



Sabbaticals

(includes elder term limits)

Purpose of elder sabbatical

Elder sabbatical time is an opportunity for a serving elder to refresh and reflect. It is not meant as a time to abandon care for the church, but a time to step back and seek the Lord for fresh perspective and possibilities: How can we as shepherds improve or innovate in how we encourage, love, and lead the church? It is also a time for evaluation of personal ministry effectiveness as measured by 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

The sabbatical, then, is a time for renewal and for taking a fresh look at how the elder himself and the Elder Team reflect Jesus' love for His Church. It should not be confused with time off necessitated by extraordinary events such as family crises or health issues.

Non-staff elder sabbatical

Non-staff elders serve a three-year term. The term may be repeatedly renewed by unanimous consent of the Elder Team, assuming the elder remains willing, eager, and qualified (see Bible passages above).

Sabbatical time is provided to each non-staff elder on a rotating basis after six years of continuous elder service (two consecutive three-year terms). Only one elder may be on sabbatical at a time, with the longest-serving elder being first unless otherwise agreed upon by the Elder Team. The length of the sabbatical will be agreed upon by the elder and the Elder Team – a minimum of three months and maximum of one year. When the elder's sabbatical begins, his current term on the team ends.

The church body's awareness and involvement at this point is crucial. We will begin informing the church at least two weeks prior to the elder's sabbatical. Then, at the end of the sabbatical, if he remains willing, eager, and qualified to serve as an elder, he will be subject to review by the church as to whether there exists any objection to his returning to the team. Comments will be solicited for at least two weeks, after which the Elder Team will evaluate any comments received and address the same. Only then, and upon unanimous consent of the Elder Team, may he rejoin the team, beginning a new three-year term as an elder.

Staff elder sabbatical

Except for term limits, all of the above applies to staff elders, with one slight modification: Due to staff elders being central to the Elder Team's interface with the staff and the ongoing ministry of the church, the maximum length of a staff elder's sabbatical will be three months at a time, unless otherwise approved by the Elder Team. It seems best for him to take this sabbatical concurrent with a FT ministry staff sabbatical (detailed below), but this is not required.

Purpose of staff sabbatical

Sabbatical time is designed as an opportunity for full-time ministry staff to gain knowledge or experience that requires an extended period of time, a time to refresh and rejuvenate the staff member's life and ministry, and as a reward for extended service. Sabbatical time should not be confused with time off necessitated by extraordinary events such as family crises or health issues, nor should it be used to seek employment in another church or ministry.

FT ministry staff sabbatical

Accrual: Full-time ministry staff earn 12 weeks of sabbatical time after every 6 years of continuous service at North Platte Berean Church. Accrual of sabbatical time is not prorated, and it cannot be used until accrued.

Use: Each sabbatical may last from 1-6 weeks, not to exceed this length unless specifically approved by the Elder Team. The sabbatical must be approved at least 3 months (can be reduced to 1 month if sabbatical length is 1 week) before it starts. During sabbatical, staff will be paid their normal compensation and be eligible for all benefits normally received.

Application: To apply for a sabbatical, the employee must submit a written proposal to the Elder Team outlining in detail how the time is to be spent and how this will benefit the employee and the church. The team will review the application based on a number of factors, including but not limited to employee needs, church needs, staffing needs, value to the employee, and value to the church.

Disclaimers: The Elder Team reserves the right to postpone or cancel a sabbatical at its discretion if it deems circumstances unfit for the staff member to depart, even if previously approved. Upon termination of employment, staff will not be paid for unused sabbatical time accrued.

Policy approved by elders April 22, 2021