

Sabbatical (January – March 2020) Update

The Lilly Foundation sabbatical grant application was submitted April 10th. We look forward to learning of its approval in August!

Advance preparation for sabbatical renewal is important to its ultimate success. Thoughtful planning between now and January will assure that both Pastor Brown and the whole congregation benefit. Sabbatical can be a time of learning and growing, reflection and renewal, for all who take part!

Our answers to two questions in the application are a good place to start in our shared conversation. In June, we will share answers to two additional questions.

Give a brief description of the process by which the congregation determined whether to submit a proposal.

Pastor Brown became Senior Pastor at Community Christian Church on July 13, 2015. His calling agreement included provision for a three-month sabbatical upon the fifth year of service with the congregation, and a commitment to continued service with Community Christian Church for at least one year after completion of the sabbatical. The congregation will continue the Senior Pastor's salary and benefits during the time of sabbatical renewal.

Sabbatical preparations began in 2017 when a sabbatical reserve was created. We anticipate having \$6,000 in this reserve in January 2020 when Pastor Brown's sabbatical begins. Congregational conversations continued via budget reporting in the annual congregational meetings in 2017 and 2018, Board reports in the newsletter, and strategic plan visioning meetings in December 2018 and February 2019. The Sabbatical Committee that drafted the proposal was appointed by the Board in November 2018. The Elders affirmed the January through March 2020 sabbatical dates on February 18, 2019 and the Board did so on February 21, 2019.

Note: The sabbatical provisions in Pastor Brown's calling agreement are well-established best practices for hiring and retaining quality clergy in our denomination.

Pastor Brown's fifth year of service is complete in July 2020. The Board and Elders affirmed the January through March dates to best conform to the demands of our church calendar in serving the Advent and Lenten seasons and our busy fall church activity schedule.

Provide a statement by a representative of the congregation that describes the intended benefits for both the congregation and the pastor.

We have a story to tell!

Community Christian Church seeks to live out its mission, to “proclaim Christ’s love to all people through worship, study, fellowship and service.”

Community Christian Church recently completed a visioning process to confirm current best practices, establish short, medium and long-range goals, and celebrate successes related to our core mission elements: worship, study, fellowship, service and stewardship. The Elders, Board, DWF, DMF, Property Committee and Pastoral Support Team joined with the entire congregation in this process.

We understand the most critical action word in our mission *moving forward* will be to “**proclaim!**”

We have a story to tell! We approach the future of Community Christian Church with a fresh perspective, intent on building on strong traditions while finding new ways to communicate. Plans include, but are not limited to, upgrades to our website, addition of an automated phone tree, creating podcasts to share worship topics and seasonal worship themes, recording sermon messages for internet access, and more systematic use of social media.

Sabbatical renewal will allow Senior Pastor William Brown and the Community Christian Church congregation to explore new ways for “**telling our story.**” How to “**proclaim**” Christ’s love to all people involves learning new ways to communicate. Even more important is **what** we communicate. We may attract fifty people by reaching out through new media, but if those fifty do not gain a sense of welcoming, honesty, and community, and our focus on sharing the Good News, they won’t be back. We have to “proclaim” from our hearts!

An important part of congregational growth during sabbatical will derive from study on transforming our faith. Diana Butler Bass identifies **ten signposts for renewal** in her book *Christianity for the Rest of Us*. This is just one good resource example we could choose. Part of preparing for sabbatical will be the quality conversations we have in making our study choice. We look forward to weekly study and coordinating messages with our visiting pastors!

Sabbatical has great renewal potential for Pastor Brown. As sole pastor at Community Christian Church, he needs this opportunity for rest, renewal, and reflection. Pastor Brown finds great joy in outdoor activities and relates his thoughts and experiences to our congregation through meaningful stories. What better way to create reflection time and promote story-telling than through sabbatical!

Sabbatical is purposeful only when **both** the congregation and Pastor Brown see and use the time for growth. Sabbatical should be a valuable time for congregational reflection on what can transform us as “church.” We are excited for the potential for growth through purposeful study in the current literature on transforming faith, engaging new leaders, and the synergy gained from shared story-telling upon Pastor Brown’s return!