

Rev. Hannah's Sabbatical: Frequently Asked Questions

When is Rev. Hannah's sabbatical?

Rev. Hannah's sabbatical goes from July 13 – November 14, 2026.

What is a sabbatical, and why does Rev. Hannah get one?

A sabbatical is an extended leave from the day-to-day responsibilities of ministry, set aside for rest, renewal, writing, study, and personal and spiritual growth. Within the Unitarian Universalist tradition, sabbaticals are common for ministers. Rev. Hannah's sabbatical is an accrued benefit of her ministry agreement with the Fellowship — she has earned one month of sabbatical for each year of service.

Is this Rev. Hannah's first sabbatical?

Yes! After four years of ministry with our Fellowship — and nine years of congregational ministry overall — this is Rev. Hannah's very first sabbatical.

What will Rev. Hannah be doing during her sabbatical?

Rev. Hannah plans to rest, spend time with family, do a significant amount of writing, and focus on her own spiritual renewal. While she will occasionally be out of town, Rev. Hannah will still be in Appleton for much of her sabbatical.

Can I contact Rev. Hannah during her sabbatical?

Here's a note from Rev. Hannah:

“In order to achieve the goals of a sabbatical – deep rest, spiritual renewal, and time away from the work of ministry – I really need to be out of touch with members of the congregation. Yes... that means even on Facebook, Messenger, or text messages. Yes, even if all you've sent me is a funny meme or a photo of your new tattoo... I won't be responding. My identity as a minister is absolutely at the heart of my relationships with each and every one of you. That's just how this profession works. Every time I'm in touch with you, I have a responsibility to show up as your minister – and that's a responsibility that's very important to me. So I will be out of contact for the entirety of my four months away.

Now if we happen to run into each other at the coffee shop or the farmer's market, you don't have to pretend you don't see me! If you have a therapist, you're familiar with the idea that when you run into them at Kwik Trip, you don't stop right then and there to have an impromptu session. But a smile and wave – or even a quick “See you in November!” – is more than welcome.”

Why does a minister need four months? Isn't a vacation enough?

The demands of parish ministry — spiritual, emotional, logistical, and relational — are cumulative in ways that a week or two of vacation simply cannot address. The day-to-day demands of parish ministry tend to undercut a minister's spiritual depth, and sabbaticals help to bridge that gap. An extended sabbatical allows a minister to truly step away, restore their heart and spirit, and return with renewed energy and focus.

Is this good for the congregation too, or just for Rev. Hannah?

Both! A ministerial sabbatical isn't just for the minister alone. This period of time is an opportunity for the congregation to reflect and discern together, recognizing that the work of the congregational community extends far beyond that of a single minister. This sabbatical is a chance for our Fellowship to deepen our practice of shared ministry and lean into the gifts and leadership of our own community.

Who will cover Rev. Hannah's responsibilities while she's away?

We have wonderful partners in place:

- **Rev. Allison Farnum** will preach one Sunday per month and support our Justice Action Ministry. A UU minister based in Evanston, IL, she serves as director of UU Prison Ministry of Illinois and guest-preached with us in January.
- **JD Gildemeister**, a local fundraising consultant, will support our Auction Team in planning a fall auction with a goal of raising \$25,000 for the Fellowship.
- **Rev. Christina** will help support the staff, Governing Board, and congregation while Rev. Hannah is away.
- **Guest preachers** will offer occasional Sunday services.
- **Lay leaders** from our Hubs and Spokes will be engaged throughout the sabbatical.

What if I need pastoral care while Rev. Hannah is away?

Rev. Christina will continue to lead the Fellowship's pastoral care ministries while Rev. Hannah is away, with the support of our wonderful Care Team. If you need pastoral care, you can reach out to Rev. Christina via email or call our emergency pastoral care line at 920.383.1565

Has our Fellowship done this before?

Yes. Rev. Christina took her own four-month sabbatical in 2023–24, and our congregation learned a great deal about how to support a minister's sabbatical while continuing the work of the congregation. We are drawing on that experience as we plan for this one.

What can I do to support this sabbatical?

The best thing you can do is embrace this season of shared ministry with openness and generosity. Attend services, participate in programs, support our fall auction, welcome our guest ministers warmly, and step up in whatever ways you can. As Rev. Christina put it, *"We will practice being a community that puts love at the center as we care for each other."*

You can also fill out your Rev. Hannah Sabbatical BINGO card and turn it in at the end of her sabbatical for a chance to win a collection of books she has read during her time away!