

Okotoks Evangelical Free Church Pastoral Sabbatical Policy

Preamble

The Pastoral Sabbatical is intended to provide pastoral staff who have served for an extended period of time at the Okotoks Evangelical Free Church, a gift of time away from normal responsibilities, to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. It is an opportunity for those who have given consistently of themselves in teaching and ministry to refill their hearts and resources in order that they might continue to lead our congregation and serve the Lord in this calling.

We expect that pastors will manage their lives and schedules in such a way that days off and vacation time will be used to renew energy needed for present ministry. However, the role of pastor demands a sustained amount of spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical stamina. That being so, we recognize the need for our pastors to have concentrated opportunities for restoration and enrichment. In addition to the time and money provided annually for professional development, we offer our pastors the opportunity of a three (3) month sabbatical leave every seven (7) years. This sabbatical should be used for furthering education, either formal or self-directed, or participation in a recognized program of renewal.

A Pastoral Sabbatical is a privilege, not a right. It is not granted automatically as part of employment with the church or because of length of service. It is not to be a written part of any offer of employment or contract. However, pastors should be made aware of the existence of an official policy allowing Pastoral Sabbaticals and the likelihood that such a sabbatical may be available.

Eligibility

A pastor is eligible to apply for Pastoral Sabbatical after every 7 year term of continuous service at the Okotoks Evangelical Free Church. There may be some flexibility possible with regard to when the sabbatical can be taken after each 7 year term (minimum 5 years between sabbaticals).

Application

A pastor must apply for a Pastoral Sabbatical to the Elders Board. The application should be submitted at least 6 months before the proposed sabbatical is to begin.

The application needs to include specific goals for the time away as well as an outline of plans and proposed dates.

The congregation should approve a Pastoral Sabbatical for the Senior Pastor. The Management Resource Team should approve Pastoral Sabbaticals for other pastors.

Scheduling and Timing

An attempt should be made by the pastoral applicant to schedule the sabbatical at the least disruptive time for the church. Normally that would be between May and August. However, extenuating circumstances (such as course schedules) may necessitate another time of year. This will be considered on a situation by situation basis.

Details

1. The Pastoral Sabbatical will be up to 3 months in duration. This may be combined, if the pastor wished, with annual vacation time added to either end of the sabbatical. The Pastoral Sabbatical is not considered part of the pastor's annual vacation time.
2. Only one pastor may take a Pastoral Sabbatical in any one calendar year. In the case where more than one pastor applies, the pastor with the longest term of service at the Okotoks Evangelical Free Church will most likely take priority.
3. It is understood that the pastor will not misuse the Pastoral Sabbatical as a means to seek another position or to become established elsewhere at the Okotoks Evangelical Free Church expense.
4. The pastor's salary will remain at 100% of the salary before the sabbatical. There will be no reductions during this time. All regular payroll benefits and other benefits such as health insurance will continue normally throughout the Pastor Sabbatical.
5. If the pastor's plans for sabbatical include formal education, consideration may be given to help with extra expenses.
6. To allow for congregation benefit from this leave, the pastor will be expected to remain in employment with this congregation for a period of at least one full year after the conclusion of the sabbatical. In default of this post leave requirement, repayment of salary and benefits may be arranged between the pastor and Elders Board on a pro rata basis.