

June 10, 2019

Dear Gladstone Park Church Family,

As you may have seen in our weekly bulletin and newsletter, I will be taking a Sabbatical this year from July 22-Sept. 14. Many have asked about this, and I'm writing to let you know what it is all about.

Recently the Oregon Conference updated their sabbatical policy for the pastors in our conference. The policy states that for every 7 years of full time service in the Oregon Conference, a pastor is eligible for a 6 week sabbatical which can be linked with vacation. During that time a pastor is completely relieved of their duties, both routine and emergency, and is encouraged to focus solely on spiritual renewal.

The Reason

Why does the Oregon Conference have such a plan in place for pastors? The simple answer is this: to proactively protect and care for the pastors in the Oregon Conference in hopes of increasing their longevity in ministry and to reward tenure within the conference.

According to statistics from Barna Research, Focus on the Family, and Fuller Seminary, almost 1,500 pastors leave their ministry positions each month due to spiritual burnout, moral failures, or issues within the church. 80% of pastors feel discouraged in their roles. 50% of pastors say they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living. 80% of seminary and Bible school graduates leave the ministry within the first 5 years. 70% of pastors constantly fight depression. Only 1 out of 10 pastors retire as a pastor.

I'm not sharing these statistics to whine, lament, or complain about how tough it is to be a pastor. I know God has called me to be a pastor and I can't imagine doing anything else with my life except to live in His calling. That said, it's still important to me and the Oregon Conference to proactively care for the pastors to ensure personal, spiritual, and emotional health so we can lead and shepherd in a way that honors God and helps you.

My Plan

Starting Monday, July 22, I will be gone for an 8-week sabbatical (6 weeks of sabbatical with 2 weeks of vacation added). Your faithful church elders will take care of almost everything that needs to be addressed during that time. Pastor Paul will be available for any emergencies that may arise during these 8 weeks. The preaching



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schedule is planned out and you will hear wonderful messages from local leaders and guest speakers.

My sabbatical plan is fairly flexible. There will be some intentional spiritual retreat time which will include camping and some time at the coast. Much of the time will be spent in deep study, reading, writing, illustration and enjoying time with Emily, Judah, Moriah, Taleah, and Noah. We will be finding local recreation and sight-seeing to enjoy.

How You Can Pray

Emily and I would greatly appreciate your prayers during that time. Here are a few ways that you can pray:

1. Pray that my time with God will be refreshing and invigorating: My prayer is that I would come back from these 8 weeks spiritually rejuvenated and ready to continue in the pastoral role God has called me. Pray that my time with Jesus will give me new insight and perspective, strengthening me in my call and helping me to love Him more deeply and become a better leader in all aspects of life and ministry.
2. Pray that my family can rest and create some great memories together: I pray that not only I benefit from my sabbatical time, but my family benefits as well. Pray that we make the best use of our time together, that the normal stressors of life can be put on hold, and that our time together is enjoyable, life-giving, and full of lasting memories.
3. Pray that the Gladstone Church leadership leads well in my absence. I am confident that our leadership team will do a fantastic job. Your elders take their responsibilities seriously in the church. Your board is full of committed, godly people who have the best interests of the church at heart. I am confident in their leadership as well. Pray that God will grant them His wisdom and courage to lead well, and lead strong.

Finally, I thank you for your support and encouragement. Many people have affirmed my taking a Sabbatical. I want you to know that I take joy in being your pastor. It is a huge privilege. I can't wait to see what God has in store for us going forward!

God bless,

Pastor Nate Hellman



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