

## Diocese of Wakefield

# CONTINUING MINISTERIAL FORMATION

## SABBATICALS

### 1. WHAT IS A SABBATICAL?

**Mind the Gap:** Integrated Continuing Ministerial Education for the Church's Ministers (Archbishops' Council, 2001) makes the following points and recommendations about sabbaticals:

- (6.15) In the different dioceses there is no common understanding as to what constitutes a sabbatical. For some the words "free and fallow" apply, whereas others would lay emphasis upon "a planned programme of study". Whatever the emphasis, it is important to acknowledge that the word *sabbatical* is derived from the same root as *sabbath*. This indicates that a fundamental purpose of a sabbatical is to have a time for rest, renewal and re-creation so as to return refreshed in one's ministry.
- (6.16) In order to avoid possible misunderstandings between bishops, clergy, lay ministers, members of congregations, work colleagues and members of the family, the two most important distinctions to be borne in mind in planning a sabbatical are (i) it is not a holiday and (ii) it is not doing the same job in a different location. That is a ministry exchange. Nor for that matter is a sabbatical the same as study leave. There may well be an element of study within a sabbatical but there is more to a sabbatical than disciplined study.
- (6.19) The normal period for a sabbatical is three months. These periods should be seen as over and above annual holiday.
- R22: All licensed ministers (lay and ordained, stipendiary and non-stipendiary) should be given the opportunity of a sabbatical, i.e. a time of rest, renewal and recreation, whether or not a financial contribution is made by the diocese.
- R23 Church of England ministers lay and ordained are given the opportunity to have a sabbatical at least once every ten years, and where appropriate, for the CME budget to reflect this offer.
- R24 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.

## 2. HOW DO I GO ABOUT ORGANISING A SABBATICAL?

The Diocese of Wakefield seeks to provide for sabbatical opportunities broadly in line with these recommendations. At present, provision is made in the CME Budget for up to 5 clergy per year to take a sabbatical (based on a bursary of £1000). There is an expectation that people will have served **a minimum of ten years** in stipendiary ministry. A sabbatical is generally expected to last three months.

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

- (i) An initial approach is usually made by the clergy person to the CME Officer. Sometimes a Bishop or Archdeacon may have initiated the idea at a Pastoral Visit. The CME Officer may on occasion adopt a pro-active role in inviting suitable people to consider a sabbatical.
- (ii) The CME Officer and the applicant meet to sound out ideas and begin to discover what the focus of the sabbatical might be. The Officer offers preliminary guidance about form, content and sources of funding.
- (iii) By 31<sup>st</sup> May in the year preceding the Sabbatical, the applicant writes a short 'sabbatical proposal' of no more than a side of A4, which the CME Officer sends to the Bishop for approval. The applicant should also normally discuss his or her plans at this stage with appropriate personnel locally, typically the Churchwardens and Rural Dean.
- (iv) If the Bishop approves the proposal, the CME Officer and the applicant meet on one or more further occasions to flesh out the programme. Ideally this stage should be reached at least six months before the sabbatical is due to begin.
- (v) The CME Officer asks the applicant to produce a reasonably detailed 'sabbatical itinerary' showing how the time is to be spent, together with a budget. The applicant is responsible for meeting the budget with the help of such funding as is available from the diocese and from other sources to which he or she may apply.
- (vi) The applicant is responsible for making arrangements for adequate cover in the parish, in consultation with the Rural Dean, before the sabbatical begins. This should include any periods during which the person on sabbatical will be residing at home, but will not be available to undertake parochial ministry.
- (vii) Shortly before the sabbatical is due to begin, the CME officer arranges for payment of the sabbatical bursary (£1000), together with any additional sum remaining in the applicant's In-Service Training Fund.
- (viii) When the sabbatical is over, some form of report should be submitted to the CME Officer. This 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 request a 'de-brief' meeting with the CME Officer to help reflect on the value of the experience.

### 3. WHAT CAN I DO ON A SABBATICAL?

There is a good deal of variation in the process because sabbaticals themselves vary so much: e.g. the focus of the project might be -

- A month-long visit to a diocese overseas with the aim of learning from the experience of some aspect of church life in a different culture.
- A study of (say) patterns of shared leadership made by visiting a range of contrasting churches throughout the country.
- Writing a book or dissertation in some area of academic 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.

Given this wide diversity of possibilities, the CME Officer generally advises that a three-month sabbatical should include:

- A period devoted to the central project, which should occupy a larger portion of the sabbatical time than anything else;
- A time of reading and 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 time for 'writing up'.

### 4. WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP?

The CME Officer produces two further leaflets, which will be of relevance. **Venues and Facilities for Sabbaticals and Study Projects** lists a range of colleges and other institutions offering library resources, residential accommodation, courses, personal tuition and any combination of these. **Sources of Funding** lists some charitable trusts and other bodies, which will consider giving grants towards clergy study projects including sabbaticals. Please request copies from Anita Raggett at Church House, and feel free to consult the CME Officer for advice.