

*Passed as submitted, September 12, 2020*

## **Resolution 2020-02**

**Title: Regarding the Definition, Description and Implementation of Sabbatical Leaves**

Submitted by: Compensation and Benefits Committee

**RESOLVED**, that the 236<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Diocese of Maryland shall abide by the sabbatical policy set forth in chapter 5 of the *Compensation and Benefits Guide* as the normative practice in this diocese, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that clergy and congregations may negotiate sabbatical leave and provision for it with reference to the guidance provided in the *Compensation and Benefits Guide* 2013, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the mandate in Resolution 2019-01 to treat sabbatical leave as an accrued benefit is repealed, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the term “accrued benefit” shall not be used to describe sabbatical leave in this diocese.

### **Explanation**

At the 2019 Diocesan Convention, an amendment to resolution 2019-01 was offered and passed stating “that sabbatical leave for rectors, vicars, priests-in-charge, and associates be treated as an accrued benefit by congregations and made available after the third year and cumulative through the sixth year of service.” The term “accrued benefit” implies the setting aside and accumulation of funds over a period of time prior to the sabbatical, a practice which is antithetical to the cash accounting system by which most congregations fund sabbaticals and other benefits. Having to actually set aside such funds over a period of years would present a notable hardship to many congregations. The term “accrued benefit” may also imply an absolute entitlement, such that a cleric might demand a lump sum payment of the accrued funds upon termination, although diocesan policy has consistently stated that neither clerics nor lay employees are entitled to monetary compensation in lieu of unused benefits (*Compensation and Benefits Guide* 2013, chapter 5, p. 12). Such a lump sum payment would require the congregation also to pay lump sum pension contributions and health insurance premiums, presenting further hardship to the congregation’s cash flow.

Consistent diocesan practice has been that the cleric must return to the congregation for a minimum of one year after a sabbatical, and that a terminal sabbatical (a sabbatical taken at the end of one’s service to the parish) is not permitted and unused sabbatical time may not be “cashed out” (*Compensation and Benefits Guide* 2013, chapter 5, p. 14). Diocesan practice provides for the negotiation (though not the automatic provision) of severance pay, without tying that pay in any way to sabbatical leaves. The Compensation and Benefits Committee’s study of the implications of the 2019 amendment leads us to believe that making sabbatical leave an “accrued benefit” can be damaging to the relationship between cleric and congregation, not only because of the financial difficulty to the congregation of setting aside the accruing funds, but also because of the inference that the cleric’s entitlement supersedes any pastoral need of the congregation.