

A Message to Messiah Congregation About Pastor Talsness' Upcoming Sabbatical

May 1, 2026

Pastor Jason Talsness will be on Sabbatical from June 1-August 31, 2026. Pastor Karen Scheib will be in charge during this period. She will be responsible for coordinating church worship services, as well as supervising day-to-day church operations and church staff. Pastor Karen will be assisted by Pastor Ken Ritz as well as by the Staff Support and Mutual Ministry committee and the Messiah Council.

Sabbatical FAQs

What is a sabbatical?

The purpose of a sabbatical is to support long-term sustainability in ministry. A sabbatical is a planned, intentional period of rest, renewal and study for a pastor. It is not a vacation, but a time to step away from regular pastoral duties so the pastor can return reinvigorated with a fresh perspective for ministry.

Why is the pastor taking a sabbatical?

Sabbaticals of three months are recommended every 5-7 years for lead clergy. Pastor Jason has never had a sabbatical since being ordained 29 years ago. The process was discussed by the Mutual Ministry committee in 2020, planning ensued and culminated with a policy in 2024, which was approved by Messiah Council in 2025.

How long will the sabbatical last?

June 1-August 31, 2026. Pastor Jason's farewell Sunday is May 31, and he will return to the office on September 1.

Who will be taking over pastoral duties while Pastor Talsness is away?

Pastor Karen Scheib. Her office hours at Messiah will be Monday-Thursday from 10:30-12:30. The church office hours for Office Administrator Sandy Cooper will remain the same as posted in the Messiah Minute and church bulletin.

Will worship services continue as usual?

Yes. The congregation will continue to gather for the Word and Sacrament on Sundays at 9:00am.

Who will lead worship and pastoral care during the sabbatical?

Pastor Karen Scheib is responsible for coordinating worship services and pastoral care. She and/or Pastor Ken Ritz will lead the majority of worship services, supported by supply pastors from the Lutheran Church and other denominations.

Who should I contact in an emergency?

For pastoral emergencies such as hospitalization, death or urgent spiritual care needs, contact Pastor Karen Scheib [Direct: (912) 556-8394, Office: (912) 598-1188 ext. 105, Email: kdsspin54@gmail.com, Text Only: (404) 401-0219] .

Will church programs continue?

Most regular ministries (education, fellowship, outreach) and church administration will continue as normal.

Will Pastor Talsness be available during the sabbatical?

He will not be available for regular pastoral duties, meetings, or communications during the sabbatical. Exceptions will be made for emergencies as mentioned above, but Messiah members wanting to communicate with Pastor Jason about church business should request it through the church office.

What if I bump into Pastor Talsness on the island, at the club or downtown?

Feel free to engage him as much or as little as you like, but **please refrain** from discussing church business.

I am friends with Pastor Talsness on Facebook, can I engage him there?

Pastor Jason may give updates on his sabbatical, or he may take time away from Facebook. Feel free to follow his lead, but it is likely he will not be engaging with other people's posts during the summer months.

How can the congregation support the sabbatical?

Support can be shown by:

- Participating actively in worship and ministries
- Supporting the Messiah interim leadership and staff members
- Praying for the pastor and congregation during the summer
- Respecting the pastor's time away

What will the pastor be doing during the sabbatical?

Activities may include:

- Reading and studying
- Travel or retreat time
- Class attendance
- Surveys of other worship services
- Rest and renewal
- Time with family and personal interests

Will there be a report or sharing after the sabbatical?

Often pastors share reflections, learnings, or insights through sermons, presentations or written reports. Details will be shared closer to the return date.

Will there be updates during the sabbatical?

Yes. Information will be provided through the Messiah Minute and weekly church bulletin. If you have any specific questions not covered, feel free to contact Pastor Karen Scheib or someone on the Mutual Ministry committee (Chair - Greg Stinson, Amanda Ridberg, or David Ridberg).

Final Note

This sabbatical is a gift to both the pastor and the congregation. It is a time to trust God's continued presence and care within the life of the church. It improves and extends the spiritual and mental well-being of the pastor while building resiliency within the congregation.