

A Note from Pastor Brenda: *The time has come, dear Church, to take my Sabbatical leave. The Councils and I have compiled a few FAQs to provide info and to quell any anxiety:*

What IS a Sabbatical? The term Sabbatical comes from the Hebrew concept of Sabbath, or **rest**. Genesis notes that God rested from the work of creation and the Ten Commandments instruct us to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy, by worship, and reflecting on the blessings of God. Deuteronomy and Leviticus describe Sabbatical periods **where the balance of life is restored**. Sabbatical leave is a carefully planned period of time in which a Pastor is granted leave away from their normal, ministerial responsibilities in order to spend an extended period of time in study, renewal, and reflection.

S A B B A T I C A L

What a Sabbatical is NOT: It is **NOT** a vacation: a Sabbatical is more than a simple holiday; it's a period of spiritual renewal and rest from the demands of ministry. It is **NOT** a job search: it is not a time for a Pastor to look for a different job or explore other career opportunities, nor is a Sabbatical a punishment or an imposed leave of absence for negative actions. Finally, it is **NOT** a substitute for normal rest: it is distinct from the regular, weekly rest or shorter vacations, and is meant to provide a deeper level of renewal.

WHEN is this Sabbatical? Pastor Brenda will be gone during **August, September, and October**. Her send-off/blessing/final Sunday will be July 26 at the Annual Church Picnic (10a at Erickson Park in Stephenson). She will return to the Office on Wednesday, October 28, and return to Worship on All Saints' Sunday, November 1, 2026.

AUG SEP OCT

WHO's going to PREACH + PRESIDE + CARE for our congregations? Pastoral Coverage has been arranged for **EVERY** Sunday! Meaning, a Pastor will be present to lead each worship service, including being able to offer Confession + Forgiveness, and to lead you through the sacrament of **Holy Communion** **EVERY** Sunday. Local Pastors **Keith Kolstad** (retired), **Scott Ehle** (Bethel), **Christine Olson** (Emmanuel), and **Amanda Kossov** (Zion) will be **on call** for Pastoral emergencies, hospital visits, and funerals. Your Council Members are dedicated to helping lead during this time, too.



How is this Sabbatical being PAID for? First, the regular expenses of the Church will continue to be paid by the **faithful members** who place their **Offerings** in the Offering Plate (or by electronic means). Your continued support (and attendance) as the **Church** will contribute to the success of this Sabbatical. Per Synod Guidelines, Pastor Brenda will receive her normal compensation and benefits while on Sabbatical. Gethsemane and St. Stephen's have also established a **Joint Sabbatical Reserve Fund**. Annual deposits into this Fund will ensure financial security, well-ahead of the next Pastoral Sabbatical.

Second, specific Sabbatical expenses are being entirely covered by the generous heart and spirit of the late **+Nancy Diehm+** and the **Living Trust** she left to our churches. This Trust will cover the payment of the Visiting Pastors who lead worship, their travel, Pastor Brenda's Sabbatical education and travel, and any emergency coverage Visiting Pastors might incur when assisting our members. While +Nancy+ was a member of St. Stephen's, the Living Trust established in her name was given in the spirit of supporting the **Pastor**, whether that Pastor is solely serving St. Stephen's, or that Pastor is serving both St. Stephen's and their yoked partner in Christ, Gethsemane. **Thanks be to God!**



May I CALL or VISIT or TEXT Pastor Brenda during her Sabbatical? **Nope...**but you can **PRAY** for her each and every day. The name + phone number of the **Pastor on Call** will be printed in the bulletin each Sunday. Calling the St. Stephen's Office at 906.753.4932 will also let you leave a message for Heather, who works 9a – 1p on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.



What do I do if I run into Pastor Brenda at Gary's or Menards? Well, **say hello!** You'll probably even get a hug – but don't be surprised if she doesn't launch into the business of the Church. While she will be away at times, she's not travelling during her *ENTIRE* Sabbatical, so you'll see her about town, in her backyard, at stores, etc. Being in her home will provide a place of sabbath rest, too.

Is Pastor Brenda discerning a new call to a different Church? **Not. At. All.** She dearly loves these congregations and wants to continue serving in this place. She has several friends in our Synod and around the country who were able to remain in their calls *even longer* because of the new energy gained during their Sabbaticals.



I thank you in advance for your faithful prayers and your commitment to worship and to one another. My rest will come easy knowing that you are capable and caring congregations who will tend to one another's needs, and I already look forward to returning to you with renewed energy and joy. May God bless you all. Love,

Pr. Brenda

Additional Info from our Northern Great Lakes Synod's Compensation Guide:

Sabbatical leave is a planned period of time in which a Pastor is granted leave away from their normal, ministerial responsibilities. They receive the opportunity to spend an extended period of time in study, renewal, and reflection. This time away from the congregation is to renew a Pastor's energies and vision. It is an excellent investment in the congregation's future. In a Sabbatical, the congregation gets many of the benefits of a fresh start without the additional expenses of a new call process and lost momentum frequently experienced in calling a new Pastor. It also provides the benefits of a longer-term Pastorate in the parish, since studies show that a Sabbatical often extends a Pastor's stay within a parish. Usually, this time away is after a Pastor has been in the parish for four years or longer.

During a Sabbatical leave, the congregation pays full salary and benefits to the Pastor on Sabbatical, plus the expense of Pastoral supply during the period. You may not realize it, but the Sabbatical is a powerful symbol of love and respect for a Pastor. It is also a powerful symbol of health and vitality for a congregation. Both congregation and Pastor benefit by the use of renewal and recreation time.

A Sabbatical leave of up to 3 months is recommended every 5-7 years to support renewal and professional growth. The Pastor would be expected to return to the present call for at least one year following the Sabbatical. Support for rest and renewal is part of the rhythm of healthy ministry. Covering professional expenses helps Pastors stay connected, equipped, and involved in the wider church. These aren't extras. They're essential acts of care—for the ones we've entrusted to lead, and for the church we're building together.

Burnout, discouragement, and depletion of spiritual and emotional resources threaten the effectiveness of Pastoral ministry and threaten to shorten Pastorates. Periodic, Sabbatical leaves may foster a ministry that is longer, more energized, and more fruitful. People are drawn to interesting, vitalized Pastors who reflect what they preach, and what we preach is a way of life. A vitalized Pastor at the center of their congregation's life is essential. The Pastor is called to model ways of emotional and physical wholeness, along with enthusiasm for proclaiming the gospel and caring about people. A Sabbatical provides the opportunity to drink deeply from Biblical and classical sources of wisdom so that the Pastor may return to the congregation with renewed vitality in all areas of ministry.

