**Sabbatical Policy**

**For the Consideration of Southside Baptist Network Churches**

Sabbaticals are periods of extended time away from church ministry granted according to tenure at a church for the purpose of refreshing the pastor spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically. During the time away, a pastor may do a variety of things for renewal: spend time alone with the Lord, attend a conference, spend extended time reading Scripture and other helpful books, travel, spend extra time with spouse and family, pursue a hobby, pursue educational opportunities, etc.

Since Sabbaticals are recommended for healthy pastors and churches, the Southside Baptist Network will gladly assist in filling the pulpit and paying appropriate honorariums as needed if the church is not able to do so.

Here are some general guidelines for churches to prayerfully consider.

1. Senior Pastors shall be eligible for a 4, 6, or 8-week sabbatical leave after completing 5-7 years of service. Each church determines what is most appropriate for them. A 4-week Sabbatical every 7 years is a starting point.
2. Churches are asked to consider Sabbaticals for other Pastoral Staff in addition to the Senior Pastor.
3. The time of the Sabbatical leave and its funding should be approved by the appropriate church leadership prior to the time the leave is taken.
4. Sabbaticals should not be considered as part of the Pastor’s vacation time, and during the Sabbatical the pastor will continue to receive his regular salary and benefits.
5. The appropriate church leadership appoints a task force to be known as the Sabbatical Team with the following responsibilities:
6. To meet with the Pastor prior to the leave of absence to see how responsibilities will be covered
7. To ensure that needed responsibilities are carried out
8. To assign a person to contact the Pastor only in cases of emergency
9. To meet with the Pastor after the Sabbatical to update the Pastor on congregational life.
10. The Pastor will recount for the Team the beneficial impact of the Sabbatical and summarize things learned while away.
11. The Team should evaluate how the Pastor’s absence affected the congregation.
12. No major decisions should be made by the staff, deacons, or congregation in the Pastor’s absence, unless they make the Pastor aware of them first.
13. For the congregation to benefit from the personal renewal of its Pastor, and out of respect for the congregation’s kindness, the Pastor should not consider a change in ministry for at least a year, and hopefully not for several years, after the Sabbatical. (Adapted from *A Suggested Pastoral Sabbatical Policy*, by Maynard Belt from the category of Pastoral Sabbaticals at [www.barnabasfile.com](http://www.barnabasfile.com).)