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October 20, 2010

Friends, Members and Family of the Virginia District:

The last time I checked, it was still legal to take long, deep breaths. ~ Jeff Davidson

There is no greater honor than serving in the work of God and no greater joy for our family than to be serving you, the great pastors and lay people of the Virginia District Church of the Nazarene. We love you, and we count it a pure joy to pray for you, to believe in you, and to serve you as you serve the Lord.

A few years ago, as part of my doctoral studies at Asbury Seminary, I had the privilege of interviewing thirty Nazarene pastors who had completed a sabbatical. The study, which was later published as my dissertation study, outlines the helpfulness and benefits of a sabbatical for ministry. I have been serving for nearly 25 years in ministry, and with the exception of a ten week period of medical leave in 1998, I have been full time in my effort of work for the Lord.

Now, with the blessing and encouragement of the District Advisory Board, and motivated by a desire to be all that we can be for God, Cheryl and I are looking forward to a few weeks of renewal, and we are so grateful to you, our district family for this opportunity to refresh, renew, refocus, and return to our first love. For more details on the sabbatical see the attached sabbatical plan.

You may want to read an excellent Eugene Peterson article entitled, "The Sabbatical is Not Study Leave" (1988). A copy of this article can be found in my dissertation, which along with other helpful resources on sabbatical leave can be found on our [district website](#).

Jesus said, "Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real **rest**. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (Matthew 11:28 MSG).

Other helpful quotes:

- *He who cannot rest, cannot work; he who cannot let go, cannot hold on; he who cannot find footing, cannot go forward. ~ Harry Emerson Fosdick*
- *Leisure and the cultivation of human capacities are inextricably interdependent. ~ Margaret Mead*
- *Rest when you're weary. Refresh and renew yourself, your body, your mind, your spirit. Then get back to work. ~ Ralph Marston*

With Joy for the Journey,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Phillip Fuller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phil & Cheryl Fuller

Phil Fuller's Sabbatical Plan 2010

At the July 2010 District Advisory Board meeting, the members of the advisory board recommended to Superintendent Phil Fuller that he plan for a period of sabbatical rest and renewal during this, his seventh year as Virginia District Superintendent. At its October meeting the Advisory Board approved the following plan in the spirit of the recommendations adopted by the District Assembly in its Finance Committee report:

From the District Assembly Journal 2009: Sabbatical Plan. Upon completion of every five to seven years of service at the same church, we recommend that each minister, with the approval of the church board, and subject to the approval of the district superintendent, plan a sabbatical of no less than 30 days. The sabbatical period is not to be counted against the minister's annual vacation time. A sabbatical is a necessary time for planned spiritual, physical, and emotional rest and works to alleviate burnout and its symptoms. Planned sabbaticals renew both ministers and congregations, and increase the length of tenures in ministry. Longer tenures, in turn, positively affect congregational health. Salary and benefits should continue during the sabbatical period. Churches should also cover reasonable expenses incurred in planning and taking the sabbatical.

THE PURPOSE of the Sabbatical for the Superintendent is to rest and renew spiritually, mentally, physically and relationally.

- To be absent from work for 7 weeks (49 days) including 7 Sundays, 11/22/2010 to 1/10/2011.
- To create an intentional break from the routine work of ministry including cell phone and email.
- Clearly communicate to pastors and district family the sabbatical plan prior to the sabbatical and include a post sabbatical reflection as well.
- The District Resource Center office will be open during the sabbatical. Ronda Lawson will be available to field questions, calls and emails. George Stevenson will continue in his role as Assistant to the District Superintendent. Rigoberto Acosta will also be available as a resource to the district family. Mike Brown, Treasurer, and Jerome Hancock (Finance Chair) will wisely oversee the finances of the district.

The specifics of the sabbatical include the following areas of focus:

- Renewal Plan for the Spirit
 - Daily scripture reading, study and prayer with Cheryl
 - Read at least one book related to personal spiritual growth
 - Attend weekly worship service
- Renewal Plan for the Mind
 - Read from a field of study which is new to me
 - Take a hobby related class (i.e., such as photography)
 - Minimize television
 - Begin a devotional writing project with Cheryl
- Renewal Plan for the Body
 - Daily Rest – at least 8 hours of rest each night
 - Eat well with careful attention to diet
 - Exercise and aim toward participation in a 5 K Race/Walk by March 2011
- Renewal Plan for Family and Friends
 - Spend extended time with Cheryl and Jon, other members of the Fuller and Walker families, and reconnect with friends