

## Pastor Sabbatical Planning Worksheet

For a positive sabbatical experience, it is important for the church to have buy-in. The church and pastor need to work together to discuss and plan what the sabbatical will look like. At least 3 months of planning and conversations in advance are recommended in order for the church and pastor to be prepared for the pastor's time away. The personnel team and/or the deacon body would be good leaders to involve in the planning process. This worksheet was developed in partnership with Texas Baptists Center for Church Health and can be used to help plan this time so that it is beneficial for the pastor and the church.

**Step 1:** First, the pastor and lay leaders should determine the type of sabbatical the pastor will take. Sabbaticals can take on different forms, have different goals, and aim to achieve different things but it is highly recommended that every sabbatical period include at least 10 -14 days of downtime and rest and time spent with family. Sabbaticals can be a mix of the different types of sabbatical described below.

**1) Spiritual Renewal** – This sabbatical type looks like some planned scripture reading, a prayer plan, hiring a spiritual director to meet with or emphasis on key spiritual disciplines, pastoral counseling sessions, time out in nature or other activities that feed the pastor's soul.

**2) Equipping** – The equipping sabbatical includes studying, being equipped, going to a conference, research, learning, auditing a master's or doctoral seminar, engaging in reading or study that stimulates ideas or pastoral creativity, or the pastor can research and create a strategy for the church.

**3) Writing Sabbatical** – A writing sabbatical aims to produce something and get ideas out. Activities may include writing a book, or writing a sermon series for the future or may include creative writing or unstructured writing time.

**4) Extended time away** – Sabbath, rest, sleep, reflect, do things that bring joy that are life-giving or encouraging to a pastor, meeting with a mentor or encouraging friend, or experiencing times of solitude.

**5) Other** – Mix and match. This sabbatical type includes a mixture of several different types of sabbaticals outlined.

Type(s) of sabbatical and goals for the pastor's sabbatical:

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**Step 2:** Pick and agree on the sabbatical dates and write the plan down. Ideally, sabbatical will take place when there are not large church events where the pastor will need to be present.

Sabbatical Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Here is a template of what the plan might look like:

**Pastor Sabbatical Sample Plan/Calendar**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Rest /Family Time	Rest/ Family Time	Rest/ Family Time	Rest/Family Time	Rest/Family Time	Rest/Family Time	Rest/Family Time
Rest/ Family Time	Rest/ Family Time	Rest/ Family Time	Pastoral Counseling/ Writing Time	Go to a Monster Truck Show/ Read Comic books	Pastoral Counseling /Reading	Go on a hike/Read a book
Meet with Mentor/ Friend	Take a gardening class at the library/ hobbies	Solitude and Prayer - Alto Frio Camp	Solitude and Prayer - Alto Frio Camp	Solitude and Prayer - Alto Frio Camp	Solitude and Prayer - Alto Frio Camp	Solitude and Prayer - Alto Frio Camp
Pastoral Counseling/ Reading/ Study	Sermon writing/ planning	Sermon writing/ planning	Sermon writing/ planning	Prayer/ Reflection/ Rest	Prayer/ Reflection/ Rest	Prayer/ Reflection/ Rest

**Step 3:** Identify what pastoral functions will need to be covered during the pastors absence and identify the staff or lay leaders that can cover those functions and who will be contacted in case of an emergency. Determine if there are any trainings the church can engage in during the pastor's absence. Texas Baptists staff are happy to provide training on a wide selection of topics. Develop a sabbatical calendar for the church.

Pastoral Functions that will need to be covered during the sabbatical:

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Staff/Church Leaders who will cover pastoral functions:

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Who will be contacted in case of emergency and what entails an emergency?

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Potential trainings for the church and/or church leaders during the pastor's sabbatical:

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**Church Sabbatical Sample Plan/Calendar**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
Deacon John covering hospital visits	Deacon Smith running staff meeting	Deacon John covering hospital visits	Children's Minister Covering hospital visits	Deacon John covering hospital visits	Youth Pastor Covering hospital visits - Church Leader Stewardship training	TXB Staff Preaching
Youth Pastor Covering Visits	Deacon Smith running staff meeting	Youth Pastor Covering Hospital Visits	Youth Pastor Covering Hospital Visits	Children's Minister Covering Visits	Children's Minister Covering Hospital Visits	TXB Staff Preaching
Deacon John covering hospital visits	Deacon Smith running staff meeting	Deacon John covering hospital visits	Deacon Chris leading bible study / Secretary covering visits	Deacon John covering hospital visits	Church Leader Evangelism training with TXB Staff	TXB Staff Preaching/ Deacon Fred lead communion
Youth Pastor Covering Visits	Deacon Smith running staff meeting	Youth Pastor Covering Hospital Visits	Deacon Chris leading bible study	Deacon John covering hospital visits	Deacon John covering hospital visits	TXB Staff Preaching

\*All funerals will be handled by Deacon Fred.

**Step 4:** Begin conversations with the church. It is wise for there to be an agreed upon plan that outlines what the sabbatical is about, what the pastor and church want to accomplish during that time and share the plan with the congregation. Schedule a time for the sabbatical to be announced to the congregation.

When sabbatical details will be shared with the congregation:

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**Step 5:** When the pastor returns from sabbatical, schedule a time for the deacons/personnel committee to visit with the pastor and debrief. This can be a time for the pastor and church leaders to discuss the benefits of the sabbatical period and address any challenges that were experienced as well. The pastor is encouraged to write and share a short document with the church regarding the sabbatical time. The document can share what the pastor gained, what they learned, and how they grew.

Date for De-Briefing with Staff/Leaders and Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 6:** Develop a Sabbatical Policy for the future. The sabbatical policy can include other pastoral and ministerial staff. This helpful [guide](#) from Focus on the Family has a sample sabbatical policy on pages 24-25.

Sabbatical Policy:

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