

## **Congregational Benefits of Sabbatical**

1. Planning ahead for sabbatical time is a good thing. It requires discernment/listening to the Spirit. Discernment is asking, “Where do we see God in this?” and “What is God up to?”
2. Prayer life of congregation is deepened through the process of discernment.
3. Anything that instills lay ownership, makes church a richer, more genuine experience is a good thing. Sabbaticals can rekindle a congregation’s calling. Congregations get busy doing stuff that makes a real difference.
4. Communication lines are improved and new ones drawn when the pastor is out of the loop.
5. Sabbatical time gives people permission to try new things, permission for new people to get involved. Creativity is enhanced. Diversity is enhanced when the question is asked, “Are you able?” Gifts are evoked.
6. Hospitality is exercised when pulpit supply pastors are welcomed and necessary changes are embraced during the pastor’s time away.
7. Sometimes out of date programs and committees do not survive when no one is there to prop them up. That’s okay.
8. Team Ministry is fostered whenever staff attendance is not required at meetings.
9. Testimony through lay witnesses, lay led bible study. The telling of many God stories. It is no small thing to tell the stories of what happened during the sabbatical time. Will it be a story of stasis or one of new opportunities perceived? What values will the stories reflect? (Pastor’s role as doer or equipper?) What happens when giving and attendance go up when pastor is gone? It builds a sense of community of belonging to each other and not to the pastor.
10. Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Shared parallel activities are helpful. Look at it as stewardship of the staff. We take care of and renew our physical plant, how about our pastors? Do you have a policy about taking all vacation days, continuing education days, working more than 55 hours, seeing that two days off in a row happen twice a month, that no more than three nights a week are spent at church? Congregation grows in knowledge of the pastor’s role and helps to honor healthy boundaries together.