

Kansas-Nebraska Conference

Frequently Asked Questions: Travel, Vacation, and Time Away for Pastors

Why this letter? We have received questions and have noticed some confusion about **vacation requests, days off, out-of-district / out-of-conference travel, mission trips, and service requests**. This FAQ is provided to clarify expectations and answer the most common questions.

QUESTION: What is a “Day Off”?

ANSWER: Per policy, for every **five full workdays** (minimum **8 hours per day**), employees receive **two days off each week**. Because you are salaried, you may determine which days you take as your days off. (Preferably not Sabbath days)

QUESTION: Can I save my days off and take them later all at once?

ANSWER: Generally, **no**. We do not recommend it. A weekly day off is intended to support a healthy balance in **ministry, marriage, family life, and personal wellbeing** (including rest, health, and exercise). In the same way the Sabbath provides weekly rest, we encourage you to take your day off regularly so you can remain effective in ministry.

Note: We recognize that special ministry circumstances may occasionally prevent you from taking your day off in a given week. In those cases, we will allow you to move or save a day off **once per month** if necessary.

QUESTION: What is a vacation request?

ANSWER: A vacation request is a request for **paid time off** that you use for personal plans such as rest, travel, spending time with family, home projects, camping, and similar activities.

QUESTION: How do I request a vacation?

ANSWER: Go to the KS-NE.org website, select **Departments**, then **Ministerial**, then open the **Travel Request Form**. This is required for **all full-time employees and pastors**. All vacation requests must be **submitted in writing** using the form.

QUESTION: Do I still need to submit the form if I already spoke with an officer?

ANSWER: Yes. Any verbal request shared with the VP for Administration must be followed by a submitted form on the website (vacation request or the appropriate request form).

Important: Please submit vacation requests **30 days or more in advance**. Requests submitted with less notice may not be processed immediately.

Honor System Reminder

We operate on the **honor system**. Please **do not take a vacation** without submitting the appropriate request. Vacation taken without an approved request may be treated as **unauthorized**.

QUESTION: Why is a vacation request required?

ANSWER: Many organizations require written vacation requests for several reasons, including:

- To support a healthy balance of work and rest.
 - To ensure the conference can respond appropriately when members call and ask about their pastor's availability (for example: "Your pastor is on a scheduled vacation.")
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QUESTION: Do I really need to take vacation days?

ANSWER: Yes. Weekly days off are not enough to maintain long-term **spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing**. Vacations provide needed rest and renewal. The work will always be there, but consistent rest strengthens both the pastor and the family. Even Jesus told His disciples, "Come away... and rest awhile."

Vacation eligibility and accrual

QUESTION: How is vacation eligibility determined for pastors?

ANSWER: Vacation eligibility is based on **years in pastoral ministry**:

- **1–4 years:** eligible for up to **2 weeks**
 - **5–9 years:** eligible for up to **3 weeks**
 - **10+ years:** eligible for up to **4 weeks**
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Newly hired pastors (graduates, new hires, and experienced ministers)

QUESTION: I was just hired by the conference. When can I take a vacation?

ANSWER: If you are a **new hire** to the conference, your **vacation bank starts at zero**, regardless of previous years of pastoral ministry. This is because accrued vacation time is typically paid out by the previous employer at the time of transfer. Therefore, you begin with **0** at the new conference.

You are **not automatically given** 2, 3, or 4 weeks upon arrival, even if you are eligible based on years of service. You must **accrue (earn)** vacation time before you may use it.

After **one month** of employment, you begin accruing vacation time at your assigned rate. In other words, you are **not eligible to take a vacation until time has been earned**.

QUESTION: How is the accrual rate determined for pastors?

ANSWER: The accrual rate is based on **years in pastoral ministry**. Each month, you accrue time at the rate for your level. Before submitting a vacation request, please confirm that you have enough time in your vacation bank.

- 1-4 years = 0.83 You can earn up to 2 weeks' VACATION
 - 5-9 years = 1.25 You can earn up to 3 weeks' VACATION
 - 10 + years = 1.67 You can earn up to 4 weeks' VACATION
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- Every month you accrue (earn) the rate at your level.
 - So, before you send in a Vacation request, make sure you have enough in your Vacation Bank.

QUESTION: Where do I find my accrued vacation (vacation bank)?

ANSWER: Your accrued vacation balance is listed on your **online monthly pay slip** (bottom-left section). Please review it monthly.

Maximum accrual: Vacation time may be accumulated up to **150% of your annual entitlement** (including current year's accruals). This is tracked by payroll and appears on your monthly statement.

Maximum totals are:

- 1–4 years: 15 days
- 5–9 years: 22.5 days
- 10+ years: 30 days

Note: Once your vacation bank reaches the maximum, it will **stop accruing** until you use vacation time. After taking a vacation and reporting it properly, accrual will resume (as long as you are below the maximum).

Reporting Time Away (Ministry Report)**QUESTION: Do I have to report my vacation days?**

ANSWER: Yes. Absolutely. Because we operate on the honor system, accurate reporting is essential. After your vacation, be sure to enter the number of vacation days used in your monthly ministry report.

QUESTION: Do I need to mark each day with an "X" on my ministry report?

ANSWER: Yes. The left-hand column of the ministry report includes boxes to mark each day. Please mark each day as **Work, Day Off, Sick, Vacation, or Holiday**.

- Do not leave the boxes blank.
- The only exception is when a vacation period includes **Saturday and Sunday**, which may remain blank since these can count as your two weekly days off.

Example: If you are away Sunday through the following Sunday, you would typically report **five vacation days** (Monday through Friday), with Saturday and Sunday left blank.

Out-of-District / Out-of-Conference Speaking Requests

QUESTION: I've been invited to speak for a Week of Prayer or a special event outside my district or outside the conference. What do I need to do?

ANSWER: It depends on the situation:

1. Conference-sponsored Event

If the event is conference sponsored (listed on the conference calendar or organized by a conference department), you may attend. You must still submit the **Out of District / Conference form**.

2. Unordained / Intern Pastors

If you are an unordained or intern pastor, your priority should be your assigned district. We want you to focus on nurturing members, strengthening and growing your district. Exceptions may be considered.

3. Ordained Pastors: Out-of-Conference request

If you receive an invitation to speak outside your district or outside the conference, you must submit an **Out of District / Out of Conference Request** for approval.

Out-of-conference requests:

- Requests are taken to **AdCom** for approval. **Do not accept** until approval is granted.
- Per policy, pastors are allowed to be out of their district for **two Sabbaths per year**.
- Sabbaths beyond the allowed two should be taken as **vacation**.
- Please consult the **Employee Handbook** with questions.

Service Requests (from another conference/division)

If you are invited to speak for another conference or division (including outside NAD), inform the inviting organization to:

- Contact their **VP for Administration / Executive Secretariat** to email a formal **Service Request** to the KS-NE Conference VP for Administration / Executive Secretariat.
- Per policy, pastors are allowed to be out of their district for **two Sabbaths per year**.
- After both conferences approve the request, you will be informed.

Timing note: Service requests must be submitted **60 days or more in advance**, since processing may involve conference, union, and division offices.

Vacation During Required Conference Events

QUESTION: Can I take a vacation during a conference-wide “required attendance” event?

ANSWER: No. Please plan vacations around major conference events listed on the conference calendar, such as pastors' meetings (January and July), camp meeting, union events, and constituency meetings. If you are unsure, please contact the conference office.

Exceptions: Funerals, graduations, and medical emergencies may be considered exceptions. Family birthdays are not exempt.

Church Mission Trips and Vacation

QUESTION: What do I need to do for a church mission trip within or outside the conference?

ANSWER: Church mission trips are considered part of your **regular church work**, not personal vacation (typically involving a mission group of 7-10 or more members).

- If the mission work is **five days**, you are still entitled to **two days off**, just as you would be after a normal work week.
- Any days beyond the two days off are counted as **vacation days**, and you should submit a vacation request for those additional days.

Example: If your church travels to Mexico and the trip includes travel days plus five days of mission work, you receive two days off. Any additional days beyond that should be requested and reported as a vacation.

Interviews and Moving to another Conference

QUESTION: I'm being considered a pastoral candidate by another conference, and they want me to come for a site visit. What should I do?

ANSWER: When considering or accepting a position outside the conference, available **vacation time or days off must be used** for interviews, site visits, house hunting, packing, and loading.

Accrued vacation payout: At transfer, termination, or retirement, accrued vacation time will be paid out up to a maximum of **150% of annual entitlement**. If vacation time was used in advance and is overdrawn, the overdrawn amount will be deducted from the final paycheck.

Unauthorized Vacation

QUESTION: What if I take a vacation without conference approval?

ANSWER: Please notify the office immediately. Taking a vacation without approval is not acceptable. A letter will be sent regarding the issue. If it happens again, the deduction from your vacation bank will **double** the number of days taken.

Example: If two unapproved vacation days are taken, **four days** will be deducted from the vacation bank.

Vacation Advance

QUESTION: What if I need time off for personal reasons but do not have enough in my vacation bank?

ANSWER: A **vacation advance** may be arranged with Administration in special circumstances and emergencies. If approved, the days taken will be deducted from your vacation bank.