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*Sabbatical  
Frequently Asked  
Questions*

*Saint Patrick's Episcopal Church*

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***Our Mission Statement***

*Inspiring and cultivating sacred  
connections with God and with one  
another as we embrace diversity of  
spiritual thought, practice and being.*

# *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”). As the 4th Commandment, Sabbath keeping is setting aside time that God consecrates and makes Holy (Ex. 20:8-11).

Sabbatical leave is a time for clergy to shift gears in order to rest, disengage from the rigors of ministry and engage in pursuits that renew and refresh body, mind, and spirit. It is NOT a time for routine work, career assessment, job search, retirement planning, or terminal leave.

Per diocesan standards, Mark’s letter of agreement with Saint Patrick’s specifies that he is eligible to take a sabbatical after three years of service at Saint Patrick’s. Mark begins his eighth year at Saint Patrick’s this September.

Sabbatical is more than a vacation from church ministry. It is a time for Mark to receive spiritual nourishment, to deepen his relationship with God — a season of spiritual growth for the entire congregation.

## **Do other clergy go on sabbatical?**

Yes. Bishops strongly encourage congregations in their Diocese to provide rectors and full time clergy with regular sabbatical leaves. After sabbaticals, priests return refreshed and revitalized, and ready with the parish to move into new phases of ministry.

## **How long will Mark be gone?**

Mark’s sabbatical begins April 6, 2015 and he returns to the parish on August 3rd. This includes three months of sabbatical and his regular one month vacation. Mark’s first Sunday back in the pulpit will be August 9th.

## **What will Mark be doing on his sabbatical?**

Mark will be spending time in contemplative spiritual practices, liturgical prayer, religious self study, and creative endeavor. For more details, see his letter to the parish dated March 23rd.

## **Who will cover Mark’s responsibility during his absence?**

Sally Brower, Assisting Rector and quarter time clergy, will cover all of Mark’s liturgical and pastoral duties during his absence. Over the last six months, and in anticipation of this additional responsibility, Sally has been gifted generous time away. She will further take some extra time off following Mark’s return. In addition to Sally’s voice in the pulpit, we will be graced with preachers from amongst our parishioners and from the diocese.

## **What about funerals and pastoral crises?**

In keeping with the traditional wisdom of sabbatical practice, and per the strong suggestion of diocesan authority, Mark will not be contacted and/or called back to clerical responsibilities while away. Sally Brower will ably minister to all pastoral concerns and events. Upon Mark’s return, he will be promptly informed of all such happenings.

## **How is the sabbatical underwritten?**

Per standard practice, the church will continue to pay Mark’s normal monthly compensation while away. Sally’s additional efforts are being compensated in terms of additional time away, and there will be no increase in her compensation.

With Sally’s presence, there will be no need for supply clergy. Mark is self funding his sabbatical activities. The 2015 budget as adopted remains intact.

## **Will the church just be in a “holding pattern” while Mark is away?**

No. This is an important spiritual time for the parish as well. All of our ministries will continue to flourish while Mark is away. Also, it is important to remember that the sabbatical is a two-way process: while Mark is on his journey of renewal, refreshment and reflection, we have the individual opportunity to embark on our journey as well. Please refer to Mark’s parish letter of March 23, 2015. This will be a valuable time to continue reflection on our prior work, to renew ourselves and to discern God’s will for us.

## **What if I see Mark out and about in town?**

Since most of Mark’s time will be spent locally, there is a chance you may encounter him or his family in public. You may certainly greet Mark and his family, but remember that Mark is in sabbatical mode — so please refrain from discussing church matters.

## **What can we do to assist Mark during his sabbatical?**

Please hold Mark in prayer as he will be holding us in his prayerful heart. May God’s spirit of refreshment and re-creation touch us all.

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