



EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

TO KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE HIM KNOWN

Dear Fellow Church Leaders,

Thank you for considering a sabbatical for your pastor! Our denomination believes that sabbaticals are based on biblical teaching. Genesis 2:1-3 notes that God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11) describe the Sabbath as a day of rest and spiritual renewal. Deuteronomy 15 describes a period after seven years in which release from various kinds of debt and labor are justified. Jesus himself took forty days away in the wilderness to prepare for his ministry, and there are many more examples pointing to a rhythm of life that include intentional periods of rest, reflection and renewal which we describe as a sabbatical.

A sabbatical is a planned period of time in which the pastor is granted leave away from his normal responsibilities in order to spend an extended period in rest, reflection, and renewal. It is a time to receive spiritual nourishment, a change of perspective, a time to deepen the pastor's relationship with God, himself and his family. A sabbatical gives the pastor an opportunity to reflect on his call to ministry and the relationship he has with the church he is shepherding.

Rather than being a burden, churches that grant their pastor a sabbatical describe the experience as a blessing. During the time the pastor is away, the congregation hears from new voices and perspectives from the pulpit, members have more opportunity to practice the "priesthood of all believers", using their spiritual gifts to minister to one another as they assume a little more responsibility. There is a true sense of newness, excitement and vision among the congregation when the pastor returns after his sabbatical.

On a very practical level, according to our guidelines, the pastor receives his full compensation for the extent of the sabbatical and his continuing education funds can be used for educational opportunities. The time of the sabbatical does not take away from the pastor's vacation time.

As Bishop, I join with our entire denominational leadership team in urging all EC Churches to consider sabbaticals as a biblical principle and practical tool that will enable their pastor to continue to shepherd God's people with joy, passion and vision.

In Christ's Service,


Rev. Randy Sizemore
Bishop