

### **What is a sabbatical anyway?**

The word sabbatical shares the same roots as the Biblical word Sabbath, meaning to rest; to cease. Sabbath is *holy time* set aside for physical, emotional, spiritual and mental renewal. The practice of Sabbath is our answer to God's command once a week to take a break from the daily grind.

Likewise a sabbatical is simply an extended Sabbath, providing an opportunity to step off the treadmill for renewal of vision and hope, nourishing the soul and rebuilding the body. A Sabbatical is time to disengage from our everyday lives in order to rest, travel, study, reflect, pray, worship and renew relationships. It is far more than a vacation, it is a season of spiritual growth for everyone involved.

### **A time to rest, renew and recharge.**

In 2007 the Vestry of St. Paul's voted to grant Bob a three-month sabbatical. It is customary in the Episcopal Church and in other denominations for clergy and lay ministers to take this time for rest and reflection every 7-10 years. This will be Bob's first sabbatical in his 30-year career.

The Cowperthwaites already had a general idea of what they wanted to accomplish during this time which included taking classes through St. George's College in Jerusalem,

traveling as pilgrims in Great Britain, exploring family roots in Scotland and Italy, mission work, and relaxing with family.

- **St. George's College Jerusalem** is a continuing education center of the Anglican Communion. Since 1962 clergy and laity from 92 countries and 96 faith traditions have attended for either short-term or long-term courses. Bob will take two courses here: "Paul and the Early Church" and "The Palestine of Jesus." Susan will join him for the second course.
- **Traveling as pilgrims** will include time spent with the Iona Community in Scotland and/or the Northumbria Community in northern England.
- **Exploring family roots** will also be part of the journey in Great Britain (Bob's family) and in Italy (Susan's family).
- **Mission work** is dear to both Bob and Susan. Options for this endeavor are still being explored.
- **Time for family** is planned at both the beginning and end of the sabbatical.

### **So when does all this happen?**

In July 2009 Susan will retire from University School of Nashville. The sabbatical will start shortly thereafter.

Bob will be gone September through November. His will officially return to St Paul's on Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. At this time, the only firm dates are those of the two courses in Jerusalem. Susan will join Bob in late September. As things are finalized, Bob's itinerary will be posted on the sabbatical website.

### **This sounds expensive.**

It is. A preliminary budget put the cost at just over \$40,000. We submitted a grant proposal to the Lilly Endowment's National Clergy Renewal Program and received \$40,922. This money has already been transferred to St. Paul's. Money had also been budgeted in 2008, some of which was used to register for the St. George's courses.

### **Here's what you really need to know.**

Once Bob leaves at the end of August 2009, he won't be back until after Thanksgiving. The Sabbatical Committee was firm on this. Even a short visit home would disrupt this time away. He will not be here for funerals, marriages or baptisms. That means no phone calls or emails either. But rest assured that our congregation will be well taken care of by Ann, Monna, Sally, Donna, and Claire. We are blessed to have such great resources. Those three months are a sabbatical of sorts for the members of St. Paul's as well. We'll get to know the other staff better. We'll probably get to know one another better too. And as Bob and

Susan's journey takes them from place to place, we'll follow along. Our formation classes will compliment their travels. Bob will carry a laptop and blog about his experiences so that we may all share in his time away.

"I have come to think that the recovery of the Sabbath is the most crucial and most demanding covenant command now to be faced in the technological society."  
-Walter Brueggemann

### Doing what we do best

Naturally, we will not let the Cowperthwaites leave without a grand sendoff. We'll celebrate their journey's beginning next summer and rejoice in their return at the start of the 2009 Advent season. The send-off will be Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. The welcome-home, Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask Bob or any member of the committee. And if you'd like to know more about the trip, explore these web sites.

<http://www.lillyendowment.org>  
<http://www.sgcjerusalem.org>  
<http://www.iona.org.uk>  
[http://www.heilig-land-verein.de/engl/html/pilgerhaus\\_tabgha.html](http://www.heilig-land-verein.de/engl/html/pilgerhaus_tabgha.html)

## Sabbatical Overview

**September:** Retreat on the Sea of Galilee, Pilgerhaus Tabgha. Followed by a class in Turkey and Greece, "*Paul and the Early Church*"

**October** *Pilgrimage and travel in Great Britain* followed by Italy.

**November:** A class in Jerusalem, "*The Palestine of Jesus*" followed by time with family in the US.

*Susan will be joining Bob the end of September.*

Learn more as the time approaches through Bob's sabbatical website:

[www.bobsabbatical.typepad.com](http://www.bobsabbatical.typepad.com)



### The Sabbatical Committee:

The Rev. Bob Abstein  
Dewees Berry  
Sally Chambers  
Francee Preston  
Tom Stearns  
Josh Sutherland  
Cindy Thomsen

