



"...to proclaim and embody the love of Jesus Christ in the city and in the world."

Dear Eastbrook Church,

The Apostle Paul writes to an early church: "And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love!" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

Recognizing the importance for intentional pastoral care, the Council approved a sabbatical for Pastor Matt beginning September 1 and concluding on December 1, 2024. The goal of this sabbatical is rest, renewal, and some study with the help of a coach. We have engaged Potter's Inn, a ministry that encourages soul care for ministry leadership, to provide one-on-one coaching through the sabbatical and help in the transition back into ministry.

### **Sabbatical**

A sabbatical is a time for rest and renewal and it's a critical extension of the rhythm of Sabbath in our lives. Sabbaticals have proven to be healthy for the pastor, the pastor's family, the ministry which the pastor shepherds, and the congregation as a whole. The sabbatical also includes thoughtful engagement of the congregation for prayer and refocusing alongside the pastor's sabbatical.

As you will read in Pastor Matt's attached letter, the sabbatical was developed together in a harmonious spirit between the Council and him. *We want to assure the congregation that there are no issues with regards to Pastor Matt's character, marriage, or relationship with the church.* The intent is to sustain and refresh the life of our Senior Pastor so that he can make the best ministry contribution out of his best self within our church and beyond as we gear up to launch new initiatives this fall.

### **What is our role during this sabbatical?**

- Pray, encourage, and support Pastor Matt and his family.
  - Pray specifically that his time with God will be refreshing and invigorating.
- Respect the Erickson family boundaries.
  - As a rule of thumb, Pastor Matt will not be engaging in any "ministry related/work talk" during the sabbatical.
- Pray that the staff leads strong in his absence.
- Use this opportunity to refocus and to draw near to God via His word and in our prayer lives.

### **Additional Information**

There is a Q&A document attached with more specifics about how we are preparing for Pastor Matt's time away, including background information on sabbaticals, what Pastor Matt will be doing during the fall, the preaching duties and guest speakers we will host, as well as, contact information.

During the weekend of August 4, we will spend a portion of the worship services in a time of discussion and prayer on the sabbatical. Council members will be available in-between services to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your continued service "to proclaim and embody the love of Jesus Christ in the city and in the world."  
Soli Deo Gloria!

In Him,

Wally Johnson, Eastbrook Church Council President



"...to proclaim and embody the love of Jesus Christ in the city and in the world."

Dear Eastbrook,

About ten years ago, an older, seasoned pastor encouraged me amidst all the work I was doing with others to be thoughtful about my own soul care and pace in ministry as a pastor. He wanted to see me in ministry for the long haul and not burn out. Specifically, he asked me: "have you ever thought about taking a sabbatical?" That conversation birthed a process with our Church Council and staff that led to increased thoughtfulness about care for those serving in ministry, as well as development of a pastoral sabbatical policy. Since that time, several of our pastors have engaged in sabbatical.

As I complete fourteen years at Eastbrook this summer, the Council and I began discussions about the right timing for me to enter a season of sabbatical. We decided that, for numerous reasons, the Fall of 2024 would be the ideal time for me to pursue that, and the Council has approved a sabbatical for me this fall, beginning on September 1 and concluding on December 1. I am thankful for this gift from the Council that we worked on together, and I believe it will be a good thing for me, my family, my ministry, our staff, and our church.

Let me assure you that there is nothing wrong with me, my marriage, my character, or my relationship with the church. We are doing great and I feel like I am in a strong season of ministry. I also believe that as Eastbrook we are at a key moment entering a renewed focus on discipleship and exploring significant capital updates on our campus in the coming year. I believe this time of sabbatical will bring the renewal I need to enter this next season of ministry for us together as a church family.

Thank you for your support, for your commitment to Christ, and for your commitment to this special, local body of Christ called Eastbrook. I look forward to sharing stories of how I heard from the Lord when I return in December.

With deep love and prayer,

Pastor Matt Erickson

# Q&A ON PASTOR MATT'S SABBATICAL



## What is a pastoral sabbatical?

A pastoral sabbatical is an opportunity to step away from the many tasks of daily ministry to rest and be renewed by God. The word sabbatical comes from 'Sabbath', following the Biblical command to observe the seventh day as a time to stop. Through time for intentional restoration and in-depth study, a sabbatical nourishes the soul for ministry. A pastor's sabbatical includes time for prayer, resting, and learning in order to return to ministry with renewed focus and energy. A sabbatical is healthy for the pastor, for the pastor's family, for the ministry which the pastor shepherds, and the congregation as a whole.

## Why is a pastoral sabbatical necessary?

Thom Rainer, a ministry leader and author, suggests five important reasons why pastoral sabbaticals are helpful:

- Pastors have emotional highs and lows unlike most other vocations.
- A pastor is on 24-hour call.
- Pastors need time of uninterrupted study.
- Pastors who have sabbaticals have longer tenure at a church.
- Pastors who have sabbaticals view time off as an affirmation from their churches.

## How long will Pastor Matt be on sabbatical?

Pastor Matt will be on sabbatical from September 1-December 1, 2024. This amounts to roughly three months.

## What will Pastor Matt do on his sabbatical?

He will begin the sabbatical by gathering with extended family for a family reunion and then participating in in-depth spiritual direction out of town for one week. Matt will have focused time for prayer with retreats in different places. There will be time for study as well as rest and relaxation. Throughout the sabbatical, Pastor Matt will meet regularly with a sabbatical 'coach' from Potter's Inn, a ministry focused on pastoring those who pastor others.

## Is there something wrong?

There is nothing wrong with Pastor Matt or with his relationship with Eastbrook. This was a mutual decision by Pastor Matt and the Church Council as part of a broader effort to care for our staff as they care for us as a church. A pastoral sabbatical is a common practice for pastors after serving seven years. This is one part of our broader policy of soul-care for our staff.

## Who will preach while Pastor Matt is away?

Pastor Matt has already worked with staff and key leaders in establishing a preaching schedule and sermon series that reflect our current emphasis on discipleship. Preaching duties will be covered by existing staff and various guest speakers.

## Who is in charge while Pastor Matt is away?

Pastor Matt is preparing the entire staff to step forward during his sabbatical, but primary staff leadership will rest with three of our Senior Directors—Jim Caler, Lupe Dueñas, and Femi Ibitoye—working in partnership; with the Church Council during this time to insure pastoral leadership is clear and ministry activities continue throughout the duration of Matt's sabbatical.

## Should I contact Pastor Matt while he is on sabbatical?

The sabbatical is a journey for Pastor Matt but also an important one for us as a church. To protect Pastor Matt's time of drawing near to Jesus, rest, and study, please contact the church office should you need pastoral care or the staff for ministry specific questions.

## How can I support Pastor Matt while he is on his sabbatical?

Please pray regularly for Pastor Matt to hear from the Lord and be refreshed. As a church we also can enter into a refocused time of drawing near to Jesus during this time.

### Contact Information

Eastbrook Church Office: 414.228.5220

### Ministry Leaders



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### Church Council Leadership



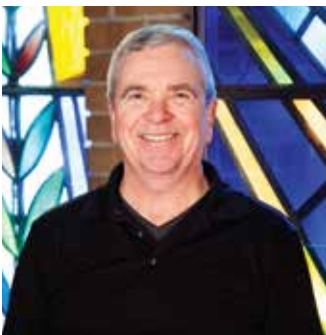
**Wally Johnson**

Council President



**Katherine Riebe**

Council Vice President



**Gary Swick**

Council Treasurer



**Mike Weitzer**

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