Clergy Sabbaticals in the Diocese of Leeds

Guidance Notes

1. What is a Sabbatical?

The word *sabbatical* is derived from the same root as *Sabbath*. The Archbishops’ Council acknowledges in *Mind the Gap: Integrated Continuing Ministerial Education for the Church’s Ministers* (Archbishops’ Council, 2001) that a fundamental purpose of a sabbatical is to set aside time for mental renewal, spiritual re-creation and physical rest, so as to return refreshed in one’s ministry.

To avoid possible misunderstanding, *Mind the Gap* makes it clear that a sabbatical is not

- simply an extended holiday.
- doing the same job in a different location.
- solely used for academic study.

To translate this in terms of our diocesan strapline, any sabbatical plans should include a balance of Loving, Living and Learning:

- Loving: the sabbatical should include dedicated time with family and friends. This is a good time to give proper attention to relationships which can be neglected in the busyness of ministry.
- Living: during the sabbatical there should be some holiday time and something recreational for you, including a retreat.
- Learning: the sabbatical should include a project or study related to your ministry. It is important to ask yourself what you hope to gain from this and how it may enhance your ministry on your return or in the future.

Clergy may apply for their first sabbatical when they have been ordained for 10 years or more. When clergy have had a sabbatical they would usually have a gap of at least 7 years before applying again. If there are more sabbatical applications than places, it is probable that preference would be given to those who have not had a sabbatical before.

The normal period for a sabbatical is three months. These periods should be seen as over and above annual holiday. However the sabbatical should include your annual retreat.

Length of service should be the determining factor in the taking of a sabbatical, not the amount of time one has worked in a particular diocese.

2. How do I apply for a Sabbatical?

The normal timeline for applications is as follows (for sabbaticals in 2021):
- January/February 2020: the Director of Clergy Development sends out a general invitation to anyone considering a sabbatical in 2021. Quite often, a Bishop or Archdeacon may have initiated the idea in personal conversation, at a pastoral visit or during the course of conducting an MDR.

- Anyone who is interested in a sabbatical in 2021 should then contact their area Clergy Development Officer (CDO) to discuss their proposals. The area Clergy Development Officer may be able to advise applicants about possible grants or applicants in their search for colleges and other institutions offering library resources, residential accommodation, courses, personal tuition and any combination of these.

- The area CDO will provide an application form and guidance notes.

- The applicant should normally discuss his/her plans at this stage with personnel locally, typically the Churchwardens, appropriate Clergy/Readers and Area Dean. In particular the application form asks how services will be covered during the sabbatical.

- The application form asks for a budget. The reason for this is to ensure that applicants are being realistic in their proposals and have done sufficient research into the likely costs. It is not binding and may later need to be adapted to the available funding.

- Completed application forms should be sent back to the area CDO by mid-April at the latest. The applications are then collated, and completed application forms are sent to the area bishops.

- May 2020: the application forms are discussed at Bishop’s Staff Meeting where the decision is taken as to which applications to approve. The diocese usually grants up to 15 sabbaticals per year so if there are more than 15 people applying some applications may be turned down or deferred to a later time. It is also possible that Bishop’s Staff may pass the applications back asking for more information or more carefully worked out learning outcomes.

- The area CDO will inform applicants whether or not their application has been successful – usually by the end of May.

- In certain circumstances a bishop may authorize a sabbatical at shorter notice than the timeline above. However if all the regular sabbaticals are already allocated for that year the diocese may not be able to provide any sabbatical expenses.

3. Funding

- The Director of Clergy Development will send to all successful applicants a list of charities which may provide financial assistance for a sabbatical. In particular the deadline for applications for the Ecclesiastical Ministry Bursary Awards is in September of the preceding year (September 2020 for sabbaticals in 2021). Clergy are strongly urged to
apply for this bursary. Typical grants are in the region of £600-700. This will either help you do more in the sabbatical, or save you spending some of your own money, or possibly save the diocese money (if you then do not need the full diocesan grant).

- The diocese offers sabbatical expenses of up to £1000. Please note, this is not given in advance but is paid to you in reimbursement for your sabbatical expenses. You will be given a sabbatical expenses claim form which should be submitted to your area Clergy Development Officer along with receipts / proof of expenditure. If you have a large sum to pay out (e.g. a plane fare) you may submit a copy of the invoice in advance and this can be paid into your bank account before you need to pay it out yourself. The sabbatical expenses can be claimed in one go, or more than one installment.

- Please note, sabbatical expenses should be claimed within the calendar year during which the sabbatical is taken. So all expenses for a sabbatical in 2021 must be submitted by the middle of December 2021. (The budget does not carry over to the coming year).

4. Covering your parish / ministry during your sabbatical

- The applicant is responsible for making arrangements for adequate cover in the parish/ministerial context, in consultation with ordained/lay colleagues and the Area Dean, before the sabbatical begins. This should include any periods when the person on sabbatical will be residing at home, but will not be available to undertake parochial ministry.

5. Sabbatical report

- When the sabbatical is over, the Bishop requires that a brief written report should be submitted to the area Clergy Development Officer. This should not be a burdensome task but a chance to reflect on what you have learned and gained from this time. A couple of sides of A4 will usually be sufficient but you may also choose to include an actual piece of work produced as a part of the sabbatical project itself, or a photographic record of your experiences.

- You may also talk about what you have gained from your sabbatical in your next MDR and/or request a ‘de-brief’ meeting with the area CDO to help reflect on the value of the experience.

6. What can I do during a sabbatical?

There is a good deal of variation because sabbatical programmes are individually tailored to meet different learning and development outcomes. Some examples are:-

- A visit to an overseas diocese with the aim of learning from the exposure to a different context and culture.
• A study of patterns of shared leadership made by visiting a range of contrasting churches throughout the country.

• Writing a paper, dissertation or book in some area of theology of particular personal interest.

• An extended retreat period offering exposure to some unfamiliar style of spirituality.

• Engagement with a secular social concern by spending time outside the church environment, e.g. in a prison, school, or social services department.

• Staying at a theological college and participating in a programme of directed study.

• Undertaking a challenging experience, well outside the “comfort zone”.

• Pursuing some area of interest which has been identified in an MDR.

Given this wide diversity of possibilities, the Bishop encourages clergy to include the following in a three-month period of sabbatical:

• A period devoted to the central project, which should occupy a larger portion of the sabbatical time than anything else;

• Time for reading/study, to help read round, focus and contextualise the project;

• A retreat or time of spiritual refreshment, not necessarily connected with the project;

• Rest and recreation with family or friends;

• A short period at the beginning to leave behind the parish, and similarly at the end to re-engage with it;

• A short or more prolonged period of time for ‘writing up’.