



If printed this document is UNCONTROLLED

**MINISTER’S SABBATICAL AND  
SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT POLICY  
AG-PS-2**

Primary Responsibility	Pastoral Care Deacon/Team
Issued	April 2024
Status	Pending approval
Review Period	3 years
Next Review Date	April 2027

**DISTRIBUTION**

Original	Church Office
Copy	Trustees

**1. Purpose and Scope**

This policy establishes the principles for sabbatical leave and regular spiritual refreshment opportunities for the Wymondham Baptist Church Minister.

**2. Defining sabbatical**

The concept of **sabbatical** is rooted in the biblical concept of ‘Sabbath’ which God Himself modelled (Genesis 2:1-4a) and commanded (Exodus 20:8-11). WBC supports our Minister to follow God’s design for Sabbath rest.

Sabbatical is not the same as annual leave and days off but is to enable the Minister to stand back from regular duties and to take time to study, reflect and pray at greater leisure than the demands of ministry allow. The purpose is to enrich their personal ministry, which benefits both the Minister and the church.

### **3. Benefits of sabbatical include:**

#### **For the Minister:**

- Refreshing and restoration (physical, spiritual, mental) by a break from usual Church daily activities and duties.
- Extended time to seek God, to hear God's voice, gain insight and renew vision.
- Space for personal reflection, to stand back and take stock.
- Opportunity for study.
- To be fed spiritually, to receive input to stimulate fresh thinking.
- Opportunities to network, visit other churches, observe how they do things.

#### **For Wymondham Baptist Church:**

- A way of honouring the Minister's commitment and faithful hard work for the church (1 Timothy 5:17).
- Our Minister is a God-given gift to our Church - we are committed to ensuring they have the pastoral care, spiritual nourishment and refreshment times we all need.
- Modelling to the Church the 'holy habit' of time set aside for God, to prioritise our relationship with Him and spiritual formation.
- Create space and opportunities for others in the Church to develop and exercise their gifts and to avoid over-dependence on one person.
- A witness to the community of the love and trust with which the WBC fellowship esteems their Minister.

### **4. Timing of sabbatical**

WBC encourages the Minister to take study leave every seven years from the commencement of their appointment, in line with Baptist Union guidelines. The leave should last at least one month, to provide the benefits of a significant break from duties, and should not be more than three months.

The Minister and the Leadership Team will work together to agree the dates with the church well in advance (ideally a year), to enable proper planning.

The leave is generally taken consecutively to maximise the benefits of refreshment or concentrated study. However it may be split up to accommodate individual circumstances, as long as the whole sabbatical is completed within six months or by agreement with the Leadership Team, in order to minimise the disruptive effect on the normal operation of the church.

Unlike an ordinary paid vacation, the purpose of sabbatical is for the future benefit of the church (WBC), as well as for the present and future benefit of the Minister.

Therefore the Minister commits to continue in their service to the church for at least twelve months from the date of their return from sabbatical leave.

Any new Minister will not take sabbatical leave within the first year in post.

### **5. Financial support**

The church will pay the Minister's stipend and normal allowances during a sabbatical.

In addition, consideration will be given to making a contribution to any extra costs incurred by the Minister in taking the sabbatical, such as travel, accommodation, fees and book purchase. This is seen as an investment in ministry that will enhance the quality of service offered in the cause of God's kingdom. *Section 5.3 of Taxation Guidance Notes for Churches and Ministers* on the BU website gives guidance on the tax implications of any contribution.

## 6. Sabbatical plan

A detailed sabbatical plan will be drawn up by the Minister with the Leadership Team. The plan will be presented to the church members at least 6 months before the proposed sabbatical. Sabbatical proposals should reflect a balance of physical rest, personal recreation, intellectual stimulation and spiritual renewal. Sufficient time for the family should be included.

The proposal should include:

- a) Description of the aims and intended outcomes of the sabbatical.
- b) Activities involved and how these will benefit the Minister and/or the church.
- c) Dates.
- d) Budget summary eg costs of travel, classes, retreat, mentoring etc.
- e) How the Minister's role will be carried out during sabbatical.
- f) A consideration of the needs of the family during the Minister's sabbatical and what support the church will put in place.

Upon returning, the Minister will make a written and oral report to the church Leadership Team and membership, reflecting on the experience, how the time was invested and the benefits realised.

## 7. Communication during sabbatical

The Leadership Team and Minister will work together to ensure that everyone in the church fully understands what a sabbatical is and why it is granted, and that it is not annual leave. This includes the Minister's specific aims and planned area of study.

During sabbatical, it is essential that the Minister is relieved from all routine and emergency duties. Everyone needs to know the arrangements for pastoral care, especially for dealing with emergencies. The Leadership Team and the Minister will agree if there are any extenuating circumstances in which it would be appropriate to call upon them during sabbatical.

The Minister is encouraged to go to different churches during sabbatical and if possible, find another church to attend during this time. This should take into consideration the needs of the family also and what works best for them too.

## 8. Ongoing spiritual refreshment

In addition to sabbatical every seven years, we encourage and support the Minister to set aside time regularly for **spiritual refreshment** ie time to be alone with the Father, as modelled by Jesus (Luke 5:6), or for personal development, reflection and spiritual enrichment times during the year.

Spiritual refreshment might include:s

- Visits to other churches on a number of Sundays each year (this is allowed for in the WBC Minister's contract).
- Attend a spiritual retreat, conference, workshop, training course.
- Participate in mutual support and refreshment events with peers.

The Minister will agree an outline plan with the Leadership Team on an annual basis.

## 9. Key sources

[The Baptist Union - Sabbatical Leave - information for Churches](#)  
[The Baptist Union - Sabbatical Leave - information for Ministers](#)