

August 26, 2018

Dear Fly Church of the Nazarene,

I am very grateful to our church board for unanimously approving the request to grant a sabbatical to Michelle this fall. Sabbaticals are given to ministers as a time for spiritual, physical, and emotional nourishment and renewal. The concept is drawn from scripture; God instructed the people of Israel to faithfully work the land he had given them for six years, but during the seventh year to allow a “complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord” (Lev 25:4). During this sabbatical year, the land was left alone so that nutrients could replenish in the soil, thus providing more fruitful crops in the coming years. The sabbatical Michelle has been granted will be for six weeks, October 15 through November 24

The practice of sabbatical is one way the church can support pastors by providing for spiritual, emotional, and physical rest and revitalization. The request for Michelle’s sabbatical is in keeping with the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene (paragraph 129.10), and the recommendation of the MidSouth District for Ministerial Support as approved by our District Assembly. The Manual and our District recommend that sabbaticals may be granted during each seventh consecutive year of service in one congregation. Michelle has served as Fly’s pastor to children and families for fourteen years.

Michelle’s confidence in, and commitment to, her call to ministry has not diminished in any way. She remains convinced that serving in vocational ministry is the call of God on her life. Michelle also remains confident that Fly is where God has placed her to serve, and that God still has plans for her and what she brings to the ministry team of this local church.

During her sabbatical, Michelle will be granted a full leave of absence from all ministerial obligations. These obligations will be sufficiently delegated to Fly’s other pastors and capable lay individuals. God’s ministry will continue, and we trust that our God who is faithful will provide all that is needed for his work during this time. Michelle will be participating in worship at locations other than Fly during her sabbatical, as well as engaging in personal spiritual development disciplines. It is important that the pastor’s mind receive a break from the work of the church during sabbatical, so that energy may be directed toward rest and renewal. I ask that anything you might have communicated or taken to Michelle, that would fall under the purview of her ministerial role, be directed to myself or Bro. Mike during these sabbatical weeks.

We should recognize that this sabbatical is not just for Michelle, but also for us. As a body of believers, we will benefit from a pastor to children and families who has been refreshed and nourished by God. I encourage you to join me in prayer for Michelle during these weeks leading into and during her sabbatical. Pray that God would meet with her in a special way, that God will provide the rest and replenishment her soul craves, and that her passion for ministry will be rekindled in ways that will bring glory to God and his kingdom.

Brother James Lunsford
Pastor, Fly Church of the Nazarene

Manual paragraph 129.10

In order to encourage a healthy pastoral ministry and strong spiritual life of the pastor, the church board, in consultation with the district superintendent, should provide a sabbatical leave for the pastor during each seventh 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 relationship 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 Global 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.