

THE DIOCESE OF RIPON AND LEEDS

CLERGY SABBATICALS:

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 intended to be

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

Church of England ministers lay and ordained are usually given the opportunity to have a sabbatical at least once every ten years, and where appropriate, for the CME budget to reflect this offer (R. 23). The normal period for a sabbatical is three months. These periods should be seen as over and above annual holiday (R.19) 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 (R. 24).

2. How do I apply for a Sabbatical?

The Diocese of Ripon and Leeds seeks to provide for sabbatical opportunities broadly in line with these recommendations. At present, provision is made in the CME budget and the Inglefield Trust for up to 6 clergy per year to take a sabbatical each year - based on a bursary of £1000.

The diocesan process for clergy undertaking a sabbatical is broadly as follows:

- An initial approach is usually made by the applicant to the Director of Clergy Development (DCD) who provides a sabbatical application form. 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.
- The DCD and the applicant meet to discuss the sabbatical application form and to develop ideas for the focus, form, content and funding for the sabbatical.
- The applicant sends a brief sabbatical proposal and budget to the DCD. The applicant should normally discuss his/her plans at this stage with personnel locally, typically the Churchwardens, appropriate Clergy/Readers and Area Dean.
- The DCD seeks the Bishop's approval for the sabbatical. If this is forthcoming, the DCD informs the applicant and supports her/him in the development of more detailed development of the sabbatical programme. Ideally this stage should be reached at least six months before the sabbatical is due to begin.

- 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.
- The DCD and the Director of Lay Development, in her capacity as administrator for the Inglefield Trust, arrange for payment of the sabbatical bursary on presentation of appropriate receipts/invoices.
- When the sabbatical is over, the Bishop requires that a brief written report should be submitted to the PCC(s) and to the DCD. It may also be appropriate to offer a verbal or written report to Clergy Chapter and Deanery Synod. This report may be an actual piece of work produced as a part of the sabbatical project itself, a simple summary of what took place during the sabbatical and its value, or even a presentation using audio-visual media, a photographic record, or educational resource pack to be made available for others to use.
- The person may include the sabbatical in their next MDR and/or request a 'de-brief' meeting with the DCD to help reflect on the value of the experience.

3. 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 (say) 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".
- It may well be appropriate to pursue 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;
- A short period at the beginning to leave behind the parish, and similarly at the end of re-engage with it;
- A short or more prolonged period of time for 'writing up'.

4. Where can I get further help?

The DCD can point applicants in the direction of colleges and other institutions offering library resources, residential accommodation, courses, personal tuition and any combination of these. There are some charitable trusts and other bodies, which will consider giving grants towards clergy study projects including sabbaticals. Please feel free to consult the DCD for advice.

*Canon Paul Hooper, Director of Clergy Development.
February 2011*