



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

November 13, 2023

Pastor Rick Reiten – Sabbatical Proposal

Dear Trinity Exec, Council, and Congregation -

After having served Trinity Lutheran Church consecutively for six years, I am prayerfully requesting a 16-week sabbatical, to take place from April 15, 2024, through August 5, 2024. The sabbatical would allow me space for renewal that I have not been able to consistently utilize in my annual allotted time away.

When I was called in September of 2017, the financial package that Trinity approved was for 9 weeks of sabbatical after six years of service. However, the Rocky Mountain Synod guidelines and Trinity's sabbatical policy recommend no less than 13 weeks (3 months). To help compensate for the difference (and because it is part of Trinity's policy) I propose using two weeks from 2024 vacation allowance, two weeks from unused 2023 vacation, two weeks of Continuing Education from 2023 and one week from 2024, be included in the sabbatical. Remaining vacation time from 2024 will still be used outside of the sabbatical timeframe.

Over six plus years, besides regular Sunday duties, I have been the primary worship leader on Saturdays - often working six-day weeks. Trinity folks have often asked me when I get a second day off, and the answer is I must piece together my time off. While the schedule is flexible, it also is demanding and regularly diminishes family time. The weekend schedule creates cumulative fatigue, more so than a Sunday only worship schedule. Yet I value Saturday night because it is well attended, has talented musicians, and offers a desirable worship option. While we have tried different solutions to balance Saturday leading, there is no substitute for a full weekend day off. Additionally, with the Deacon position being reduced to half-time, this will add more to my Saturday evening responsibilities.

My regular vacation time is more than adequate, and yet is difficult to take. Being away from Trinity requires pulpit supply, which has not always been available within our budget. We do not always have retired pastors or visitation pastors willing to fill that role either. I am allotted time away and a budget line for continuing education as well, but I have limited it mostly to self-study for the same reasons as the vacation away time.

Complex grief and compounding stress from the global pandemic – along with consistent staff changes, and our shared space/ministry conversations and challenges, have negatively impacted my mental health. I use my counseling strategies and resources, and it is still hard to find bits of joy in ministry. Even when I have taken vacation and break from work, I feel briefly rejuvenated – only to return to a weary state as soon as I return.

This is evident by our recent mediation conversations, where I said that I was worn down to the point of leaving ministry. This desire to leave ministry is not unique across the Church, with the demands that congregations put on clergy. The sabbatical time is designed as care for the clergy, to prevent burnout, and realize a renewed sense of call and passion for ministry in this place and time.

Trinity benefits from the sabbatical – not only as caring for the pastor – but also for council and congregation to learn from and with other voices in leadership. From council, to preaching – having another regular pastoral voice will teach the congregation in new ways. Additionally, this time of sabbatical would be a discernment opportunity for Trinity and what they want out of a pastoral leader and staff as we look into the future.



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Purpose of Sabbatical Leave:

I plan to use this leave following the model of the Rocky Mountain Synod.

“For a three-month sabbatical, the Rocky Mountain Synod encourages one month of total rest and relaxation, one month of learning for the sake of learning, and one month of learning that will directly benefit the congregation.”

Rest (1/3)

- I am planning to hike ten 14ers as part of my personal rest and renewal. I plan to do this around Durango, CO and Buena Vista, CO. Along with this, I hope to backpack a few segments of the Colorado Trail.

Personal Learning (1/3)

- I am planning to work with my wife and father-in-law, learning construction, plumbing, and electrical trade skills together building our cabin. This gives me a chance to reconnect with family and dream together, while developing talent that have not had.

Professional Learning (1/3)

- I am planning a retreat to Rainbow Trail, for research, writing, and professional study. I want to specifically study Pastoral Care and Genetics, exploring the idea of writing a book on how we provide accompaniment to families in the church facing genetic decisions. Gene editing and gene therapy is and will continue to be at the forefront of discussions in Christian ethics.

Planning and Scheduling:

While we have two rostered leaders on staff, with the reduction to the Deacon position, I do not intend the sabbatical leave to place extra burden on staff. I am proposing covering sabbatical with a combination of preachers, volunteers, current staff in allotted hours, and Pastor Kathy Gauger.

I propose hiring Pastor Kathy for 16 weeks at 5 hours a week and \$37.50 per hour. Her responsibilities would be preparing worship, presiding at worship when needed, accompanying Deacon Katie and staff as needed, and coordinating the visitation ministry. She is already doing visitation and will be on council as part of her Trinity volunteering.



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Preaching: Will be covered by an array of preachers. I will be responsible for scheduling our preachers, prior to my leave. I have included a draft calendar at end of the proposal, with all 16 weekends covered for preaching. This is only a draft, and if the Sabbatical Proposal is approved, I will work on solidifying these folks to preach.

- Eight by Kathy Gauger (paid in addition to the hours above)
- Four by Trinity Benevolence Ministry Partners
- Two by Deacon Katie
- Two by Colleagues from St. Paul's and Mary of Magdala

Funerals: Will be handled by Pastor Kathy or if available and willing Deacon Katie. If neither are available, Pastor Felicia (St. Paul's) or Mother Rosean (Mary of Magdala) will be asked. Compensation for these services are paid for by the funeral family and will not impact Trinity's Ministry Funds Plan.

Worship Committee: Will be handled by the committee itself. Any worship decisions that need clergy input will refer to Pastor Kathy or Deacon Katie.

Finance Committee: Will be handled by the committee itself. Pastor Kathy is not expected to attend.

Property Committee: Will be handled by the committee itself. Pastor Kathy is not expected to attend. Pastor Rick does not attend each month unless it is necessary.

Co Op (301 Faith Partner Cooperation)- Will be handled by Pastor Kathy or another representative from Council. Whomever sits on this committee should represent the clergy presence of Trinity at this meeting.

Staff Oversight: Will be handled by Deacon Katie in her allotted hours each week.

Chapel: Will be handled by Deacon Katie in her allotted hours each week (Monday morning).

Small Groups: Will be handled by Deacon Katie in her allotted hours each week, and with other staff (Amanda/Deana). Small groups by this time should be self-sufficient, though we will be planning for the following program year.

Sermon Discussion: Will be self-led by the group. The preacher for the week is always invited to participate, but this is not a requirement for the preacher, nor for the group to meet.

Adult Forum/Confirmation: Will already be scheduled with leaders. Adult forum will be able to be led by Paul Johnson and others. Confirmation will have a rotation in place that includes Deacon Katie and a volunteer on the Sundays Deacon Katie is off.

Visitation: Will be done by our Visitation Small Group. This includes home communion to our shut-ins, as well as hospital visits, nursing/rehab care, and other emergency (acute) visitation needs. I propose that one of our visitation folks be on call in an emergency, or Deacon Katie/Pastor Kathy can direct the emergency to the visitor on call.

Bible Study (April and May): Will be led by a volunteer.



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Financing and Budget:

The cost of this sabbatical is minimal as I do not intend sabbatical to burden the congregation financially. Because we have two rostered leaders on staff, coverage for the sabbatical is reduced, even with Deacon at half-time. We currently have \$12,000 in the Clergy Sabbatical Fund, and will add another \$2000 grant in 2024. Additionally, I will donate back to Trinity the four months of mileage reimbursement that is added to my pay. This amounts to \$670.

Expenses:

\$2000	Preaching – Pastor Kathy Gauger (8x @\$250)
\$3000	Office Support – Pastor Kathy Gauger (80 hrs @\$37.50)
<u>\$1000</u>	Misc - Preaching Stipend for Benevolence Preachers, if needed (4x @ \$250)
\$6000	

Income:

\$2000	2022 Grant from Rocky Mountain Synod (Clergy Sabbatical Fund)
\$2000	2024 Grant from Rocky Mountain Synod (Clergy Sabbatical Fund – not yet deposited)
<u>\$2000</u>	From - Clergy Sabbatical Fund
\$6000	

Goals and Value to Trinity:

As mentioned earlier, Trinity benefits from the sabbatical in different ways – including learning from other leaders and discerning what God wants from Trinity. Additionally, Trinity has the opportunity to reinvest itself in volunteers who lead the ministry. So often, congregations rely heavily on the paid staff to do the work of the church. However, with sabbatical volunteers are essential to making the leave work and more folks will step up. We already have a good system in place with Small Group Ministry, which lifts up those volunteer leaders.

My goal for council and the congregation is to use the ministry grid presented by Pastor Ernesto, to define the roles of each ministry entity at Trinity (i.e. Clergy/Staff, Exec, Council, Congregation). Using the results of the grid, along with the 'Definition of Compensation', will help us clarify the mission, vision, and special emphasis you need from me. I want to return from sabbatical with a clear understanding of where my gifts and Trinity's needs match, how I will support the congregation in living out its mission and how the congregation will support me in ministry into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal and for the opportunity to be co-laborers in the gospel.

Peace,
Pastor Rick



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Tentative Preaching Schedule:

April 15-Aug 5 (16 weeks)

April 20-21, 2024	Kathy Gauger
Apr 27-28, 2024	Sky Ranch
May 4-5, 2024	Kathy Gauger
May 11-12, 2024	Kathy Gauger
May 18-19, 2024	Deacon Katie
May 25-26, 2024	ISAAC
June 1-2, 2024	Kathy Gauger
June 8-9, 2024	Kathy Gauger
June 15-16, 2024	Paul Judson
June 22-23, 2024	Mother Rosean
June 29-30, 2024	Pastor Felicia
July 6-7, 2024	Kathy Gauger
July 13-14, 2024	Kathy Gauger
July 20-21, 2024	ELCA World Hunger – Gabe Brannon
July 27-28, 2024	Deacon Katie
August 3-4, 2024	Kathy Gauger