



## From Pastor Mary Beth

Sabbatical: Rest and Recreation

“Ministers desperately need to recreate and restore what has been worn down by day-to-day encounters with reality. Nourishing one’s soul and regaining perspective requires a change of pace and place...” (Richard Bullock, *Sabbatical Planning for Clergy & Congregations*, p. 3).

When I was called to our wonderful church about five and half years ago, we included a three-month sabbatical leave as part of my Letter of Call, to be taken every five years we are in ministry together. I so appreciated then – as I still do – the fact that St. Paul’s recognized how vital it is for ministers to engage in a season of rest and renewal. There are a lot of disheartening statistics out there about how we ministers tend to exhaust ourselves. One article puts it like this, “Again and again, ministers burn out. They lose their enthusiasm and excitement; they become bored and pedantic; and they decide to leave the ministry and enter other occupations.”<sup>1</sup>

Don’t worry, St. Paul’s; I don’t feel on the verge of burning out! But I believe that a big reason for that is because I take seriously the call to care for myself so that I can care for others... which includes gratefully looking forward to my upcoming sabbatical, where I will spend time at St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, NE, May 29-August 20, 2017.

For as long as I can remember, I have been drawn to monastic life: a life of ordered prayer, lived in community. The apostle Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing.” I wonder if monastic communities come close to this. But I am also intrigued by the idea that one need not become a monk or a nun to “pray without ceasing.” I wonder, in other words, if one can live a life of prayer as one simply goes through the everyday motions of life.

During my sabbatical, I intend to explore this, and follow my intuition that prayer is always happening within us; we simply need to pay attention to it! During my time with the monks at St. Benedict’s (about every other week), I will receive spiritual direction every day, join the community in their regular prayers, journal, walk, play music, and take my meals in community. During my weeks “off” from the monastery, I will continue to pray the same hours the monks keep at St. Benedict. But more than that, I hope to see the prayer in all that I do at home as I care for my children, strive to be a good spouse to my husband, do work around the house, and spend time with friends.

As for you, church, you also will get a sabbatical! You will get time “off” from leadership as usual, as you pray and worship together, listening for God in your homes and in our pews in a slightly different way. As I write this, your leadership is in the beginning stages of forming a Sabbatical Working Group, a faithful collection of people who are going to help shape what, exactly, this sabbatical time will look like for *you*. Who will lead you? How might you do things differently in worship? In pastoral care? How might you pray? What new things might you discover? I know in my

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1980/fall/8014057.html>

bones that you already have everything you need just as you are, with or without your pastor around for three months.

At the end of the sabbatical, I believe that we all will have re-connected to the Holy Spirit burning within us, the same Spirit who prays without ceasing. This, I believe, will enrich and enliven our shared ministry at St. Paul's, as I anticipate exploring practices of deeper and deeper prayer together, practices that weave prayer into the fabric of our everyday, "ordinary" lives.

As you can tell, I am very excited about this extended time of listening deeply to God. I would love to talk to any of you more about it, so please call or email me, and we'll set up a time to talk! Also, my good friend and colleague David Ruhe (former senior minister at Plymouth) is coming to St. Paul's on Sunday, January 22 to teach us more about what a sabbatical means, both to the pastor and to the church. I hope you can come then, to listen, to ask your questions, and to support each other in this amazing and holy work we are so privileged to do together!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Mary Beth

### **David Ruhe Coming to Talk "Sabbatical 101," January 22!**

Pastor Mary Beth's Letter of Call includes a three-month sabbatical, taken every five years. But... what is a sabbatical, exactly? Why is it important, both for the church, and for the pastor? To hear more about it, you are invited to attend a "Sabbatical 101" talk by Rev. Dr. David Ruhe, former senior minister at Plymouth, on January 22, right after worship. All are welcome!



Sunday school classes are back on January 8th! The students are continuing to learn a lot, with their awesome teachers who continue doing a great job demonstrating God's love by teaching them about God's word, the church, and the wider world. Some of the upcoming lessons are: Single Mindedness, Total Surrender, Biblical Community, Spiritual Gifts, Offering My Time, Giving My resources, Sharing My Faith and Love. Thanks be to God!



**Visioning and Planning Retreat, January 15, 11:30-2:30!!!**

For the second year in a row, St. Paul’s is combining our Visioning Retreat (which we have previously done in the summers) with the work of our committees. Last year, our January retreat was a great success... because of *you*. You showed up, *really* showed up, not just in body, but in spirit. We were honest, and open, and faithful. It was good. It was very good.

But the job is not over yet. The job is never over! Now we get to do it again. Now we get to continue to work and pray and listen together, to discern what God would call us to in 2017. I hope you can join us! The retreat will be held from **11:30-2:30 on Sunday, January 15**. It will be facilitated by our church’s amazing leadership: Julie Mathes, Lisa Winne and John Roosa, and will include a delicious lunch.

Before, during and after: keep praying. God is at work at St. Paul’s Church, and I, for one, am so very excited to see how the Spirit will continue to move in this place...



**Youth Calendar 2017**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Time</u>
Feb 12th	Sledding/Skiing Outing	Saylorville/Seven Oaks	1-3pm
* Mar 12th	Open Mic Night	Youth Room/Sanctuary	6-8pm
Apr 9th (Palm Sunday)	Movie Night – “Passion of Christ”	Youth Room	6-8pm
* May 14th	Spring Family Lunch & Games	St. Paul’s	12-3pm

\* = open to all ages (all other activities are for 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)



From Deacon Mike Burkhart

As one of our church's deacons, I have the privilege of helping our pastor tend to the spiritual needs of our congregation. On communion Sundays – we serve communion to all who want it during worship. We then contact our home bound and care center members to see who would like communion. We get to visit - serve communion and pray with some of us who can't make it to church.

Another opportunity for us deacons to be with our people is to join our pastor during mid week visits to those who don't mind someone joining Mary Beth. I find it to be both humbling and spiritually rewarding for me to let these people talk about their joys and what is weighing on them. We always end in prayer and leave feeling blessed by the ones we came to minister to.

## 3 WAYS TO INVITE SOMEONE TO CHURCH

BY PASTOR JOSH TEIS

### **1. The Bashful Neighbor**

If you are a bit of an introvert you can still invite your neighbor to church. Just take one of the church brochures, casually walk next door, quickly slip the card into the door between the weather stripping and the door, and then run home. It's simple and nobody will know it was you. For increased effectiveness attempt this at 2:00am.

### **2. The Facebook Post**

Some of you are like the Sultans of Social Media. You can use the powerful influence you have over your 1900 closest friends by posting a link to our church's website and expressing your love for the church. You may not know the impact that might have upon someone that is just now ready to receive Jesus and start attending a new church. Try it!

### **3. Just Ask**

You know, you could just ask. Ask God to give you the opportunity of inviting someone. Then, simply ask that person to be your guest on Sunday. They might surprise you, come and enjoy it!



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### Trustees Report

The Trustees have several projects on the calendar for the coming year. Initially, we will look at replacing all the light bulbs in the basement with LED. This change will save the Church a significant amount on the electric bill. The change requires wiring and possible replacement of some housing brackets, but Alliant energy will refund the church almost half the cost for each bulb. In the Spring we will begin the process of fixing many of the bricks on the outside of the church by tuck pointing. This will be our biggest project this year. Inspections and maintenance continues with our annual boiler inspection in January. No deficiencies were noted. Finally, we will replace the remaining air conditioning units – again, Alliant energy pays the church for the old models. We currently have two left to replace. This will lower cost and gain efficiency in the pastor's office and youth room specifically.



#### SANCTUARY MEMORIAL CANDLE

The Sanctuary Memorial Candle can be designated in memory of a loved one/s by making a \$4.00 donation (covers cost of candle). Donations can be put in the Offering Plate (be sure to designate who it is in memory of and what date you prefer) or give donation to Wes Mathes or Carolyn Douglas. Please specify if you want to provide a candle for a specific Sunday otherwise the memorials will be assigned as they are received.

*Happy Birthday to everyone with birthdays in January  
and February!*

**B**e yourself

**I**nvite new challenges

**R**ecall past triumphs

**T**rust your instincts

**H**ave faith in your abilities

**D**esire only the best

**A**ffirm your strengths

**Y**ou've got what it takes

