

INTER-MISSION FOR PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS

What is Inter-Mission?

The Policy Committee of the Board of Ministry has been considering sabbaticals for professional church leaders in congregations. The term sabbatical means different things in different institutions but seems most widely known as an educational model. It was decided that a new term was needed. Such words as repose, sabbath, re-formation, re-creation, enrichment, sacred journey, oasis, hospice and inter-mission were all considered. The term inter-mission was chosen as it seemed to describe best what is proposed: a time to get in touch with the Holy Other in our lives. This is done in repose, in line with Jurgen Moltmann's comment about God: "The true completion of creation, however, is on the `seventh day', the day when God takes up active repose wherein the creation is contemplated, blessed, enjoyed and pronounced `very good'." This time is to be for the sake of self, not for congregation, the Church or for acquiring academic credentials. The mode is to be that of follower, not leader, thus the need for a spiritual guide or mentor, to enable reflection and discipline. However, considerable latitude is given to what actually may happen in the time set aside.

In line with Reformed tradition, a time set aside is not just to include self, but neighbour as well. Therefore it might be conceivable for a person to spend time on a mission field doing hospital work. Nor need the time apart be seen in the sense of denial of the gifts of God, but more a detachment from them. A fast would not be for its own sake, but only to enhance prayer, for example. Most important, if we wish to maintain the Calvinist tradition, a deep sense of the "mystical union" with Christ will be a strong component.

In his lecture at Princeton Theological Seminary, May 20-23, 1991, Howard Rice reflected on Reformed Spirituality. He noted that balance must always be maintained in Reformed Spirituality between:

- communal and corporate and private and personal
- intelligent thoughtfulness and the experience of the warm heart
- enjoyment of the world's gifts and detachment from them
- action and quietness.

Procedures

The following is the procedure to be followed:

1. Inter-mission is a full-time experience and is for ten weeks.
2. There is to be a five-year period of employment in the denomination before an intermission may be granted.
3. No short-term training event may be undertaken within a six-month period of the beginning or end of the inter-mission.
4. Twelve months prior to the anticipated start of the inter-mission, a proposal must be submitted to session and presbytery. The proposal must specify the goals of the inter-mission, plans for the use of the inter-mission time, procedures for supervision and spiritual direction, implications and plans for coverage of the person's normal workload, financial arrangements in place, and the form of

evaluation of the inter-mission. The subject of inter-mission will be on the agenda of presbytery visitations.

5. Full stipend and benefits will be maintained during the inter-mission, including the person's contributions to all benefit plans.

Financial Arrangements

The costs are: 10 weeks supply and travel at \$200 per week plus \$1,000 for expenses for inter-mission, the total being \$3,000. This cost will be covered as follows: beginning of the third year of ministry, a stipend deduction of \$125 per month is made, 66.6% for supply, and 33.3% for inter-mission expenses.

A congregation may contract out for pastoral care if necessary. The minister or diaconal minister will be responsible for initiating the third-year inter-mission deductions. Such payments are transferable from one position (pastoral tie) to another, and are linked to the person, not the position. Contributions are to be held in trust and released at the person's request, \$2,000 to the employer who will administer same, and \$1,000 to the church worker for their approved inter-mission.

Recommendation No. 5 (adopted, page 63)

That the above proposal concerning inter-missions become the policy of the Church available to all professional church workers, effective January 1, 1993.