

Sabbatical Overview

A time of rest and renewal

WHY

Sabbaticals are designed to be a time of both rest and renewal. Sabbaticals should include a break from the normal day-to-day responsibilities of life (in my case, a break from two jobs), which is valuable in and of itself. But sabbaticals should also include intentional activities that lead to a renewing – a growing and deepening of faith and understanding. Together, these two things will allow me to return energized and better equipped to lead the Branch into its next season.

WHEN

My sabbatical is 12 weeks long and will begin March 20 (on the 19th the Branch will have a party to celebrate the start of sabbatical). I will return Sunday, June 11.

WHAT

My sabbatical activities are connected to the Ghanan word: sankofa, which roughly translates, “go back and get it” and carries the idea of reaching back into our roots in order to move forward. This deeply resonates with a consistent biblical theme: by looking back and remembering what God has done and who God has been, God’s people are equipped to live in the present and empowered to step boldly into the future. I want to spend the sabbatical reflecting on God’s past movement and activity in the world and in my life in order to better step into the present and future.

Trip to Israel - my family and I will revisit our biblical past by traveling in Israel for 2 weeks. We’ll visit ancient sites and meet people who are working courageously to foster peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

Personal Counseling - I have eight sessions of personal therapy planned. I am trusting that these times will help me better understand the things from my past that are shaping how I interact with the world and with others today.

Trip to Seattle - I am fortunate to be able to travel to one of my favorite places: the Pacific Northwest. I’ll spend a number of days backpacking and then Bethany will join me for a few days in Seattle as we connect with friends.

Personal Retreat - I have three one-day retreats planned at The Hermitage, a Mennonite retreat center south of Kalamazoo. These are spread out through the sabbatical and will include time for personal reflection as well as guided spiritual direction.

Reading - I have a number of books on my reading list. This list may grow or change, but needless to say it will be a significant activity.

- Hearing God, by Dallas Willard
- Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes, by Kenneth Bailey
- Whose Promised Land, by Colin Chapman.
- Working the Angles, by Eugene Peterson
- Slow Church, by C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison
- A City Within a City, by Todd E. Robinson
- Deep Work, by Cal Newport



The wall in Israel

WHO

While I'm gone, a group of people will step up to provide leadership.

- Teresa Kinnear will increase her hours* to provide overall, day-to-day leadership. She will:
 - be available to meet with people for care or guidance
 - along with Nate, ensure that Sunday morning goes off without a hitch
 - oversee web/print/email communication
 - meet weekly with other staff members
 - ensure that the Branch's events during sabbatical are resourced and on track
 - be the point person for random things that pop up
- The Stewards will continue to provide overall leadership on any major decisions or needs. They will also give increased leadership during worship and will continue to make themselves available for pastoral care.
- Preaching will be covered by a number of people from the Branch and by guest speakers. This is one of the cooler aspects of sabbatical: it gives the Branch the opportunity to hear from a multitude of voices and perspectives.

*The cost of this is covered by the sabbatical grant.

YOU

Here's a final challenge: ***I invite you to consider what this time will mean for you.***

The endowment which provided the grant for this sabbatical wisely allows churches to set aside some of the grant money for congregational activities that would strengthen and empower the church. With that in mind, here are some ways for you to be transformed during these three months.

- Make a commitment to come to both of the trainings we have planned.
 - March 4-5 we will have guests from Seattle here to lead a training on tangible, everyday ways we can join in the work God's Spirit is already doing in the neighborhoods where we live. I have no doubt that this training will provide something for everyone at the Branch.
 - In late April (dates TBD) this training will focus on racial reconciliation. I think this is a must for all Branch-ers (so much so that I plan on coming back to be a participant). You will gain insight into how we each contribute to and can positively contribute to racial equity. You'll walk away with practical tools and steps to take.
- Be a part of the planning and/or implementation of these events. There are all kinds of ways you can pitch in. Email stewards@thebranchonline.org if you'd like more info.
- Lend your skills or time on Sunday morning. There are many ways you can contribute to our worshipping life together (reading, setting up, tear down). It may be for one week, or throughout sabbatical. You choose. Again, email the Stewards for more info.

