

## **So Your Pastor is Going on Sabbatical...**

At the end of the summer, I will be going on sabbatical. This is a bittersweet time because, while I am excited for rest and renewal, I will miss you all terribly! As we approach this time together, I know there are many questions. I've done my best to answer most of them below, but would love to hear what else may be on your mind as we prepare for this time.

### **What is a Sabbatical?**

Sabbaticals are times of rest and spiritual renewal. This can look different for everyone. For some, it may include a study program or visiting a new place. For others, it may look like pure rest – not doing anything overly stimulating and allowing your body, brain, and spirit to breathe. In scripture, we learn about the Sabbath – God's commandment to keep the Sabbath holy and to rest. In the New Testament, we see Jesus often sneaking off to pray on his own or simply to escape the crowds. Most churches offer their pastors a 3 month sabbatical after 5 years of ministry. If that math doesn't add up correctly, you're right! I am in year 6 & rapidly approaching year 7. I intentionally chose to delay my sabbatical by a year. This time last year was an especially critical time for the church as we moved back into a state of "normalcy" and experienced significant growth. I felt like being away last year for 3 months would have done more harm than good and so I chose to wait a year until we had stabilized – and I am so glad I did! Every Sunday I am amazed at the strength of this community and the renewed sense of calling that we experience together. I have no doubt that you all will continue to thrive during my time away and to be the body of Christ.

### **When do you leave and for how long?**

My sabbatical will be August – October. Because of the way General Assembly (our bi-annual denomination's conference) falls, my last Sunday in worship will be July 23rd. My first Sunday back will be October 29th.

### **So what are you going to do for 3 months?**

I am excited to take some intentional, extended time to visit my parents in Louisiana as well as my family and friends in Texas. I'll be focusing on the idea of home – the home where I grew up, the home where I grew as an individual, and the home that we've established here in Jacksonville. If I am feeling brave, I might tackle a few home projects around our house and learn how to use power tools, but that's contingent on how much of our deductible has been met by then and if we can afford multiple ER visits.

### **Who is going to preach?**

Rev. Kimberly Weir will preach on the first Sunday while I am at General Assembly (July 30th).

Rev. Dan Webster, retired pastor of FCC Gainesville, FL and long time friend of RACC, will preach August 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th.

Rev. Sylvia Ramos will preach September 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th.

Rev. Mary Moore will preach October 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd.

### **What if there is a Pastoral Emergency?**

RACC is blessed to have 9 capable and compassionate serving Elders. While we primarily see our Elders leading during worship, behind the scenes they are praying for the church, visiting people in need, and spiritually leading the congregation. Each week, the Elders who were serving in worship the preceding Sunday will be the "on-call" Elders. To reach the on-call Elder:

1. If it is during office hours (M-Th, 9 am – 3 pm), call the church office and Janet will relay the message to the on-call Elder. The office number is 904-389-1751.
2. If it is after office hours, call Ray Murphree, our Elder Chair, and he will relay the message to the on-call Elder.

### **But... can I call or e-mail you?**

Part of the sabbatical process is to allow space between a pastor and their congregation for the Spirit to move and speak. Key leaders will keep me informed should anything that needs my immediate attention arise, however, we are entrusting our lay leadership to continue the ministry with which they're very much capable of doing during this time. That is my sugarcoated way of saying no. You are in very good hands!! I also will not have access to my e-mail during that time – as in Justin will change my password at the beginning of the sabbatical and not tell me my new one until my sabbatical is over.

### **What will it look like when you get back from Sabbatical?**

I will be so excited to hear about how you continued to witness, love, and serve in my absence and what hopes we have for the future of the church! It will be a wonderful celebration!