**Opportunities for Sabbatical Leave and Study**

*It is a jubilee and it is to be holy for thou*

I**NTRODUCTION**

A structured and well-planned opportunity to step aside from the everyday routines of active ministry can be of enormous benefit to that ministry. It needs to be understood that such an opportunity is offered to clergy at the discretion of the Bishop. It is not a right to be claimed. It also needs to be seen as part of the conscious development of ministry – and not simply as an interlude away from it. In general up to six clergy from the diocese each year may be encouraged to think of a sabbatical as an appropriate way forward. In the light of such considerations the following points are made.

1. **Who is eligible for a sabbatical?**

It is assumed that you will have been in Orders for at least seven years: and that you will have been in your present post for at least three years (so that you will feel “at home” in your parish, and your parish will feel “at home with you).

1. **What are the purposes of a sabbatical?**

It may take a number of different forms but within it the following factors should have a significant place:

* + ***Spiritual renewal*** – some form of retreat, pilgrimage, conference, course or guided reading that will resource and enrich your walk with God.
  + ***Theological renewal*** – something that engages the theological brain and may take your thinking forwards. This does not need to be ‘heavy’ or ‘worthy’ but its important that our brains are not put out to pasture for three months.
  + ***Renewal of wellbeing –*** what is it you need to do for yourself? Lie on a beach with an audio book, re-engage with friends, do that clowning course you’ve always wanted to do? Please, have some fun! Of course, wellbeing might also mean practising those good habits of exercise, journaling, eating well that could be sustained when you return to the demands of ministry.

A sabbatical should be both enjoyable and stimulating but needs to be seen in a context larger than itself – as contributing both to the wellbeing of the person undertaking it and also through them to the missionary and ministerial development of the wider church.

1. **What is the duration of a typical sabbatical?**

In order to give appropriate time and space it needs to run for not less than two months and for not more than three. This period should generally be taken in one block to make the most of the different pace of life, rest, and to help the parish/benefice/context be clear about when you are absent and when you are back. On occasions planned activities make this impossible so, exceptionally, two ‘blocks’ might be negotiated.

1. **How should I involve the parish?**

Clearly the parish does need to be involved because you will be absent for a period of between two and three months – substantially longer than the average annual holiday! You will need to keep your colleagues and congregation abreast of your thinking and planning at an early stage and to include mention that you are supported in this project by the bishop. It is your responsibility to provide clerical cover in your parish in your absence. You must not leave this job to the Churchwardens or Area Dean. It may be a food idea to send two or three letters (for inclusion in the parish magazine?) while you are away from your locality to give your friends and colleagues a taste of the experience and stimulus that you are discovering yourself. Please ask Kate for the RACI document (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) which may help you and your wardens share out all the various tasks and be clear about who is doing what in your absence.

1. **How do I apply for a sabbatical?**

Think ahead! An initial request needs to be submitted to the Bishop’s People and Places meeting in the January **a year before** the year in which you wish to take your sabbatical. Ie Panel meet in January 2026 for a sabbatical any time in 2027. You will find the Initial Enquiry form on the website or from Ruth on [rcameron@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:rcameron@glosdioc.org.uk). You are welcome to discuss this with the Collaborative Ministry Lead: Life Long Learning before you return it by 16 December 2025.

The Bishop’s People and Places meeting agrees in principle to the sabbatical proposal and earmarks a Diocesan grant for your sabbatical. You then have more time to firm up your plans. A Sabbatical Application Form should be returned to the Collaborative Ministry Lead: Life Long Learning by Easter. You will then meet with the HMD to talk through your proposal and make any changes to your application that might be appropriate. At this time possible sources of funding are also discussed and identified as appropriate. When the application is agreed the HMD submits your application to the Bishop of Tewkesbury for consideration and approval.

1. **How might a sabbatical be funded?**

Currently a sum of £800 is available from Diocesan funds.

The HMD will encourage you to approach local, regional or national trust that may have an interest in this kind of work and who might be in a position to help you. NB: In general it is found that a three month sabbatical may take up to £2,000 to fund.

1. **Is there any expected outcome of the sabbatical?**

It is expected that the participant will complete a short questionnaire in the final week of your sabbatical to reflect on the impact of your experience. This is sent to the Bishop of Tewkesbury who will meet with you to reflect on your sabbatical about six weeks after your return.

If you would like to begin to explore seriously a sabbatical opportunity – in the light of the themes and concerns mentioned above – please contact:

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Updated June 2024