

## Dear Friend,

We want you to be among the first to know what's happening in our ministry with The Navigators and to ask for your partnership in funding. Melanie and I have reached significant milestones in our lives and ministry in the past year. We celebrated 14 years of marriage in May, we now have a 7, 5 and 2 year old, and in 2024 we will celebrate 12 years of serving with The Navigators. All of these have been rewarding adventures!

We began with The Navigators in 2012 by starting our Navigator training at Penn State. We spent 4 wonderful years in Happy Valley and are very thankful for that season of life. For the last 8 years, we've been leading the Navigator work at Millersville University. During that time God has grown our family, given us a home and increased our staff team. We have gladly given our lives to help advance the gospel on campus and feel we still have so much more to do!

The Navigators recognizes that for staff to have long-term effectiveness in ministry, they must occasionally step back from ministry to rest, recover, reflect, and refocus. The Navigators has created a sabbatical process for that very purpose. With the support of our leadership, Melanie and I will begin a six-month sabbatical in January!

No, sabbatical is not a vacation! In fact, it's a structured, supervised time to intentionally replenish and regroup for future ministry. The first phase is resting and recovering—doing what puts energy back into our tired bodies. The second phase is reflecting and refocusing—learning more about God and ourselves. The final phase is realignment—seeking God's best fit for us in life and ministry. During our sabbatical, we'll meet regularly with an advisor as we work through our personalized sabbatical plan. All of this is to prepare us to finish well the ministry to which God has called us.

Financial needs can add pressure during this time, as well as potentially some travel costs. Would you prayerfully consider joining our monthly support team or making a special contribution to bless us during this time? Some can give monthly or special one-time financial gifts but, others may have access to locations that we might be able to use for weekends away or other resources that might be a blessing. Would you please pray and consider how God may have you participate?

Thank you for your investment in us and the Kingdom! Please know how much we appreciate you!

Sincerely,

*John & Melanie Birkenbine*

# How Is A Sabbatical Different From A Vacation?

*They are similar, and they are different.*

- **Similarities – Both:**

- Have elements of rest.
- Are applications of the Biblical Principle of Rest, Sabbath, Festivals, Sabbatic Year.
- Are breaks from the regular schedule of work and are a change of pace and focus.
- Requires planning.

- **Differences – 3 Differences:**

- Definition
- Goal/Results
- Supervision

- **Definitions**

- Vacation:

- A period of suspension of work, study, or other activity, usually used for rest, recreation, or travel; recess or holiday: School children are on vacation now.
- A part of the year, regularly set aside, when normal activities of law courts, legislatures, etc., are suspended.
- Freedom or release from duty, business, or activity. (Dictionary.com)

- Sabbatical: There are several models for a sabbatical. The sabbatical definition we are using is from The Navigators' Sabbatical Guidelines:

- A guided process where we deliberately trust God for the unfinished as we disengage from normal ministry and leadership involvement to allow for serious evaluation of life and ministry.

- Our sabbatical model has five Phases (note "Rest" is only one of the Phases):

- Release/Relinquish,
- Rest/Recovery,
- Reflection/Refocus,
- Realignment/Reassignment,
- Re-Entry/Re-Engagement

- **Goal/Results:**

- The goal of vacation is usually "a break" where you've experienced a different focus and pace. You hope to come back refreshed, but you often come back tired.
- The goal of a sabbatical is to be refreshed, hear from God, and learn from Jesus. A result of the serious evaluation will be intentional life and ministry changes.

- **Supervision**

- A vacation is self-directed, unsupervised
- A sabbatical is team-directed, supervised.