

Mini-Sabbatical Program



“AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY ... GOD RESTED” – GENESIS 2:2

We worship a God who rested. Keeping a holy Sabbath is one of God’s commandments. Christ himself modelled the importance of taking time apart from ministry for respite and dedicated prayer. The Holy Spirit longs to refresh and renew our souls.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a deep fatigue. Pastoring congregations and maintaining community through unprecedented challenges over the last 27 months took a significant toll on the mental, physical and spiritual health of our clergy. The College of Bishops believes that every cleric – priest and deacon – is in need of a Sabbath rest.

To this end, the College of Bishops has established the following Mini-Sabbatical Program.

What is it?

Over the next 14 months, between July 1, 2022, and Aug. 31, 2023, every priest and deacon currently in an appointment in the Diocese of Toronto, and who worked a minimum of 12 months between March 2020 and June 2022, is entitled to one 10-day Sabbath Leave or “Mini-Sabbatical,” which includes one Sunday when the liturgical colour is green (i.e., in “ordinary time”).

The 10 days (pro-rated for part-time clergy) may be taken consecutively or divided up – even to one day a week for ten weeks – as desired. The 10 days may stand alone or be added to other holiday time or a study week.

How may this time be used?

Everyone’s needs are different. The Mini-Sabbatical is not additional vacation. Its purpose is to allow clergy to intentionally rest, however may be best for each person. For some, it may involve a form of retreat or study. For others, it may be restorative simply to stay home, read and pray. Clergy may wish to consult with their spiritual director on the best way to keep their Mini-Sabbatical.

Our monastic communities in the Diocese of Toronto – the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine and the Order of the Holy Cross – are aware that this policy is being enacted and will be offering opportunities for guided and/or residential retreats for clergy. Stay tuned for those opportunities. (Clergy are responsible for any costs associated with their Mini-Sabbatical and may access their Continuing Education plans for funds.)

Will clergy be paid?

Clergy will continue to receive remuneration and benefits from their paying source at their usual rate, uninterrupted. Parishes will be billed as usual.

What about coverage in the parish?

The bishops are very aware that finding sacramental and pastoral coverage can be challenging. One of the advantages of the pandemic is that parishes have learned to worship and cooperate in new and creative ways. Online worship, whether live or pre-recorded, has become normalized. The cathedral livestream is always available for worshippers to tune in. Deacons or lay leaders may officiate at Morning Prayer; [a simple rite](#) has been developed for this particular situation. Bishop Andrew Asbil is providing a video sermon on the topic of Sabbath Rest that may be used on the Sunday that the cleric is away. We hope that clergy will partner to spell each other off for emergency pastoral coverage during their respective Mini-Sabbaticals.

How do clergy request the time?

Please use the attached form to establish dates, in consultation with Churchwardens (and other parish clergy, if applicable). Indicate how worship and emergency pastoral care will be covered on the dates that the clergy are on Mini-Sabbatical. The signed form should be submitted to the regional dean at least one month in advance of the Mini-Sabbatical.

Terms of the policy

This policy comes into effect on July 1, 2022, and ends as of Aug. 31, 2023. Unused Mini-Sabbatical time will not be granted beyond Aug. 31, 2023, and will not be compensated by pay in lieu.

The policy shall be posted on the diocesan website under Leaves and will be distributed by email to existing clergy.

Only one Mini-Sabbatical will be granted per cleric. Only those clergy who served in an appointment for a cumulative minimum of 12 months or more between March 2020 and June 2022 are eligible.

For further information, please contact your regional dean or Canon Mary Conliffe in the Bishop's Office. Questions can also be submitted to the Wednesday Q&A Bulletin at info@toronto.anglican.ca.