

*The Board of Pensions administers the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), offering retirement, healthcare, death, and disability benefits to qualifying members. The Board also provides financial and vocational grants through the Assistance Program.*

## About the Assistance Program

The Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions comprises a range of programs designed to meet specific assistance needs of Presbyterian ministers and other church workers at various points in their lives. These programs complement the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in their aim to promote and sustain the wholeness of church workers in their ministries; they also provide an important safety net to church workers and their families who have specific needs that exceed personal resources and other means of support.

Through the Assistance Program, the church community provides for

- retired church workers' financial and housing needs through Income and Housing Supplements;
- church workers' financial and vocational needs through Shared, Emergency Assistance, Adoption Assistance, Transition-to-College Assistance, Minister Educational Debt Assistance, and Sabbath Sabbatical Support Grants.

The Assistance Program is funded by gifts, legacies, income from endowments, and half the Christmas Joy Offering; no dues support the program. Fully 100 percent of each gift is passed on to those in need. The Board of Pensions covers the administrative costs of the Assistance Program through endowed funds accumulated over generations.

*For information about the Assistance Program or to apply for assistance, call 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN) or visit [pensions.org](http://pensions.org).*

## Summary

The Sabbath Sabbatical Support Grant Program provides a limited number of grants of up to \$3,000 to help fund small-church ministers' sabbatical studies.

Sabbath Sabbatical Support Grants are intended to help these ministers take sabbaticals that will strengthen their skills and renew their ministries.

## Background

Ministers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seek to live faithful and committed lives in answer to their calling. At the same time, they lead busy, demanding, even stressful lives. They are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These stresses, if not attended to, can have emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual consequences that lead to burnout for the pastors who are called to serve our congregations.

Sabbaticals can help alleviate burnout; they allow pastors to enhance their spiritual lives, strengthen their skills, and renew their ministries. But most pastors taking sabbaticals serve larger congregations with significant financial resources and staff; smaller congregations often lack the funds or staff to support sabbaticals. The Sabbath Sabbatical Support Grant Program addresses this need, helping to make it possible for these ministers to engage in a time of personal and professional renewal. It is hoped that the program will strengthen ministries throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and develop stronger church leadership.

## Program Description

The Assistance Program provides **grants of up to \$3,000 each** to ministers of small churches who submit a plan for their sabbaticals to their mid council and the Board of Pensions for approval. The grants are administered in cooperation with the mid councils. The full grant may be used to supplement the funding for the pastor's sabbatical leave, or, at the discretion of the presbytery and the pastor, a portion of the grant may be used to provide pulpit supply and pastoral support for the congregation during the pastor's sabbatical leave.

## Eligibility

You are eligible to apply for this grant if you meet **all** of the following requirements. You must

- be a minister who is currently serving a congregation of fewer than 200 members\*;
- have served your current PC(USA) congregation for at least six years;
- be enrolled in Pastor's Participation in the Benefits Plan;
- be able to demonstrate financial need;
- receive additional financial support for the sabbatical from other sources, such as congregations, foundations, your synod or presbytery, or other contributors; and
- take your sabbatical for a period of not less than four weeks. (The Sabbath Sabbatical may be taken in conjunction with annual study leave and/or vacation.)

\*Other ministers serving in positions that directly support congregational ministry may also be recommended for a grant through their presbytery.

**Note:** Expenses related to Doctor of Ministry or other degree programs do not qualify for this program.

*A church worker is an individual who is employed, or has been employed (i.e., is retired or between service), by a congregation, mid council, agency, or other organization under the direct governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*

## Additional Requirements

You are responsible for receiving congregational approval for a Sabbath Sabbatical and for providing a project plan for your proposed sabbatical. You also must provide a post-sabbatical summary to your congregation, presbytery, and the Board of Pensions. In addition, you must commit to returning to your congregation for at least one year following the Sabbath Sabbatical.

Individual mid councils may place further requirements on you or your plan.

## Application

A limited number of these grants is available each year. To determine if grants are still available, contact the Assistance Program.

The application form is available on the Board of Pensions website, [pensions.org](http://pensions.org), or you may contact the Board at 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN) and speak with a service representative.

When the application and supporting materials have been completed, you must obtain the signature of the congregation's clerk of session and from the presbytery before submitting your application to the Board for review and decision.

