Clergy Sabbaticals

**Information Concerning Sabbaticals**

**1. Purpose**  
The prime purpose of a sabbatical is to step back aside and have space for prayerful reflection, professional development and personal enrichment. As such, **renewal, retreat** and **rest** are all important elements to take into consideration when planning a sabbatical. It can be a significant time to reflect on your work, and on the way it is shaping you. To look back and look forward, as well as being an opportunity to give concentrated attention and sustained time to a subject or project which matters to you and your future ministry, and which may benefit others in the church.

Two options are available

* Long sabbatical: 3 months every 7 years
* Short sabbatical: 1 month every 3 years

The purpose of a sabbatical may suggest a long or short option is more appropriate. If it is to live for a while in a different rhythm, then the three months should be taken as a block. However, there may be good reasons, given the focus of a particular sabbatical, to take the time in shorter instalments. Please discuss these options with the Head of Learning and Ministry Development.

Please also remember, you do not have to have to justify your sabbatical with works. At all costs, avoid the temptation to fill up the time with a succession of ‘projects’.  Having said this, holiday or annual leave is distinct from the sabbatical and should not be counted as part of the sabbatical time. You may choose to plan your holiday at a separate time from the three months given to the sabbatical.

**2. Eligibility**

* Stipendiary clergy who have been ordained at least ten years are eligible to apply for the long sabbatical, and clergy who have been ordained at least five years are eligible to apply for the short sabbatical.
* Prior service in a similar ministry in another diocese, church or ministry, will normally be recognised.
* Repeat sabbaticals can be applied for 3 years after a short sabbatical or 7 years after a long sabbatical.

**3. Procedure**  
Applications can be made between January and June this year for sabbaticals to be taken between January and December next year. There are restrictions on the number of Sabbaticals available in any one year. Applications will be considered by the meeting of Bishops and Archdeacons (B&As) upon recommendation from the Head of Learning and Ministry Development.

Application forms are available below, and a preliminary conversation, with the Head of Learning and Ministry Development is recommended before completing an application.

Please remember when making plans to:

* think them through carefully with family and friends;
* discuss them with ministerial colleagues (e.g. Churchwardens, lay leaders, clergy colleagues);
* give thought about letting go of responsibilities and how to take them up again when re-entering the regular working context, perhaps finding creative ways to mark the return.

**4. Cover**  
Those taking a sabbatical will need to consult with their Area Dean and/or Minster Community Oversight Minister, to ensure that the deanery is aware of the sabbatical. It is the responsibility of the person asking for the sabbatical to ensure that proper cover is in place for pastoral duties and services during the time of sabbatical. It is expected that PCCs will assist in arranging cover and take responsibility for any costs involved. It is good practice to ensure that any other ministry team members are fully aware of plans well ahead of time and that where a first-post curate/reader is involved, that arrangements have been made for ‘supervision’ for the period of the sabbatical.

**5. Finance**  
Licensed, stipendiary clergy will be entitled to a grant of up to £500 – long sabbatical, or £200 – short sabbatical, (either claimed back piecemeal via expenses or as a one-off grant of £500). In addition, clergy may use their annual CMD grant towards sabbatical costs. All CMD grants are subject to the agreement of the Head of Learning and Ministry Development and budget availability.

There are additional sources of sabbatical funding, and the following list may be useful:

* The Ecclesiastical Insurance Group: [Ministry Bursary Awards Scheme](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/ministry-bursary-awards/)  
  The EIG Bursary Award Scheme is open to those in full time stipendiary ministry in a Christian church and can provide a grant towards a work-related project, contribute to a study course away from a demanding ministry, or support research in the UK or abroad. EIG write that “Due to the nature of their work and the demands of busy ministries, most members of the clergy rarely manage to make sufficient time to carry out imaginative projects to improve their ministries or to simply take time to refresh themselves through a spiritual journey. The Ministry Bursary Awards are here to help them achieve just that.”  
  Successful applicants have used their awards to help fund projects such as travel, study courses and pilgrimages, as well as periods of reflection and retreat. The closing date for applications for awards for each year is generally the end of September of the previous year.
* The Alexis Trust: Small grants (c£50) for Christian based activities. Write to Prof D W Vere, 14 Broadfield Way, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, IG9 5AG
* The [St. George’s Trust](https://fsje.org.uk/): Grants to people involved in the service of the Church of England and churches in communion with her, including clergy grants towards sabbatical expenses.
* Women may also make applications to: the [Women’s Continuing Ministerial Education Trust](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/diocesan-resources/ministry/wcmet)
* The [American Memorial Chapel Travel grant](http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/american_memorial_chapel_travel_grant) seeks to foster understanding and the exchange of ideas between members of the clergy in the UK and USA, by allowing a member of the clergy to take a study tour to the USA for up to four weeks.

Please do inform the Head of Learning and Ministry Development of any other useful sources of funding you come across so that these can be shared more widely via this website.

**6. Getting the most from your Sabbatical**  
As mentioned above, three important dimensions of a sabbatical are renewal, retreat and rest. While the word sabbatical is now used in secular institutions to mean only a time of professional development in the church, we should not lose sight of its roots in rest and renewal. Every sabbatical will be unique, but it is good to consider these three elements when preparing the proposal, and with short sabbaticals, balancing these three aims over multiple short sabbaticals.

**6.1 Renewal**  
This is the element of professional and ministerial development which might well take the greatest part of your three months. It is usually the key element in the sabbatical. It can involve some element of learning probably through study and theological reflection. It should be designed to widen horizons or deepen thinking in a particular area, rather than simply revisiting familiar territory. Most people have some idea of what they want to do with this time, but it is good to ensure that it is something which benefits a variety of needs including your own ministry now and, in the future, and the wider work of the church.

**6.2 Retreat**  
The sabbatical should include some time which is by nature of retreat. For some people that may mean going on a “Retreat”. But there are other ways of retreating. The principle is that some of your sabbatical should be set aside for you and your own relationship with God. This means retreating from church, work, family and responsibility to refresh your own personal spiritual life in a way which is best for you. It is wise to discuss this element with your spiritual director or mentor if you have one.

**6.3 Rest**  
A sabbatical is not a holiday. Nonetheless the biblical pattern of Sabbath does include rest as a vital part of its very nature. It is, therefore, appropriate and necessary that the three month includes some time of physical rest and refreshment. And ideally plenty of fun and laughter! It is particularly wise to include a few days at the beginning of your time to adjust to a change of pace and prepare yourself to get the best from your sabbatical.

**7. Feeding back**  
You will not be asked to produce a report, but you should review your learning, development, self-discovery, vocational insights with a suitable person soon after your sabbatical. A suitable person might be your line manager, area dean, archdeacon, or bishop. Please let the Head of Learning and Ministry Development know who you will use and if a member of the coaching team would be helpful in debriefing. Likewise, incorporating it into ongoing MDR processes and your learning development plan is vital.

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