

## **North Highlands Baptist Church**

### **Sabbatical Policy for Full-Time Pastors**

#### **What is a Sabbatical?**

Sabbatical leave is a carefully planned period in which a member of the Pastoral staff is granted leave away from his regular responsibilities to spend an extended period in rest, study, and reflection. Sabbatical leave is not a vacation, nor is it only continuing education. Sabbatical leave can be a needed break from the long hours, high pressure, personal sacrifice, and 24 hours a-day, seven days a week nature of pastoral ministry.

Sabbatical leave is a time of prayer, rest, study, and growth at home or abroad. It can provide the needed change of scenery and pace that can help prevent burnout for the Pastor of a congregation. Sabbatical leave can also benefit the congregation in that the Pastor should return to the responsibilities of the ministry with new energy, spiritual vision, and rediscovered zeal for ministry.

Sabbatical Leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of a Sabbath day and a Sabbath period for renewal. It is both an act of faith that God will sustain the Pastor through a period of reflection and change activity and an occasion for recovery and renewal of vital energies.

#### **When is a Sabbatical granted?**

A Pastor at North Highlands Baptist is eligible for a Sabbatical after completing seven years of full-time pastoral ministry at North Highlands. Upon completion of his seventh year, the Pastor is eligible to take a four-week paid Sabbatical.

Only one Sabbatical can be taken by the pastoral staff per calendar year. Priority will be given to Pastors based on how long they have served at North Highlands.

A Sabbatical will be granted to full-time Pastoral staff once every seven years.

#### **Who is responsible for initiating and planning the Sabbatical?**

It is the responsibility of the Pastor to submit a Sabbatical request to the Personnel Committee of the church at least six months before the requested leave. The Committee and the Pastor

then work together to determine the most appropriate time in the church life for it to be taken and any financial parameters.

### **What is the church's responsibility to the pastor during Sabbatical?**

The church will continue to pay the Pastor's full salary and housing during the Sabbatical. The Personnel Committee, in conjunction with the Finance Committee, may recommend to the church to cover costs associated with the Sabbatical as they pertain to professional counseling, continuing education, or any other professional development-related costs. Other scholarships/opportunities may be available through organizations like Samford University, Pathways Counseling, and the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association. The Personnel Committee will provide recommendation letters or documentation, if required. Additional expenses may be the Pastor's responsibility.

The church will commit to praying for the Pastor and his family during the Sabbatical and will work together to keep ministries working optimally while he is away.

### **What is the Pastor's responsibility to the church in relationship to the Sabbatical?**

It is the responsibility of the pastor to develop a written plan of action and set goals to present to the Personnel Committee one month before the Sabbatical to share with the church before the Sabbatical begins and to give a report to the church when the Sabbatical is completed. While a plan and goals are wise, the Pastor should be encouraged to follow the leadership of God while he is on Sabbatical.

No church functions, such as preaching, leading worship, weddings, funerals, etc., may be performed during a Pastor's Sabbatical. The remaining staff, church leaders, and others will fulfill the ministry obligations based on the pre-determined action plan. The Sabbatical leave will take priority over vacation and paid leave requests of the remaining Pastoral Staff.

### **Ethical Implications Concerning a Sabbatical:**

It is unethical for pastors to use the Sabbatical time to explore other employment opportunities or to take another job in the year following the Sabbatical. It is also unethical for the church to use the sabbatical time to review its relationship with the Pastor.

## **Conclusion:**

The sabbatical is an essential event in the life of the Pastor and the church. For the sabbatical to be successful, the church body needs to accept the Sabbatical. The Sabbatical is not a vacation or a reward for good work done. Nor should the church give a Sabbatical grudgingly or with expectations that are overbearing and lacking grace. It is important that the Sabbatical be planned well, prayed over fervently, and funded adequately so that both the Pastor and the congregation are edified by it.

The Sabbatical is subject to the Personnel Committee's approval and the Church's financial status. This Personnel Committee retains the right to alter or discontinue this benefit with a timely notice to the staff.

*North Highlands Sabbatical Policy approved by church vote on October 18, 2023  
Motion made by Personnel Committee, Finance Committee, and Deacon Body*

