1. Your name, congregation/city and church size

My name is Pastor Ryan Anderson. I currently serve the dual-parish of Trinity in Vesper, WI and Saint John's in Sigel, WI. Trinity has a total membership of about 200, with an average attendance of 55 on a Sunday. Saint John's has a total membership of 40, with an average attendance of about 18 on a Sunday.

2. What is a sabbatical? How does it work?

A sabbatical is not a long vacation, but an intentional change of pace for the sake of a longer ministry. In my case, the sabbatical was 13 weeks in length, but I had a dedicated project to work on with the time off from regular duties. During a sabbatical, a called church worker sets aside the regular duties of his office for the sake of rest, recovery, reflection, and dedicated time for a project that you wouldn't have time for otherwise. Following the biblical model of rest, a sabbatical respects the called church worker's need for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual rest as a gift from God and from his congregation.

3. How can a small congregation afford sending a pastor on sabbatical?

In order for this to happen, I did a lot of work equipping my elders and other church leaders to handle things in my absence. My congregational secretary was a great blessing in keeping everything organized during my absence. The elders led worship for most of the Sundays away. We were able to contract a pastor for 3 Sundays, which meant that the total cost of the sabbatical, in addition to my regular salary, was $600. Finances were not a major concern for these congregations.

4. What were the benefits to you and the congregation?

For me, I did not realize how exhausted I was until I was actually on sabbatical. I needed the rest and recovery more than I knew. I also got some time to reflect on the "big picture" of ministry at the congregations, including some time to plan long-term goals for the future. The congregation also gained a renewed sense of purpose and participation in the work of the congregations. In my absence, the members had to step up and do things that I normally do, so they gained a new appreciation for all the work of ministry and the ways they can better be involved in it. Since my return, we have seen a greater participation in

our congregational activities, as well as a small bump in Sunday morning worship attendance.

5. What else would you like to tell us about the sabbatical?

A sabbatical will be a great benefit to any called worker. If a congregation is wondering about how this could work for them, I would be happy to come and talk with your leadership about how to make this happen for your worker. I reminded my people over and over that this ultimately will benefit them. Coming off sabbatical, it is customary for a pastor not to consider a call for a few years, so my congregations are very happy that I will be sticking around. I feel reinvigorated and rejuvenated for another season of ministry in these places. The people of Trinity and Saint John's are also reinvested in all that we have going on in these places. I strongly encourage all congregations at least to begin a discussion regarding a sabbatical for your called workers.