

FAQs about Sabbatical

Our Trinity Sabbatical 2022

Renewing Joy: Baptized by water and the Spirit

What is a sabbatical?

The word sabbatical has its roots in the biblical concept of Sabbath (“to rest” or “to cease”). The Sabbath is sacred time, during which God’s people rest from labor — not for the sake of rejuvenation, but for the sake of deepening our experience of God’s active presence in our lives. The Sabbath is time with God, and without distractions. Sabbatical, likewise, is a time for clergy to spend concentrating on some aspect of their ministry, prayer life, spiritual discipline, or study. Sabbatical is not vacation: it is a period of extended, focused, prayerful attention on some aspect of the priestly vocation. Our upcoming Sabbatical will be a time for Rev. Nancy to renew her vocation and for each one of us to renew our baptismal vocation through study, prayer, visiting preachers and clergy, and some special Sabbatical invitations. Since ministry is shared within the parish community, the sabbatical can be a period of deepening spirituality for the whole parish.

Do other clergy go on sabbatical?

The Diocese of Massachusetts requires that its sabbatical leave policy be incorporated in the letter of agreement between a rector and a congregation. Research shows that clergy and congregations are strengthened by clergy sabbaticals. Your clergy are eligible for sabbatical time after five years of ministry.

How long will Rev. Nancy be away?

Rev. Nancy will begin her sabbatical after services and a festive, water-oriented send off event for the whole parish, on Sunday, August 28, 2022 and will return to Trinity on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. Her first Sunday back will be January 8, 2023 when together we will celebrate the Baptism of our Lord with a joyful renewal of vows and “mingling of waters.”

We plan to host an in-person (hybrid if needed) Trinity Town Hall in January 2023 for Rev. Nancy to share about her experiences and for the congregation to share with her about what we all learned, how we are renewed in the Spirit, and ways we hope to move forward in our mutual ministry.

What will Rev. Nancy be doing on her sabbatical?

Rev. Nancy will be exploring God’s call by the water; through photography, prayer, meditation, and time with family and friends. The theme for her and for us is ***Renewing Joy: Baptized by water and the Spirit.*** After the challenges of the past few years, a time of quiet renewal, by various bodies of water, will allow Nancy to renew and restore. She will serve 2 Sundays in September (as she has done for the past 6 years) at Church of the Redeemer in Longport NJ, make a pilgrimage to Holy Island Lindisfarne on the North Sea in England in early October, to the Pacific Ocean in Monterey CA, and to Otter Lake in NH. She will also use some of her time to research and read for her doctoral thesis. Nancy is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree at The General Theological Seminary in New York, NY with a focus on contemporary issues of death and dying, and the Episcopal funeral rites.

What will WE be doing during the sabbatical?

Again, with the theme of ***Renewing Joy: Baptized by water and the Spirit***, we hope that everyone will be intentional about how we might each renew our faith, our baptismal vows, our witness of faith, our relationship with God. Over the summer, in preparation for the sabbatical, everyone is invited to do some preparatory reading and conversation with Revs. Nancy and Christopher through our “Spiritual Guides” offerings. Once the fall sabbatical time begins, we will engage in conversations about faith and work, faith and life, Sacred Ground conversations about race; what it means to live a life of faith, not just on Sundays, but all the time. You will be invited to participate in the “God’s Beloved” photo project. Parish photographers will make portraits to share in a congregational photo show in Jan. 2023 alongside Rev. Nancy’s sabbatical photos. You are also invited to collect water from your special, sacred place (Nancy will be doing likewise), and together we will fill the Baptismal Font in January 2023 with this water as we renew our Baptismal vows together.

Who will cover the rector’s responsibilities during her absence?

The Vestry is the canonical authority of the parish in the absence of the rector. While Rev. Nancy is gone, our Assistant Rector, Rev. Christopher Whiteman, will function as head of staff under the authority of the vestry and with the full support of the vestry. Essentially, Rev. Christopher will handle daily operations and the vestry will continue in their role to oversee facilities and finances. We have hired the Rev. Cathy George to work ten hours per week to help with Sunday worship services, provide an Adult Faith Formation program about faith and work, and to support Rev Christopher during the sabbatical.

Will the office be open as usual?

Yes, the office will still be open Tuesday through Friday 9am to 5pm. Clergy are always reachable by calling their church phone and leaving a message. Rev. Christopher 978-369-3715, ext. 14. Rev. Nancy will not be checking email or voicemail during her sabbatical, but the rest of the staff is available, and all clergy functions will be covered by the Rev. Christopher Whiteman and the Rev. Cathy George.

Who pays for the sabbatical?

The sabbatical is part of our rector's contracted employment with Trinity Concord, and her salary and benefits are accounted for in the parish budget. Typically, the parish would need to set aside funds or raise funds to support the additional cost of a sabbatical. In this case, Rev. Nancy, with the help of a Sabbatical Committee, applied for and received a \$50,000 Clergy Renewal Grant in 2021 from the Lilly Endowment. The congregational portion of the grant (\$12,000) will cover supply clergy, the send-off event, as well as other programming needs during Nancy's time away. The remaining \$38,000 will cover Nancy's travel and lodging expenses. Because Nancy lives on the church property, accommodations will be made, through the benefit of the Lilly Endowment grant for all of her nights away from Concord. We are grateful to the Lilly Endowment for this gift that enables Nancy and all of us to enjoy this sabbatical time without financial implications for our 2022 budget.

What if I have further questions about the sabbatical?

You may contact Rev. Nancy hagner@trinityconcord.org or Rev. Christopher whiteman@trinityconcord.org, or direct your questions to Charlie Stone (Senior Warden)

cstone.damonprop@gmail.com, David Weiss (Sabbatical Committee Chair) dpaulweiss@gmail.com, or any other vestry member with questions.
