/resources/leadership/sabbatical>

¹⁴ <http://www.soulshpherd.org/2016/04/sabbatical-guide-pastors/>

As said before, on Sabbatical, a leader's self-esteem won't be propped up by their role, accomplishments, and appreciation from people so at times they may feel insignificant or bored.

Going on Sabbatical is a major discipline of abstinence or self-denial. Like fasting, solitude and silence, frugality, or secrecy these disciplines are meant to evoke emotion. Then we can share our feelings with a soul friend, mentor, or counsellor, seeking empathy and guidance from the Lord through our "Christ's ambassador" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

In this way, our Sabbatical can be a time of soul training that helps us learn how to truly rest and to make progress in becoming the kind of person who is able to be at peace in the midst of stress. We are practicing living and working in Jesus' easy yoke (Matthew 11:25-30).

COMMON PITFALLS OF SABBATICALS

There is a dark side to almost any sabbatical, and it is worth considering. The negatives may not be eliminated, but they may be anticipated and thus controlled a bit by eliminating the surprise.¹⁵

As churches and pastors consider whether and how to plan a sabbatical, it's important to keep some key issues in mind.

- Not every church can afford a sabbatical. Smaller churches with a solo pastor struggle in very practical ways to handle their leader's absence. Sabbaticals can happen, but it takes a great deal of work: a long time in preparation, a lot of responsible volunteers, and follow-up. For some congregations, it may be simply too hard to manage.
- Congregational anxiety is less contained without the pastor at the centre to model faithfulness in the face of fear. The burden of added anxiety can mean sleepless nights for staff and lay leaders and can co-opt their agendas.
- A sabbatical always involves someone who is left behind. Spouses, associate pastors, lay leaders and others carry an extra load. Envy, weariness and

¹⁵ <https://www.faithandleadership.com/dark-side-sabbatical>

resentment are not noble responses, but they are predictable. The congregation should anticipate them and seek ways to respond with understanding.

- A sabbatical forces a pastor to negotiate a transition in role, responsibility and self-definition. Transition involves an “in-between” phase that is hard. Pastors should expect and plan for such a transition when they begin and end sabbaticals. It is hard to move from the world of engagement, authority and accountability to a world of rest or a world of study or writing, and back again.
- Ritualizing the separation, such as in a blessing and sending ceremony in worship, can help anchor the transition in a spiritual context. Pastors/leaders may want to plan a personal trip that takes them away for a time at the beginning, as they seek to break old routines and find routine in the new.
- Life goes on without the absent leader - and that is both good and hard to accept for those of us who lead. Staff and lay leaders take on tasks and step into roles that once were the pastor’s. They may not want to give them back.
- The increasing prevalence of pastoral sabbatical in an era that stresses “self-care and self-leadership” may have led some new pastors to think of it as something all pastors deserve and should expect. But it must have a larger purpose. To be worthwhile of congregational support, a sabbatical ought to connect explicitly with the ministry to which the pastor will return. Otherwise, sabbatical risks seeming like an extended paid vacation.
- Sabbaticals can be wonderful times of renewal and growth for both pastors and congregations, with the potential for energizing ministry for the long haul. They also have the potential for trouble. A good sabbatical requires expectant hope and good planning, with a wise awareness of the dark side.

POLICY: COMMON GROUND'S STAFF SABBATICAL

Purpose:

Common Ground Church places highest value in Christ-centeredness in the functioning of all believers’ lives. In order for our long-term, God-breathed goals as a church to be reached, we need to have a church culture that values long-term leadership and supporting our pastoral and leadership teams maintaining a high degree of personal integrity and wellness. As a result, we believe that from time to time our leaders will have need of an extended break from duties to realign with God first, themselves, and close significant relationships apart from the life

of responsibilities that their role holds.

Realising that our leadership team's energy and emotional resources become depleted over time, and especially as ones tasked with investing in the lives of others, we believe it is both a biblical wisdom, an example Jesus himself set, and in the best interest of our people (both the leader and the people led by the leader) that we invest in extended time of purposeful rest, namely a sabbatical after a certain amount of years served.

Objectives:

Our sabbatical programme has the following objectives:

- To honour the example set for us in Scriptures relating to rest
- To conserve and reignite productivity, creativity and passion in long-term leaders
- To decrease the outflow of valued leaders from full time ministry as a result of fatigue/burn out rather than God calling them out of full-time ministry
- To uphold the value of Christ-centeredness in our leaders

Eligibility:

- Sabbaticals are possible for any pastoral staff member with five years of service to Common Ground Church (pastoral staff who have years of ministry without adequate rest before starting employment at CGC may be eligible for an earlier sabbatical).
- Other staff members (key ministry leaders and administration staff) may apply for a sabbatical after seven years of service at CGC.
- Sabbatical leave is not an automatic right of employment.
- Sabbatical benefits are not to be considered benefits available to on termination of employment.
- Part-time staff, contract staff and interns are, in general, not eligible for a sabbatical, however this remains at the discretion of CGC leadership and at times extended, paid rest may be granted to these individuals.
- A staff member may not receive cash in lieu of time off for sabbatical.

TERMS

Sabbaticals are granted under the following terms

- Only one staff person in a team can take sabbatical leave at a time (and not within the same 6-month period).
- Length of the sabbatical may be up to 12 weeks for lead pastoral staff and 6-8 weeks for other key leaders/pastors/staff.
- The person on sabbatical is understood to be free of ongoing responsibilities related to their position except as indicated in the sabbatical agreement.
- It is not intended that the person on sabbatical engage in other paid work during their time away, therefore their full salary will be covered with some extra (as agreed) to assist with the extra costs associated with extended leave (this expectation excludes staff members who normally work for another company in addition to CGC)
- During the sabbatical, CGC will provide 100% of the employee's average salary, plus employee's current benefits.
- Post sabbatical leave, the position that is held by the employee at the beginning of the sabbatical is guaranteed to the employee at the same rate of pay and conditions as when the sabbatical began (unless agreement for other terms were reached prior to the sabbatical).
- Written commitment to return to the organization for one full year post-sabbatical is required. If the employee resigns within one full year of returning from sabbatical, the employee shall provide full repayment to the organization of the costs of salary and benefits provided during the sabbatical.
- After completing the sabbatical, the employee is not eligible to apply again until after the full years from the end of the sabbatical leave agreed for their role.

Criteria

Rigby and Ryan shall use the following criteria in deciding whether or not to grant sabbatical leave (or the timing thereof):

- Individual's performance
- Need of the individual for extended rest
- Effect of the sabbatical on congregation, programmes and other employees
- Availability and capacity of replacement staff
- Effect on current staff
- Effect on the budget
- How close to another individual's sabbatical and the effect thereof

Implementation:

- Eligible congregational elders will submit written application to Rigby and Ryan
- An eligible staff member will submit a written application to the Base Management Team (who will include the individual's applicable congregational and/or team leaders in the review process and decision).
- The request should specifically address the following six criteria:
 - the proposed length of sabbatical
 - start date
 - end date
 - a rationale for how the sabbatical leave will benefit the individual and the church/congregation
 - a motivation letter from the individual's team leader (if staff member)/congregational leader (if on staff pastoral team)/Rigby or Ryan (if congregational lead elder)
- On approval of a sabbatical, a written contract will be required committing to at least one year of service following the completion of the sabbatical and to reimbursement of the costs of salary and benefits if the employee departs of their own volition before the year is up.
- Applications should be submitted at least four months prior to the beginning of the leave. Ideally, applications should be submitted during the calendar year prior to the proposed leave to allow for budget planning to accommodate the individual's absence from service.

Approval Process:

- All sabbatical requests from staff shall be granted at the discretion of Rigby and Ryan and/or BMT, who will explain if application does not get approved or negotiate terms and conditions with the individual.

POLICY: MARKETPLACE ELDERS SABBATICAL AND REST

Like our paid pastors, we want to create rhythms that allow our marketplace elders appropriate rest and recalibration.

There are several ways we encourage this in our regular rhythms:

- Marketplace elders get every sixth weekend off.
- We also try to avoid responsibilities and events being set for Saturday as much as possible – recognising that for our marketplace elders this is their Sabbath.
- Marketplace leaders are encouraged to take their leave in good “down” times to maximise these moments (Such as Easter and Christmas when the paid elders cover these times).
- In addition, flexibility is encouraged. During busy travel and work seasons, we do not expect marketplace elders to make every meeting.

Congregations are strongly suggested to create rhythms for meetings that allow for both parents not to always be expected to attend. (e.g. Guys only THETS, or no agenda “THETs” on Sundays which allow for families to connect).

- Common Ground congregations offer volunteer babysitting support where possible to support the family for evening events and meetings.
- All our leaders should receive regular access to inspiring input on calling, and life-flowing ministry, igniting passion and recalibration as a team (e.g. inviting them to an Advance conference)

We recommend that congregational leadership teams keep in mind the amount of time marketplace elders have spent in serving and leading (e.g. they may only have served on eldership for a year or two, but been part of leading and serving the story for much longer. Likewise, they may have been serving/leading in other contexts before coming to CGC.)

MARKETPLACE ELDERS SABBATICALS

A sabbatical leave for Marketplace Elders is unpaid time off from eldership duties and responsibilities. The types of sabbaticals may include one or more or a combination of the types of leaves listed below:

1. Study Leave – to focus on a particular learning goal such as completion of a defined academic course/programme, seminar or study.
2. Rest and Spiritual Renewal Leave – While spiritual renewal and rest should be a component of every type of leave, at times leave may be necessary for this purpose alone. If there has been an extended or particularly intense time of pouring themselves out for the church (or extended personal circumstances that have led to fatigue/burnout), an individual may need an extended time to replenish spiritual resources through prayer and reflection.
3. Service Leave – On occasion a marketplace elder may have specific expertise or interest that may be needed by a partner congregation or organization on a short-term basis. This may include interim teaching, administrative support, or helping to start a new ministry. The length of this type of leave varies depending on the situation, however, it should be defined in advance.
4. Special Circumstances – at times there may be a special case where an extended rest is required for the health and flourishing of the individual. This could be for physical health, mental/emotional health, or marriage health (there are times when marriages need extended times of focus to ensure ongoing health and flourishing).
5. Unusual market-place withdrawal – during a period of marketplace busyness, marketplace elders may need to take an extended break from the role of elder to focus on their marketplace responsibilities.

MARKETPLACE SABBATICAL DURATION AND AGREEMENTS:

We realise that each congregation has a different reality and context, therefore when marketplace elders need extended rest, the plan needs to be co-crafted with each couple and their congregational lead elder.

We suggest that consideration be given for when are good seasons for leave, in light of calendar and staffing for the specific congregation and Rigby and Ryan should be

included in communications when marketplace elders are planning on an extended break.

This will also allow more city-wide support to assist these congregations (preachers/ministry leaders/eldership couples that other congregations can send to support and strengthen).

Because the sabbatical is more an evening/Sunday reality rather than the full break a full-time employee can enjoy, it is recommended that 3-6 months be considered as an appropriate length for a marketplace eldership sabbatical (every 5 years).

Like with staff sabbaticals, expectations should be clarified around:

- Start date
- End date
- What will happen on sabbatical
- Which elders/staff/volunteers will take over responsibilities

If there are other extenuating circumstances for marketplace elders sabbaticals that fall outside of these agreed suggestions, we recommend asking Rigby and Ryan to be involved in assisting with perspective and wisdom in the decision-making process.

MARKETPLACE SABBATICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Congregational elders need to be building a culture of robustness and eldership as life-giving energy-flowing. They will need to discuss and agree with the couple going on sabbatical how they will keep in community if they step off for a time (Will they attend another CGC congregation? Will they attend another church?).

Some of the suggestions for recalibration may be helpful for the couple to consider while on sabbatical.

APPENDIX A

PROPOSED: SABBATICAL REQUEST FORM

Please complete the following information to enable the Sabbatical Review process to consider your request. Answer all questions. This form must be received no later than 4 months before you intend to take your sabbatical (preferably a year before).

Name: _____

Congregation: _____

Team on staff: _____

Direct team leader (if applicable) _____

Congregational leader (if applicable): _____

Period and dates of previous sabbatical (if applicable): _____

Preference for sabbatical leave dates:

Start _____

End _____

Statement of purpose:

- Ministry Sabbatical
- Study Sabbatical
- Mission/exchange Sabbatical
- Other (please specify) _____

Rationale from individual:

Is there currently someone on staff who can cover your role (if yes, please specify)?

Is there a key volunteer who can cover your role for a contractual period (if yes, please specify)?

Rationale from the team/congregational leader:

I, _____ (name), understand that if my application for a sabbatical is accepted, I am committing to one year of employment following the completion of the sabbatical, and understand I will need to reimburse the costs of salary and benefits if I depart of my own volition before the year is up.

_____ (staff members signature).

APPENDIX B

LEARNINGS FROM CGC SABBATICALS

Ryan and Kate Termorshuizen

Each sabbatical is unique.

Our first sabbatical happened in a change of season - we were commissioned to go and gear up FOR the next challenge that lay ahead. The second one felt like a resting FROM a season of intensity of ministry. This was for wellness in marriage, family and spirituality. Our key learning was to shape the sabbatical according to its purpose. This happens by having good conversations up front around the purpose and then shaping the sabbatical accordingly.

We also learnt that we needed to ensure we were on the same page and that we were reading the season of our family life well. What we might experience as a break could be an extra strain and burden for the family, especially our spouses. Deal with home-game stuff as much as possible before you go – we needed to ensure that our eldership team was well set up, that responsibilities were delegated, and that people felt well cared for before we left. This enables us to go in strength.

Have the big things in our own life settled so that the sabbatical itself is not a journey of decision. If we are wrestling with important or weighty decisions to be made during this time, it is hard to rest and refresh.

Have a spiritual re-vitalisation plan – it is easy for days to flow into each other, so having a plan in place helps direct the rest. We need to read the things our souls need for re-vitalisation and plan to do them. Disconnecting identity and spirituality from one's ministry is such a key thing - being able to disentangle these things is one of the key elements of the sabbatical. Be ready for this internal journey.

Bonus of a sabbatical coach – as leaders we can feel like we can plan for and strategize the sabbatical for ourselves. But, having someone else come and ask you questions is key – things that you don't even know you don't know. It is ideal to do this a couple of months beforehand. Re-entry is key – the weight of responsibility we carry means we often feel we need to “bring it” on our return. Most of the time we come back to business as usual and need to integrate slowly without feeling like we “need to deliver”. We often come back with fresh lenses, and it is a season to be aware and listen more.

Don't come back with financial deficits which create stress and burden on your return. Limit yourself to what you can truly afford so that you are also living within your means. Be open to the provision of grace upfront.

APPENDIX C

SUGGESTED SUNDAY ANNOUNCEMENT PROCESS AND WORDING FOR SABBATICALS

It is suggested that at least two Sunday announcements are made – the final one being on the final Sunday in attendance. Doing two allows the congregation the chance to process and ask questions and communicate with the person/ couple involved, without any time rush. There is then no chance for false stories to creep in (Why was this rushed? Why can't we speak to them? Was something wrong? etc.)

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus modelled a wisdom and reality of appropriate seasons of rest through his own life and indicated a deep understanding and appreciation for the rhythms of life and the requirement for Sabbath rest (rest towards God). His own ministry showed times of withdrawal for prayer and spiritual solitude. We likewise recognize that having leaders who have hearts towards God and people that are tender and wise and energetic need to have times of extended rest and recuperation. So, from time to time, after faithful years of serving, we allow our leaders to have a season of extended rest from the responsibilities of church leadership and work (if they are full-time employed). It is strategic rest to allow the leaders to rest in God and come back refreshed spiritually, mentally and physically.

As you know, Yy and Xx give their very best for God in this community. And anyone who runs a race knows that you can't go at the same speed for too long. You need times to pause, stop, rest and get ready for the next stage. This is not an emergency, but rather an important and strategic time to invest in themselves, as a couple and as a family. So, as leaders, we are excited about how God will use this time to grow them and prepare them for the next season of ministry.

For 3 months, we will not see them. They won't reply to emails, they will exit many WhatsApp groups. They will still love us but will step back from actively ministering. How can you support them in this time? Pray for them: that this is a time of replenishment, restoration and rest. Praying that they would hear from God, be filled up and freshly envisioned for the next chapter of ministry. [few words by the couple - optional] I am going to invite a few leaders to come forward, lay hands on them and pray for them.

PRAYER TIME – 2 OR 3 LEADERS PRAY INTO MICROPHONE

If you want to share something with Yy and Xx, please feel free to connect with them after the meeting.