

# Richland Lutheran Church

## SOUL CARE POLICY

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### INTRODUCTION

We have an inner life – it's called a soul. While our soul may not be visible it is real and very critical to our well-being. Our souls are a living thing that needs nurture, care and attention. Christian ministry can be demanding for all in church leadership roles – pastors, church staff, and volunteers. In their daily ministering to others they sometimes become tired, stressed, and burned out and often neglect themselves and their families. The purpose for this policy is to help to re-energize those in church leadership roles. In other words, to take care of the people at Richland Lutheran Church who take care of others and this policy is designed to guide us in this endeavor.

Philippians 2:3b-4, *“Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”*

### ORDAINED PASTORAL STAFF

#### Purpose

Members of pastoral staff serve in a unique position in their full-time ministry. The demands of pastoral ministry are great and often physically, emotionally, and spiritually draining. Despite use of accumulated vacation time, pastors often find themselves stressed and spiritually depleted over the years.

Recognizing the importance of maintaining strong, effective, and long-term pastoral leadership, it is the desire of Richland Lutheran Church to provide a time of personal and spiritual refreshment for the pastors.

#### Sabbatical Policy

The term "sabbatical" means the pastor is relieved of all routine and emergency duties during the time granted. This is a time solely for the purpose of rest, refreshment, replenishment, and renewal. This is a personal spiritual sabbatical, not an academic policy.

Prior to the sabbatical, the pastor and congregation council will develop a plan for covering the pastor's duties during the absence. Sabbatical is separate and distinct from accrued vacation. No vacation time should be used within four weeks before or after the sabbatical.

All full-time ordained pastoral staff shall be eligible for sabbatical during their seventh year of ordained pastoral service at Richland Lutheran Church and should occur every seven years thereafter [14,21,28,35...years of service]. Eligibility will be reached following the pastor's anniversary date.

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Example: Start date at RLC: Dec 31, 2020

Anniversary Date with six years of service: Dec 31, 2026—eligibility reached

Qualifies for leave on Jan 1, 2027

Eligibility for next sabbatical leave after Jan 1, 2034

The recommended length of the sabbatical is twelve weeks. If requested, adjustments to the length of time may be granted.

Scheduling shall be based on seniority of position as pastor at Richland Lutheran Church. No two pastors may be on sabbatical at the same time. In the event of two or more pastors, there should be a minimum of 18 months between each pastor's sabbatical leave. Leave should be taken within 18 months of eligibility.

Well in advance of the starting time of the sabbatical, the lead pastor shall submit a sabbatical proposal in writing to the congregation council outlining how the time will be used. This proposal shall be agreed upon by the pastor applying for the sabbatical and the congregation council.

Other pastoral staff shall first present a written request to the lead pastor following the same guidelines. The request shall then be presented to the congregation council for final approval.

The proposal shall include the following:

- type of ministry-related activity planned for sabbatical,
- plans for physical rest and personal recreation,
- family responsibilities,
- intellectual stimulation,
- spiritual renewal,
- strategy for coverage during the sabbatical, and
- commitment by the pastor for continued service at Richland Lutheran Church.

A written report shall be presented to the congregation council at the conclusion of the sabbatical. This report should include how the time was invested and what benefits were realized.

The pastor's full wages and benefits shall continue during the sabbatical. No compensation shall be given for unused sabbatical time. Pastors should covenant with the church to serve at least two more years with the congregation following the sabbatical. The congregation council will address exceptions to the above policy on a case-by-case basis.

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### **Silence Retreats**

Richland Lutheran Church pastors should be encouraged to take up to three days every quarter for an extended solitude and silence retreat.

### **Continuing Education**

Richland Lutheran Church requires its full-time pastors to engage in a program of continuing education to improve their skills and performance, and provides an allowance and time away from work to aid in achieving individual educational goals related to their assignments. The congregation council will hold the pastors accountable for using their annual continuing education.

Educational time away from work is not to be construed as vacation. Unused educational time away from work will be forfeited upon termination.

The allowance and time away from work shall be provided immediately in proportion to the remainder of the initial calendar year and on January 1 of subsequent years.

During each year of employment, Richland Lutheran Church shall provide full-time pastors an allowance of \$800 and two weeks of time away from work. This allowance may accumulate to a total of \$2,400. Unused educational time away from work is permitted to accumulate to a total of six weeks.

### **Pastors' Peace Teams**

Each pastor will establish a "peace" team. This is a group of individuals, normally selected by the pastor, who meet together along with the pastor to pray, talk, listen - offering guidance and support. If the pastor or pastors do not have a "peace" team, the congregation council will assist them in establishing such a team.

### **Pastor Appreciation**

The congregation council should encourage and teach congregation members to practice affirmation (such as words of love, cards, verbal affirmations, and both public and private acknowledgment of their many gifts to us as a congregation and as individuals) of our pastors throughout the year.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. The congregation council, along with non-pastoral staff, should communicate this event in appreciation of pastors.

### **The "Hard Stuff"**

The congregation council should position themselves to handle the difficult member issues, relieving the pastors as much as possible of burdensome, disruptive developments that sometimes occur.

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### **Soul Monitoring**

The congregation council will develop a process to regularly meet with the pastors to listen and hear how they are progressing in their soul care. The Executive Committee will be responsible for implementation of this process. It can be as simple as no less than two people from the Executive Committee will meet with each pastor every two months or as needed.

### **Pastoral Marriage Support**

A healthy Christian marriage is essential to the spiritual well-being of our married pastors. Therefore, RLC will provide three days' time for our pastors to attend a Christian-sponsored marriage retreat or Christian workshop with their spouse, annually. Costs associated for registration, lodging, and transportation for a Christian-sponsored marriage retreat or Christian workshop for the couple will be reimbursed as approved by Council.

## **RICHLAND LUTHERAN CHURCH STAFF**

### **Office Hours**

The church will be open to the public weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm. Hours for full-time staff will begin at 8:00 a.m. The first half hour (8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.) should be used for personal spiritual study and prayer to energize for the day. The second half hour (8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.) should be used to organize and prepare for the work day (check emails, organize priorities, plan their calendars, etc.).

### **Spiritual Health**

Each staff member will be granted a two-hour morning (8:00 a.m. to 10:00a.m.) every two weeks for to go to their chosen "quiet" place for spiritual prayer and study. They will work out the details with their supervisor and other staff members as needed.

### **Staff Appreciation**

The congregation council should encourage and teach congregation members to practice appreciation and affirmation (such as gifts of food, words of love, cards, verbal affirmations, attending staff meetings, and both public and private acknowledgment of their many gifts to us as a congregation and as individuals) of our staff.

### **The "Hard Stuff"**

The congregation council should position themselves to handle the difficult member issues, relieving staff as much as possible of any burdensome, disruptive developments that sometimes occur.

### **Soul Monitoring**

The congregation council will develop a process to regularly meet with staff to listen and hear how they are progressing in their soul care. The Lead Pastor will be responsible for

implementation of this process. It can be as simple as one pastoral staff meeting with each staff member every two months or as needed.

**CONGREGATION VOLUNTEERS**

Richland Lutheran Church volunteers are critical to the spiritual health of our pastors and staff but are also vulnerable to the demands of leadership roles that contribute to burn-out. It's important to encourage and support RLC's volunteers and this can be done in various ways such as volunteer appreciation and recognition programs. The pastoral and non-pastoral staff will be responsible for developing and implementing an annual program to recognize and honor RLC's volunteers.