

SEND International Sabbatical Guide

March 2017

This *SEND Sabbatical Guide* draws heavily upon *The Navigators' Sabbatical Guidelines: A Season of Renewal* and the *PI Sabbatical Guide* from Pioneers, and are used by permission.

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I. Letter of Introduction

TO THOSE STARTING SABBATICAL

March 2017

Dear SEND Member,

Our hope and prayer is that if God leads you to set aside time from your normal ministry responsibilities to rest, reflect and realign with His calling on your life, it will be a rich experience that will set you up for renewed and effective participation in His kingdom work.

The purpose of this SEND Sabbatical Guide is to provide you with helpful resources to guide your decision making and sabbatical planning. This guide draws from the experience of others to offer you the benefit of their experience of sabbatical renewal.

As you consider engaging in a sabbatical, you and your sabbatical advisor will find a careful reading of this Guide will answer many questions and assist you in your planning.

We take seriously the spiritual battle that rages, and want each of our workers to utilize all of the “spiritual blessings” available to us in Christ. Beyond the function of rest and refreshment, a sabbatical can be a time of discovery and of establishing new habits that will better enable you to join with God’s extraordinary work in our world.

The opportunity of sabbatical leave may not come to you often. For that reason, such an opportunity calls for careful planning in order to enjoy the greatest fruit from this season of reflection, realignment and rest. Plan well!

In His Sabbath rest,

Warren Janzen
International Director

II. Overview

In May, 2017 the International Council approved that the following statement be included in the SEND International Manual. This SEND Sabbatical Guide and separate Resource Supplements for each region are provided to assist members who consider taking sabbatical leave.

SEND Sabbatical Statement

“SEND members are encouraged to intentionally pursue a Sabbath lifestyle, balancing rest and work, and reserving one day a week for rest. Sabbatical leave is an extension of the biblical concept of “Sabbath,” and is available to members of SEND, as defined in the Sabbatical Leave Policy. Should a sabbatical leave be considered, a member’s mission and sending church leadership will be consulted and leadership will, with the member, develop a mutually agreed plan. A SEND International Sabbatical Guide *and separate Resource Supplements for each region* are provided to assist in developing this plan.”

Definition of Sabbatical

“Sabbatical” is not another word for vacation, but is an intentional process for disengaging from normal ministry and leadership involvement for a period of time to allow for evaluation of life and ministry. It’s an extended time for pursuing God and for the restoration of one’s soul and “disciplining” oneself after godliness. This is a time to quiet the noise of life and hear the voice of Jesus.

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Matthew 11:28-30 in *The Message* captures this thought: Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.

Why take a sabbatical?

The primary purpose of a sabbatical is time, space, and quiet for intentional pursuit of intimacy with God and seeking to understand Him as our source for life and ministry. However, it may also include secondary elements such as focused study, writing, or other creative projects which support this primary purpose and your approved sabbatical objectives.

While sabbatical may be somewhat counter to our culture, it can pay weighty dividends to the individual and to the organization.

Those within SEND who have taken a sabbatical believe their time was an opportunity to reflect, assess and recharge; a restorative and healthful time that fostered longevity in mission service.

Some observed a sabbatical time for the purpose of searching God’s direction for the future.

For others, observing a sabbatical practice was an act of obedience for the purpose of refreshment, re-

visioning, spiritual growth and renewal; a time for soul-rest and a slower pace; and to address the patterns of low-grade fatigue produced by 20 years of ministry.

In the case of some, they were so weary they hit a “wall.” They had such a sense of depletion and soul weariness that they lost motivation and knew they were dangerously low.

Spiritual Transformation

Spiritual transformation is a major focus during sabbatical. Experiencing inner freedom and more Christ-like character occurs as we allow the Holy Spirit, the Word, and others to speak to our inner person.

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost parts.

(Ps 51:6)

The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.

(Proverbs 18:15)

Spiritual growth does not occur by changing our behavior, but by changing what we believe.

Dallas Willard

As we come to understand what we believe about God, the world, ourselves, and others, and as we allow Jesus to touch those beliefs, we become more transformed into the image of God and experience more of the freedom of the Gospel.

The Reflection Phase is a good time to look at issues like lack of brokenness, false identity, unresolved sin and woundedness, addictions, hiddenness, shame, fears, guilt, pride, anger, etc. Dealing with these below-the-line issues in our lives helps us move from living from the heart of flesh to living from the heart Jesus gave us.

Sabbath Lifestyle

The command to guard the Sabbath day is certainly the clearest Biblical mandate for rest. Beyond resting one day a week, however, is a fuller spiritual reality: All our efforts—apart from resting in Jesus who is our life—are vanity. To live a Sabbath lifestyle is to recognize and embrace the fact that we are made of dust and that God is our life. God gave us an example of a work/rest rhythm not because He got tired, but because He knew we would get tired and would need a regular lifestyle of ceasing from work and presenting ourselves to Him.

Sabbath lifestyle is integral to being all God would have us be. It is as much a posture of the heart that flows from a discipline, as it is the discipline itself. It is important to have a “daily Sabbath,” spending time in prayer with our Father, to allow Him to speak into the pressures, challenges, relationships and triumphs that we face in following HIM. As much as anything, Sabbath, silence, anonymity, prayer, reflection and REST help us to keep the total picture in right perspective. God also knew that man would naturally struggle with the fleshly, self-destructive tendency to work too much.

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places because he too felt the need for intimate encounter with His Father.

Biblical Foundations for Sabbatical

A sabbatical is an extension of the Sabbath lifestyle. While Sabbath lifestyle includes a disciplined weekly approach to rest and regular dedicated times of prayer and refreshment in the Word, a sabbatical is an extension of this principle, applied on an occasional basis.

The book of Leviticus (chapter 25) describes the “shmita,” or Year of Jubilee, as a “Sabbath of Sabbaths.” It was again a rhythm of six on and one off, this time not on the micro scale of the week but the macro scale of the year. It was a “both/and” not an “either/or.”

The rationale for sabbatical is above all obedience to God, not “because I need or deserve a break.” While we undeniably need rest, the original precedent for Sabbath rest set by God after six days of creation was not because He needed rest, but just because rest in His estimation is good. Nehemiah 9:14 says God’s holy Sabbath was “made known” – fascinating! Whereas the other nine commandments were “given” from God to man, the Sabbath was a special “invitation” for man to join a God thing!

Biblically – Taking a sabbatical is one application of the biblical “Sabbath” principle that at times we should deliberately trust God with the unfinished. As an act of faith, we break from our regular work for the purpose of worship, rest, renewal, and repair.

Practically – In the ministry, the messenger is the message. The messenger must embody the message. A healthy Sabbath/sabbatical rhythm can help to keep the spirit fresh.

While future productivity is certainly a goal and outcome of sabbatical, increased intimacy with God is the priority. John 17:3 says that eternal life itself is wrapped up in ‘knowing’ God. That ‘knowing’, or intimacy with God, is the core of the message we are to embody. The fragrant aroma that Paul says we spread is ‘the knowledge of Christ’ (2 Cor. 2:14).

Approval for Sabbatical

Consideration of a sabbatical should be done in consultation with leadership, and upon approval should lead to a jointly-developed plan. For many SEND members this will involve their field leader, their Sending Office or Sending partner leadership, and their sending church leadership. In order to plan a sabbatical well, it is advisable to start up to a year in advance.

A sabbatical plan typically includes elements such as:

- sabbatical mentor/advisor(s)
- a plan for handling current responsibilities
- sabbatical timeline and goals
- a plan for accountability
- and a financial plan, if necessary

What Mission Leaders Are Saying About Their Sabbaticals

“We feel God re-energized us and gave us a new sense of His calling for our next season, a renewed sense of who He wants us to be . . . as we look toward the future. It gave us the opportunity to immerse our souls in the deep truths of His Word and prayer, enjoy nature and beauty, revamp our way of making decisions and ordering our lives for Sabbath lifestyle, and work in our lives to address issues, values and perspectives that were not God-centered, etc.”

“I learned lots about my giftedness and so to seek areas with those skills in the future.”

“It was a really positive experience. I’m looking forward to the next one in a few more years! Mine was 4 months long. In retrospect, I probably would have asked for an extra month or two. I think it paid some rich dividends with family, time in the Word, and in recalibrating my personal life – preparing me for this last busy year.”

“It was restorative in about every way possible . . . spiritually, emotionally, and physically.”

“God met us!! [Our sabbatical] renewed us. For us it was like being full time in God’s school. His Word came alive and ministered deeply to our hearts. It was a time of accelerated spiritual growth. God brought many things to light . . . healed us in places we didn’t know we needed healing . . . broke spiritual bondages that we were unaware of. It was an incredibly intense time of God’s ministry to us.”

“If you know in your own heart and have received confirmation from your immediate co-workers or supervisors about your genuine need for a sabbatical, then plan appropriately and implement it, even if there are some people who may not understand why you are doing this. One key to a sabbatical is not to ‘feel guilty’ while you are taking it. If you feel guilty during that process, it will take the glow off the experience. Just accept it as a rare gift from the Lord.”

“I would like to encourage SEND leaders to give deep and serious consideration to regular sabbaticals. I believe it is inappropriate for us to miss or skip these critical health times. We need our leaders, and our leaders need regular periods of God-ordained rest.”

Selection of Sabbatical Advisor/Mentor(s)

The role of a sabbatical advisor is to shepherd you through the sabbatical process. It should be a person with whom you’re willing to be transparent and vulnerable. (Transparent = open and honest about yourself. Vulnerable = invite others to speak into your life.)

You may draw on the counsel of several advisors while creating your sabbatical plan, but it is also important to have at least one advisor geographically nearby throughout your sabbatical. Include in your sabbatical plan periodic meetings with your advisor(s) for the sake of accountability and processing.

Members taking a sabbatical can be in danger of experiencing lack of community, loss of perspective, and a sense of isolation. While we all need times alone, we live and minister in community. Your advisor can help to monitor these needs.

A sabbatical advisor should be someone who is willing to pray with you throughout the sabbatical and give

input before, during and after. It is helpful if that person is someone who has had a meaningful sabbatical him or herself. An advisor provides accountability, helps you think through and plan your sabbatical, provides mid-way engagement, and debriefs and helps bring closure to your sabbatical. An advisor is all the more powerful if he or she is committed to speaking into your life with boldness.

Sabbatical Care Interview

Just as you take an annual physical to check your body, the beginning of sabbatical is a great time for a spiritual and emotional checkup. It would be helpful for you and your spouse to complete the following inventories in preparation for an interview with your SEND supervisor or other member care person (see [Appendix C](#)).

- Role Fit Inventory
- Burnout Inventory
- Personal and Marital Survey

You can also discuss these with your sabbatical advisor so the issues and possible action steps can be incorporated into your sabbatical plan (see [Appendix B](#)).

The purpose of a Sabbatical Care Interview is to determine priority emotional or spiritual issues that should be dealt with during the sabbatical. This interview should be scheduled as early as possible – preferably during the Release and Relinquish Phase.

NOTE: Several mission members who have had the opportunity to take a sabbatical considered this step essential in identifying the issues that needed to be addressed by themselves and their sabbatical advisor(s). In addition to the inventories included in this guide, The Highlands Ability Battery, The LEAD Program, a stress inventory, and a gift-analysis/role-match assessment were recommended.

Sabbatical Support Group

To meet the need for community, some people on sabbatical have found a sabbatical support group to be helpful. See [Appendix E](#) for ideas regarding establishing a sabbatical support group.

Marriage Intimacy Retreat

People in ministry often become so involved in giving to others that their personal lives are neglected. They focus on the biblical principal found in Matthew 10:8, Freely you have received, freely give, but may not experience another principle from Galatians 6:6 – Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with him who teaches.

Couples on sabbatical are encouraged to take advantage of one of many retreats (usually 2 days), specifically designed to help couples better understand and meet each other's emotional intimacy needs. These are times of personal renewal and encouragement and some are designed exclusively for ministry couples. It's a time to freely receive and to be reminded that the Great Commandment to love others begins at home.

Reassignment Process

In planning for sabbatical “keep the end in mind.” The reassignment process will build on the member’s sabbatical findings to help them find a good ministry fit. It may result in a change of role or changes in how they carry out their role. The member’s counselors in sabbatical planning—including supervisor, sending office leader, sending church leader, and your sabbatical advisor—will also be counselors in reassignment.

Will People Give to Me When I Go on Sabbatical?

YES!

When I began overseeing the sabbatical process, the first survey I asked of a member who had been on a sabbatical included four questions:

- Did you lose any donor support when you went on sabbatical?
- Did you gain any donor support when you went on sabbatical?
- Did you have any negative feedback from going on sabbatical?
- How did you communicate about your sabbatical?

No one lost any donor support. Some actually gained support. Two different members each had someone give negative feedback for going on sabbatical. When the members explained our sabbatical process to these critics, both negatives became very positive. One even said, “If anyone gives you a hard time, send them to me.”

We encourage you to raise funds for your sabbatical and use this opportunity to make up any deficit you have. When I was preparing for my sabbatical, an aunt who’d never given to us before sent a generous gift, just because we were going on sabbatical.

Most misgivings about donors funding our sabbatical come from our own fears. They’re not founded in reality. Most donors give to you because they love you and share your vision. Churches, too, have been supportive when they understand our sabbatical process.

God promises to meet all your needs. This includes your needs during your sabbatical.

On the next few pages are sample letters used by our members to raise funds or to tell their support team about their sabbatical. May these help you as you plan your funding strategy.

...by His power may He fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.
2 Thes. 1:11

And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
Phil. 4:19

Communicating About Your Sabbatical

Here are some helpful thoughts from Steve Brown of The Navigators on how to communicate practically, corporately, and biblically about sabbaticals to your church and friends.

PRACTICALLY

In Christian work, the messenger is the message. If we don't embody the message, the morals, and the model, it's probably time for a sabbatical: an extended time of rest, reflection, and realignment. Someone in a secular role could have an affair, struggle with an addiction, or be distant from God, and still be "effective" at work. But in a Christian ministry, this would be hypocritical.

The pace of life in the U.S. is accelerating. With every generation we need to figure out fresh ways to deal with the added pressures. Moving too fast over too long a period of time leads to burnout. Every leader experiences depletion to some extent and wishes for a way out.

Here are some thoughts on burnout and busyness from Dave Legg:

- Life in overload - life without margin + stress without recovery + physical/emotional exhaustion and spiritual dryness = burnout
- Busyness - no unhurried time to think, pray, listen, be in Word -> barrenness (no fruit)
- Burnout - when you start to resent your calling, something is wrong.

CORPORATELY

Testimony from The Navigators mission: "For 65 years The Navigators did not encourage members to take sabbaticals. In 1998 we initiated a policy to change our corporate culture; all members are strongly encouraged to take a 3-6 month sabbatical every 7-10 years. We believe (and have experienced) that it pays us and them dividends in the long run. This is part of being good stewards of the resources God has given us. Our people are our greatest resource."

BIBLICALLY

Any sabbatical is a cultural application of the biblical principle of Sabbath – "regular times of no regular work". Although the Bible has numerous verses on Sabbath, there is nothing in the Bible on sabbaticals per se.

Two passages that have spoken to me are:

Genesis 1-3 – I find it interesting that the third thing God blessed was rest (2:3) and the third thing God cursed was the work of man's hand (3:17-19). God blessed rest and cursed the work of man's hand. Our nature is to get the things of God backwards; today we bless work and curse rest. That is not the way God did it.

Leviticus 23 and 25 - I don't want to put us under the law, but it is interesting that God laid out a lifestyle for His people. In Leviticus 23 and 25 God lays out the Sabbath day, the appointed times/feasts to the Lord, the Sabbath year, and the Year of Jubilee. Notice God intended that there should be regular periods of no regular work as a lifestyle for His people.

The greatest gift you can give the world is your intimacy with God.

III. Sabbatical Phases

Getting Started

Sabbatical planning may be initiated by you or your supervisor or your sending or receiving leadership. The process generally follows these steps:

1. Select an advisor/mentor(s) (see sample letter to Sabbatical Advisor on page 6)
2. Develop a sabbatical proposal to address the purpose, timeline, location, workflow reassignment, plan, finances, and accountability.
3. Submit your sabbatical proposal for review and approval to the one in your sending office or IO Globalization office responsible for member care, who will then also consult as it's appropriate with your receiving area leadership, sending church leadership or partner agency leadership.
4. Once approved, make preparations for the sabbatical and implement the plan.
5. At the completion of the sabbatical, be prepared to provide a reflection or evaluation to the leaders who approved the plan.

Sabbatical timing should be set according to your ministry/family needs and in consultation with your leadership. A typical sabbatical is 3 to 6 months, but could be shorter or longer if deemed appropriate. You, your field leader, your sending office leader, and your sending church leader should agree on the length. Additionally, adequate lead time is needed to plan a sabbatical well.

I can state without wavering that the single greatest need of the church today is the restoration of ministers. What is required is a quite different approach to their life and work. It is a matter of leading them into a massive shift of the dynamics of their personality under God, and one that cannot be done by more books and conferences. They need to be taken out of the circulation for a sufficiently long time to re-vision and re-structure their lives in communion with Jesus and his kingdom. - Endorsement by Dallas Willard on back of brochure for Hilltop Renewal Center, Brea, CA

Note: Other mission members found mentors, supervisors, their team, supporting church pastors, board members, counselors and others who had taken sabbaticals to be helpful places to start for advice.

What Will You Do on Sabbatical?

1. Release and Relinquish – During this first phase you disengage from the ministry and leadership responsibilities, and you establish a plan for your sabbatical. This sabbatical plan is an initial framework for direction and reflects priority needs.
2. Rest and Recovery – “Rest” in the second phase of the sabbatical doesn’t mean ceasing from all activity. Rather, you stop ministry activities and, where possible, other areas of stress. You consider what restores you emotionally and feeds you spiritually. During this phase, be sensitive to feelings of isolation or lack of significance. You should be out of regularly scheduled ministry activity, but not out of fellowship.
3. Reflect and Refocus – During this phase, you ask the question, “Lord, is there anything You want to say to me?” Consider how God has spoken to you in the past and posture yourself to hear His voice. Scheduling extended time alone with God is a priority.
4. Realignment and/or Reassignment – This doesn’t necessarily imply a change of roles. During this phase

of the sabbatical, it's important to review and reaffirm your calling. The goal is to experience maximum contribution in this next season of life, which may or may not mean changing jobs.

5. Re-Entry/Re-Engagement – In this phase you transition back into ministry. Expect emotional stresses, pace issues, spiritual warfare, and struggles in working out desired changes in life and ministry. Also expect the joy of being refreshed physically, reaffirming His vision for you, and gaining renewed perspective!

Helpful Hints and Lessons Learned

1. If you have school-aged children, consider taking a sabbatical during the school year rather than summer.
2. It's okay to sleep more.
3. This is not a sabbatical from life. Expect to spend time on family responsibilities, expense reports, updating your supervisor, etc.
4. Expect to feel stress as you transition into the rest phase—change is stressful.
5. Don't skip on the planning of your sabbatical (take 6 months or longer in order to ensure things are passed off well), and don't cut your sabbatical too short.
6. Wait on the Lord to see at least part of the sabbatical just unfold like a rose.
7. If at all possible, the husband and wife should do a sabbatical together.
8. Spend long, lingering times in the Word and before HIS face.
9. If possible, separate geographically from the ministry context.
10. Consider being in a place of physical beauty to greatly enhance the intimate journey with God.
11. Learn and practice new disciplines like staying quiet, reducing your activity level, getting more exercise, meditating and memorizing, reading, etc. In other words, "Take a sabbatical and change your life."
12. Use the time to organize your personal world in a way that will make you more effective and efficient when you return to work.
13. Have confidence in God to meet you, even if He waits until very late in the process to do so.
14. Taking a sabbatical as part of a planned home service can work well.
15. Communicate openly and early with supporters about your sabbatical.
16. Do some reading on sabbatical before entering into it.
17. Reengage slowly, both for personal balance reasons and to not offend those who have been carrying a much heavier load during this period.
18. If taking a sabbatical were to offend supporters and cause you to lose their support and confidence, it would be better for you to adjust to a 3-day work week and extended retreat (3 weeks) than to take a full "sabbatical."
19. Compile a list of personal "takeaways" throughout your sabbatical.
20. Make it a sabbatical goal to re-order your values and habits toward a "rest-full" post-sabbatical lifestyle that is reflective of and honoring to God.
21. Plan personal get-aways into your sabbatical for the sake of silence and solitude.

Phase I – Release and Relinquish

Exiting from leadership roles and ministry responsibilities

During this first phase, you disengage from ministry and leadership responsibilities, get needed funding, and draw up a plan for your sabbatical. Typically, this phase starts at least 3-5 months before the sabbatical begins. You may want to consider attending a Navigators Sabbatical Orientation Workshop with your spouse, and even your sabbatical advisor.

At the beginning of Phase I, your sabbatical advisor helps you and your spouse develop a sabbatical plan. Begin by meeting with your supervisor to get his input. Your plan revolves around priority needs identified by your supervisor, the sabbatical care interview, and the following inventories found in [Appendix C](#):

- Role Fit Inventory
- Burnout Inventory (as needed)
- Personal and Marital Survey
 - “When do I get my sabbatical?” is a sentiment often expressed by spouses of members on sabbatical. This is especially true for a wife whose main ministry is mothering and maintaining a household. Her work continues and may even increase when her husband is at home. Her opportunity to rest, reflect, and refocus is often limited. (See [Appendix F](#) & [Appendix G](#).)

When putting together the sabbatical plan, a sabbatical advisor should acknowledge the spouse’s workload, encourage husband and wife to examine parental and household responsibilities, and consider how the load can be lifted or shared during this sabbatical so both can participate as much as possible.

Once you (and your spouse) identify your priority needs, your sabbatical advisor works with you to come up with possible resources and action steps. You then create a sabbatical plan draft that includes your funding plan, priority needs, action steps, and other resources. Your sabbatical advisor and supervisor read the draft and give you input and suggestions. You will then submit this proposal to the one responsible for member care in your sending office or IO Globalization office for review and approval, in consultation as appropriate with leadership in your receiving area, sending church, or partner agency. Once approved this becomes the sabbatical plan.

The sabbatical plan is an initial framework for direction, based on your priority needs. It’s a dynamic tool that can be tweaked throughout the sabbatical process. Early phases often have more detail than later phases. A copy of the sabbatical plan should be shared with your supervisor, receiving area leader, sending church leader, and your sabbatical advisor.

Questions to Ask Yourself During This Phase:

- With whom do we need to process this decision? And from whom do we need permission?
- How will we communicate with our churches, supporters, family, etc.?
- How will we close out our leadership responsibilities so that the baton is passed smoothly?
- How will my responsibilities be carried out in my absence, and who will carry them out? (If done well, this can be a fantastic leadership development opportunity, assisting other leaders to grow in their own leadership skills.)
- How do I get the permission/support necessary from SEND and from my sending base to take a sabbatical?
- What will my goals be for each of the sabbatical phases?
- What are the financial ramifications of a sabbatical, and how can we address them?

- Who will I ask to be a part of my sabbatical accountability team?
- How will we handle stepping away from email?
- How can we plan where we will live so that our objectives can best be met?
- What will accountability look like?
- When and how will we evaluate during and after the sabbatical process?

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During The Release And Relinquish Phase:

- How are you feeling about disengaging from the ministry?
- Are you worried about losing financial support while on sabbatical? How's your funding?
- How have other members and friends reacted when they learned about your sabbatical?
- How does your spouse (children?) feel about your sabbatical?
- Since drawing up your sabbatical plan a couple of weeks ago, have you had any further thoughts? Do you still believe it reflects your priority needs and desires?
- Does the starting date for Phase II: Rest and Recovery still seem realistic to you?
- What excites you most about your sabbatical?
- What are your priorities for the next couple of weeks?
- What can I do to help you?
- What can I be praying for you?

Sample Sabbatical Advisors Checklist: Release and Relinquish Phase

- Member has attended a Sabbatical Orientation Workshop in Colorado Springs.
- Member has completed or turned over ministry and leadership responsibilities.
- Sabbatical support group has been established.
- Sabbatical Care Interview with member (and spouse) has been completed.
- Member has requested input from his/her supervisor, sending office leader and sending church leader.
- Sabbatical plan, based on priority needs, has been approved.
- Member has communicated the sabbatical to supporters
- Copy of the approved sabbatical plan has been sent to the supervisor, receiving area leader, sending church leader, and sabbatical advisor.

Phase II- Rest and Recovery

Establishing Margin and Managing Pace of Life

It isn't unusual for members on sabbatical to have trouble letting go of the ministry. Some don't quite believe it's really okay to step out. It's important that you and your sabbatical advisor make sure ministry commitments have been handed off or finished. During this phase, be sensitive to feelings of isolation or lack of significance. Often, members who are no longer "doing ministry" struggle with their identity. You should be out of regularly scheduled SEND ministry but not out of fellowship. Plan to - spend unscripted time with family members and iron-sharpen-iron friends – those enriching relationships God has given you.

It's also common for members to treat their sabbatical as another Type-A frenzied activity. As you consider the inevitable ministry opportunities that will pop up during a sabbatical, the guiding principle is: "Keep the sabbatical the focus." Can you attend the meeting or prepare and deliver the workshop without losing the focus of the sabbatical? "Extra opportunities" should be examined individually, cautiously, and with accountability to your sabbatical advisor. Generally, it is recommended that you make a full break from ministry activities. This is the time for rest.

"Rest" in this phase doesn't mean ceasing from all activity, but rather, pulling back from ministry activities and (where possible) other areas of stress. This gives you room to explore and discover what relaxes you and what restores you emotionally. Mark Buchanan says, "Cease from what is necessary; engage in what is life-giving.")

Isolation: A Place of Transformation in the Life of A Leader, by Shelley Trebesch, is a very helpful resource for this phase to read, journal, and discuss with your sabbatical advisor. The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath, by Mark Buchanan, is another excellent resource.

What Others Have Done During This Phase To Rest:

Duck hunting	Gardening	Journaling
Read novels	Home projects	Cooked dinner for the family
Fly fishing	Traveled	each day
Slept more	"Fast" from media	Audited Bible courses
Played softball	Exercised	Wholeness Prayer Seminars

"Would you believe that one of the most difficult things for me to model to my team leaders and fellow missionaries is vacationing? Sometimes I fall into the trap of believing the lie that missionaries should not rest or take vacation. 'The devil never takes a vacation,' some say. But, as Howard Hendricks once replied, 'I didn't know he was your role model.'" – A Mission Leader

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During The Rest and Recovery Phase:

- How would you define or explain rest?
- Do you feel that you're resting? What rests you?
- Are you experiencing any obstacles to rest?
- Have you noticed significant changes in your eating or sleeping habits?

- What things are stressful for you right now? Can anything be done to remove or reduce them?
- How is your relationship with your spouse? With your children?
- What are your thoughts about your last meeting with your sabbatical support group? What kind of feedback are you getting from them? Do you think they understand you?
- Is your sabbatical going the way you expected? How so?
- Have you given your SEND supervisor an update recently?
- What are your priorities for the next two weeks?
- Is there something I can do to help you?

Sample Sabbatical Advisors Checklist: Rest And Relax Phase

- Member has pulled back from ministry and leadership responsibilities.
- Action steps have been taken to promote rest.
- The book *Isolation: A Place of Transformation in the Life of A Leader*, by Shelley Trebesch has been read and discussed.
- Sabbatical support group has met at least once each month.
- Member has contacted SEND supervisor at least once with an update.
- Member has attended a Marriage Intimacy Retreat.

NOTE: These phases are based on a six-month sabbatical model.

Phase III – Reflect and Refocus

Experiencing God and Self in New or Deeper Ways

This is the work phase of the sabbatical, although goals will often be more “receptivity goals” than “productivity goals.” During this phase, you should be asking the question, “Lord, is there anything You want to say to me?” God speaks to us in a variety of ways. You should consider how God has spoken to you in the past and position yourself to hear His voice. Extended time alone with God for reflection is the focus of this phase. This is the time to go after whatever it is you want to pursue. It is the time for soul enlargement. Read, meditate, write, pray – soak up nutrients freely without immediate demand for production.

What Other Members Have Done During This Phase:

- Spent extended times alone with God
- Went away to a retreat center
- Focused on emotional healing
- Read books of interest
- Crystallized personal passions
- Grew purposefully by reading in an area that stimulated thinking
- Took a class
- Interacted with highly-interesting people that stretched them

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During the Reflect and Focus Phase

- Are you aware of anything that would hinder God from speaking to you during this phase? (Busyness, unforgiving spirit, conflict, unconfessed sin, etc.)
- Is there anything I’ve missed that would be helpful to discuss?
- What things are currently stressful for you? Can anything be done to remove or reduce them?
- How’s your relationship with your spouse/children?
- Tell me about your last meeting with your sabbatical support group. What kind of feedback are you getting from them? Do you think they understand you? Are they speaking into your life?
- Is your sabbatical going the way you expected? How so?
- When did you last give your supervisor an update?
- What are your priorities for the next two weeks?
- Is there something I can do to help you?
- Have you completed your Life Lessons? How can I help you get them completed?

Sample Sabbatical Advisor Checklist: Reflect & Refocus Phase

- Member has contacted supervisor at least once with an update.
- Sabbatical support group has met at least once each month.
- Member has crystallized his personal passions.

Phase IV– Realignment and/or Reassignment

Empowering for Maximum Contribution

At the beginning of this phase, it is IMPORTANT that you contact your supervisor and/or Sending Office leader to solicit their partnership in planning to reengage ministry responsibilities.

This is the application phase of the sabbatical. During this phase you want to answer the question, “What changes in life and ministry should I make as result of hearing from God in the Reflection Phase?” This might involve changing your ministry role or a change in how you’ve been handling your current ministry role. What realignments do you need to consider?

This is a time for rekindling and clarifying vision for ministry. Review and distill sabbatical journals and response papers. What has God been saying, and what is He saying for the future? How has God answered sabbatical prayers? How were sabbatical goals met? What are my key sabbatical takeaways? What practical “Sabbath lifestyle” applications will I include in my life going forward?

What Other Members Have Done During This Phase:

- Reviewed and reaffirmed their calling
- Updated their resume
- Received input from their supervisor and sabbatical advisor
- Received counsel from friends and co-workers
- Visited possible ministry locations
- Entertained various ministry options
- Developed a plan for what to do differently in their role
- Renewed their commitment to the Lord and discerned afresh His call upon their life
- Wrote a few, clear, concise statements of what was learned through this time

Questions to Ask Yourself During This Phase:

- How will we transition back into ministry while translating life-giving patterns into the reality of challenging ministry demands?

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During This Phase:

- With what you’ve learned in the last phases, what adjustments do you need to make in your life or ministry to more accurately reflect your design and desires?
- What do you sense God has for your future?
 - Realignment?
 - Reassignment?
- If you lack clarity about the future, what specific steps might you take to see more clearly?
- Can you describe your perfect job? Be sure to include elements or functions you consider essential. Also pinpoint those that should NOT be your primary responsibility.
- Does your sabbatical support group think you’ve completed your sabbatical? Do they affirm your job

selection and job description?

Sabbatical Debriefing Questions

It's very important for you to take time to reflect on the sabbatical and capture major lessons in writing. After you complete the debriefing questions below, send a copy to your sabbatical advisor and supervisor and discuss your responses with them.

Personal Questions

- What decisions have you made related to your ministry assignment?
- What are major lessons learned and how do you anticipate them making a difference?
- What do you believe God has spoken to you during your sabbatical?
- Do you have any emotional healing or relational healing issues you realized you need to work on? What's your next step?

Process Questions (Please send these responses to your Sending Office or Sending Partner Member Care director with "SEND Sabbatical Guide" in the Subject Line.)

- What activities were most helpful during each phase of your sabbatical?
- What activities were least helpful during each phase?
- What would you do differently?
- Would you consider being a sabbatical advisor to another member? If so, please share this with your SEND leader.
- Do you have ideas, suggestions, or comments to help us improve the SEND Sabbatical Guide?

Phase V – Re-entry and Re-engagement

Engaging at the right pace

Re-engaging correctly is an extremely important part of the sabbatical process. It can make or break the success of the whole experience. Below are some helpful tips:

- Plan your re-engagement even before you start the sabbatical.
- Plan a phased-in engagement where you don't resume all of your responsibilities again overnight. The temptation will be to plunge in quickly, but this will reduce the long-term benefits of your sabbatical.
- Make sure that your re-entry includes an emphasis on relationships and reconnecting with people.
- Try to incorporate into your lifestyle new enduring habits and disciplines that can be traced back to your sabbatical.
- Process ahead of time how your new sabbatical lifestyle will translate into the ministry context. Which patterns will you retain? How could some patterns be modified for a busier schedule? What is non-negotiable?

At the beginning of this phase, be aware that your pace of life will increase and that transition is stressful. Expect emotional disorientation and spiritual warfare as you re-engage.

What Other Members Have Done During This Phase:

- Resumed ministry responsibilities half time for the first month
- Set up extra accountability relationships to help with changes they want to make in life and ministry
- Coached ministry and teammates on their desired changes
- Scheduled no major responsibilities for at least the first 4 months

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During This Phase:

- What changes have you experienced as you've re-engaged?
- How can we help you as you re-enter ministry?

Sample Sabbatical Advisor Checklist: Re-Entry & Re-Engagement Phase

- The member has communicated and worked out with their supervisor and team their desires and expectations for re-entry.
- The member is maintaining a good pace.

IV. Appendix

Appendix A- Sabbatical Checklist

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Member and spouse – Give themselves to the sabbatical process and experience all God has for them.
- Supervisor – Give feedback on issues, and approve sabbatical along with sending church and Sending Office leadership.
- Sabbatical advisor – Shepherd member through the sabbatical process, hold accountable, help process.

Initiation

- Process can be initiated by member or supervisor or other leadership.
- Member and supervisor review SEND Sabbatical Statement in International Manual and SEND Sabbatical Guide
- Supervisor approves the sabbatical, along with mobilization base leader and sending church leader.
- Member and spouse consider how to maximize one another's involvement in the sabbatical.

Selection of Sabbatical Advisor

- Member determines who could be a sabbatical advisor.
- Begin drafting a sabbatical plan for approval by SEND leadership.

Sabbatical Orientation Workshop

- Member considers attending a Navigators Sabbatical Orientation Workshop during Release and Relinquish Phase.

Becoming One Retreat/Galatians 6:6 Intimacy Retreat

- Member considers attending a Marriage Intimacy Retreat, determines the best time and location for them, and makes travel arrangements.

Sabbatical Phase I – Release and Relinquish – Exiting from leadership and ministry responsibilities

- Member disengages from leadership and ministry responsibilities (usually takes 6 months +/-).
- Member gets input/feedback from supervisor for the sabbatical.
- Member drafts sabbatical proposal and submits to sending office/IO Globalization member care for review/approval.
- Member sends a copy of approved sabbatical plan to supervisor, receiving area leader, sending church leader, and sabbatical advisor.
- Member tells current ministry and support team about the sabbatical.
- Member does fundraising to fund the sabbatical.

Phase II – Rest and Recovery – Establishing margin and managing the pace of life

- Sabbatical advisor (SA) makes sure member has pulled back from ministry and leadership responsibilities
- SA helps member keep the sabbatical their focus.
- SA ensures that action steps have been taken to promote rest.

- SA has met with member at least bi-monthly.
- Member has contacted SEND supervisor at least once with an update.
- Member may have attended a Marriage Intimacy Retreat.

Phase III – Reflect and Refocus – Experiencing God and self in new or deeper ways

- Member has experienced extended time alone with God.
- SA has met with member at least bi-monthly.
- Member has contacted supervisor at least once with an update.
- If needed, member has experienced Healing Prayer.
- Member has read books of interest.

Phase IV – Realignment and/or Reassignment – Empowering for maximum contribution

- Member contacts supervisor to discuss his future role. SA can serve as liaison for negotiating a job adjustment or change.
- Member clarifies/reaffirms his calling.
- SA has met with member at least bi-monthly.
- Member and supervisor have agreed on Realignment or Reassignment.
- Member completed and discussed debriefing questions with supervisor and SA.

Post-Sabbatical

Debriefing/Closure Questions

It's very important to take time to reflect on the sabbatical and capture major lessons in writing. The member should complete the debriefing questions and discuss them with their sabbatical advisor and supervisor. A written copy of the completed questions should be sent to the individual's supervisor and sabbatical advisor.

Personal Questions

- What is your final (current) decision on your ministry assignment?
- What are the major lessons learned and how do you anticipate their making a difference?
- Do you believe God has spoken to you during your sabbatical?
- Do you have any emotional healing or relational healing issues you want to work on? What's your next step?

Process Questions (Please send these responses to your Sending Office or Sending Partner Member Care director with "SEND Sabbatical Guide" in the Subject Line.)

- What activities were most helpful during each phase of your sabbatical?
- What activities were least helpful during each phase?
- What would you do differently?
- Would you consider being a sabbatical advisor to other member?
- Do you have ideas, suggestions, or comments to help us improve the sabbatical process?

Phase V – Re-Entry and Re-Engagement – Engaging at right pace

- Member re-engages at a pace beneficial for him (and spouse).
- Member talks with his team about his expectations and desires for re-entry into his ministry role.

Follow Up

3-6 Months after Sabbatical

Initiate a conversation with a SEND leader (your supervisor or the member care person in your sending office or the IO Globalization office who approved your sabbatical) to discuss:

- How's it going?
- What changes have you experienced?
- What has been the impact of your sabbatical?
- Is there anything we can do for you?

Appendix B- Sample Sabbatical Plan

Name: Joe and Jane Members Sabbatical Advisor: Ben Johnson Sabbatical dates: March-August
Phase I – Release and Relinquish (5-8 Months Before Sabbatical Begins) Exiting from leadership and ministry responsibilities

Read Contemplative Pastor by Eugene Peterson (esp. the final chapter)

Complete assessment inventories.

Complete Sabbatical Care Interview.

Develop sabbatical proposal.

Develop sabbatical proposal with SEND supervisor or other sabbatical mentor/advisor(s)

Submit proposal for review and approval by person in sending office or IO Globalization office responsible for member care.

Communicate sabbatical to supporters.

Transfer or complete ministry/leadership responsibilities.

Establish sabbatical support group.

1. Jeff and Sue Smith
2. Peter and Joan Wilson
3. Paul and Marie Jones

Complete fundraising for sabbatical as necessary.

Meet with sabbatical advisor to review sabbatical plan, process, pray

Phase II – Rest and Recovery (March-April) Establishing Margin And Managing Pace Of Life

Read:

- Isolation: A Place of Transformation in the Life of A Leader, by Shelley Trebesch
- The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath, by Mark Buchanan,
- Abba's Child by Brennan Manning
- The Overload Syndrome by Dick Swenson

Finish projects around house.

Play in softball league.

Fishing trip with iron-sharpen-iron friends.

Go to Bed & Breakfast with Jane.

Attend Galatians 6:6 Intimacy Retreat.

Meet with sabbatical advisor to review sabbatical plan, process, pray

Phase III – Reflect and Refocus (May-June) Experiencing God And Self In New/Deeper Ways

Read:

- Connecting by Larry Crabb,
- Reaching for the Invisible God by Philip Yancey.

Attend Bill Hybles' Summit on leadership.

Take two extended prayer retreats asking God what He wants to say to me.

Crystallize personal passions.

Meet with sabbatical advisor to review sabbatical plan, process, pray

Phase IV – Reassignment/Realignment (July-August) Empowering For Maximum Contribution

Clarify my calling.

Confirm God's direction for realignment in current role.
Get counsel from supervisors, Jim and Gary.
Complete Sabbatical Debriefing Questions and send to supervisors, SA, and SD.
Meet with sabbatical advisor to review sabbatical plan, process, pray

Phase V – Re-Entry/Re-Engagement (September-October) Engaging at right pace

Determine right pace to re-engage.
Communicate to supervisor and team my desires and expectations for re-entry.

Agreements

- Keep my sabbatical a priority focus.
- Regular journaling.
- Bi-monthly day alone with God.
- Jane will participate as appropriate.
- Take initiative to stay current with sabbatical advisor and supervisors.
- Disengage from ministry activities and travel as agreed in the sabbatical plan.
- Be transparent and vulnerable.
- Consider becoming a sabbatical advisor for someone in the future.

Accountability – take initiative for

- Bi-monthly meetings/phone calls with sabbatical advisor.
- Monthly meeting with sabbatical support team.
- Once per phase update supervisors.

Priority Issues [Note: Normally A List Would Not Be This Long]

From Sabbatical Care Interview, input for others, own prayers

1. Ministry overload, over commitment, overwork
2. Perfectionism
3. Partnering in ministry
4. Disappointment
5. Self-doubt
6. Critical spirit
7. Anger
8. Fear
9. Role-fit
10. Marriage

Miscellaneous

Confirm meeting schedule with sabbatical advisor.

Define possible future role with _____.

Resolve conflict with _____.

Appendix C- Inventories: Role fit, Burnout, Personal and Marital

ROLE FIT INVENTORY

Carefully read each of the ten statements below, and insert the number between 1 and 5 that best represents your response.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

- In my current role, I'm utilizing my primary gifts and abilities.
- I'm motivated and challenged in my day-to-day activities.
- I draw satisfaction and fulfillment from my current contributions.
- I feel energized and encouraged in my primary responsibilities.
- I have a sense that I'm making a significant contribution to my organization.
- The ability to fulfill my current responsibilities comes naturally and easily.
- I receive feedback from others that I'm in a good role-fit.
- I experience little frustration in my current role.
- I don't experience unmanageable stress in my current role.
- My relationships with co-workers are generally free of conflict.
- Total

INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

40 – 50 Maximizing

15 – 39 Moderate

0 – 14 Marginal

BURNOUT INVENTORY

These questions may give you an idea of how heavily you're experiencing burnout. Rate your response to each question on a scale from 1 to 5. (1 = Doesn't describe me at all. 5 = Describes me very accurately.)

- I'm exhausted much of the time, and rest doesn't seem to help much.
 - I don't get as much satisfaction from ministry as I used to.
 - Most mornings, I dread beginning my ministry responsibilities.
 - I feel like a failure in the ministry.
 - I don't sleep as well as I used to; or I'm sleeping more than I used to.
 - It's more and more difficult for me to deal with people's problems.
 - I have more difficulty making decisions than I used to.
 - I get very frustrated when things don't go well in the ministry.
 - More and more I find myself thinking about leaving SEND.
 - I feel greatly bothered or guilty about ministry responsibilities not done or not done well.
 - I get angry and/or irritable more easily than I used to.
 - I often feel a sense of emptiness and depletion, as if I have nothing more to give.
 - The ministry gives me very little or no joy.
 - I'm concerned that I won't be able to last much longer in the ministry.
 - It's getting more and more difficult to do some aspects of the ministry.
 - I struggle with feeling pressure to perform and succeed.
- Total

ASSESSING YOUR LEVEL OF BURNOUT

- 15-29: You probably don't have a problem with burnout.
- 30-49: You may be experiencing mild to moderate burnout.
- 50-64: You may be suffering significant burnout.
- 65-75: You may be in serious trouble.

Adapted from a similar *Burnout Inventory* prepared by Ken Williams, Ph.D., Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc.

PERSONAL AND MARITAL SURVEY

(To debrief with member care specialist. Each spouse should fill out a separate survey. Information to be kept confidential.)

GENERAL INFORMATION

In what area or areas of difficulty would you like help?

What results you would like to see?

Optional Question – If you're comfortable, please list any physical conditions that may impact your sabbatical.

When was the last time you had a physical?

Please indicate any conditions that apply to you:

Headaches	Panic attacks	High blood pressure
Insomnia	Dizziness	Nightmares
Fear	Fainting	Irritability
Loneliness	Depression	Loss of initiative
Indecisiveness	Inferiority	Drug problems
Racing heartbeat	Nerves	Alcohol problems
Constipation	Rejection	Nervousness
Vomiting	Appetite loss	Stomach problems
Abandonment	Work difficulty	Suicidal thoughts
Smoking	Weight gain	Memory loss
Economic difficulty	Anger	Problems at home
Weight loss	Marital difficulty	Sexual control
Guilt	Attention deficit	Problems with parents
Sexual addiction	Sleep too much	Phobias
Eating disorder	Strange thoughts	Obsessions
Loss of hope	Problems with pornography	Difficulty concentrating
Difficulty relaxing	Difficulties with friendships	Abuse by spouse
Learning difficulties	Abusive to spouse problems	Tiredness
Anxiety		

Do any other physical/emotional conditions apply to you?

STRESS LEVEL

How would you evaluate your level of stress on a rating of 1-10 (10 = high stress)? Explain.

Are you struggling with attitudes such as resentment, anxiety, fear, pride, etc.?

How would you rate the level of pressure you feel to perform and succeed?

What relaxes and refreshes you?

How would you evaluate your level of restlessness?

RELATIONSHIPS

Do you have unresolved conflicts with people that need to be addressed?

Do you experience feelings of loneliness, isolation, or insecurity?

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

What have you always wanted to do but never had the time?

In what character areas do you feel the need to grow?

In what ways are you developing your God-given gifts and design?

SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

Assess your spiritual intimacy with God by assigning each aspect a number from 1 to 10 (10 = excellent).

- My intimacy with Christ is truly vibrant and growing.
- The Word and Spirit of God are speaking to me and guiding my mind, decisions, and significant relationships.
- I have passages and promises from God for life and ministry that motivate me in my walk with Him.
- In my time alone with God I'm growing in thankfulness, praise, and worship.
- Intercessory prayer tends to be foundational to everything I do.
- I'm praying and believing God for my life, ministry, and significant relationships.
- My spiritual disciplines are strong and consistent.
- My motivation to live a life of devotion to Christ in purity of heart, ministering out of interest in the welfare of others, is strong.
- The joys, hardships, sufferings, and circumstances of my life are drawing me to a deeper love for and dependence on Christ.
- I have a consistent inner sense that God deeply loves me, is present within me, is for me, and is active in my life.

Is there a spiritual discipline that I sense is weak and would like to grow in?

Reflect on the above parameters of your spiritual life, as well as any others that come to mind. Talk to God about them and ask Him to speak to you. Is He putting His finger on some area of your spiritual life, urging you to develop in it? If so, what?

MARITAL INTIMACY

Independently of one another, please assess the following areas of your marriage by assigning each aspect of intimacy a number from 1 to 10 (10 = excellent). Then enter your spouse's ratings and compare.

View of		Aspect of intimacy
Husband	Wife	
		Our spiritual closeness through prayer and sharing the Word together is rich.
		Frequent times of quality communication and special times away together are high priority.
		We practice honest confession and genuine forgiveness when we hurt one another.
		My spouse is good at sharing appreciation, and at speaking and showing love.
		My spouse and I often agree on important issues concerning values and beliefs.
		We generally understand and appreciate each other's differences.
		We often share deep feelings and strong emotions like grief, sadness, and joy.
		We give each other undivided attention when listening or talking.
		Our communication is characterized by sharing on important and significant issues.
		The handling of finances isn't usually a source of tension in our relationship
		My spouse and I understand and accept our marital roles.
		My spouse is responsive and sensitive to my needs and desires concerning our relationship.
		My spouse and I experience community and meaningful relationships with a few close friends.
		We're comfortable in our relationship with our children.
		My spouse and I take part together in recreation, relaxation, and rest.
		We have good and meaningful relationships with our in-laws and parents.
		We partner together in some areas of common interests, and in ways that are consistent with individual design and desires.
		Generally I am satisfied with our level of sexual intimacy.

Assessing Your Level of Intimacy

- A. Record your responses to the questions and share with one another.
- B. Identify and talk about areas of significant agreement and disagreement.

Areas of Agreement

Areas of Disagreement

As a couple, what are your three greatest strengths?

As a couple, what are your three greatest weaknesses?

Identify and agree on one or two issues as most important to focus on during your sabbatical.

CAREGIVING AND COUNSELING

Is there anything else you'd like to discuss or explore?

Is there any area in which you seem unable to make progress on your own?

Have you seen counselors in the past? In what areas did you seek help? Was it helpful to you? If so, how?

Appendix D- Sabbatical Advisor Guide

Dear Sabbatical Advisor,

A sabbatical is a unique and powerful opportunity to hear from God, but potential “downsides” do exist. During sabbatical, people have experienced discouragement, loneliness, isolation, and loss of perspective. A significant part of the solution is a friend...a spiritual friend. That’s a good way to describe a sabbatical advisor. The sabbatical advisor doesn’t do much teaching. He doesn’t do much directing. He takes the initiative to come alongside and listen, clarify, suggest, and possibly protect. A sabbatical advisor shepherds the member through the sabbatical process, helping the member achieve his or her God-directed goals.

The following pages will guide you in being the best possible friend to the member on sabbatical. If you’ll apply the process described in these guidelines and make sure the checklist for each phase is completed, you’ll make a significant contribution into the life of another. Successes and lessons learned from many members who’ve experienced a sabbatical have shaped these guidelines. When they’re faithfully applied, members return to ministry with renewed excitement, creativity, and passion.

One advisor was helping a couple prepare for their sabbatical. As they discussed priority needs and action steps to meet these needs, the advisor noticed tears in the husband’s eyes. He stopped and asked if everything was okay. The man paused and then replied, “Yes, I’m fine...it’s just that someone cares.”

Thank you for being someone who cares!

Selection of Sabbatical Advisor/Mentor(s)

The role of a sabbatical advisor is to shepherd you through the sabbatical process. It should be a person with whom you're willing to be transparent and vulnerable. (Transparent = open and honest about yourself. Vulnerable = invite others to speak into your life.)

You may draw on the counsel of several advisors while creating your sabbatical plan, but it is also important to have at least one advisor geographically nearby throughout your sabbatical. Include in your sabbatical plan periodic meetings with your advisor(s) for the sake of accountability and processing.

Members taking a sabbatical can be in danger of experiencing lack of community, loss of perspective, and a sense of isolation. While we all need times alone, we live and minister in community. Your advisor can help to monitor these needs.

A sabbatical advisor should be someone who is willing to pray with you throughout the sabbatical and give input before, during and after. It is helpful if that person is someone who has had a meaningful sabbatical him or herself. An advisor provides accountability, helps you think through and plan your sabbatical, provides mid-way engagement, and debriefs and helps bring closure to your sabbatical. An advisor is all the more powerful if he or she is committed to speaking into your life with boldness.

Sabbatical Phases:

Phase I- Rest and Relinquish

Questions a Sabbatical Advisor May Ask

- How are you feeling about disengaging from the ministry?
- Are you worried about losing financial support while on sabbatical? How's your funding?
- How have other members and friends reacted when they learned about your sabbatical?
- How does your spouse (children?) feel about your sabbatical?
- Since drawing up your sabbatical plan a couple of weeks ago, have you had any further thoughts? Do you still believe it reflects your priority needs and desires?
- Does the starting date for Phase II: Rest and Recovery still seem realistic to you?
- What excites you most about your sabbatical?
- What are your priorities for the next couple of weeks?
- What can I do to help you?
- What can I be praying for you?

Sample Sabbatical Advisors Checklist: Release and Relinquish Phase

- Member has attended a Sabbatical Orientation Workshop in Colorado Springs.
- Member has completed or turned over ministry and leadership responsibilities.
- Sabbatical support group has been established.
- Sabbatical Care Interview with member (and spouse) has been completed.
- Member has requested input from his/her supervisor, sending office leader and sending church leader.
- Sabbatical plan, based on priority needs, has been approved.
- Member has communicated the sabbatical to supporters
- Copy of the approved sabbatical plan has been sent to the supervisor, receiving area leader, sending church leader, and sabbatical advisor.

Phase II- Rest and Recovery

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During The Rest and Recovery Phase:

- How would you define or explain rest?
- Do you feel that you're resting? What rests you?
- Are you experiencing any obstacles to rest?
- Have you noticed significant changes in your eating or sleeping habits?
- What things are stressful for you right now? Can anything be done to remove or reduce them?
- How is your relationship with your spouse? With your children?
- What are your thoughts about your last meeting with your sabbatical support group? What kind of feedback are you getting from them? Do you think they understand you?
- Is your sabbatical going the way you expected? How so?
- Have you given your SEND supervisor an update recently?
- What are your priorities for the next two weeks?
- Is there something I can do to help you?

Sample Sabbatical Advisors Checklist: Rest And Relax Phase

- Member has pulled back from ministry and leadership responsibilities.
- Action steps have been taken to promote rest.
- The book *Isolation: A Place of Transformation in the Life of A Leader*, by Shelley Trebesch has been read and discussed.
- Sabbatical support group has met at least once each month.
- Member has contacted SEND supervisor at least once with an update.
- Member has attended a Marriage Intimacy Retreat.

Phase III- Reflect and Refocus

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During the Reflect and Focus Phase

- Are you aware of anything that would hinder God from speaking to you during this phase? (Busyness, unforgiving spirit, conflict, unconfessed sin, etc.)
- Is there anything I've missed that would be helpful to discuss?
- What things are currently stressful for you? Can anything be done to remove or reduce them?
- How's your relationship with your spouse/children?
- Tell me about your last meeting with your sabbatical support group. What kind of feedback are you getting from them? Do you think they understand you? Are they speaking into your life?
- Is your sabbatical going the way you expected? How so?
- When did you last give your supervisor an update?
- What are your priorities for the next two weeks?
- Is there something I can do to help you?
- Have you completed your Life Lessons? How can I help you get them completed?

Sample Sabbatical Advisor Checklist: Reflect & Refocus Phase

- Member has contacted supervisor at least once with an update.
- Sabbatical support group has met at least once each month.
- Member has crystallized his personal passions.

Phase IV- Realignment and/or Reassignment

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During This Phase:

- With what you've learned in the last phases, what adjustments do you need to make in your life or ministry to more accurately reflect your design and desires?
- What do you sense God has for your future?
 - Realignment?
 - Reassignment?
- If you lack clarity about the future, what specific steps might you take to see more clearly?
- Can you describe your perfect job? Be sure to include elements or functions you consider essential. Also pinpoint those that should NOT be your primary responsibility.
- Does your sabbatical support group think you've completed your sabbatical? Do they affirm your job selection and job description?

Phase V- Re-Entry and Re-Engagement

Questions Sabbatical Advisors Might Ask During This Phase:

- What changes have you experienced as you've re-engaged?
- How can we help you as you re-enter ministry?

Sample Sabbatical Advisor Checklist: Re-Entry & Re-Engagement Phase

- The member has communicated and worked out with their supervisor and team their desires and expectations for re-entry.
- The member is maintaining a good pace.

Appendix E- Sabbatical Support Group

A sabbatical support group is a group that ideally consists of 3-5 couples for married members or 3-5 people for singles (both SEND members and non-SEND members where possible) who have a good relationship with you. If you have finished a role and handed it over, it is crucial that you identify leaders within SEND who will take responsibility for helping you find a new role.

This group meets with you (and your spouse) each month to help process your journey in a safe environment. You facilitate the meeting, sharing first your current progress and then asking for input. (When possible, your sabbatical advisor will participate in the group.) Ideally, people in the sabbatical support group should meet the following criteria:

- Have your best interest at heart.
- Willing to speak truth to you.
- People with whom you're willing to be transparent and vulnerable. (Transparent = open and honest about yourself. Vulnerable = invite others to speak into your life.)
- Willing to meet monthly for the duration of the sabbatical.

Guidelines for Sabbatical Support Group Members

Thanks for serving our SEND member on sabbatical! Here are some guidelines to help define your role as a member of the sabbatical support group:

Guidelines

1. Provide community for the staff on sabbatical and help offset isolation.
 - a. Gen. 2:25 – Help them be fully known and fully accepted.
 - b. Phil. 2:20 – Help them feel cared for and understood.
2. Keep their best interest at heart.
3. Speak truth to them.
4. Meet monthly with them as a group.
 - a. Beware of canceling an SSG meeting because a few people will be absent.
5. Help them work through their sabbatical plan.
6. Expect and encourage them to be transparent and vulnerable with you.
7. Pray regularly for them.

Illustration of your role:

- Speak to the timing of moving from one phase to the next. You may see a need to extend or change a phase.
- Speak to issues they're working through.

Sample Agenda for First Meeting

- Each person introduces himself.
- Staff shares sabbatical plan and expectations for SSG.
- Question-and-answer time.
- Schedule next few SSG meetings.
- Close in prayer.

Appendix F- Article: Rest for the Weary

Renewal for women through mini-sabbatical events by Denele Ivins

My hands gripped the steering wheel as my mini-van cut through the ranch-strewn countryside of eastern Oregon. I was escaping to a retreat center for missionaries, in desperate need of rest and restoration. It had been nine months since we packed up our lives in East Asia and returned to the U.S. After 18 years of Asian life, our move back to the States was not a return “home,” but was a painful uprooting of what God had planted deeply in the land where we raised our children and made disciples.

As I drove, rest and restoration seemed unlikely. All I could think of was what I’d left behind—my undone to-do list and loose ends for my family in my absence. My mind raced with doubts and guilt: “I don’t really need to do this,” “What kind of mother leaves her family for a week with an empty refrigerator?” and “I should have brought my family along; they need it too.”

But as the miles passed, the almost-empty roads, the rural landscape and the quietness began to work magic. My hands began to loosen their tense grip on the steering wheel. I already felt calmer—and hope was building in me that God might use this time away to restore me.

Five days later, I retraced my journey on those rural roads. With the windows down and the radio off, my mind was still busy, but with thoughts of a different type. As I thought of my husband and children and their needs through our recent East-to-West transition, I was able to pray for them in a deeper, more trusting way than I had for a long time. My heart for ministry, which had been numb for a stretch of time, was waking up. I dreamed about the possibility of taking a group from our church back to our adopted land on a short-term missions trip. I broke the nine-month musical silence when I sang praise songs in the privacy of my van. All at once, as I maneuvered curving mountain roads, I realized that I was refreshed. Creativity and energy and praise were returning—and hope had been restored.

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

My five days at a missionary retreat center was just what I needed. But how did I even know that I needed to get away? The truth is that I was weary to my core and unable to take any action to help myself. Caring brothers and sisters saw my condition and made a diagnosis: emotional exhaustion and possible burnout because of the trauma of our transition back to life in the U.S. Beyond a diagnosis, God was gracious to give them a prescription—a care plan to restore me back to emotional health.

Through debriefing with our church and the Navigators, I began to understand how very tired I was. I left China tired, and then, as mom’s do, I set aside my need for rest to attend to the huge task of settling my children—grades 6, 8 and 12—into their new lives in their passport country. Our sending organization very gently but persistently suggested the value of taking a sabbatical after 18 years of serving overseas. My husband was able to take a manner of one, but I found myself unable to even sit and read anything for more than five minutes. The needs around me—carpooling, phone calls, dusty floors, and dirty dishes—seemed to scream at me throughout my waking hours.

Across the table over lunch that week in Colorado, missionary care counselor Shirley Wilson asked me about taking a sabbatical. My question, in a choked voice, was how could I even entertain the idea of a sabbatical—a release from regular responsibilities to refresh and renew and learn—when I faced the task of guiding my children through their transition, not to mention the relentlessness of the tasks of daily life. I can't just take off three months from life, I said.

Shirley saw my sense of drowning in my eyes—and she threw me a lifeline. “Why don't you take mini-sabbaticals?” she asked, coining a new phrase right then—mini-sabbatical events. With some well-placed questions, Shirley guided me to discover what would best refresh me. My deepest longing, she helped me see, was to get away by myself, in places with heavy doses of mountains and pine trees and quietness, where I could rest, explore, hike, bike, read and pray.

REST FOR MY SOUL

My first foray into solitude came seven weeks later. I left our home in Boise, Idaho, and drove two hours to a little inn on the Billingsley Creek just before it pours into the Snake River. I wanted to quiet myself enough to hear God's voice. I took my Bible down to the creek-side swinging bench. My weariness was so deep that all I could do was open it up to the Psalms. I remember how I read a few verses, only to have my eyes blur over with tears. During my three days there, I did my part by showing up on that swing with God's word in my lap, asking Him to restore me. And He did! One of the greatest burdens I carried with me on that first retreat was the deep disappointment for my daughter Claire and her college admissions process that year. I was able to walk away from that three-day retreat with thankfulness for the scholarships to the local university—and feel a huge burden lifted.

A MIRROR FOR REFLECTION

On my Oregon “mini-sabbatical event,” God revealed to me a root reason for my weariness. I'd been putting the blame solely on the transition of the past months, but He gently reminded me that my weariness came mainly from the accumulation of the sacrifices of 18 years of living and reaching out cross-culturally.

One day I sat in the sunshine on my private deck, meditating on Psalm 20:1-3:

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; May the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

May He send you help from the sanctuary And grant you support from Zion.

May He remember all your sacrifices

And accept your burnt offerings.

I began by asking God to do this for me, to answer my distress, protect me, and send me help and support. As I took the time to reflect and let His spirit work through His word, I could see how He had been doing this all along! He remembered my sacrifices even before I did—and I began recounting in my journal a long list of ways He had answered, protected, helped and supported me.

NURTURE FROM NATURE

Significant as these spiritual moments were for me, it would be dishonest to make it sound like I spent entire days in monk-like meditation. In truth, these deeper moments punctuated days full of walks, bike rides, hikes, meals out and a good novel.

On my first trip, my walks were leisurely—mostly on the way to the small-town diner where I ate comfort food three times a day. But the springtime greenness and brilliant blue skies helped me rediscover both the beauty of my home state Idaho and the value of quietness. I cruised my van slowly down the country roads, marveling at the landscape carved out by the Snake River. On one drive down in the canyon, a bird burst into song just as I drove past; the beauty of it and a sense of God’s love brought tears to my eyes.

This was physical restoration, after almost two decades of urban life—where instead of mountains, construction cranes rose above the horizon at every turn, and instead of the serenade of songbirds, the blare of taxi horns and yells of teeming life were what constantly assaulted my senses.

The healing power of nature was just as important in my second and third retreats, but I felt more energetic and was able to be much more active, enjoying long hikes and bike rides.

RESOLVED TO REST

While I couldn’t manage a lengthy sabbatical, Shirley’s prescription for personal retreats—my mini-sabbatical events—were just what I needed to renew my body, mind, and soul after the years’ sacrifices of service and the transitions of the last year.

As I climbed into the small backcountry plane to leave my last retreat—feeling energetic, rested and hopeful—I resolved not to wait until my weariness calls for emergency measures. I am determined to make this a life-long habit—to take time out to seek solitude, rest and renewal. To come to Him and let Him give me rest.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest....

You will find rest for your souls.” Matt. 11:28, 29

Appendix G- Twelve Steps to Renewal: Tips for Planning Your Own Personal Retreat

1. Admit your need for rest. There's no shame in being tired because you're serving others. You're only human.
2. Put it on the calendar. Once you determine your need for a rest, get a date on the calendar before it fills up. Stick to it! Resist the inevitable temptation to cancel as the time draws near.
3. Get the support of your family and friends. Share with your husband why you'd like to try a personal retreat; after all, he's the one who'll hold down the fort when you're gone. Ask your close friends to pray for you through the process.
4. Resist taking someone else. A personal retreat is a great idea, so everyone who hears your plans will want to come along. For maximum renewal, keep it solo. Encourage them to take their own personal retreat.
5. Don't feel guilty. While it's true that you're leaving behind needs and tasks, the unselfish thing is to make renewal a priority. You'll return strengthened for the tasks at hand.
6. Customize your retreat. Think through what's restful for you. Rustic or luxurious? Active or quiet? Mountains or ocean? Near or far?
7. Include the nature element. The heavens do declare His glory, and are the perfect setting in which to be renewed.
8. Take advantage of resources. Check with your ministry organization for retreat venues in your area designed especially for ministry workers. These are usually low-cost and sometimes offer counseling and other resources.
9. Think creatively. Consider off-season church camps, a friend's mountain cabin, or an inexpensive motel in a place you'd like to visit.
10. Address the whole person. Include elements of rest and renewal for your body, mind and soul.
11. Take a well-stocked tool chest. Be prepared. Pack your Bible, a devotional book and other Christian books, a songbook or hymnal, and your journal. (But don't feel bad if you don't use much of what you bring.) For the whole person, pack a good novel for lighter reading, as well as your favorite snacks.
12. Have great expectations. Expect God to meet you in a special way. He specializes in giving rest to the weary. All He asks of us is to come.

Appendix H- Resources

Books

Biblical Foundations

The Holy Bible (Many who have experienced a sabbatical counsel us to let the Word be our main sabbatical resource.)

Sabbath Keeping, by Lynne M. Baab

The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath, by Mark Buchanan

Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives, by Wayne Muller

Working the Angles, by Eugene Peterson

Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation by Ruth Hayley Barton

Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence by Ruth Hayley Barton

Listening Prayer / Wholeness Prayer

Can You Hear Me?, by Brad Jersak

See resources for listening prayer from Dave and Jean Coles at www.freemin.org.

See resources for wholeness prayer from Dave and Jean Coles at www.freemin.org and http://www.en.freemin.org/Simplified_Version.htm.

Sabbatical Planning

Isolation: A Place of Transformation in the Life of A Leader, by Shelley Trebesch

The Overload Syndrome, by Richard A. Swenson

The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath, by Mark Buchanan

Contemplative Pastor, by Eugene Peterson (last chapter especially)

Community

The Safest Place on Earth, by Larry Crabb

Discernment/Spiritual Direction

Listening to God in Times of Choice: The Art of Discerning God's Will by Gordon T Smith

The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer and the Witness of the Spirit by Gordon T Smith

Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God Given Potential by Gordon T Smith

Spiritual Direction: A Guide to Giving and Receiving Direction by Gordon T Smith

Life Lessons

Windows of the Soul, by Ken Gire

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, by Peter Scazzero

Healing Prayer

Waking the Dead: The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive, by John Eldredge

Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World, by Henri J. Nouwen

Soul Care

Embracing Soul Care, by Stephen W. Smith

Soul Keeping, by Howard Baker

Intimacy with the Almighty, by Charles Swindoll

Shattered Dreams: God's Unexpected Pathway to Joy, by Larry Crabb

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry by Ruth Hayley Barton

Personal Contribution Assessment

Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation, by Parker J. Palmer

Prayer and Temperament, by Chester Michael and Marie Norrisey

Retreat Centers

Check with your Sending Office for recommendations for retreat and counseling centers.