

Sabbaticals: Diocese of Manchester

Guidelines for stipendiary clergy

Who?

All stipendiary clergy in the diocese are generally considered for a Sabbatical of three months, after they have served an initial 10 years as an ordained minister. Subsequent Sabbaticals are generally offered after a further period of 10 years.

In general the initial trigger will be from within the Ministerial Development Review process. Unless there has been agreement at the time of appointment, clergy new in to the diocese are unlikely to be offered a sabbatical in the first three years of the new appointment. Because the Sabbatical is about refreshing for future ministry, it is unlikely that the bishops would suggest and offer a Sabbatical to clergy who are due to retire within the following three years. (It being understood that the time after retirement would be used to assess what future patterns of ministry would be.)

Why?

The Sabbatical is understood to be a time for space and reflection, refreshing and equipping for the future. It is a chance to step back from the immediacy of parish life and to look again at our ministry and work and rhythm of life. It is a chance to let God speak to us more deeply and afresh. While a Sabbatical is not a right, it is the policy of the diocese to try and ensure that clergy are able to take a Sabbatical at due times, such that the Sabbatical is for their own good and without detriment to the parish.

When?

See above (Who?) for the guidelines as to when clergy are eligible to be considered for a Sabbatical. See below (How?) for the procedure that needs to be followed in preparing for a Sabbatical. In short, the sabbatical will be granted taking into account when is best for the clergyperson, as well as when fits for the parish and the deanery in terms of the cover, and extra workload asked of others. It will generally be arranged in the early part of the year to happen some time in the following year.

What?

The Sabbatical is an agreed and structured time away from the parish. It should definitely contain time to rest and “recharge batteries”, and it should have a purpose and agreed aims and goals. However, some will be predominantly times of further reading and study in an area of ministry, some will be developing or furthering a new skill or ability, some will be predominantly times of retreat and reflection, and some may be set for exposure to a different culture, community or place with time to reflect. The broad outline of how the time will be spent is discussed first with the appropriate Bishop and agreed, and further planning is worked out with the CME Officer; much of the fine-tuning and day by day programme is left to the minister to sort.

While some want to write up what they have done and others find it helpful to do so, whether as a paper or in a journal form, there is no requirement for a full report or a research paper to be submitted. However, a brief resume of how the time has been spent, with key moments / events / learning, and a brief assessment of the benefits gained, is required after the Sabbatical, not least so that good and less good experience can be shared. The CME Officer will send out a pro-forma which should be returned to him; a copy will then be sent to the bishop.

How?

The first overture will probably come from the appropriate bishop or Archdeacon, quite probably through the Ministerial Development Review process, though clergy are encouraged to be proactive when they are reaching a time when a Sabbatical would be appropriate. The initial discussion with the bishop leads to a recognition that the application is now in process. The "applicant" is asked to see the CME officer to flesh out the details and to confirm that parish and Area Dean are aware and provisional dates will work for all concerned. The CME officer will send out a short form to be completed prior to the meeting with him. There needs to be both discussion on how the time will be used, and how the ministry in the parish will be covered: hence there needs to have been discussion with both Area Dean and Church Wardens about a suitable time. [Church Wardens are not able to refuse a vicar a Sabbatical, but given the work they will pick up in the absence of the minister, they need to have been fully consulted!]

In order to allocate sabbaticals fairly and in response to real need, all applications are provisional until discussed at the Bishops' meeting and then confirmed at a Bishop's Staff Meeting. Space is given in the February and May meetings each year to consider and decide on applications for sabbaticals for the following year and also for the allocating of sabbatical grants. Half the sabbaticals are allocated in the February meeting and half at the May meeting. It is important therefore that clergy are aware of these meetings lest they try and put in for a sabbatical after the May meeting.

Money

For 2008 there are 20 grants from the diocese each year for those taking Sabbaticals. The current grant is £500. These are allocated at the Bishop's Staff meetings in Feb and May. It is hoped that all who have applied will be able to receive a grant but budget limitations mean the number of grants is finite.

There are a very few other sources of possible grant-funding depending on what the sabbatical will be about, but clergy should not presume on finding further financial help. The CME Allocation can be applied for elements of the Sabbatical which fit with the CME Allowance criteria, (e.g. Retreats, Further Training or Learning, and Travel to and from such).

Where married couples are both ordained in stipendiary ministry, and seek sabbatical time together and it is granted, both are entitled to a Sabbatical grant.

Other

Generally speaking, in order to ensure proper discussion and preparation and adequate time for the parish to be prepared and have cover, Sabbaticals take at least 9 months from initial enquiry to the taking of time away. It is for these reasons that it is the Feb and May meetings of Bishop's Staff which will decide sabbaticals for the following year.

NSM and OLM

This paper provides the guidelines for stipendiary clergy. At present the diocese does not provide sabbatical grants for NSMs, MSEs or OLMs, nor does it do so for Readers. Regular and appropriate patterns of refreshment should be part of the pattern of ministry for all who hold the Bishop's License, and enabling such patterns should be a part of review procedures.

Bishop's Staff, November 2006