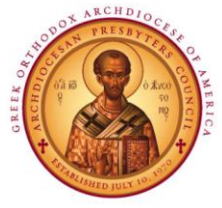




ARCHDIOCESAN PRESBYTERS COUNCIL

OUR VISION: "BROTHERS WHO LOVE AND SERVE ONE ANOTHER"

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APC CLERGY SABBATICAL PROGRAM

Adopted by the APC: June 8, 2022

Approved by the Holy Eparchial Synod: March 24, 2023

THE MISSION
OF THE
ARCHDIOCESAN
PRESBYTERS
COUNCIL
IS
TO SERVE
THE CLERGY
OF THE
ARCHDIOCESE
BY SUPPORTING
OUR PRIESTS
THROUGH
SPIRITUAL
GROWTH,
EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
AND
PERSONAL
WELLNESS.

THIS MISSION IS
ACCOMPLISHED
THROUGH
RETREATS,
CONTINUING
EDUCATION,
BROTHER-TO-
BROTHER
OUTREACH,
MINISTRY
DEVELOPMENT,
CLERGY FAMILY
CARE AND
BENEVOLENCE.

VISION

Clergy transformed with refreshed spirits, renewed energy and rededicated ministries.

MISSION

The mission of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Clergy Sabbatical Program is to make Clergy Sabbaticals possible by providing information, funding and fill-in clergy to serve during the Sabbaticals of active clergy.

ABOUT CLERGY SABBATICALS

Clergy Sabbaticals are a long-established tradition focused on rest and spiritual refreshment. They differ from other forms of sabbaticals as practiced in the academic or business worlds. Clergy Sabbaticals are not vacations, but rather a time for clergy to take an intentional break from the demands of leadership, experience a change of pace and location, discover new perspectives, gain fresh vision and energy and simply rest. They also provide congregations the opportunity to affirm the work of their clergy, develop dynamic parish leadership and establish new goals.

HISTORY OF CLERGY SABBATICALS IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE

Clergy Sabbaticals have been an official part of the Clergy Benefits Program of the GOA for many decades as stated in the Parish Regulations, Section 17, Section 8, Point 9; "A paid sabbatical of three (3) months after six (6) years of continuous services in the same parish."

Unfortunately, this greatly-needed benefit has been historically underutilized in the GOA, with few clergy having actually taken a Sabbatical in recent decades. This has resulted in clergy serving for many decades without a serious opportunity for long-term renewal. This lack of time for rest and personal growth has also been a contributing factor in many cases of a syndrome known as "clergy burnout," which has damaged clergy families, parishes and the Archdiocese spiritually, pastorally and financially.

The experiences of those who have been successful in taking a Clergy Sabbatical have produced priests able to return to their ministries renewed, serving with greater energy, spirituality and vitality and bringing blessings to themselves, their families and their parishes immediately and in the long-term.

TERMINOLOGY

- **“Clergy Sabbatical”** – A Sabbatical designed specifically for clergy.
- **“PP”** – A “Parish Priest” actively serving a parish of the GOA
- **“TAP”** – A “Temporarily Assigned Priest” filling in during the Sabbatical of its Parish Priest.
- **“APC”** – The Archdiocesan Presbyters Council of the GOA
- **“RCA”** – The Retired Clergy Association of the GOA
- **“TC”** – The Total Commitment financial support system of the GOA
- **“Administrator”** – The Clergy Sabbatical Program Administrator
- **“Reviewers”** – Members of the Application Review Committee

AN APC MINISTRY

The APC has offered itself as an educational and organizational central resource to make Clergy Sabbaticals in the GOA an achievable opportunity for all qualified clergy of the Archdiocese. This will be offered through the following services:

1. The APC will develop and administer a clear and well-structured application process which will fully incorporate clergy instruction, parish cooperation and the blessing of the local hierarchs.
2. The APC, in cooperation with the RCA and with the blessing of the local hierarchs, will create and maintain a list of qualified retired clergy willing to serve as TAPs.
3. The APC will create a grant proposal with Leadership 100 and other potential funding sources to provide clergy and parish funding for Clergy Sabbaticals starting with five (5) clergy in 2025 and growing to ten (10) clergy per year in 2027 and beyond.

PROGRAM DETAILS

PARISH PRIEST (PP) QUALIFICATIONS

- This Clergy Sabbatical program is for priests currently serving in a parish of the GOA.
- Parish priests with 6 years of continuous service in the same parish may apply. Priests with at least 6 years of service but not in the same parish require the blessing of the local hierarch to apply.
- Applicants will require an application recommendation and blessing from the local hierarch.
- Applicants must submit a Sabbatical Acknowledgement Form signed by the Parish Council President of the community he is currently serving.
- Priority will be given to those priests with more years of service who have not taken a sabbatical.
- In the event that there are multiple full-time priests serving a parish, the PP may apply for the Clergy Sabbatical Grant but the parish will not qualify for the TAP funding since there is another full-time clergy already serving the parish.
- The PP agrees to return to the parish and resume active ministry for at least a year following the Sabbatical. A Clergy Sabbatical is not to be used as a transition to immediate retirement or transfer.
- Clergy who have applied but not been awarded may apply in subsequent years.
- Clergy who have been awarded a Sabbatical Grant are eligible to reapply after another 6 years of service.

TEMPORARILY ASSIGNED PRIEST (TAP) QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSIGNMENT

- All TAP candidates must have the blessing of the local hierarch in whose Metropolis they reside and the local hierarch of the Metropolis in which they will serve as a TAP.
- A list of TAP candidates will be developed by the APC in cooperation with the RCA on the national level, and on the local level with the Clergy Synodesmos, Chancellor and local hierarch of each Metropolis. This will provide an important avenue for continued valuable service to the Archdiocese and the parishes for our retired clergy.
- The TAP must be available for a minimum of six (6) weeks of continuous service. Preference will be given for TAPs that are able to serve the community for the entire length of the Sabbatical.
- Each TAP must indicate his willingness to serve in either the local, regional or national area.
- A TAP must be willing to fully support the current ministry of the PP and not seek to develop new programs or ministry changes which would in any way harm the parish or the PP in his absence.
- When the need for a TAP arises upon the award of a Clergy Sabbatical Grant, the Administrator, if needed, will assist the Metropolis Chancellor by providing TAP candidates who have been vetted and approved by their respective Hierarch and whose qualifications match the needs of the parish being served by the PP. Of course, the decision of which TAP will serve at the parish belongs to the local hierarch.
- The CSP welcomes the assistance of the Parish Priest (PP) seeking the grant in the selection of the TAP. If the PP has found an appropriate TAP candidate to assume his pastoral responsibilities with the blessing of his local Metropolitan, then that person may serve as the TAP and will receive the stipend as detailed in the program document. The program list of potential TAPs is simply a resource to assist both the PP and the Metropolis to find an appropriate TAP to serve the parish during the sabbatical, if needed.
- **NOTE: Grant selection priority will be offered to those who can identify an approved TAP to cover for their sabbatical prior to applying.**
- If an appropriate TAP cannot be found the PP receiving the grant may need to suspend his sabbatical plans until an appropriate TAP is available.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Every qualified priest seeking a Sabbatical must complete the Clergy Sabbatical Application process, including the following components:

1. The Clergy Sabbatical Application.
2. The Hierarch's Blessing form.
3. The Parish Sabbatical Acknowledgement Form signed by the Parish Council President with the knowledge Parish Council to ensure that the parish is aware that a Clergy Sabbatical application is being submitted.
4. An essay expressing the reason for the application and a vision for the Sabbatical.
5. A general outline/timeline of the proposed Sabbatical.
6. A Sabbatical Budget

EXPECTATIONS OF THE PP

- The PP is required to create a Sabbatical Information Guide to the TAP and the parish office providing:
 - The list of planned liturgical services along information with information on the local practices regarding when the sermon is offered, when collections are passed and other relevant instructions.
 - The list of pending sacraments.
 - A schedule of normal meetings, classes and parish events.
 - A parish contacts directory including parish staff, the list of Parish Council members, Philoptochos Officers, Church School Directors and Staff, Youth Ministry Leaders, Choir Directors, Prosforo bakers and any other important parish leaders.
 - A list of home-bound and shut-in parishioners and other pastoral matters that will require attention during the Sabbatical.
 - Instructions for parish facilities access, audio-visual and broadcast equipment operation and parish emergency procedures.
- **IMPORTANT: The ability to disconnect from parish life and responsibilities is essential to your ability to recharge and renew your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being. Therefore to receive this grant we ask you to commit to the following: The PP will not attend any services, sacraments, funerals or other events in the life of the parish and will not have any contact including social media with the TAP, parish staff, parishioners or ministries during his sabbatical except in the case of dire emergency.**

EXPECTATIONS OF THE TAP

- The TAP will fully support the current ministry of the PP and not seek to develop new programs or ministry changes which would in any way harm the ministry of the PP and his relationship with the parish in his absence.
- The TAP will provide all liturgical services, offer sermons, celebrate all sacraments, ensuring all are properly recorded in the Parish Registry, preside at all funerals and offer eulogies.
- The TAP will provide regular office hours with a minimum of three hours per day on three weekdays per week.
- The TAP will attend all meetings normally attended by the PP.
- The TAP will visit the sick when informed on a timely basis, fulfill any reasonable, agreed-upon tasks identified by the PP and work cordially with the parish leaders and parishioners.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE PARISH

- Each parish is required, as per the Parish Regulations, to maintain the current salary, housing and other benefits to the PP during the entire term of his Sabbatical.
- The Parish Council, along with the PP, should work in advance of the start of the Sabbatical, to inform and educate the parishioners about the purpose of a Clergy Sabbatical and the benefits it brings to the life and ministry of the priest and the parish.
- The PP should inform the parish of the role and expectations of the TAP to ensure a fruitful experience in his absence and to ensure a process for emergency contacts during the Sabbatical.
- **IMPORTANT: The PP and the Parish Council should clearly communicate the necessity for the PP to disconnect from the parish during his sabbatical and that the parishioners can help facilitate a**

positive experience for their priest by refraining from any communication with the PP. This communication commitment is required to be considered to receive this grant.

FUNDING

- **PP Funding**

- As stated above, the parish is required to maintain the current salary, housing and other benefits to the PP during the entire term of his Sabbatical.
- The Clergy Sabbatical Program will fund the PP with a Clergy Sabbatical Grant of up to \$15,000 to assist in the costs of the Sabbatical.
- The PP is responsible for all taxes which will be incurred by the receiving of the Clergy Sabbatical Grant. Such grants are considered by the IRS to be taxable income (Note: in 2022 this may be between 12% and 24% depending on the PP's marginal tax bracket, so that amount should be reserved out of the grant by the PP to pay the tax at a future date.)

- **TAP Funding**

- Salary: \$8,500/month for up to 3 months
- Housing: Up to \$1,500/month for up to 3 months if the parish is not close enough to the TAP's regular residence to enable commuting. The parish may need to supplement the housing allowance for the TAP in areas of higher costs of living or may provide adequate housing if available and approved by the TAP.
- Transportation: \$1,000 for the duration of the Sabbatical
- The TAP will be considered self-employed and is thereby responsible for all taxes.

- **Program Funding**

- Grant monies received by the APC will be retained in a restricted account to be used only for Clergy Sabbaticals.
- Funding for both the PP and the TAP will be paid from the APC to the parish, and the parish will be responsible for disbursing the funding directly to the PP and the TAP as agreed.
- The Sabbatical Grant funds paid to the PP and the compensation paid to the TAP will not impact the parish annual budget or the parish's Total Commitment (TC) to the Archdiocese and Metropolis. All Sabbatical funding is to be deducted from the parish's TC calculations.
- The parish is responsible for properly filing any tax-related information regarding the employment of the PP and the TAP.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- The Clergy Sabbatical Program will be administered by the APC.
- A **Clergy Sabbatical Program Administrator** ("Administrator") will be nominated by the APC President and approved by the APC for a term of two years, which may be renewed if desired by the APC.
- The Administrator will report directly to the APC Executive Committee and will be overseen by the APC President.
- The Administrator will serve on a volunteer basis with any program-related expenses being reimbursed by the APC from the grant funds.
- The Administrator will work with the APC to develop program guidelines and details to be submitted to the APC for approval.

- The APC will create an Application Review Committee consisting of the following categories of Reviewers:
 - A. Three (3) retired clergy nominated by the Administrator subject to approval by the APC Executive Board.
 - B. One (1) APC representative appointed by the APC President with the consent of the APC Executive Board.
 - C. One (1) RCA representative appointed by the RCA President with the consent of the RCA Executive Board.
- Reviewers will serve for a term of two years, concurrent with the two-year term of the APC representatives. Reviewers may serve multiple terms with a limit of six (6) years total service in each category.
- The positions of Administrator and Reviewers in categories A and B above are subject to annual review by the APC. The position of Reviewer in category C above is subject to annual review by the RCA.
- The APC and RCA have the authority to appoint replacements in the event of a vacancy.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

- The application and approval process will be administered by the APC.
- All applications and related documents must be submitted to the Administrator by June 30th of the year for Sabbaticals intended to commence during the following calendar year.
- All qualified applications will be submitted by the Administrator to an Application Review Committee.
- All applications will be reviewed by the Application Review Committee between July 1st and August 15th.
- Sabbatical awards will be announced on September 1 of each year by the Administrator and the APC President via a joint press release from the APC and the Clergy Sabbatical Program as well as direct award notifications to the recipients (PP and Parish Council President).
- Following award announcements, the Administrator will work with each affected Metropolis to provide information on TAP availability and request the blessing and participation of the local hierarchy to make the TAP assignments by November 1 of the same year so that all clergy and parishes involved may make the necessary plans.
- Any Reviewer who has a conflict of interest with an applicant by being a family member will be recused from reviewing or ranking that application. Any other relationships with the applicant must be disclosed by the reviewer.
- Applications will be ranked by the Reviewers using the Review Form developed by the Administrator. The Administrator will not have a vote in the process but rather will coordinate the decision process of the Reviewers.
- All applications are strictly confidential. Reviewers will not ever discuss the applications with anyone outside the Application Review Committee.
- Reviewers will not discuss applications with other Reviewers unless and until such a Committee discussion is called for by the Administrator.
- The Administrator will develop an unbiased and objective process for compiling Review Forms and providing a ranking of applications. All conversations and communications regarding applications are to take place with the entire Application Review Committee to keep the entire process transparent, unbiased and confidential.

POST-SABBATICAL REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

- **TAP to PP Report:** Upon his return, the PP will receive on day one a TAP to PP Parish Update Report listing sacraments and significant parish events that occurred during the Sabbatical. The report will also provide a confidential narrative from the TAP discussing any issues requiring the attention of the PP.
- **Parish:** Within 30 days of the completion of the Sabbatical the parish will submit a Sabbatical Funding Verification Form to the APC indicating the receipt and proper disbursement of all Sabbatical funds to the PP and the TAP.
- **PP:** Within 60 days of the completion of the Sabbatical the PP will submit a completed PP Sabbatical Report form and Post-Sabbatical Survey to the APC and the Metropolis.
- **TAP:** Within 60 days of the completion of the Sabbatical the TAP will submit a completed TAP Sabbatical Report form and Post-Sabbatical Survey to the APC and the Metropolis.
- The PP should incorporate experiences and lessons learned during the Sabbatical in his ministry and relationship with the parish, including sermons, presentations and other opportunities.

HELPFUL HINTS AND OTHER THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

- The parish may consider providing a Sabbatical farewell event to provide a proper separation experience for both the PP and the parishioners and to give the parishioners an opportunity to express their support and encouragement for the PP.
- Although a Clergy Sabbatical is focused on the priest, it involves and blesses the clergy family as well. Married clergy should, therefore, prayerfully involve their Presvytera in this process from the beginning and fully consider how the family will be involved and how they, too, can benefit.
- This Clergy Sabbatical program is intended to be flexible and creative to meet the personal and spiritual needs of the applicant. It is focused on renewal, creativity and rest and so that applicant returns to ministry with new energy, focus and dedication. It is not intended to be used as a time to work toward an academic degree, a formal continuing education program or other occupational engagement.
- Applicants should dream big! Options for a Sabbatical may include time for reading and writing, personal travel, pilgrimages to religious sites, quiet time for rest and prayer, and special visits with family and friends, just to name a few. Think and pray about things that would not be otherwise possible without this dedicated time and grant support. The formats to Sabbaticals are as varied as the needs and dreams of the applicants.
- The TAP should make a parish visit or have virtual meetings with the PP and the Parish Council President prior to the start of the Sabbatical to become familiar with the parish, approve the housing option and confer with the PP about any necessary parish issues.