

1 Policies for the Theological Education Fund for Clergy and Laity
2 and for
3 Clergy Sabbaticals and the Sabbatical and Advanced
4 Degree/Certification Accrual Fund
5 Diocese of Easton
6

7 The canons of the Church make it clear that ministry is shared by all baptized persons.
8 In many cases, training is appropriate and necessary for lay persons to carry out their
9 ministries.

10 Clergy are required to have extensive education before their ordinations, and are now
11 required to have continuing education throughout their ministries. Often this continuing
12 education is in the form of short courses both inside and outside of the diocese. Occasionally
13 sabbatical leave programs and advanced degree programs or programs leading to certification in
14 specialized areas of ministry are undertaken by clergy.

15 The diocese recognizes the importance of continuing education programs for lay and
16 clergy persons and, in order to help meet the costs of such programs, the diocese has established
17 two separate funds through which financial aid can be given. Details of these two funds are
18 outlined below.

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21 Use of the Theological Education Fund for Clergy and Laity

22 Grants from this fund are given to both clergy and laity to assist with the costs of
23 continuing education programs which will enhance their ministry in their parishes or in the
24 diocese. Grants from this fund are intended for short-term educational programs and are not
25 intended for sabbatical programs, graduate level courses, or training required for ordination.

26 Applications for funds must be submitted to the Commission on Ministry which will
27 review the applications and award grants at the regular monthly meetings of the Commission.
28 The Commission will notify the applicant of approval and certify payment via the diocesan
29 Administrator of Finance.

30 Grants from this fund will normally be one-third of the total cost of the program, not to
31 exceed \$500. Grants may exceed \$500 if multiple persons are involved or if the grant is for a
32 program which will result in a “multiplier effect” on the Diocese and is a direct benefit to the
33 Diocese.

34 No cleric or lay person shall receive more than one grant from this fund during any
35 calendar year.

36 If the Theological Education for Clergy and Laity fund is exhausted in any one year,
37 applicants might be turned down for funding. In that event, those persons would receive priority
38 consideration for diocesan assistance in the following year.

39 Upon approval, applications will be filed in the office of the Bishop. For clergy,
40 continuing education programs will be recorded as meeting the requirements of the canons.
41 (III.7.5 and III.9.1)

42 Adopted by COM, April 5, 2005

43 Sabbatical Policy for Clergy, and Use of the Clergy
44 Sabbatical and Advanced Degree/Certification Accrual Fund
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46 Background:

47 The 124th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Easton adopted as a high priority any
48 effort in this Diocese which would promote or develop ways to support our clergy in the
49 enhancing of their gifts, self-care, health and wholeness. Further, the 125th Convention
50 established and funded for the clergy of this Diocesan Sabbatical Accrual Fund.

51 Our Commission on Ministry is recommending a Sabbatical Leave Policy for use of the
52 Sabbatical Accrual Fund as a way of supporting the physical and spiritual well-being of those
53 who serve in the ordained ministry of this diocese. The Commission also recognizes that
54 continued energy will be necessary to develop an understanding and acceptance of the need for
55 sabbaticals.

56 As intended by this policy, a sabbatical is not a leave of absence for simple rest,
57 relaxation or a change of routine. Such is already provided for in annual vacation time. Nor is
58 sabbatical leave necessarily or simply an extended continuing education program. The Biblical
59 concept of Sabbath time is for the opening of one's self to the working of the Holy Spirit and for
60 the renewal of one's sense of vocation. Sabbatical leave is intended to offer the opportunity for a
61 more extended period of reflection and learning than is possible in a brief workshop or short-
62 term educational leave. It is unlikely that ordained clergy can avoid "burnout" or becoming
63 "stale and going to seed" without taking some extended periods of time away from parish duties
64 for refreshment and spiritual rejuvenation.

65 Any plan for a sabbatical needs to provide time and space for the gracious and often
66 surprising movements of God's Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, it is the intention of our Diocesan
67 Policy that individual sabbatical leave plans shall have clearly articulated goals and defined
68 benefits for both the parish and/or Diocese and the clergy person. To this end, it is recommended
69 that the parish members be kept informed from the earliest stages concerning particular plans for
70 the sabbatical. Also recommended is that one or more re-entry and debriefing meetings for all
71 interested be held very soon after the sabbatical leave ends.

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73 Conditions and Definition of a Sabbatical Leave
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75 1. A sabbatical is understood to be time released from regular duties for the purpose of spiritual
76 renewal, study, theological reflection, and strengthening of skill according to a well defined plan
77 developed by the person taking the leave and accepted by his or her Vestry.
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79 2. A sabbatical leave is not a gift but a normal and expected part of spiritual and professional
80 development for clergy. It is recommended that provision for this temporary leave be included in
81 any "Letter of Agreement" between parish and clergy person.
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83 3. Clergy who are granted sabbatical leave are expected to complete at least a year of service to
84 the parish or diocese upon return from the sabbatical.
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86 Eligibility and Application Procedure

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88 1. The recommended standard for sabbatical leave is one month's leave for every one year of
89 accrued service, not to exceed six consecutive months. A priest will be eligible to apply for
90 sabbatical leave after having completed five years of service to the parish or Diocese. In some
91 situations, it may be possible to negotiate taking an earlier sabbatical.

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93 2. Advanced Degree/ Certification program Support: The Commission on Ministry has
94 recognized the need for financial support to clergy who are committed to an extended period of
95 continuing education, such as certification in Pastoral Education or a doctoral degree. Since the
96 cost for these programs significantly exceeds the norm for annual continuing education, and such
97 programs often take the place of sabbatical programs, the Diocesan Sabbatical Accrual Fund may
98 be used to fund these educational endeavors.

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100 3. A clergy person applying for sabbatical leave or an advanced degree/certification program
101 shall prepare a proposal that identifies the time requested, and that describes a plan of study,
102 action, training and reflection, together with benefits and anticipated costs. The proposed funding
103 for such a plan must be formulated and approved by the applicant's Vestry and the applicant
104 before the request for financial support from the Diocesan Sabbatical Accrual Fund is submitted
105 to the Commission on Ministry. There is no minimum service requirement for this funding.

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107 4. A proposal that seeks financial support from the Diocesan Sabbatical Accrual Fund shall be
108 forwarded to the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop for review, using the appropriate
109 application form supplied by the Commission on Ministry. Such proposals shall be submitted to
110 the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop with as much advance notice as possible, one year
111 being recommended. The Diocesan Commission on Ministry may serve in an advisory capacity
112 in the process. Applications for financial assistance will be reviewed and grants awarded by the
113 Commission on Ministry at the regular monthly meetings of the Commission. The Commission
114 will notify the applicant regarding approval of the grant and certify the grant to the diocesan
115 Administrator of Finances.

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117 5. If the Diocesan Sabbatical Accrual Fund is exhausted in any one year, applicants might be
118 turned down for funding. In that event, those persons would receive priority consideration for
119 diocesan assistance in the following year.

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121 6. Grants from the Diocesan Sabbatical Accrual Fund (for any program) shall normally be
122 awarded to any cleric only once during a calendar year.

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124 Financial Arrangements

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126 1. It is the parish's responsibility to continue to pay the normal salary and benefits to and on
127 behalf of the clergy person for the duration of the leave, and to pay for any supply clergy needs
128 during the sabbatical consistent with the Parish's ability to meet such costs. In addition, as this
129 policy goes into effect, establishing a minimum of five hundred dollars per year accrual fund is

130 recommended to the parishes.

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132 2. Depending upon the availability of funds in the Sabbatical Accrual Fund, the Diocese
133 normally may fund up to 33% of the cost of an approved sabbatical plan or advanced degree
134 programs or programs leading to an advanced degree/certification program, but when conditions
135 warrant, the Diocese may fund more than 33% of the cost of a sabbatical request approved by the
136 Commission on Ministry. The clergy person and parish shall fund the remaining costs in such
137 division that is mutually agreeable with the clergy person and the sponsoring vestry.

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139 Supply Arrangements

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141 1. The clergy person applying for sabbatical leave shall take primary responsibility, in
142 consultation with the Vestry, for making satisfactory arrangements for worship services, pastoral
143 care, and parish administration during his or her absence. This will include:

144 a. ordained clergy persons for regularly scheduled sacramental worship,

145 b. lay readers for occasional morning prayer services,

146 c. care givers for pastoral emergencies,

147 d. preparation of wardens, parish secretary, and others for additional responsibilities.

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149 2. Clergy persons developing a sabbatical proposal shall be sensitive to the liturgical needs of the
150 parish, especially during Lent/Easter and Advent/Christmas. It shall be the joint responsibility of
151 the clergy person and Vestry to inform the parish at large of plans as they develop.

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153 Accountability

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155 1. The person returning from a sabbatical shall present, with reasonable promptness, a written
156 report to the Bishop, the Commission on Ministry, and to the Vestry. This report and the
157 application for diocesan funding (if any) will be kept on file in the Bishop's office.

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159 2. A brief oral report on the sabbatical experience shall be made at the next Clericus meeting.

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161 3. A report, in some appropriate form, shall be made to the congregation, and to the people of the
162 Diocese through the *Eastern Shore Episcopalian*.

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164 Updated and revised by the Commission on Ministry, April 5, 2005.