

Ministers' Supplement to the Employee Handbook

Approved: May 28, 2013



Acton Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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1.0 Introduction

The Purpose of this supplement to the Employee Handbook is to document specific benefits for the Ministers of the Acton Congregational Church. Benefits and responsibilities for all ACC staff members, including Ministers, are found in the full Employee Handbook.

2.0 Ministerial Leave

Ministerial leave is the primary benefit granted exclusively to the ministerial staff. There are three types of ministerial leave, sabbatical leave, spiritual renewal leave, and study leave. Each of these are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

The amount of leave granted to each minister is either that specifically negotiated in the original call or that specifically negotiated and granted by the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees and the Personnel Committee.

2.1 Sabbatical Leave

Acton Congregational Church's Sabbatical Leave policy is in keeping with the guidelines of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and reflects recognition that a periodic extended leave of several months for continuing education, reflection, spiritual growth and renewal are essential to the healthy growth and continuation of both the minister and the congregation.

Conditions and Terms of the Sabbatical Leave

- a.** Ministers are eligible for a sabbatical leave of up to three months upon the completion of six years of service. Calculation of years of service shall begin on the first day of employment as an ordained minister. After a sabbatical, calculation shall begin again when regular duties resume.
- b.** While on leave, the minister shall continue to receive full salary and all applicable benefits according to the terms of his/her contract.
- c.** The minister shall notify the Board of Deacons at least twelve months in advance of the desire to have a sabbatical leave for a specified period of time. The Deacons at their discretion in special situations may accept shorter lead times. The minister and the Board of Deacons must agree upon the specific dates.
- d.** The purpose of a sabbatical is for continuing education and professional enrichment of the minister. The minister shall prepare a plan of activities and have it approved by the Deacons, who will review the plan and make suggestions and offer insights for the minister's consideration.
- e.** Sabbatical leave time shall be in addition to the annual vacation leave and may be contiguous if so desired by the minister and approved by the Deacons.

- f. It is not expected that Study Leave will be taken during the year in which a sabbatical is taken. Exceptions may be made with the approval of the Deacons.
- g. The Board of Deacons may, at their discretion, form a sabbatical committee to work with the minister, the Board of Trustees, and other persons and groups in the congregation to ensure essential ministerial services are addressed during the term of the sabbatical leave.
- h. During the period of sabbatical leave, the minister shall be free of all professional responsibilities to the Church. However, the Board of Deacons may request that the minister return from leave in extraordinary circumstances and the church will provide reimbursement for any necessary associated expenses.
- i. If a minister resigns or is dismissed, accrued sabbatical leave shall not be paid in financial equivalent.
- j. The minister's professional expense account can be used for professional expenses incurred during the sabbatical. Up to 50% of the total unused balance of the prior year's professional expense account may be carried over to a sabbatical year to be available for possible additional professional expenses incurred during the sabbatical.
- k. The Board of Deacons shall allow no more than one ministerial sabbatical in a calendar year.

2.2 Spiritual Renewal Leave

The Spiritual Renewal policy recognizes that a periodic break from the day-to-day routine for each of our ministers to allow continual spiritual renewal is an important part of both the minister's and the church's well-being. Each minister is therefore asked and encouraged to set aside one day each quarter (four per year) to spend in reflection and spiritual growth. The minister should choose an activity and location which is off-site and out of the routine.

Spiritual renewal days shall be in addition to the annual vacation and study leave, but must be used each quarter, as they do not accumulate except by permission of the Personnel Committee.

2.3 Study Leave

The ministerial staff is entitled to study leave in order to maintain and add to their professional skills.

2.3.1 Definition of Study

The guidelines as to what constitutes study are very broad. They are usually one of the following:

- a. Formal study – Typically, either a conference or a course is taken to increase one's proficiencies in administration, calling, preaching, etc., or to gain an increased knowledge concerning recent theological and world church developments.

- b.** Informal study –The purpose of informal study is to broaden and deepen one’s personal religious perspective. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, through contact with other peers and Christians, through travel or pulpit exchange, through individual prayer and spiritual renewal, or through reading, writing and research into professionally relevant areas.

2.3.2 Administration of Study Leave

The guidelines of administration of study leave follow:

- a.** The specific weeks intended to be used for study leave should be approved by the Church Council and communicated to the Deacons, Personnel Committee, and the Trustees six weeks in advance, when possible, in order to allow the leave to be smoothly integrated into the church programs.
- b.** None of the study leave may be “carried over” from one calendar year to the next. Except under unusual circumstances and with the approval of the Board of Deacons, there can be no “borrowing” of leave from the next calendar year.
- c.** Associate ministers should review requests for leave with the Senior Minister. Leave periods among ministers should not overlap.
- d.** The maximum amount of continuous study leave is limited to one-half of the minister’s annual allotment, except by special permission of the Church Council. There should be a minimum of one week between study leave and other time off (e.g. vacations).

3.0 Special Compensation Arrangements

Ministers may annually request a restructuring of certain line items within their compensation package without increasing the total value of the compensation package:

- a.** Transfer of compensation between salary and housing allowance lines, provided that the minister has responsibility for dealing with the IRS tax implications. Any such transfer requires a resolution of the Board of Trustees, which is used by the Minister to show approval of such action by the Board in case of an IRS audit.
- b.** Transfer of compensation between the individual’s Professional Account and Car Allowance.

Except in the case of unforeseen circumstances, any such request must be submitted in writing to the Personnel Committee no later than April 1. The Personnel Committee will review the request at their next scheduled meeting. The requesting minister will be notified of the decision of the Personnel Committee in writing and any approved change will become effective on May 1.

4.0 Ministers' Supplement Acknowledgment

I, _____,

acknowledge that I have read and understand the Ministers' Supplement to the Employee Handbook and that my employment with ACC is governed by the policies it contains. I understand that the Ministers' Supplement does not create a contract of employment between me and ACC and that my employment with ACC is at will and may be terminated at any time with or without notice or procedure, for any reason.

I understand that the Ministers' Supplement to the Employee Handbook is subject to change at the sole discretion of ACC and that the Employee Handbook, the Ministers' Supplement, and any applicable policies are available to me.

Employee Signature

Date

Please sign and return this page to the Church Administrator for placement in your employee file.