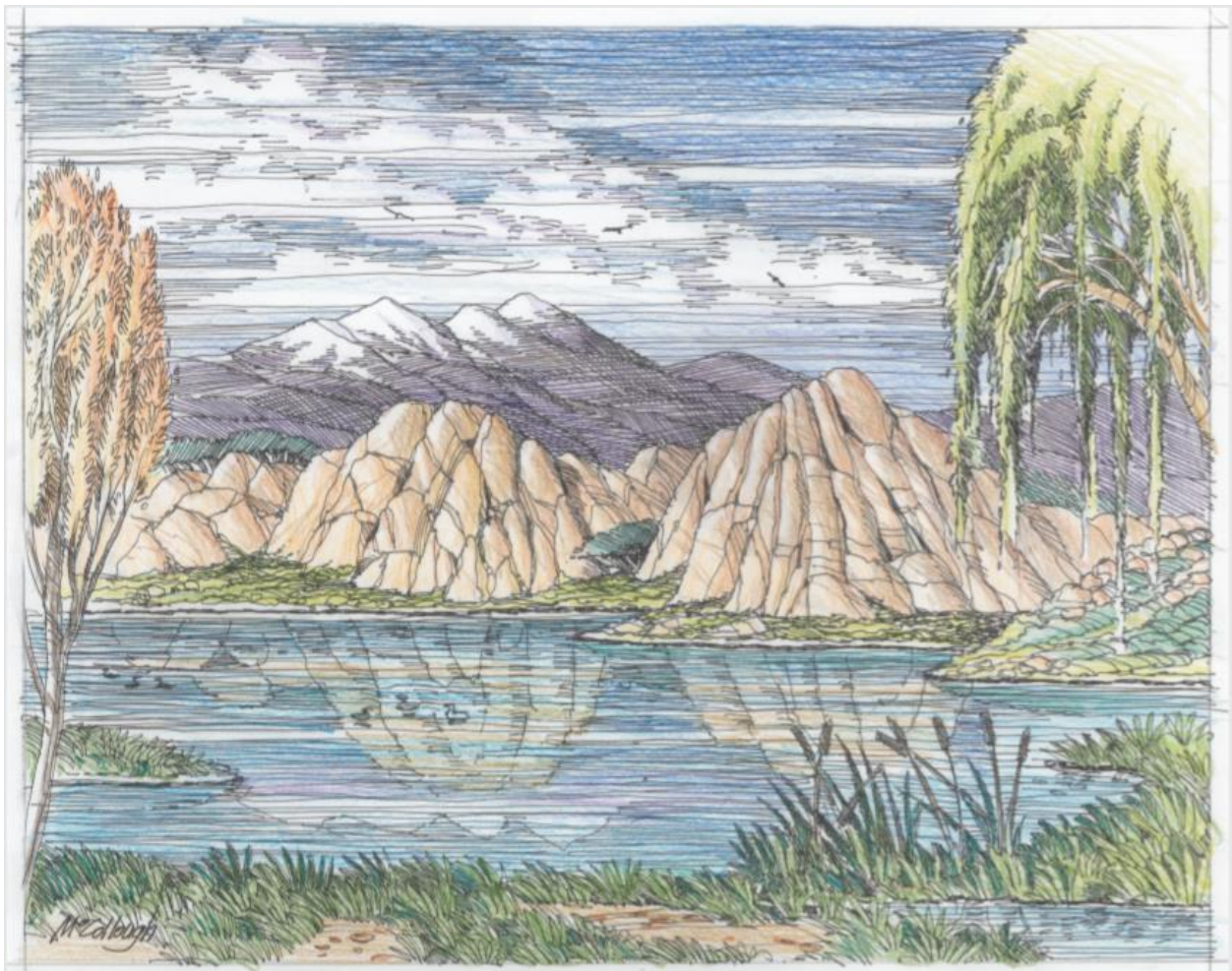


First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

2020 SABBATICAL

A TIME TO SLOW DOWN FOR REFLECTION



The cover art was masterfully created by Dennis McCollough based on his interpretation of the focus for Pastor Jay and the congregation's sabbatical.

When viewed by a member of the congregation, the drawing brought forth a spiritual experience:

The water and reflection give an opportunity for me to reflect on my relationship with God. It also brought forth the question of how thirsty am I for his word and my relationship with him.

The dells reminded me that he alone is my rock and salvation and his strength is always available to me.

The green of the grass and trees represent growth and reminded me of my need for and interest in my personal spiritual growth.

The blue of the sky and water represent peace – true peace – his peace – that is always mine.

Prayerfully you will experience your own thoughts and feelings when viewing this artwork.

This brochure has been prepared by the Sabbatical Planning Committee for congregants of First Congregational Church to share information about Pastor Jay's sabbatical experience in the year 2020 and what our role will be during his absence.

Sabbatical Planning Committee

Dennis McCollough Harry Strong
Staci Robbins Ralph Wagner

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a sabbatical?

The word sabbatical has its roots in the biblical concept of Sabbath (“to rest” or “to cease”). Sabbath keeping is setting aside time that God consecrates and make holy.

Sabbatical leave is a time for Pastor Jay to shift gears in order to rest, disengage, study, reflect, and travel in order to return to minister among us refreshed and renewed in body, mind, and spirit. It is not a time for routine work, job search, retirement planning, or terminal leave.

Pastor Jay’s letter of agreement (or contract if you will) with First Congregational Church specifies he will take a 3-month sabbatical after serving 5 years with First Congregational Church. The year 2020 will be Pastor Jay’s 5th year with us.

Sabbatical is more than a vacation from meetings, budgets, sermons, and people in need. It is a time for Pastor Jay to receive spiritual nourishment and a change in perspective, to deepen his relationship with God, himself, and his family – a season of spiritual growth. This time will also be a season of growth for the entire congregation.

Do other clergy go on sabbatical?

Yes, it is quite common across several denominations for pastors to take sabbaticals as stated in their covenants/contracts.

How long will Pastor Jay be gone?

Pastor Jay will be gone for 3 months – June, July and August. Pastor Jay will leave on the Monday, June 1, 2020 and return to the church on Tuesday, September 1, 2020. His first Sunday back will be September 6, 2020.

What will Pastor Jay be doing on his sabbatical?

As Pastor Jay shared with us in the January 17, 2020 Parish Caller:

I am grateful for the opportunity to take a sabbatical during the months of June, July, and August of this year. A sabbatical committee has begun planning for the tasks of preaching

and pastoral care during these months. We are blessed with retired clergy and lay leaders who can help us through this time.

My sabbatical plan includes:

A trip to Michigan with my son to visit family.

A trip with my wife to New England and New York.

A personal spiritual retreat for renewal and reflection.

A chance to visit different church worship services each week for gathering ideas.

A time for worship and church-year planning for the next year.

A time of rest and recreation to revive creativity.

I think of the sabbatical as a chance to step off the treadmill – what I call a chance to step back from the relentless return of Sunday. My continual focus is on the next Sunday's sermon and worship service. I lack time to look at things from a larger perspective.

Who will cover Pastor Jay's responsibilities during his absence?

The co-moderator(s) and sabbatical committee have worked with retired clergy members and guest clergy to provide worship services and pastoral care. The co-moderators, assisted by members of cabinet, will bear primary administrative authority.

Who will I call to plan a special service?

The church office will be open during its usual hours, staffed by the office administrator and other volunteers. They and the duty pastor(s) will arrange for weddings, funerals, baptisms, and other special services.

Who will conduct the worship?

As mentioned above, there is a roster of worship and pastoral care pastors identified to serve while Pastor Jay is away. They will be supported by volunteer worship readers and communion hosts as needed.

Who should I contact for special prayer requests?

You may contact the office to have names placed on the prayer list or you may contact the Called to Care Ministry chair, Harry Strong.

Who do I call if I have a family or personal crisis?

For pastoral concerns, contact Harry Strong, Called to Care Ministry chair. He will also have a copy of the Pastoral Care Roster to help you contact the duty Pastor. The Pastoral Care minister and Called to Care team will share responsibilities to provide pastoral counseling and visit those who are homebound or in the hospital.

Will the church budget need to be increased to cover the Honorarium expenses during Pastor Jay's absence?

The budget committee and Cabinet approved \$2,400 in the 2020 budget to cover Pastor Jay's sabbatical and vacation.

Who will administer the church in Pastor Jay's absence?

The co-moderators, Ralph Wagner and Barbara McCollough, aided by members of cabinet, will supervise the staff, facilitate communications, and oversee the use of church facilities.

What if a question/concern arises while Pastor Jay is gone?

The Sabbatical planning committee will serve as a "clearinghouse" for questions and concerns. As needed, the church cabinet will exercise authority to resolve all issues concerning parish life.

Will the church just be in a "holding pattern" while Pastor Jay is away?

All of our ministries will continue to flourish while Pastor Jay is away. Also, it is important to remember that sabbatical is a two-way process: while Pastor Jay is on his journey of renewal, refreshment and reflection, we will embark on a journey as well – to reflect on our prior work, renew ourselves and to discern God's will for us. As Pastor Jay shared in his article:

My hope and prayer are that this will allow all of us to get out of some ruts and go down some new paths. One of our Cabinet members likened it to driving down the interstate at high speed and missing most of what could be seen, but by taking an exit and slowing down, new landscapes come into focus. May the Spirit make it happen!

Will Pastor Jay be in contact with First Congregational Church during his sabbatical?

An important part of a sabbatical is to make a **complete** break from things. The only people who will be in direct contact with Pastor Jay while he is away will be his family. In the unlikely event that some extraordinary news absolutely needs to be communicated to Pastor Jay, one of the co-moderators will make contact.

Will Pastor Jay's family go with him?

As noted in Pastor Jay's article, he will take a couple of trips with family. Unfortunately, due to work commitments, Cherie will remain home for much of the sabbatical time.

How will we get "reacquainted" with Pastor Jay when he returns?

We will celebrate Pastor Jay's return on September 6th during fellowship after service. This will allow time for Pastor Jay to share his experiences with the congregation. Pastor Jay will also share his sabbatical experiences with us through articles in the Parish Caller.

How can I learn more about the sabbatical?

Talk with any member of the sabbatical planning committee (listed at the beginning of this brochure).