



ROSE HILL CHURCH

Pastor Brian on Sabbatical

As many of you know – it’s been mentioned in recent Messengers, and discussed at our Annual Meeting in late January – I will be taking a Sabbatical this summer. Sunday, June 2nd will be my last day doing any pastoral work for Rose Hill until I return in early September; my first Sunday back will be September 8th. This is something that has been in the works for a few years, really. A few years ago, I applied for a grant from the Lily Foundation to fund a Sabbatical with some travel and other experiences for me and my family. Although the kinds of things I laid out in the proposal were completely in line with other pastors who received grants in previous years, I did not receive one (I applied twice, actually, in two consecutive years).

At that point, the Session suggested we fund it ourselves, perhaps scaled down from what I had originally planned, if needed. And so, that is what will be happening. When I became pastor at Rose Hill, taking a sabbatical after 6 years was part of the offer the church put together for my “terms of call.” I will have been pastor here for twelve years this November, and this will be my first Sabbatical – ever, actually. I’ve served as a pastor for nearly 22 years total. I am very grateful that the Session wanted to ensure my own spiritual health and vitality by offering this opportunity.

I must admit, I take this sabbatical with a certain measure of guilt, and a lot of humility. There are many hard-working people in a variety of work environments who would also greatly benefit from a break like this, but don’t get one. That I get to do this is truly humbling. Additionally, part of me says, “I don’t really need this.” Ministry at Rose Hill has been a joy for me. But the reality is that over the years there have been challenges, and I’ve helped lead a lot of transitions/ change...and that is hard work. It’s taxing. Churches don’t change very easily.

Scripturally, the word “sabbatical” is related to the word “sabbath,” which is the “day of rest” Christians are to take from work each week. So, a sabbatical is an extended period of rest. And that truly is what I plan to do, in ways that help me (and my family to some degree as well) to rest, relax, and get recharged. To aid in my own sense of spiritual rejuvenation and invigoration, I have a number of books I would love to read, though the list is long and I will not get through them all. If I try to, I probably will not find this season to be very restful! Several of them have to do with “rest for the soul” and similar themes. I am on the waitlist for a Christian family camp, and will attend if they contact me with space available. Otherwise, this will be my own season of rest, reading Scripture, spending time with God and my family, and decompressing from leading Rose Hill for nearly 12 years.

While I am gone, the Rev. Tyler Easley will be on staff taking my place, though at about half-time. He will preach the bulk of Sundays this summer, with others taking some Sundays as well, as normally happens in the summer when I usually miss several Sundays. He will lead staff, be available to help with pastoral care (Pastor Rob will keep leading in that area), and provide general church leadership to keep us moving forward in our vision to “lead people toward Jesus where we live, work, and play.” I think you will enjoy Tyler very much – he’s preached for me before – and you will be blessed to have him on board for this interim time.

I look forward to being reunited with you in early September, and I pray that God will strengthen and enrich your faith this summer!

Your Pastor,