

Sabbatical Announcement Letter to the Congregation

Grace River Community Church
1234 Faith Lane
Springfield, IL 62704

June 16, 2025

Dear Grace River Family,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to share with you some important and exciting news: beginning July 1st, I will be stepping away from my pastoral duties for a three-month sabbatical, returning to full ministry responsibilities on October 1st.

This time of sabbatical is something I have prayerfully discerned with our Ministry Council, and I want you to hear directly from me what this season is about and what it means for our church.

Why a Sabbatical?

This sabbatical is not a sign of burnout or crisis—it is a proactive investment in my long-term spiritual and pastoral health. After more than ten years of continuous ministry at Grace River, I sense God inviting me into a period of spiritual renewal and rest, in order to return with fresh vision, deeper joy, and renewed strength.

What Will This Sabbatical Include?

During these three months, I will focus on practices that nourish my soul and renew my sense of calling:

- Daily rhythms of prayer, silence, and Scripture reflection
- Time in nature, reading, and journaling
- Worship with other congregations as a recipient rather than a leader
- Intentional time with my family and with God

My sabbatical theme is based on Matthew 11:28 — “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” I am entering this time with the intention to release the weight of expectations, rediscover God's delight in me apart from ministry, and return with greater clarity and peace.

How Will the Church Continue During This Time?

Our leadership has been preparing for this transition.

- Associate Pastor James will lead the staff and preaching ministry.
- The Elder Team will continue to care for our congregation and provide oversight.
- Our Church Administrator will keep operations running smoothly.

You will be in capable and prayerful hands, and I have complete confidence in our team. I ask that you support them with grace, encouragement, and your ongoing presence during these summer months.

Sabbatical Q&A Event

To help answer any questions and provide clarity, we will host a Sabbatical Q&A Session on Sunday, June 23, immediately following the worship service. This will be a time for you to hear more about the sabbatical plans, ask questions, and pray together as a church family.

How Can You Pray?

Please pray:

- That I would truly rest and encounter the Lord in quiet and unexpected ways.
- That God would give our church continued unity, joy, and purpose.
- That my return would be marked by new vision for the next chapter of ministry together.

We will have a special moment of commissioning and prayer on Sunday, June 30, to mark this sacred beginning together.

From the bottom of my heart—thank you. Thank you for your trust, your prayers, and for being a church that values the spiritual well-being of its leaders. I am so grateful to serve you, and I look forward to the season ahead with great hope.

With love and gratitude,
Pastor Michael Thompson