SABBATICAL INFORMATION
(The following is an excerpt from the General Council Executive meeting of Fall 2005.)

22A SABBATICAL POLICY FOR MINISTRY PERSONNEL IN PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS
Motion: Heather Leffler/Diane Dwarka
That the following Sabbatical Policy be adopted:

Purpose
The essence of sabbatical is rooted in the Biblical practice of the Sabbath day described in the creation story. Jesus kept this practice when he took time in his ministry for renewal. He often went away to pray and reflect in silence and meditation ‘on mountaintops and by lakesides.’

The daily practice of ministry may involve the pressure of many tasks compressed into too few hours leaving little opportunity for reflective, prayerful time. In the context of ministry, sabbatical time is for learning through reflection, revitalization and recreation. It is, therefore, personal and individual in nature. It may include study, spiritual retreat and rest and will probably be a blend of all of these.

When ministry personnel take a sabbatical, the congregation(s) will benefit from the opportunity to reflect on its mission and ministry and experience different gifts of lay leadership. The sabbatical offers the congregation(s) a minister who returns with new energy and clarity about the tasks at hand.

Policy
It is the policy of The United Church of Canada that every pastoral charge shall provide a paid sabbatical of at least three consecutive months to those in paid accountable ministry who have completed at least five years of service in one call or appointment. (General Council 2003, Petition 131).

The sabbatical is in addition to the minister’s vacation time and regular study leave for the year in which the sabbatical is taken. Sabbatical leave may be taken in conjunction with the vacation time, continuing education and additional unpaid leave of absence.

The provision for a sabbatical shall be included in the terms of the call or appointment.

Procedures
1) The ministry personnel must submit notice of their intent to take a sabbatical to the Ministry and Personnel Committee of the pastoral charge at least twelve (12) months prior to the projected commencement of the sabbatical. The timing of the sabbatical shall be developed in consultation with the Ministry and Personnel Committee and approved by the Official Board, Church Board or Council. The Presbytery must be notified by the pastoral charge of the ministry personnel’s intent to take sabbatical time no later than six (6) months prior to the commencement of the sabbatical. The Presbytery will determine whether a pastoral charge supervisor should be appointed.

2) The ministry personnel must submit a detailed proposal to the Ministry and Personnel Committee at least three months prior to the start of the sabbatical. This proposal should outline the ministry personnel’s plans during the period of renewal including the nature of the study or experience being proposed and the goals of the sabbatical, which must be related to the practice of ministry. While a plan is essential, the sabbatical should not be so tightly structured that the Spirit has no freedom to lead and reveal. This plan must be approved by the Ministry and Personnel Committee and reported to the Official Board, Church Board or Council for information.

3) After the sabbatical the ministry personnel will provide a brief written and oral report to the Ministry and Personnel Committee and to the Official Board, Church Board or Council.
4) Ministry personnel taking a sabbatical and the pastoral charge will normally be expected to continue their pastoral relationship for at least one year following the conclusion of the sabbatical.

5) During the sabbatical time the pastoral charge will pay the ministry personnel’s regular salary and housing allowance (or provide the use of a manse), and make the regular payments to The United Church of Canada for health and pension plans, and the Employee Assistance Program as well as Canadian Pension Plan and Employment Insurance, as of the day prior to the commencement of the sabbatical.

6) Ministry personnel working less than 40 hours per week are entitled to all the terms of the three month sabbatical policy. During the sabbatical time the pastoral charge will pay the ministry personnel who is working less than 40 hours their salary and housing allowance at the rate as of the day prior to the commencement of the sabbatical.

7) In those cases where the ministry personnel normally receives travel expense reimbursement for the use of a vehicle on church business, the ministry personnel while on sabbatical will receive an income supplement of 40 per cent of their average monthly travel claim based on the six (6) months prior to the sabbatical. It shall be paid monthly and declared by the pastoral charge as taxable income.

Carried.

22B SABBATICAL POLICY FOR MINISTRY PERSONNEL IN PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

Motion: heather Leffler/Leah Halliday


2) That the Executive request the PC-MEPS to review and make recommendations with respect to the application of the Sabbatical Leave Policy for those in paid accountable ministry outside of the pastoral charge relationships and the General Council Offices, including Interim Ministers, and report to the April 2006 meeting of the Executive of the General Council.

3) That the Executive of the General Council include in the budget an annual amount to be administered by the General Secretary, to be granted to pastoral charges that would be subject to undue financial difficulty in funding Sunday supply ministry during the sabbatical time.

4) That the General Secretary
   a. develop appropriate resources to support the implementation of the sabbatical policy.
   b. advise ‘Education for Church Leadership’ of the need to develop a program to assist ministry personnel and pastoral charges to prepare for the sabbatical time, and
   c. alter the pastoral relations forms to include in the terms of appointment or call the provision for a sabbatical.

Carried.

Further details will be available soon.
Our Reps to General Council Executive are Jim Jackson and David Giuliano.

Emailed January 2006