



Rev. Geoffrey J. McLean, Pastor

Dear Members and Friends of Christ Presbyterian,

This letter is to inform you that Session has approved the formation of a Sabbatical Task Force for the purpose of supporting Pastor Geoff as he seeks to re-invigorate his call. Pastor Geoff has been called to active parish ministry in 3 locations over 19 years (11 years at CPC), working tirelessly to serve his congregation of call, his community, and the greater Church. In this timeframe, there have been a few short term spiritual retreats, but no opportunity for the renewing experience of true sabbatical.

A sabbatical is an extended time away from routine ministry for the purpose of renewal, retooling, and receiving a fresh vision. It is meant to provide a time of special renewal that will bring personal nourishment to the soul, a deeper relationship with the Lord, family renewal, and a clearer understanding of God's vision for the church. A sabbatical helps prevent ministry burnout and gives a fresh perspective for future ministry.

A ministry sabbatical is not an extended vacation nor is it an academic sabbatical that normally involves extensive study. *A ministry sabbatical is a release from the routine of the call for the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual well-being of the ministry leader. A sabbatical is a Biblically-based practice.*

The word sabbatical is drawn from Sabbath. The Hebrew word for Sabbath means to "close or rest" and is connected with the last day of Creation when God rested. In the Old Testament, both the Israelites and the land benefited from Sabbath rest, contributing to a natural rhythm of life.

Jesus' own life and ministry reflect a deep understanding and appreciation for the rhythms of life. The demands upon Him were so great that his own ministry was punctuated with times of withdrawal for prayer and spiritual solitude. Jesus affirmed the importance of rest saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27). In the same way, we want to provide rhythms of rest and restoration to our spiritual leaders.

As a task force, we are working with Pastor Geoff to plan a time of sabbatical that will both meet his needs, and provide opportunities for the congregation to experience its own form of spiritual renewal. Pastor Geoff will be participating in a retreat this coming March, which is intended to lead a pastor through call renewal and discernment. After that time, we will have a more defined plan for a 4 month sabbatical in the fall of 2018.

This is an opportunity to re-discover and live out the unique freedoms we have within our denomination. A core principle of PC (USA) is the emphasis on leadership among lay people. We hope you will support the process, using this time to stimulate creativity and renew our congregational commitment to being the hands and feet of God's kingdom, independent of who is in the pulpit. God is going to do something in all of us and we encourage you to be part of that work.

We look forward to sharing more details as the process unfolds. In the meantime, we ask for your prayers as we explore the options to ensure this time will bear fruit for all. Should you have questions, you can feel free to contact one of the Task Force members.

In Christ,
The Sabbatical Task Force
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