

## Rev. Jeff's 2026 Sabbatical

During our April Church Council meeting my 2026 sabbatical plan was approved and I wanted to share it with all of you.

I will be taking the first half of my sabbatical (six weeks: July 6, 2026-August 16, 2026) this summer and the second half in the summer of 2027 (dates TBD). Pastor Gwen has agreed to cover the six weeks while I am gone. During this time I will *not* be available for worship, pastoral care, funerals, or other pastoral functions. I will, however, make myself available to Gwen should she have any issues or questions while I am gone. I will be remaining in my role as Chaplain with the Tolland Fire Department and Lead Chaplain for the Connecticut State Police, but I will be selective in what I respond to in order to give myself a true break.

My sabbatical will have four areas of focus:

- I have found the last year of my ministry to be particularly challenging and tiring. I was on my own for a considerable amount of time during which we experienced a lot of hospitalizations and death. In fact, in the year 2025 I did more funerals than I have done in my 20+ years as an ordained minister. Initially I didn't think so, but I have realized that this has taken a toll on both my physical and mental health. As such, I am going to spend some time exploring, and practicing, a new concept to me: **Nature Therapy**. It is said that time in nature can reset a person's mind and body—and I would like to spend some time delving into it. It is my hope that this will open up a door for me to practice if/when things become busy and stressful again in my ministry, and it is a practice that I hope to share with you all.
- Having been preaching from the Revised Common Lectionary for over 20 years, I would like to take some time to explore the possibility of the church shifting to a cycle of the **Narrative Lectionary**. This is a four year cycle of readings that delves deeper into some areas and books of the Bible that the Revised Common Lectionary does not. I have never had a chance to explore this and so I would like to check out the readings, resources, etc. and then weigh the pros and cons of UCCT possibly shifting to this.
- I also hope to expand my chaplaincy knowledge by obtaining 1-2 certificates from the **International Critical Incident Stress Foundation**. This will depend on availability of courses (not all summer classes have been scheduled). The two certifications are Critical Incident Stress Management and Pastoral Crisis Intervention
- Finally, the longer I do this work, the more it becomes clear that I am pulled away from my **family** a great deal. As such, I am planning to take some down time to rest, hike, and enjoy my family.

I am grateful to the church for this time away and I look forward to a period of rest and renewal, while also continuing to do the work I am passionate about and serving the community I love.

In peace and gratitude,  
Rev. Jeff