

## June 10 (Thursday) Session #4 (3:15 pm to 4:30 pm)

Steps toward Longevity in Ministry: Practical Helps toward the practice of Sabbath and Sabbatical– Dr. Phil Fuller

### Sabbath/Sabbatical

- Sabbath is a gift of time back to the Father, it is not a practice to improve our productivity. (See Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath*)
- Sabbatical is clearly rooted in the Biblical concept of a 7 day cycle of rest.
- Clear biblical standard of rest and renewal
- Many of our assumptions about sabbatical come from an academic mindset, however, the concept and practice of Sabbath rest really has a biblical history.

### The Purpose of a Sabbatical for Ministers

- Renewal of the spirit of the minister, the sabbatical is not study leave (we've borrowed from academia this idea but it really belongs to the world of the church)

### The Value of a Sabbatical for a Minister

- Minimizes impact of pre-cursors to burnout: (work overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown in community, absence of fairness and conflicting values)
- Increases Tenure in Ministry (including the local context)
- Renewed passion for the work
- Renewed vision for the future
- Greater clarity/focus
- Break in routine that leads to change in behavior
- Engaging the Call to Ministry -- "This is what I was meant to be, to do"

**Manual 129.10.** In order to encourage a healthy pastoral ministry and the lifelong learning of the pastor, the church board, in consultation with the district superintendent, should provide a sabbatical leave for the pastor following each seven consecutive year of service in one congregation. The timing and duration of the sabbatical shall be determined in consultation with the pastor, church board and district superintendent. It is strongly urged that the pastor's salary continue in full and the church board provide for pulpit supply during the sabbatical period. This topic is to be addressed by the district superintendent as part of the church/pastoral review process that would come after year two and again in year six, once the viability of continuing the relationship has been established. Materials shall be developed and distributed by the Clergy Development office to guide local congregations in establishing and implementing a sabbatical leave policy and procedure. At the church board's discretion, such a program may also be implemented for a member of the pastoral staff.

# Keys to An Effective Sabbatical:

1. Requires an understanding that Sabbatical is not the answer to all the problems you have, and it is not the answer to all of your “Self-Care” needs
2. Requires having well stated objectives
3. Requires Communication
  - a. Talk with superintendent (Manual)
  - b. Talk with key leaders
  - c. With the congregation
  - d. What is the re-entry plan for the pastor? Congregation?
  - e. Family
4. Has a length of 42-91 days in duration
5. Must not be overscheduled
6. Imposes no financial hardship on pastor or church
7. Is rooted in a connection to the local parish
8. Is understood as more than a once in a lifetime event
9. Involves intentional opportunities for spiritual renewal
10. Involves periods of intentional physical rest
11. Provides opportunity for emotional recovery by a long lasting break from routines
  - a. What events trigger a communication with the pastor? How will the sabbatical be communicated to the congregation? What updates (if any) will the congregation receive? Who will communicate with the pastor if necessary?
12. Is an open door to improvements in significant relationships with family, friends, congregants
13. Requires Advance Planning
  - a. Decisions regarding ministry in the local church, “Who will preach while I’m gone?” “What about board meetings?” “What about ministry/administration that typically falls to the pastor?”
14. Requires intentional Schedule Planning
  - a. Decisions regarding The Sabbatical itself, “What will I do for 7 weeks?”; “How is the sabbatical different from a 7 week vacation?” “What are the different phases of the sabbatical?”
15. Has a plan for re-entry to effective ministry