

GUIDELINES FOR THE LOCAL SABBATICAL SUPPORT GROUP



A sabbatical is a time away from the usual day-to-day job, for further study, reflection, recreation and some renewal. It may take the form of a retreat, a course, visiting other places and churches, reading, or a combination of these and other things. The Church believes sabbaticals are important and therefore they are compulsory for all presbyters and deacons. They have to be taken in the 10th and every subsequent 7th year of travel.

For a sabbatical to be effective the person taking it must feel that their work is covered and their family are being supported. The role of the local sabbatical support group is to work on the practical issues so that the minister can take the sabbatical without worrying about these details.

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about the role of the support group.

The main tasks of the support group are:

1. Working with the presbyter or deacon in planning the sabbatical
 - ❖ The presbyter or deacon will have ideas of what they wish to do, but they may appreciate help with planning practical matters.
 - ❖ This will also include planning for their return at the end of the sabbatical. Particularly to ensure the person taking the sabbatical allows themselves time to gradually return to work and that what they have learnt can be used by the individual and the church.
2. Making arrangements for covering the duties of the appointment
 - ❖ In a single presbyter circuit this may involve asking retired presbyters or neighbouring circuits for help. You may find help from ministers of other denominations.
3. Ensuring the dependents and partner of the person taking the sabbatical are supported and receive any practical help they need when the deacon or presbyter is away from home.

Who is on the group?

The membership of the group will vary depending on local circumstances but it will normally include:

- ❖ Representatives of the relevant local churches
- ❖ A representative of the circuit meeting, (possibly a circuit steward)
- ❖ Someone from the presbyter or deacon's family
- ❖ The person taking the sabbatical

It may also include:

The superintendent minister (or another member of the circuit staff)

The superintendent of a neighbouring circuit (in the case of a single station circuit)

A link person appointed by the District Sabbaticals Advisory Group

A minister of another denomination (if support is needed from beyond Methodism)

The convenor of the support group will be appointed by the Circuit meeting, but normally it will be formed by the person taking the sabbatical. The convenor will receive help and advice from the District Sabbaticals Advisory Group. Every member of the group will have copies of the relevant leaflets from the District Sabbaticals Officer.

When does the support group meet?

The first meeting of the support group should be no later than the Autumn of the Connexional year before the sabbatical is due to happen, e.g. October 2009 for a sabbatical to be taken in the Connexional year 2010/11. This should allow enough time for planning when during that year the sabbatical can be taken and what arrangements will need to be made.

The support group should aim to have all the arrangements made for covering the sabbatical period no later than three months before the sabbatical begins.

If you have more questions, please contact your district sabbaticals advisory group, or district sabbaticals officer. If necessary, you can also contact Discipleship and Ministries at 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR, 020 7486 5502, cdim@methodistchurch.org.uk.