



December 30, 2022

Dear Church Family,

I am writing to inform our Covenant church family of my upcoming eight-week Sabbatical which Olivia and I plan to take in 2023. I will be gone from Vermont from Tuesday February 14th through Friday April 14th.

During that time, I have been approved by the Committee on Ministerial Care of the OPC to take a six-week stay in Wildwood, New Jersey. The Boardwalk Chapel there has housing which Olivia and I look forward to using for rest and study. The Committee is providing funds for this housing as well as some gas money. The other two weeks of the Sabbatical will be used attending our eldest son's wedding in North Carolina and seeing family in Virginia.

Olivia and I are so thankful to have this time away for reflection, prayer and rest. We treasure you as our church family, and we know that it will be a benefit for you as well as for us to have this time in order to be spiritually refreshed and reinvigorated to serve you as our congregation in the future.

I am also so thankful for the capable intern we have right now who will bring the Word for most of the Sundays we are away. Sam is gifted and studious in the Word, and it is our confident prayer that the Lord will bless Covenant richly through his ministry. During those eight weeks, we will not hold the 4:30 service; Sam will preach in the morning and the elders will oversee worship, the Lord's table and the monthly prayer meeting.

I close with some thoughts that underline the importance of times of rest for all of us. Here are the verses from Mark's Gospel to ponder:

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. (Mark 6:45-48)

Here Jesus is showing His Lordship by *calming tumultuous situations*. The crowds' excitement after being miraculously fed have made them feverish at the prospect of seizing Christ and making him king against the Romans (John 6:15). But Christ calms the crowds and sends them away.

In the same way, Christ is keenly aware of the danger for the Twelve of getting involved with the crowds' political view of the Messianic Kingdom. So he immediately puts them in boats to go over to the other side of the lake. His desire is for his disciples to be able to rest and to concentrate on his teaching, instead of on the enthusiasm of the masses.

So Christ teaches us that rest takes effort to plan and to implement. Our Savior was constantly on the look-out for his weary disciples, seeking times of respite for them, as many other examples in the Gospels attest.

I am thankful that the elders, with a similar Christ-like spirit, are looking out for my welfare as their brother and fellow-elder. Since being ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1989, this will be my first opportunity for an extended time of rest and study, and I am anticipating a good harvest from the change in schedule.

I conclude this letter with the prayer that the Lord will give each family in our church seasons of refreshment and rest in the New Year.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have about our time away.

In Christ, Pastor Carl