

Richland Lutheran Church

SOUL CARE POLICY

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, ⁴ 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 upon completion of six years of ordained pastoral service at Richland Lutheran Church and should occur every six years thereafter. Eligibility will be reached following the pastor's anniversary date.

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

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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 three months between each pastor's sabbatical leave. Leave should be taken within one year 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.

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.

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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

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

The congregation council should encourage and teach congregation members to practice affirmation of our pastors.

The "Hard Stuff"

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

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.

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

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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 of our staff.

The “Hard Stuff”

The congregation council should position themselves to handle the difficult member issues, relieving staff 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.