

Pastor Sabbatical Policy

1. Biblical Foundation for Rest

Regular, intentional seasons of rest reflect a consistent biblical pattern:

- God set aside every seventh day as a day of rest (Ex 20:8–11)
- Every seventh year was a time for the public reading and reflection on the Law (Deut 31:9–13).
- Every fiftieth year was observed as the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25)

2. Value of Sabbaticals in Ministry

Longevity among pastoral staff is a common trait in healthy, thriving churches. Sabbaticals support this in several ways:

- They encourage long-term commitment to the church.
- They serve as a meaningful reward for faithful, sustained service.
- They communicate care and appreciation for pastors and their families.
- Extended paid leave is also a recognized practice in many secular workplaces.
- Sabbaticals help prevent burnout through proactive rest and renewal.

3. Purpose and Expectations of a Sabbatical

A sabbatical is not simply an extended vacation. During this time, pastors are encouraged to:

- Invest in meaningful time with family to strengthen marriage and parenting relationships.
- Visit other churches for worship, encouragement, and a fresh ministry perspective.
- Read ministry-related books to renew spiritual focus and creative energy.
- Set aside intentional time for prayer, solitude, and reflection.
- Prioritize spiritual, physical, and emotional renewal as the primary goal.

4. Sabbatical Guidelines at the Church

All sabbaticals must be arranged with advanced notice and approved by the Shepherd/Elder Team.

- Pastoral staff are eligible for a paid sabbatical after each 7–10 years of service, with duration based on years served (7 years=5 weeks, 8 years=6 weeks, 9 years=7 weeks, 10 years= 8 weeks)
- If a sabbatical has not been taken by the end of the 10th year, it will become mandatory. Sabbaticals may be requested earlier in cases of extenuating circumstances.
- Pastoral staff who take a sabbatical are expected to remain employed at the church for at least 12 months afterward.
- Sabbaticals will normally be scheduled during the summer months unless otherwise approved.
- Staff members must arrange for volunteer coverage in their ministry areas before beginning their sabbatical.
- It is recommended that at least part of the sabbatical be spent away from Twin Falls to allow for true separation from ministry responsibilities.
- While on sabbatical, pastors should refrain from attending the church facilities.
- Sabbatical time does not count toward earned vacation time and should not be combined with vacation time to extend the time away.

- Salary and all personal/family benefits will continue as if the pastor were working full-time.
- The Shepherd/Elder Team may provide additional funds for sabbatical expenses.
- The Shepherd/Elder Team may adjust certain ministry expense items to help support those covering ministry responsibilities during the pastor's absence.
- While on sabbatical, pastors should not be contacted with ministry-related texts, calls, or emails from the church except in emergencies. "Emergency" should be defined prior to the sabbatical.

5. Considerations

- Plan well in advance. It is not too early to begin preparing and putting the right pieces in place.
- View the pastor's absence as an opportunity. Invite guest speakers, have elders share from the pulpit, and find creative ways to keep the congregation engaged.
- Consider setting aside funds to help support the sabbatical. Many pastors don't earn high salaries, and an extended break can be difficult to enjoy if there are no resources for meaningful travel or rest. Be generous!