



*First English Lutheran Church*  
*a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*  
GOD LOVES. WE LOVE. EVERYONE!

---

## Letter to the Congregation on Bryan Rust's Sabbatical

September 20, 2021

Dear FELC Friends,

During the past year, Bryan Rust and I, along with the church council, have been in conversation about granting a 3-month sabbatical to Bryan for rest, renewal, and some time to study topics of interest to him. The council has approved Bryan's sabbatical plan and granted him 3 months away with full pay and benefits.

### *What is a sabbatical? Purpose?*

Sabbath is rest. Rest is renewal. Good work and good rest are commanded by God. Taking purposeful time away from day-to-day ministry will be healthy for physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

### *Why a sabbatical now?*

Church denominations recommend ordained ministers take a sabbatical about every 7 years. While not an ordained minister, Bryan has professionally served in the ELCA for 26 years and at FELC for 9 years. This will be the first time Bryan participates in a sabbatical.

### *For Bryan:*

Renewal, reengagement, study, rest, discernment. Bryan will be spending this time learning music from African American female composers, going on retreats, traveling, spending time with family (near and far), and working with others to care for his wellness. Bryan is also working with a spiritual director and a therapist in a discernment process for his life and ministry.

### *For FELC:*

We can experience congregational and community life in different ways, finding new opportunities to engage one another. This time invites others to step into leadership roles. This time can provide insight into shared life between a leader and the congregation they serve.

### *Time away.*

Bryan will be away on Sunday, October 10 as he will be the primary musician that weekend for the ordination of our 49th vicar, Kelsey Kresse. Bryan's last Sunday before sabbatical will be October 17, 2021, and he will return to FELC on Monday, January 3, 2022. During the sabbatical, Bryan will be away from FELC in all duties, participation, and communication. Bryan will not be in communication with FELC members and friends. If there is a major issue in our church life, I will be able to contact Bryan directly. Bryan has agreed to return to ministry with FELC following his sabbatical.

### *Director of Music responsibilities.*

During Bryan's leave, Renee Kesselring will serve as our primary musician. Renee is known to FELC as she has substituted for Bryan previously. Renee has a thriving piano studio, and with her husband, Pr. Tom Kesselring, are retired from full time ministry with Immanuel Lutheran Church in Pflugerville. Renee will lead music on Sunday mornings and special services. Renee will also lead groups of FELC musicians in rehearsal and musical offerings throughout this

time. Additionally, Renee will work with me and Vicar Wes in worship and music planning. We are grateful that Renee has agreed to serve with us. The compensation for Renee has been negotiated, and several donors are generously contributing funds toward that. We are also utilizing the approved budgeted income for 2021 normally used for Bryan's vacation Sundays.

*Office Administrator responsibilities.*

During Bryan's time away, Vicar Wes and I will be the lead contacts for daily ministry issues, scheduling and building use needs, and communications. We will have some FELC members serving in various ways in the church office. Erin McCracken, Bryan, and Joe Cain have developed a process for our finances, and Erin, as treasurer, will be taking Bryan's responsibilities in that area. We are grateful to Penny Baker, financial secretary, and Terry Porter, for their participation in keeping things moving with contributions.

*Why I support Bryan's sabbatical.*

I have had the benefit of two sabbaticals during my 28 years of ordained ministry. They have been life-giving, transforming, and energizing for my ministry. Full-time church work is a wonderful calling. It is also demanding, with nearly every weekend of the year committed to church work. There is little opportunity for weekend getaways, and holidays are peak church ministry events. Vacation time is important to utilize, but a sabbatical is a more significant opportunity for rest and renewal. Bryan has been a dedicated, hard-working, faithful minister of the church and will benefit greatly from this break. I'm excited for him to have this opportunity.

We will send Bryan with God's blessings for a time away on Sunday, October 17 and welcome him home in worship on Sunday, January 9, 2022.

Peace in Christ,  
Michael Coffey, Pastor