

April 20, 2022

Dear North Lake:

I am excited and grateful to begin today a sabbatical that will last slightly more than 100 days through July 31. The word sabbatical is connected to Sabbath, God's gift of rest and rejuvenation incorporated into every week. The concept of a sabbatical is familiar in some circles and professions, but not always understood. So the sidebar panel provides additional information and perspective from the Central Florida Presbytery.

Both the Presbytery and North Lake's personnel policies suggest a pastoral sabbatical is appropriate every six years. I've had two previous sabbaticals in 1998 and 2009. Those were significant, formative, and replenishing times for me. Given the rigors of ministry during the pandemic, as well as the cumulative weight of pastoral leadership, I am aware of my need for a change of pace and an opportunity to "sharpen the saw" for making disciples for Jesus Christ in the years ahead.

Through the next three months I anticipate a season of spiritual refreshment with Psalm 105:1-4 as the framework:

***O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name,  
make known his deeds among the peoples.  
Sing to him, sing praises to him;  
tell of all his wonderful works.  
Glory in his holy name;  
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.  
Seek the LORD and his strength;  
seek his presence continually.***

I hope this will be an extended time of

- 1) reflecting with gratitude, and
- 2) seeking the Lord's presence and strength.

Then, upon my return to North Lake, I pray for the ability to make known God's deeds and tell of all his wonderful works. May the hearts of all of us who seek the Lord rejoice!

I want to *call on his name* and *glory in his holy name*. Last year one of our North Lakers needed to be at Mayo Center in Jacksonville, and while there she spotted in the bookstore a small paperback: *The Power of God's Names*, by Tony Evans. She bought a copy and gave it to me. Her thoughtful gift will be part of my devotional reading, along with several others I've chosen for daily readings.

In addition to the devotional reading, I have selected about 5000 pages of reading I'd like to do while I have this extended opportunity. I probably won't finish everything I plan (I seldom do!), but even this reading is an essential part of my reflecting and seeking the Lord.

Sabbatical Leave is not a vacation, nor is it only continuing education. It offers a means for a pastor to move away from normal responsibilities for refreshment, intellectual growth and personal development. It provides a pastor with an opportunity for a planned time of intensive enhancement for ministry and mission. Sabbatical Leave follows precedent in the academic community and among a growing number of private sector groups. This "extended time" is qualitatively different from "vacation" or "days off". It will enable the pastor to be renewed through the vital pursuit of continuing education, extended time spent in spiritual formation and fresh mentoring by respected teachers. A Sabbatical enables a pastor to return to the responsibilities of the parish with new energy, spiritual vision, and effectiveness.

Sabbatical Leave Policy  
Central Florida Presbytery

The seeking will also entail travels and new experiences. For example, in May Bobbi and I will return to Zephyr Point, a Presbyterian conference center at the southern edge of Lake Tahoe. We stayed there during the 2009 sabbatical and look forward to being back there in the majesty of that setting. While in California we will also get to meet our newborn seventh grandchild and spend time with our West Coast son and his family.

The highlight of June will be a twenty-three-day trip to Scotland and England. This will fulfill a hope I've had for decades. I can hardly wait to visit some of the historic sites that have shaped our Presbyterian identity, as well as spend time in cathedrals that date back as far as a thousand years. The grandeur and artistry of those buildings testify to a people who were seeking the Lord. What do their voices and perspective have to say to us today?

The July details are still being ironed out. But I expect it will include 1) a stay at Montreat, the Presbyterian center in the western North Carolina; 2) a visit with our daughter and her family in Minnesota; and 3) ample time for re-entry preparation for the start of August. Through all of these phases I hope to be reflecting with gratitude and seeking the Lord continually.

So many of you have expressed your support and intent to be praying for us during this sabbatical. Thank you! Let me suggest some specifics to focus your prayers. You might pray for:

- This season of reflecting and seeking the Lord to be fruitful in all the ways that matter to God.
- An appropriate balance of rest and adventure that produces physical and spiritual renewal.
- The blessing and enhancement of our marriage and family relationships.
- The well-being of our parents (Bobbi's and mine) during the periods we are away.
- North Lake staff and leaders carrying extra loads during my absence.

While I'm away, I will check in periodically with Kathy Yoakum, our Office Manager. If you have messages you need to reach me, please direct them to her by email ([kyoakum@northlakepc.org](mailto:kyoakum@northlakepc.org)) or phone: 352-753-8484.

*Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!* (Psalm 105:3) I look forward to August when we are rejoicing together again. In the meantime, I'm on my way seeking the presence and strength of the Lord.

Blessings,

Jeff

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Hosmer