



Sabbatical F.A.Q.

What is a sabbatical? One definition of a sabbatical is, “an extended period of time offered to key leaders by the organization to equip the organization for the next season of opportunity by enhancing the leader’s skills”. This is done by providing a space away from the “tyranny of the urgent” for renewal, strategic thinking, and personal change. A sabbatical is a time for study, rest, and renewal.

Why are we implementing a sabbatical policy at Element Church? Research indicates both ministry staff and the churches they serve benefit from planned, prayerful, God-directed time spent apart. It is one of the most effective ways for a pastor and a congregation to maintain a long-term relationship. It is recommended by The Evangelical Church’s Leadership (our denominations governing body) that each church offer its pastor(s) time for an extended sabbatical every 7-10 years of ministry. Not only do we want to honor the encouragement of The Denomination, but we also believe that a healthy, balanced lifestyle is needed to lead well. Creating the time for this sabbatical, we believe, will allow Pastor Jeff extended time to listen to The Lord and return to lead the church into the future with a renewed and refreshed heart.

Who qualifies for a sabbatical? Ordained pastors are eligible for a sabbatical after nine years of full-time service at Element Church. The extended sabbatical duration is twelve weeks in length.

Is this something Pastor Jeff wants? Although Pastor Jeff has not asked for a Sabbatical, he has received the opportunity with enthusiasm. Pastor Jeff desires to have an extended period of time to listen to God, and discern the Holy Spirit’s leading for Element Church. We view provision of this sabbatical as one very meaningful way the church can tangibly show love to our Lead Pastor for his dedication and service over the past 10 years and to bring about a healthy approach to the future of Element Church. With the pace of a Lead Pastor’s life, this is more of a preventative measure to protect balance and provide space for rejuvenation.

When and how long is the sabbatical? Pastor Jeff will take a three-month sabbatical during the summer of 2017 (May 22-August 28). Pastor Jeff will ease back into a regular preaching schedule upon his return starting Sunday, September 10th.

Aren’t you worried about participation going down with Pastor Jeff being gone for three months? With the overwhelming support from the Evangelical Church Conference Superintendent, Pastor Steve Strutz, the Element Church External Advisory Council, the Element Church Leadership Council, and your Element Church Staff, we believe and trust the congregation will be very supportive and will have a healthy perspective. We view your participation throughout the summer of 2017, as an opportunity for personal enrichment and spiritual growth through lessons from gifted teachers, as well as a tangible way to show Pastor Jeff and Element Church your love and support.

How will Pastor Jeff’s sabbatical affect me, as an Element attender? We are so thankful for a healthy leadership team that believes firmly that the church is not about the building, but about a community of people desiring to grow in their faith and be connected with others. This will not change while Pastor Jeff is on sabbatical. God has given Element a vision that we all are privileged to carry out. We will be a life giving movement of people having such an impact that if we were gone our communities would miss us.

How will the church leadership and preaching function during Pastor Jeff's sabbatical? Element Church is blessed with a very capable Lead Team. Yes, Pastor Jeff will be missed, but we are incredibly confident that the Lead Team can and will lead with excellence. Staff members have developed very detailed ministry action plans that guide their goals and activities that will resume during the sabbatical. The Lead Team is a structure Element has used to guide decision making at the church. This team meets weekly and collaborates about all of the ministry details and decisions that affect Element Church. They will continue to provide leadership, as they always have. Our Executive Pastor, Derek Mowery, is a key member of the Lead Team. One of his core responsibilities is to care for each and every staff member, and help them maximize their potential. A large part of his role (with his team) is overseeing the finances of the church. During Pastor Jeff's sabbatical, we have complete confidence the staff will be well cared for and the finances will be handled with utmost integrity and stewardship. The preaching will be covered in part by other members of our teaching team, and outside guest speakers, including Pastor Jeff's father, Pastor Gary Maness.

What does a pastor do during a sabbatical? A sabbatical is designed so pastors can receive, rather than give, by providing the time and space necessary for (1) spiritual, (2) emotional, (3) physical, and (4) relational renewal. It provides an intermission within the unending demands of daily ministry life. It is a time for the pastor to recalibrate to enable him to provide quality leadership in the next season of life and ministry. Here are a couple of things Pastor Jeff will be doing.

Educationally:

1. Attend the Willow Creek Leadership Summit
2. Take a tour of the Holy Land.

Vocationally:

1. Visit several other churches of similar style but a step ahead of Element Church to learn from their leadership and ministry.
2. Seek in focused prayer for the next season of ministry here at Element.

Personally:

1. Reading, praying and pursuing spiritual disciplines to deepen his own personal walk with Jesus.
2. Running a Sprint Triathlon
3. Connecting with his wife and kids in a greater degree.
4. Celebrating his 20th Anniversary on a trip with his wife.
5. Regular check-ins with a representative that will help monitor his progress of rest, renewal, and refocus.

How can the church family help make this sabbatical beneficial?

1. Pray consistently for Pastor Jeff, his family, and the congregation throughout the sabbatical.
2. Go the extra mile in support; Attend, serve, give, reach out, and pray.
3. Support the idea that our pastor will not be attending worship services, events, etc., and instead will worship with other congregations of his choosing.
4. Please do not contact Pastor Jeff or his family about church matters. If a situation arises that needs to be addressed, please contact one of the Lead Team members or ministry staff members. (<http://elementchurchwy.com/staff/>)

If you have additional questions or would like to pass along a word of support or encouragement to Pastor Jeff, please contact our Executive Pastor, Derek Mowery at Derek@elementchurchwy.com.