



Sabbatical FAQ's:

Our Pastor, Nate will be on sabbatical this summer. What is a sabbatical?

A sabbatical is an extended time away from work for rest and renewal. Sabbaticals are common in religious and educational institutions. Clergy use this time away from the demands of daily ministry to engage in a deeper form of sabbath, offering them a carefully considered respite that may include travel, study, rest, prayer, time to reconnect with God, themselves, and their family.

How long will Nate be gone?

Nate will be on sabbatical from Monday, May 1 through Sunday, July 23. Nate's first day back at work will be Monday, July 24.

Why is he going now?

Clergy sabbaticals are typically taken every 4-7 years. This August Nate will celebrate 7 years of service to Hope Community. This will be his first sabbatical – not only in the time he has served Hope but ever in his 23 years of ministry. The Elders of Hope have committed to offering sabbatical to all staff commensurate with years of service and level of employment. We believe sabbatical is an important part of caring for and nurturing the spiritual life of all the staff that serve Hope.

What will Nate be doing on sabbatical ?

In order for Nate to find rest and a sense of renewal, he has thoughtfully crafted a plan that will include travel (sometimes by himself and sometimes with family or friends), rest, play and guidance. Originally the Stratmans planned to be in Israel in May however that trip will be taken at another time due to Kim's back health. Nate intends for May to be pretty laid back and restful with some fishing trips, meeting with a spiritual director, gardening and cooking. In June, Nate and his brother will go to Scotland for 10 days and in July the Stratman family will go to Colorado together.

How does the sabbatical benefit Hope Community?

Sabbaticals are not just for pastors, they are a healthy opportunity for churches as well. From the beginning Hope has focused on discipleship and equipping lay leaders. This decentralized structure allows for many in the church to practice using their gifts and talents and allows the church to continue to grow and learn from many in leadership.

Specifically during the sabbatical, there will be over 20 leaders within the church who will participate in a leadership cohort led by Dr. Jim Singleton (Nate's dear friend and mentor).

They will read and reflect on the book, "Resilient Faith" by Gerald Sittser which looks at the patterns of the early church and how we can apply those to today.

We also have 12 different people preaching each of the Sundays Nate is away. Most of these folks are part of Hope Community and many have never preached before but each will be sharing their thoughts on the summer series, "What am I learning from Jesus?" We ask that you join with the congregation in supporting these folks by praying for them as they prepare and showing up throughout the summer to learn from the wonderful variety of voices we have at Hope Community.

How is the sabbatical funded?

Hope Community was fortunate to be one of 197 congregations across the country to receive the very competitive and sought after Clergy Renewal Grant from the Lilly Endowment. This is a link to the press release from that organization describing more about their mission:

<https://www.cts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-CRP-Press-Release.pdf>

The grant we received includes \$35,000 to cover all of the expenses for Nate (and his family) for the entire sabbatical period. It also includes over \$10,000 to support training and other spiritual growth activities that our congregation will be involved in while Nate is away. The congregation will continue to pay Nate's salary and benefits while he is on sabbatical, as required by our letter of agreement with the Lilly Endowment.

Who will cover Nate's work while he is away?

Pastoral Care: Elder Sherry Artemenko + Deacon Linda Whited + Deacons

*email option care@hopeforwilmington.com to be connected to a Deacon

Sunday Leadership: Elder Connor Ciment + Staff Blake Mueses

Staff support: Elder Steve Risley

Leadership Cohort with Jim Singleton: Elder Kathy Risley

Elders: Elder Dickson McLean

Pastoral support/emergencies/funerals: Rob Hamilton robhamilton25@gmail.com

(Please reference the church directory for contact information)

Does this mean Nate is getting ready to leave Hope Community?

No! In fact, because the sabbatical is intended for the benefit of the clergy person and the congregation, Nate's letter of agreement stipulates that he *cannot* leave Hope for at least a year and a half after returning from sabbatical. He is not planning to go anywhere anytime soon!

Can we be in touch with Nate while he is away?

As stipulated by the Lilly grant and as is customary for clergy sabbaticals, in order to truly decompress and reflect on his spiritual life away from the beloved congregation, Nate will be completely out of touch by phone, text, email, and social media during his three months away. In cases of extreme emergency and at the Elder's discretion, they will be able to get in touch with him. However the Lilly Endowment stipulates that the congregation and staff respect the sabbatical experience by allowing Nate to be fully disconnected from any church related work, news or other information.

As he is able, Nate is allowed to send occasional photos and updates from his sabbatical to Blake to include in the newsletter but he is not required to do so. Nate looks forward to sharing more fully about his time away and all that he has learned upon his return. In turn we know he will also be eager to hear about what we as a congregation have learned during our sabbatical time together. We ask you to save the date for a special worship service and potluck to **celebrate Nate's return on Sunday, July 30.**

Can I talk to Nate if I see him around town?

Great question! Of course, if you see Nate...say hello! It would be weird if you didn't.

We just ask that you respect the parameters set by the Lilly grant and avoid discussion regarding any church business.

Can we be in touch with Kim and the girls?

Kim and the girls will continue to show up for worship throughout the summer when they are in town. Feel free to reach out as you normally would.

How can I help during the sabbatical?

We have worked hard to delegate responsibilities fairly between staff/Elders during the sabbatical. The church has many opportunities for you to connect and serve. We are always looking for additional volunteers to support various things at Hope on Sundays and throughout the week (greeting, set up/breakdown, children's ministry, tech, etc) You can reach out to Blake or Ali Jo anytime to find out more about how to get connected or get set up volunteering.

Have more questions about sabbatical?

Kathy Risley (kathy@risleypadula.com)

What should I do if there is an emergency in my family where I would normally call my pastor (death, major illness, etc.)

Our deacons and elders plan to support our church pastorally through prayer and any assistance within our ability. Our leadership will also be able to connect families with counselors and another pastor who could officiate a funeral if needed.