

## What's a Sabbatical?--A Message from Stephen

This isn't just an idle question, as I will be gone on Sabbatical from the second week of January until the week before Easter, in mid April.

Normally, a sabbatical is six months, but I have experience through my 29 year ministry that short sabbaticals are the best--for me and for you. This old tradition applies mostly to academics and to the clergy, and allows, in the course of a long career, an opportunity to pause, reflect, re-charge, and to experience things that one cannot do in the normal course of a work year, but will still be beneficial to the totality of a ministry...In other words, ministers learn and try new things, and avoid that little bugaboo of the profession, emotional burn-out!

What I will be doing will not be spectacular or sensational--I won't be traveling the world or climbing a mountain.

But I will be writing a book from a sermon I delivered here a year ago called, "Scared, Scarred, and Sacred," and finishing up a novel I have worked on over two summers--and visiting my Dad in Ohio and helping Tiz visit some colleges on the West Coast near my brother Tom.

But that is of course not the most important thing about the sabbatical...