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SABBATICAL 2026

GOD'S NEXT?

SABBATICAL RENEWAL TEAM

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

We often have ideas about what we are doing next weekend, or next summer, or what happens next after we retire. But what does God have planned next for us? *"For I know the plans I have for you,"* declares the Lord, *"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"* (Jeremiah 29:11). This Spring and Summer, Sabbatical 2026 is going to be all about opening ourselves up for what God has next for us!

The Sabbatical Renewal Team, comprised of Sue Brockman, James Burkey, Ron Koestler, Dan Mestelle, Nathalie Schmidt, Lisa Smithmeyer, Jenny Suydam, Lori Trolinger, and John Walker, are excited to be serving the congregation in developing this exciting new exploration of God's dreams for his people.

OUR MISSION

TO BE THE LOVING COMMUNITY
OF JESUS CHRIST THAT WILL

WIN

NEW FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST TO
SAVING FAITH

GROW

ALL FOLLOWERS TO DEEPER FAITH

GO

INTO THE WORLD AND
DEMONSTRATE FAITH

If you don't know what a Pastoral Sabbatical is and why FPC has always felt it's an important part of the care of our Pastor, please read the following pages to learn more about what it is and why the Bible supports this time of rest and renewal. This will be Pastor John's fourth Sabbatical over the nearly 30 years of his ministry service here at FPC. Each Sabbatical has been a time of renewal for Pastor John and a time of exploration and fellowship for our congregation.

SABBATICAL BEGINS IN APRIL

WHAT IS A SABBATICAL

Let's start with a working definition. A Ministry Sabbatical is a planned period of time that allows a leader the opportunity to step away from their usual ministry responsibilities for a specific purpose. This definition has three main parts:

First, a sabbatical is a planned period of time. A sabbatical is not a leave of absence. Nor is a sabbatical an extended vacation. Sabbaticals are a carefully planned event that is designed to benefit both the ministry of the pastor and the church as a whole. This planning is usually done well in advance and should involve the pastor, the church leadership team, and the church body. We will talk about how to create an effective planning process for sabbaticals in a future article.

Second, A sabbatical allows a pastor an opportunity to step away from usual ministry responsibilities. A pastor cannot be "on-call" during a sabbatical. Nor should they be preaching, teaching, counseling, or doing anything that is a regular part of their ministry. Sabbaticals are unique in that they give pastors space and opportunity to disconnect from their usual role and function. A sabbatical is an intention disconnect from the regular demands, decision making, and responsibilities of normal ministry life.

Third, a sabbatical should have a specific purpose. This purpose usually falls into one of three categories: rest and recovery, addressing a specific issue, or advanced study.

Rest and Recovery Sabbaticals are appropriate when a pastor has served for an extended period of time in a specific role. This type of sabbatical allows the leader the opportunity to unplug from ministry, recharge, recalibrate, and return to their ministry assignment at their best. Rest and recovery sabbaticals are the most common (and needed) type of sabbatical for ministry leaders.

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR A SABBATICAL?

There is strong Biblical support for Sabbaticals. Critics contend there is no specific command from Scripture regarding the practice. However, the Bible contains a wealth of evidence that indicates such a practice is both healthy, wise, and at times, necessary. The length of this article will not permit a comprehensive examination. However, three areas of Scripture are worth serious consideration: 1) The Example of Jesus 2) The way God uses time in the lives of leaders, and 3) the practice of Sabbath.

The Example of Jesus

Mark 6:31 *And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.”*

Jesus commanded his disciples to physically separate themselves from the busy demands of ministry. His call to “a desolate place” gave his followers the margin needed to rest and be replenished. This command also emphasizes another overlooked aspect of our Lord’s ministry: Jesus was not always available.

Luke 5:15-16 *Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.* Jesus retreated frequently as ministry demands increased. Retreating to a desolate place separated him from the requests, demands, and questions involved a growing ministry.

Note that Jesus did not merely retreat to an unoccupied room; he went to unoccupied places. The practice of Jesus stands in glaring contrast to many leaders who fall into unhealthy patterns when ministry demands increase. Jesus considered time away from the demands of ministry essential.

The Way God Uses Time in the Lives of Leaders

Effective leadership is often preceded by large periods of time outside of regular ministry. Scripture indicates God used significant periods of time to prepare the hearts of key leaders. Moses spent forty years in the desert (**See Exodus 2:11-7:7**) before returning to Egypt and leading God’s people.

David spent significant time in the wilderness caring for and protecting sheep. His time as a shepherd shaped how he looked at life and his relationship with God (**see Psalm 23**). After conversion, Paul retreated to Arabia for years to study the Scripture (**see Gal 1:17-18**). Paul retreated for this season time before he would enter his most effective work. We live in an age where leadership is usually developed through online courses, digital media, and internships. The idea that leadership preparation requires extensive periods of time outside of the typical ministry role is unpopular. Nevertheless, God often calls leaders into extended periods of separation and isolation prior to their greatest ministry assignments. God uses periods of time to leave an unmistakable mark on the lives of leaders.

The Practice of Sabbath

Genesis 2:2-3 *And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*

Mark 2:27 *And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*

From the beginning, God planned for humans to be intention about rest and the care of their spiritual lives. The importance of this rest is clearly communicated through the various commands and instructions on the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath was an intentional act of rest, fellowship, and the pursuit of a deepening commitment to God. . The massive emphasis Scripture places on the Sabbath should not be missed by modern believers. This ancient practice should inform our own views on the importance of rest and its connection with deepening our relationship with God.

Ministry Sabbatical: A Pastor’s Guide. Dace Clifton. dailypastor.com. November 17, 2020

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION HOUR



***NOT PICTURED - ZONE and SR HIGH**

-BIBLE ZONE is for all children ages 3 years to 3rd grade

11-11:30am in the East Room

-Middle School is for all children in grades 4th-8th

11-11:45am on the 2nd floor

-Senior High is for kids in grades 9th - 12th

11-12pm in the Senior High Room

-The Young Adult Class is meeting in Pastor John's Office from 11-12pm

-The Adult Class is meeting in the Church Library from 11-12pm



DINNER WITH FREDDY

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14th

SCOTT HALL

5:45 pm - DINNER

7:00 pm - COMMITTEES

MAIN COURSE PROVIDED

PLEASE BRING A DISH TO SHARE

Pastor Freddy Smola has been a mission partner with FPC for 20 years. He leads a growing church-building network in the Czech Republic, planting new faith communities in this former communist-controlled country. Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union the communist leaders worked to stamp out Christianity and make Czech an atheist nation. God is blessing the work of the church network that Freddy leads called Majak (english: Lighthouse) which we support with our mission giving. This October Freddy and 6 young pastors from Czech will be visiting US churches to see and learn different models of ministry. After an afternoon talking with Pastor John, Freddy, and these young pastors will join FPC for a potluck dinner in Scott Hall at 5:45 pm and then they will join us for our committee night meetings. Please mark your calendar to come welcome these men. We will enjoy listening to how God is using them to lead growing numbers of spiritually hungry people in their nation to faith in Jesus Christ. Let mission elder, Cheryl Stohr, know of any questions or to offer any help for the mealtime.

OTTAWA'S LABOR OF LOVE IS

OCTOBER 4th

CAPTAIN - DIANE CHAPMAN

815-228-0493

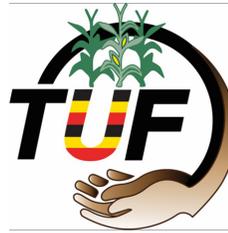


Good news - a work site has been chosen for the Labor of Love project on Saturday, October 4th by First Presbyterian! The location is easy to find right here in Ottawa. The couple is elderly and needs help with cleaning the garden area, painting the front porch metal railing, adding weather stripping and installing a secure support to the back porch deck for assistance in using the step. Also standard minor needs are always included such as caulking doors and windows, sealing & insulating gaps, and checking smoke detectors. All levels of experience or none are needed for this home. Ages that can help are from 14 years old and up. Please contact Diane Chapman or sign on the list at church entry area. A free breakfast is at 7:00 am at Marquette Grade School cafeteria as well as lunch at noon.



WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO LISA MESTELLE AND BETSY FEAGANS FOR THE WONDERFUL, NEW CHAIRS IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY! NOT ONLY ARE THEY BEAUTIFUL, THEY ARE SO MUCH MORE FUNCTIONAL THAN THE ONES THAT WERE IN THERE. THANK YOU!

TRANSFORMING UGANDAN FARMERS ANNOUNCEMENT



DEDICATION SUNDAY

Our STEWARDSHIP DEDICATION SUNDAY will take place during worship on October 12th, when we turn in our commitment cards for 2026. Stewardship is about the three Ts - Time, Talent, and Treasure. We invite you to use the commitment cards to make a faith-based pledge to include the portion of your treasure that you will return to God.

Also remember to consider how you will share your time and talents. Without sharing our time and talents, God's work here on earth will not be completed. Please remember the most important step of

stewardship is to pray about the commitments you are going to make.

Once you have prayerfully considered what you are able to give, we invite you to turn in your commitment cards on Dedication Sunday. Each member will be invited to drop their card in the offering plate at the front of the church. Extra cards can be found in each of the pews.

If you are unable to be in worship on October 12th, you can turn your cards in an envelope marked "Stewardship" and place it in our treasurer's box in the office.



Operation Christmas Child

NOVEMBER 2, 2025



Our packing party is just a little over a month away. The bins are in the library and will be filling up throughout the month of October. We are focusing on buying things for the 2-4 year old age bracket. The list of approved items to pack is on the table outside of the church office and also listed here. Help us fill up our bins!

Mark the correct age category:

2-4 Years Old
 5-9 Years Old
 10-14 Years Old

GIRL

GIRL 2-4	GIRL 5-9	GIRL 10-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pencils Colouring book Exercise book Safety scissors Watercolour set Stuffed animal Doll Blanket Dress Hat Scarf Mittens T-shirts and tops Pants Underwear Socks Shoes Toothbrush Facewasher Soap Comb or brush Balls Cars, trucks, boats Toys that light up, squeak or make a noise Tote bag/purse Blocks Finger puppets Board or cloth books Sunglasses Plastic tools A note from you! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pens, pencils and sharpener Exercise book Eraser Scissors Colouring book Dolls Doll bed Stuffed animal Dress ups – crowns, fairy wands, etc. Toy jewellery Ribbon wands Balls with pump if necessary Lego Puzzles Hand puppets Plastic toys Yoyo Dress Pants Hat T-shirts and tops Underwear Pants Shoes Soap Underwear Facewasher Toothbrush Comb or brush Hair ribbons, elastics, etc. Sunglasses Illustrated books Bag A note from you! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pens, pencils, coloured pencils, eraser and sharpener Exercise books Scissors Books Ruler Chalkboard and chalk Backpack Stuffed animal Skipping rope Doll Balls with a pump if necessary Puzzles Yoyo Musical instruments Dress Skirt Hat T-shirts and tops Socks Shoes Underwear Pants Soap Facewasher Toothbrush Comb or brush Hair ribbons, elastics, etc. Sunglasses Kaleidoscope Bag Sewing kit A note from you!

Mark the correct age category:

2-4 Years Old
 5-9 Years Old
 10-14 Years Old

BOY

BOY 2-4	BOY 5-9	BOY 10-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pencils Colouring book Exercise book Safety scissors Stuffed animal Blanket Hat Scarf Mittens T-shirts and shirts Pants Underwear Socks Shoes Toothbrush Facewasher Soap Comb or brush Balls Cars, trucks, boats Toys that light up, squeak or make a noise Blocks Finger puppets Board or cloth books Sunglasses Plastic tools Plastic dinosaurs Duplo A note from you! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pens, pencils and sharpener Coloured pencils Erasers Pencil case Exercise books Scissors Ruler Stickers Chalkboard and chalk Backpack Stuffed animal Balls (tennis balls, bouncy balls, hacky sack, football, soccer ball, beach ball, etc.) with a pump if necessary Plastic dinosaur, animal or action figure (no war-related toys) Lego Cars or trucks Puzzles Frisbee Musical instrument Yoyo Soap Facewasher Toothbrush Comb or brush Sunglasses Hat Underwear Shoes T-shirts and shirts Pants Socks Scarf A note from you! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pens, pencils and sharpener Coloured pencils Erasers Pencil case Exercise books Scissors Ruler Stickers Chalkboard and chalk Backpack Stuffed animal Balls (tennis balls, bouncy balls, hacky sack, football, soccer ball, beach ball, etc.) with a pump if necessary Books Kaleidoscope Cars or trucks Puzzles Frisbee Musical instrument Yoyo Soap Facewasher Toothbrush Comb or brush Sunglasses Hat Underwear Shoes T-shirts and shirts Pants Socks Scarf A note from you!



OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL

Our church is filled with the giggles of preschoolers again! Opportunity School has begun its 57th year in our church building. What an amazing mission it continues to be! This year, the school has grown by another full classroom, now offering THREE 3-year old classrooms, as well as THREE 3/4s combined classrooms, and FIVE Explorer classrooms. The staff and school board is full of FPC members and community members alike who show their dedication and compassion for the children in their care every day. This program has provided a safe learning environment for nearly 6 decades. Imagine all of the thousands of children that have passed through our doors.



Let us lift them up in prayer this school year. From students and their families, to the teachers, directors, and board members, each thrives when our *LOVING COMMUNITY* supports and encourages this important mission. It only takes looking at these precious photos of the student body to realize what a special place FPC is for them.

FELLOWSHIP AND OUTREACH ANNOUNCEMENTS



THANK
YOU!
♥

Good day to everyone.
Thank you, church family, for all the prayers and well wishes for a speedy recovery from pneumonia. I am feeling better now and prayers really do help.
Thanks again!

Love, Idalia

We invite you to be a part of refreshing the PRAYER LIFE of our congregation! We know that the foundation of prayer is so important for anything we do. There is an opportunity each week to be a part of this important and special work of the church; WEDNESDAY mornings from 9-10am (NOTE: from January through March we meet by ZOOM). Please come join us in the church library or by ZOOM. You can ask Pastor John for the link. Come and see what great work God is waiting to do, as we thank, seek, and ask Him in a weekly season of prayer together.

Heavenly Father, Thank you that we can come before you, our loving, powerful Father, and ask for your help and guidance. Thank you for how you have blessed FPC these past 150+ years. Will you please continue to pour out your blessings upon us? We ask for your protection and provision, for our church and leaders, as we enter this time of wanting to grow closer to you and be your disciples. Please help our hearts to be open to what you want to teach us. Help us to see your love for us and others all around us. Show us where we can be your hands and feet. Give us courage to speak out in love and kindness, in your name, where we see need. Please heal those who are sick; comfort those whose hearts are hurting; provide for those in need; bless and protect our families; heal our nation and world. Jesus, thank you for your amazing gift of complete forgiveness, because of your obedience and sacrifice on the cross, on our behalf. Please help us to live with new awareness of the freedom we have been given as your deeply loved sons and daughters. Help us to grasp and understand the rich PRIZE you have for us, and those all around us. Holy Spirit, please reveal yourself to us. Guide, lead, and protect us.
In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

**Want more help with HOW to pray and for WHAT?
See the daily calendar for PRAYER on the next page.**

<p>1 Pray for our Restoration and Revival Psalm 80:19</p>	<p>2 Pastor John and his family Galatians 6:9</p>	<p>3 FPC Staff 1 Corinthians 16:4</p>	<p>4 Our Hurting World John 3:16</p>	<p>5 Public Schools and Opportunity School Proverbs 22:6</p>	<p>6 Shut-ins James 1:27</p>
<p>7 Community Meals Matthew 25:37-40</p>	<p>8 Worship Psalm 86:9-10</p>	<p>9 Hearts of Hurting People Psalm 34:18</p>	<p>10 Session Isaiah 41:10</p>	<p>11 PADS Shelter and Homeless Matthew 25:35-40</p>	<p>12 Protection of the Congregation Ephesians 6:10-18</p>
<p>13 Invite and Welcome the Holy Spirit Titus 3:4-7</p>	<p>14 Choir and Music Team Psalm 92:1</p>	<p>15 Youth Group Ministry Proverbs 22:6</p>	<p>16 Our Children Matthew 19:14</p>	<p>17 Pray for our Missionaries <small>strength and protection</small> Acts 1:8</p>	<p>18 Food Pantry Luke 21:18-19</p>
<p>19 Health of the Congregation James 5:14</p>	<p>20 Small Groups and Missional Communities Hebrews 10:25</p>	<p>21 Nation, State, and Government 1 Timothy 2:1-4</p>	<p>22 Bible ZONE and all Sunday School Programs Matthew 19:14</p>	<p>23 Our Seniors Psalm 90:14</p>	<p>24 Churches of Ottawa Hebrews 10:24-25</p>
<p>25 Ottawa Mayor and City Counsel 1 Timothy 2:1-4</p>	<p>26 Leaders of Ministries Hebrews 13:17-18</p>	<p>27 Ottawa Community Jeremiah 29:7</p>	<p>28 Pray for those who are far from God Luke 10:2</p>	<p>29 Servant's Heart Matthew 25:37-40</p>	<p>30 Under His Wings Ministry Jeremiah 29:7</p>

PLEASE PRAY EACH DAY WITH US
FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND CHURCH



OCTOBER

Larry Schmitt	2
Hannah Walker	2
Caleb Burkey	6
Eddie Martin IV	9
Rob Angus	14
Michael Stohr	16
Joe Schmitt	20
Dan Mestelle	22
Jon Duewer	27
Laura Worley	28
Susan Paul	31

NOVEMBER

Brad Armstrong	1
Julie Angus	1
Carol Zimmerman	6
Jean Zeilmann	6
Brian Smithmeyer	6
Chris Keely	8
Nolan Zarwell	12
Griffin Clemens	15
Laura Zarwell	15
Susanne Gibbs	15
Kevin Arjes	16
Brad Clemens	17
Gayle Schmitt	17
Pat Gerding	18
Peg Kramer	19
Ruth Ann Stephen	20
Kyle Zarwell	22
Elizabeth Kennedy	26
Ron Koestler	28
Lori Trolinger	30
Nolan Sohn	30

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee has begun its work to nominate a new 3-year class of elders and a trustee to serve on FPC’s Session, the body of people chosen to lead our congregation. The Nominating Committee’s work is vitally important to the life and future of our *Loving Community of Jesus Christ*, and your help is also very important! Please help in two simple ways:

First and foremost... **PRAY**. Pray for the work of this 5-member committee as they seek God’s guidance to select this next class of officers to lead your church.

Second **NOMINATE** any person you believe would serve well to lead as a maturing disciple of Jesus Christ, someone who is an FPC member and is active in our community life. You may even choose to nominate yourself!

Please share your encouragement and any nominations with the committee members: Mike Farrell (chairman), Julie Angus, Diane Farrell, Gayle Schmitt, and Cheryl Stohr.

FLASHBACK CORNER

Who Do You See?



2011

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

MOBILE FOOD PANTRY

The Community Food Basket, that coordinates the Mobile Food Pantry each month, has asked all area churches if they can contribute to the Thanksgiving boxes they will be handing out on November 22nd. They distributed 500 boxes last year and ran out! They are hoping to pack 700 this year.

FPC has taken the challenge and will be collecting 700 boxes of stuffing (6oz boxes) throughout the month of October. The big collection can is sitting under the choir loft.

Let's do our part to reach this important goal! The Mission Committee will be looking for volunteers to help that morning.

THANKSGIVING CHURCHES CHALLENGE



WHAT WE NEED?

700 6 OZ. BOXES OF STUFFING MIX, ANY BRAND OR FLAVOR

DUE BY: SUNDAY, 11/2/2025

Thank you for helping the Community Food Basket to provide 700 Thanksgiving meals to those in need!



FPC STAFF and ELDERS

John Walker
PASTOR

David Farrell
ADMINISTRATION

Lisa Smithmeyer
DISCIPLESHIP

Lori Trolinger
CHURCH SECRETARY

Pete Trolinger
ADMINISTRATION

Amanda Brockman
FELLOWSHIP

Kerry Gerding
CLERK of SESSION

Brian Huebner
TRUSTEE

Peg Kramer
FELLOWSHIP

Joy Huebner
TREASURER

Mike Farrell
TRUSTEE

Allen Gibbs
WORSHIP

Lloyd Chapman
MUSIC DIRECTOR

Dan Mestelle
TRUSTEE

Ron Koestler
WORSHIP

Diane Chapman
ORGANIST

Cheryl Stohr
MISSION



Thank you, Carol, for the beautiful Fall pulpit flowers!



October 2025



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p>COLLECTING STUFFING BOXES THROUGHOUT THE MONTH FOR THE MOBILE FOOD PANTRY</p>			Prayer Meeting 9am by ZOOM Choir Practice 7:00pm			LABOR OF LOVE OTTAWA
Communion 9:30am			Prayer Meeting 9am by ZOOM Choir Practice 7:00pm			
Stewardship Campaign Ends 9:30am		DINNER WITH FREDDY 5:45 pm Committee Meetings 7pm	Prayer Meeting 9am by ZOOM Choir Practice 7:00pm			
SOUL SHINE in Worship Community Meal 12-1pm		Session 7pm	Prayer Meeting 9am by ZOOM Choir Practice 7:00pm			
			Prayer Meeting 9am by ZOOM Choir Practice 7:00pm		COLLECTIONS FOR OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD AND THE MOBILE FOOD PANTRY ENDS	
<p>SATURDAYGIFT.COM</p>			Choir Practice 7:00pm			