**Diocese of Carlisle**

**SABBATICAL** - adj. - designating a period of absence for study, rest or travel, given at intervals.

Collins Dictionary

1. A CHANCE FOR A SABBATICAL?

Most clergy and licensed lay workers lead busy lives, often living ‘over the shop’, available and on call even when not working. Personal needs and aspirations easily get pushed aside by the demands of the role or the needs of others. Bigger projects, wider perspectives, can loose out to the round of day to day responsibilities.

The Diocesan scheme for Sabbatical Leave recognises that for those who have been in ministry for some time a serious block of time spent away from their post and its immediate demands can be a source of enrichment, new experiences and energy, different perspectives and fresh vision.

Prospective applicants are sometimes deterred by anticipated difficulties such as:

* Finding adequate pastoral cover.
* Reactions within the parish / Mission Community.
* Leaving the parsonage empty for long periods.
* The danger of additional burdens on spouse and family.
* Difficulty in obtaining funding.

but with sufficient preparation these can nearly always be overcome.

Properly planned and reflected on, Sabbatical Leave can be of enormous benefit to ministers, their families and those they serve, and to the wider church.

2. WHO QUALIFIES?

Applicants for sabbatical leave are expected to follow the procedure in paragraph 5 and should (*normally)* have not less than

* Eight years in post of responsibility.
* Three years in current post.
* Seven years since a previous Sabbatical.
* Three years before retirement age.

3. HOW LONG IS A SABBATICAL?

The usual (and maximum) period of leave is three months. While shorter periods of Study Leave are useful, the length of time away from day to day pressures is part of the particular value of a Sabbatical and it should not normally be less than eight weeks.

4. BUT WHAT WILL I DO?

Your ideas may be vague at first. It is worth giving them time to evolve. Talking to the CMD Adviser will help. Some people have a clear task in mind from the start, but good sabbaticals also allow *space* – for reflection, discovery … perhaps for the usually neglected or suppressed in you to surface. They often have more than one strand – the walking as well as the reading, the woodwork as well as the prayer – giving an opportunity to nourish different parts of the self, and sometimes discover surprising interactions and resonances. The scope is wide and every sabbatical is different.

5. THE PROCEDURE

It is never too early to begin planning for a Sabbatical but it can be too late. Try to begin at least a year in advance, preferably two years. The following points must be considered in the early stages:

* Clergy wishing to be considered for a sabbatical should in the first instance inform the Rural Dean so that s/he can have an overview of how many from their particular deanery are applying and can offer relevant information to BLT
* Only 2 clergy to have concurrent sabbaticals in any one deanery in any year
* Priority would be given to applicants who are ministering in Launched/commissioned Mission Communities
* Applicants should have consulted with their Mission Community colleagues who then evidence support of the application
* Normally, when Mission Communities are newly formed, sabbatical requests would only be considered a full year after their formation
* When new clergy join a Mission Community we would normally only accept sabbatical requests from their colleagues a year after the new person had come into post
* Normally we would aim to have an even spread of sabbaticals across the deaneries.

Once a conversation with the Rural Dean has taken place with those considerations in mind, the application procedure is as follows:

1. The applicant should arrange to meet the Bishop’s Chaplain, Cameron Butland, at an early stage to discuss ideas and possibilities for the Sabbatical and the various questions that need to be considered. The applicant should continue to liaise with him as plans develop and change. Cameron can be contacted by email at Cameron.Butland@carlislediocese.org.uk
2. After initial discussions the applicant sends an outline proposal to the Bishop’s Chaplain the using the Sabbatical Application form. Applicants should not worry about completing all the details at this stage, as this will not be possible or appropriate, but it can be a helpful framework for thinking through what might be undertaken.
3. The application is submitted to the Bishop’s Leadership Team for approval the names (with draft dates) of those applying for a Sabbatical. Applicants should not make firm commitments until such approval has been given.
4. The Bishop’s Chaplain will contact the applicant on hearing the outcome from Bishop's Staff.
5. When the proposed plans and budget for the Sabbatical have taken shape the applicant sends them to the Bishop’s Chaplain using the form provided.
6. After any necessary further discussion, the Bishop’s Chaplain approves the appropriate Sabbatical grant.

Following the sabbatical the person completing their leave should send a brief written report (two sides of A4) to the Bishop’s Chaplain and arrange to meet him to share reflection on the experience and identify learning to be passed on or points to follow up.

6. INVOLVING THE PARISH AND MISSION COMMUNITY

Clergy should consult with their PCC(s) and Mission Community colleagues about the timing of a sabbatical and its impact on the churches’ ministry. All colleagues including P.C.C. and Churchwardens should be fully informed about the final dates of absence and arrangements for cover.

Sabbatical leave is part of the church’s care for its ministers. A minister refreshed with new perspectives will also serve more effectively. Mission Communities can be helped to ‘own’ a minister’s sabbatical when there is a readiness to share aims and plans and subsequent reflections on the experience.

With prayerful preparation the sabbatical may also be recognised as an opportunity for growth in the Mission Community itself as others are given responsibility during the minister’s absence.

7. PASTORAL COVER

The initiative and responsibility for the provision of pastoral cover rests firmly with the person taking Sabbatical leave who must consult with the Rural Dean and Mission Community colleagues at an early stage. If there are particular difficulties the Bishop’s Chaplain should be consulted.

A written scheme of cover for worship and referral points for funerals, etc., should be produced and circulated to the Rural Dean, the Churchwardens, and anyone else who needs to know.

Where necessary appropriate redirection arrangements should be included for telephone, post, email etc

With planning and imagination, the ‘problem’ of cover can present opportunities for the development of lay ministry, for example in the leadership of worship.

8. FUNDING

When the sabbatical proposal and budget are approved the Bishop’s Chaplain may authorise a Sabbatical Grant. This will normally be not more than £500. Any accumulated personal CMD grant may be added to this.

The applicant will usually need to find additional funds. A list of other possible sources can be provided. Applications to these often take some time and this will need to be allowed for.