

Pastor's Reflections

by Jeffrey E. Frantz

With the good news this past week that our church received the full amount requested in the grant proposal for my Sabbatical leave in 2010, I want to share some more reflections with you on all of this.

Sabbatical leave, revisited. As many of you by now know, I will be taking a four-month Sabbatical leave from early May to early September of 2010. A Sabbatical leave (for five or more years of service) is included in the terms of *The Call* I accepted to become the pastor of our church back in May of 2000.

In an effort to hopefully avoid confusion, please note the dates for my leave: *early May to early September of 2010*. Again, that is **2010**, next year.

This leave will afford me a wonderful opportunity for rest and renewal as well as time to focus on a number of issues related to the future of our church. Fourteen weeks, or thereabouts, of my leave will be spent living in France. Here are my words of explanation for the France option as expressed in the grant proposal to the Lilly Foundation (whom we just learned has fully funded my Sabbatical):

The French connection. "I chose France for two reasons. To begin with, throughout my life, I have thrived in the international world. Learning the language and culture of other countries not only renews my soul, it enlarges my world and feeds my spirit.

Secondly, and most importantly, for years, I have wanted to learn French (actually, Yvette is half French; maiden name, Dubois). My life and ministry have always been about a deepening of mutual understanding and acceptance in the international community.

My two-years in the Peace Corps in Panama, years ago, enabled me to learn Spanish. Following this, I learned Portuguese during a thirteen-month stint in Portugal playing basketball for *O Futebol Clube do Porto*. Both of these experiences and the languages I learned have helped me immensely in my ministry here in South Florida (particularly the Spanish). However, with the considerable Haitian community down here, the language that is missing is French (while Haitians' first language is Creole, they understand and speak French as well). I led a ten-day mission trip to Haiti in 1981 and recall the limitations of not being able to speak French. Thus, learning French is something I have wanted to do since my arrival here in South Florida in 2000. Fluency in French would help improve my ability to advocate and interact with the Haitian community"

Reflections on the BIG PICTURE. While on Sabbatical leave, I will have restful time to reflect and do research on the unique demographic that is Miami Lakes. The emergence of Hispanic Protestants is in many ways a recent emergent in American life. Yet, their numbers are mounting every year. In the years ahead, and particularly around

my leave-experience, I invite you to reflect as well and to join me in envisioning the unfolding of our future in the years ahead.

How do you envision our church five years from now? And ten years, or twenty-five years?

Part of the benefit of my Sabbatical leave experience will be the progress we make together in this envisioning process.

Dr. Paul Veliyathil to be Interim Pastor. In my absence, popular preacher, Rev. Dr. Paul Veliyathil, will filling in as Interim Pastor and preacher. In addition to doing the weekly bulletin preparation and preaching on Sundays, Dr. Veliyathil will do pastoral calling (i.e., hospitals etc.), attend the monthly Council meetings, and have afternoon office hours two days per week.

Preparing for my Sabbatical leave. Between now and May of 2010 (when my four-month leave begins), we will have on-going conversation about the shared benefits of the leave experience. Our Clergy Renewal Support Team (CRST), chaired by Dr. Arlene Brett, will coordinate these conversations, which will culminate with a ***Bon Voyage*** send-off dinner, after worship on the Sunday before my departure.

This Sabbatical leave experience promises to be a time of growth and renewal, not just for me as your pastor and friend, but also for you, the members and friends of our church. Stay tuned, as the conversation begins leading up to my actual leave in early May of 2010.