Sabbatical
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 makes holy. Sabbatical leave is a time for our pastors to shift gears, rest, disengage, study, reflect and travel in order to return to minister among us refreshed and renewed in body, mind and spirit.

Why do Pastors David and Kelly feel they need a Sabbatical?
We readily acknowledge that most working professionals no longer work a 40 hour work week nor do they, in many cases, leave work for the day at the close of a business day. The clichéd description for the work of the pastor is that the calling is one that is 24/7. Though middle of the night telephone calls are rare and there are breaks from church activities, it is fair to describe the physical and emotional engagement by pastors as being consistently present.

Do other clergy go on sabbatical?
A growing number of clergy are taking sabbaticals. The Virginia Synod has guidelines posted at www.vasynod.org and they are also available in the church office. Research suggests that clergy and congregations are strengthened by clergy sabbaticals.

How long will the pastors be gone?
Sabbaticals are typically 3 to 6 months in length. At St. Philip a 3 month sabbatical is being proposed.

What will the pastors’ be doing on sabbatical?
Initial conversation includes travel to the British Isles and Germany for renewal and reflection. A more in depth description of the sabbatical time will be outlined in the grant application.

Who will conduct worship and provide pastoral care?
This will be a congregational effort. But, a pastor in the Roanoke area will be scheduled to help with worship leadership and provide pastoral care. Holy Communion will continue on a weekly basis. The St. Philip church council president will be responsible for contacting the clergy person “on call” for pastoral emergencies.

Who will pay for the sabbatical?
St. Philip is applying for a grant from the Lily Foundation that will pay for the cost and expenses for the pastors as well as for the clergy serving the congregation while the pastors are on sabbatical. A generous lead gift of $5000 has been given to start a St. Philip sabbatical fund to provide resources for an alternative if St. Philip’s application is not selected by Lily Foundation.

Will the church just be in a “holding pattern” while the pastors are away?
All of our ministries will continue to flourish during the sabbatical, and perhaps new ones will be formed. Things will be different because we will be without Pastor David and Pastor Kelly, but the ministry of St. Philip will continue as always.

How will the congregation be a part of this process?
The congregation will have 2 opportunities as a group to ask questions, express concerns, add affirmations once in December and again in February. It is particularly important for the congregation to be a part of the planning and dreaming for how St. Philip might be renewed. A Lily grant provides resources for the congregation to experience rejuvenation in addition to the pastors. The sabbatical team is also available for questions. Information about the sabbatical process including a timeline is posted on the congregational web site.