

In Preparation for Pastor Bob's Sabbatical

Leading with Grace – April 2018

By Travis Greene

Beginning on April 30th through July 22nd of this year, Pastor Bob is going on sabbatical. My goal in writing this article is to help everyone in our church understand what sabbatical is, why Pastor Bob is taking one and why it is happening now.

First, let me put your mind completely at ease – this is a planned event that has been in the works for months, and is something that we as a Board of Elders feel is important for our pastors. Pastor Bob is and will remain, God-willing, our Senior Pastor for many years to come. Our decades-old written policy has been that our pastors are eligible for and encouraged to take a sabbatical every seven years. Pastor Don and Pastor Steve took sabbaticals when they served our church full time, and we want Pastor Bob to finally be able to take his.

I say “finally” because even though Pastor Bob is only just now concluding his first full year as Senior Pastor, he has served as a pastor on our staff for twelve years. This will be his first chance to experience the Spiritually-renewing rest that is afforded by an extended time away from the day to day efforts of full-time ministry.

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A pastoral sabbatical, as defined in our policy, is intended to provide our staff pastors with a gift of time away from normal responsibilities and locations, to pursue a plan of personal renewal and growth that combines study, education, research and rest. The sabbatical is not just a reward for longevity of service commitment, although there is an element of that to it. It is primarily an opportunity for those who have given consistently of their teaching and life to refill their own hearts and resources in order that they might continue in effective service to the Lord in our congregation. Research conducted by Wheat Ridge Ministries in 2011 shows that sabbaticals aid in pastoral longevity of service to a congregation, among many other benefits.

Pastor Bob has submitted a sabbatical plan to the Board of Elders, which we have approved. He was assisted in creating this plan by Church Resource Ministries, which has provided support for numerous pastors in our area in planning their sabbaticals. The Board of Elders and church staff are also being assisted by Eric Marsh, Executive Pastor at Parkcrest Church, in planning how we will cover all necessary functions for Pastor Bob during his time away.

During his sabbatical, you will not see Pastor Bob participating in any of our church ministries. Instead, he will be working on his doctoral project regarding leadership development in the local church, visiting other churches both for worship services and during the week to learn from them, and resetting his practices around spiritual disciplines. Of course, this will also afford him extra time with his family, and he has physical exercise routine improvements planned as well.

So why have we chosen this time for this sabbatical? The Board of Elders has been trying to get Pastor Bob to take this time away for several years now, but the timing always seemed off. Now that we are fully staffed and are past Easter, with a deep bench of teachers for Sunday morning and ministries that have had a year to adjust to Pastor Bob's leadership style, the time is finally right. The timing is perfect during these early days of his senior pastorate to allow Pastor Bob to pray, think and plan for the future of our church, under the lordship of Christ.

We will miss Pastor Bob while he is away, but I ask you all to respect the process and funnel any requests you might have of our church or to Pastor Bob personally through the church staff or the Board of Elders. We look forward to reuniting with Pastor Bob and the Wriedt family upon their return at the end of July, with all of the benefits we will receive as a church of having a Senior Pastor who has experienced a Spirit-led refresh.

Something good is happening at Grace. I'm glad you're a part of it.