

Faith Lutheran Church of McLean County

Sabbatical 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

This document has been prepared by the Faith Congregation Council to share information about the Sabbatical planned for Pastor Brian Goke and the congregation.

What is a sabbatical?

“Sabbatical” means “of the Sabbath”, the Biblical day of rest. This will be a time away from Faith for Pastor Brian to rest, study, reflect, and travel in order to return to us refreshed and renewed in body, mind, and spirit. In his absence, it is also a period of renewal and growth in shared ministry for the Partners and friends of Faith.

Why are we planning this now?

The sabbatical is an opportunity for pastors to step away briefly from the persistent obligations of daily parish life and to engage in a period of renewal and reflection. Renewal periods are not vacations but times for intentional exploration and reflection, for regaining enthusiasm and creativity for ministry.

We believe that after nearly 31 years engaged in ministry without having taken a sabbatical, this will be a good season for Pastor Brian and his family to experience spiritual rest and renewal. The pastoral call that brought Pastor Brian to Faith included the commitment to provide him a Sabbatical leave beginning no sooner than summer of 2020. Through his leadership and enrichment of our spiritual lives, Pastor Brian has brought this church startup/plant to a place of maturity that will enable us to thrive during this sabbatical period.

How long will it last?

It is planned to last 16 weeks in the summer of 2023, from mid-April through July.

What will Pastor Brian be doing during the sabbatical?

Pastor Brian’s sabbatical will begin and end with transitional activities that are familiar and renewing to Pastor Brian and his family, as they experience the wonder and majesty of God’s creation in the woods and on the river. He will seek to calm his soul through this quiet time in nature, much like Jesus did when He grew weary from the constant ministry demands.

In the first phase, he and his son Quentin will resume hiking the Appalachian Trail.

In the second phase, the family will travel across Europe to re-explore the people and events that shaped the Protestant Reformation five hundred years ago and continue to reverberate today.

In the final phase, Pastor Brian and his son Logan will resume their canoeing on the Mississippi, with Cindy and Mikelah providing support.

What are the benefits of a sabbatical for Pastor Brian?

Pastor Brian will enjoy physical and spiritual rest and renewal, a deeper understanding and personal connection to the people, places, and events of the Reformation. The sabbatical time will also gift him with personal time devoted to the members of his family which in turn establishes deeper connections, deeper conversations, and time for creating family memories.

What will the congregation be doing during the sabbatical?

The congregation will regularly pray for Pastor Brian and his family. We will continue to lead, support, and participate in the ministries that align with our mission to grow disciples who grow disciples. We will continue to invest in the Life Groups begun in 2022. We will elevate our commitment to providing one another pastoral care which can create new opportunities for leadership and reflection. Possibilities include lay preaching and sharing testimonials. We plan to implement a spiritual gifts assessment program to help Partners and friends uncover leadership and service gifts. We will engage an interim pastor through Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).

What are the benefits of a sabbatical for our congregation?

The primary benefit will be the return of our pastor after his sabbatical refreshed, renewed, and re-energized on all personal dimensions.

By leveraging an interim pastor through LCMC, the congregation will benefit from another shepherd speaking into our lives for a season as we explore our own spiritual gifts, talents, and passions for the purpose of more fully engaging in congregational ministry.

New relationships will be formed within the congregation and with the community by supporting one another in clergy-like roles and inviting outside community speakers in to share their experiences and perspectives.

How will the sabbatical be paid for?

Sabbatical expenses will be paid for as part of the Faith congregation budget for 2023 supplemented by external funds, if available (see below).

Pastor Brian will continue to receive his normal pay and benefits during the sabbatical.

In his absence, the congregation will incur extra-ordinary expenses for an interim pastor and for activities related to congregational renewal.

Are there sources of external funding available to help pay for the sabbatical?

Yes. Faith is in the process of applying for one of the grants from The Eli Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for up to \$50,000 given to a congregation in order to help pay for both the pastor's and the congregation's renewal activities. These grants are highly competitive on a national scale and there is no certainty of receiving a grant nor in what amount. Successful applicants for sabbaticals occurring in 2023 will be notified in late August 2022. Further information is available at www.cts.edu/clergy-renewal.