First of all, thank you so much church family for the blessing of a sabbatical. My family and I are so grateful for the gift of time. Time to connect with each other, time for me to recharge for the work of ministry, and time for God to speak into my life. Like many, I can struggle to rest and I can struggle to create silent space for God's voice. So this sabbatical has helped stand in a gap and I hope to pour out into our church family what I gained these 8 weeks.

I had a theme of connection for my sabbatical time. Some of what I planned went as planned, and there were some surprises, as God likes to bring our way. We had some great connection times as a family, both with me home more and through some trips. Our family went to Colorado for a week, which is a place that Annie and I both love, but we hadn't introduced the boys to. So from mountain tops to river valleys, we got to adventure in the Rockies in the Estes Park area. Our next trip was over July 4th to go see our good friends and former Point members Neil and Chrissy Hubers. The kids all had a great time reconnecting and playing on the beach. Our last trip was to Minnesota, where the boys got to meet cousins they had never met, and I was able to show them around the Twin Cities, where I grew up and went to college.

I had some opportunities to connect with friends that I used to live in community with. Dustin Fenton, who I worked with at two former workplaces, met me for some hiking in CO. Together we were able to take in some awesome alpine views, and managed to accomplish a one-day hike that summited two different 14,000 foot elevation peaks. Later in the summer I also got to see a couple friends in St. Louis, one of which was transitioning his family from being missionaries in Tanzania to Brazil.

I also got to have some great connection time with Annie and the boys in the time between trips. Annie works from home for World Vision, so I'm sure that at times she could have used a little less connection as we were all in the home at times with the summer heat! An unplanned connection happened for me with our home. I'm not a handyman at all, and I often call on friends to assist with projects around our house. But this summer I had a home improvement list to work through and enjoyed having the time to figure out some DIY projects and accomplish them when I hadn't taken the time in the past.

Outside of my regular quiet time and devotions, I had the opportunity to re-read a book by Pete Scazzero, "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality". I started it at the beginning of my sabbatical time, and finished it during a solitude retreat I took a couple weeks before coming back to work. Prior to my sabbatical, I had begun to uncover some areas of my life that I hadn't realized required grieving. Scazzero's book was helpful in giving me some insight into the realities of grieving since the human experience is one of constant loss and decline. I came to realize that the areas I had begun to realize needed grieving were only part of more to come. And while simultaneously getting overwhelmed with the reality that life is full of inescapable loss, there was hope.

"Good grieving is not just letting go, but also letting it bless us. The central message of Jesus and the Bible is that suffering and death brings resurrection and transformation. Jesus himself said, 'I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds' (John 12:24)."

One highlight spiritually from my sabbatical came during my solitude retreat. I went for a few nights to The Springs, a pastor retreat center in Oldenburg, IN. Solitude is a challenging practice for me, as I am extroverted and easily distracted. Truth be told, part way through I told Annie she should come join me for the last night, but in God's providence it was the same night as the Point Kids pool party, so she wasn't even able to join me if she wanted to. On property for The Springs there is a very nice, beautifully built chapel building. Very small, and very intentionally designed for encounters with God. There were communion elements on the altar, and a printed off liturgical resource for taking communion with God. Even being on staff at church, there was something sweet and special about sitting silently, unrushed, and reflecting on what Jesus did for us on the cross, and what that means for our daily lives.

So again, thank you for the blessing of taking a break so that I could have a “fab-batical”! There are so many wonderful things about our church and how we strive to do life together, and I’m thankful that the encouragement to experience and model sabbath rest is a value of our church’s leadership.