

Dear Board,

Thank you for giving me time and space to grieve my mother a bit before asking for information that I know you've been waiting for. Namely, sabbatical. I'm hoping we begin that conversation at this month's board meeting, and at a minimum I can share my initial thoughts as well as the roles and responsibilities of others during that time. I believe that you'll find my initial ideas ones that should benefit us all.

I know some of you see the cost of sabbatical, or what you fear the cost might be, and worry. I offer that we can see sabbatical, instead, as a sign of just how far we've come. Settled ministers usually don't take sabbaticals until year 5 or later, and then usually only as they feel comfortable the congregation will thrive without them. Just the fact that a sabbatical is on the horizon speaks to me of the good work we've already done together.

But you know I'm always dreaming of more, of what's next.

Around year 4 or 5 of a successful ministry, a question arises: what will our legacy be?

We're growing, in so many ways. But as a congregation gets larger, it begins to need a central point of focus, something to guide it forward. Something, outside of these walls, that benefits the larger world, that creates opportunities for congregants to put their hands and heart to work.

And yes, I recognize the great work being done by committees, and especially the focus of Social Justice into the larger community. But those efforts are still, in some ways, disparate. Jean and Carolyn shepherd an amazing and diverse flock of justice-makers, but I want yet more for us.

Congregations that reach their potential have a burning coal at their center. This is a question asked of you when you called me as minister, and one, I hope, we answer, together.

Later this spring, and in collaboration with others, I hope to begin to jointly envision what a shared effort might look like. Congregations have built low-income buildings, homeless shelters, and so much more. In this time of so much need in the world, we all want somewhere to put our hearts and minds to the task. What, I wonder, shall we dream into being?

With excitement for all the next steps,  
Rev. DL