

Pastor Steve's 2025 Spiritual Renewal Leave

Summary and Reflections

My time on spiritual renewal leave was filled with God moments, blessings, gratitude and renewal through time with family, friends, self and nature. I am grateful for all the support I received from SPRC, staff and the congregation.

July 2-5: Cara and I spent time visiting close friends Dan and Marci Robinson at their home on the Rappahannock River in Virginia. We shared lots of memories, listened to good music, told stories, danced, floated in the river and laughed a lot! We also spent July 4th with my brother Brad, my dad and lots of extended family. Good for the soul.

July 5-12: Cara and I were at Virginia Beach with sons Eli and Atticus as well as my brothers and their families and my late sister's family. Lots of nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews! We went to church at Virginia Beach UMC with my dad, sons and two great nephews. It was great to build sand sculptures, swim in the ocean, go crabbing, eat seafood with family, enjoy long conversations on the beach, take walks and celebrate my aunt's life spreading her ashes in the ocean.



VA Beach UMC



Most of the Family at VA Beach



Remembering Aunt Barb

July 12-23: Time with my dad at his home. My original plan was to stay with my dad for a few days and then go backpacking on trails off Skyline Drive July 15-18 and be home by July 19. But, I changed my plans as my time with my dad resulted in me being able to help him transition into an assisted living community near my brother Jeff in Fredericksburg, VA. On our way to my dad's house from VA Beach, we stopped in Dumfries, the town where I grew up, and visited my mom's and my sister's grave. On Sunday, July 13, we went to worship at Arcola UMC where I interned during seminary. It was a gift to visit with Pastor Chris Riedel who is in his 30th year there. While staying with my dad, we did a lot of work cleaning up his house. We also had a lot of fun marveling at the burdock plant in his front yard and a hornets nest! We actually saw a hornet being "born". I got it on video! I took my dad to the Paramount Assisted Living community to visit a few times. On July 23, my brother Jeff and I had lunch with him at Paramount and then he left to go to an orientation without us. He has been there since then – just over a one month – and, he now sees it as his home. He is experiencing community, enjoying regular meals and helping others. This is the greatest

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gift of all that would not have been possible if I had not been on renewal leave. God opened doors and paved the way.



Mom and Shelly's Graves



My childhood home in Dumfries, VA



After worship at Arcola UMC in Arcola, VA with Rev. Chris Riedel, my dad and nephew



My dad visiting Paramount Assisted Living



Marveling at a hornets' nest



Home Project w/Cara

July 24-August 3: Time at home and at sons Eli and Atticus' house in Akron. Cara and I worked together on some long overdue projects at home. I spent time at Eli and Atticus' house organizing their garage so it can be used for projects and fun on a skateboard ramp. Cara and I worshipped with our sons at Mt. Zion UMC and we worshipped the two of us at Church of the Saviour UMC. Both experiences were really wonderful. We also welcomed my nephew Pete and his wife Britt and their new baby Miles into their new home just five blocks from our home!



Worship at Montrose Zion UMC



Pete and Britt in new home



Skate Ramps in Boys Garage

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August 4-7: Visit with close friends in Madison, Wisconsin. Amanda Stein is a District Superintendent in the Wisconsin conference. We went to seminary with Amanda at Wesley Theological Seminary. We enjoyed visiting with her and her husband Bryan. We had meaningful conversations, good food, and time out on Bryan's boat.



Amanda, her son and dad



Food and fellowship.
Essential for renewal!



On Bryan's boat with Amanda
and her dad

August 8-23: Time at Cabin in Blind River, Ontario, Canada. Cara and I stayed one night in Escanaba in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on our way to Canada. So good to have time to be together. In Canada, we had a few days just the two of us, a few days shared with Cara's sister Marny and her son Doescher and daughter Anna, then I spent the last six days with my good friend and mentor in ministry Rev. Gary Heaton, and his wife, Beth. My brother and cousin also joined us for three days. Eli and his friend Maddie were there too. We saw sunsets and sunrises, went fishing, ate the fish we caught, went hiking and swimming, played music, sang, played games and read. We even went on a flying tour in a float plane! Everything was incredibly rich for my soul to get to spend uninterrupted time with these people who mean so much to me.



Our sanctuary place in Canada



Fish caught with niece, Anna



Bass Casserole for dinner

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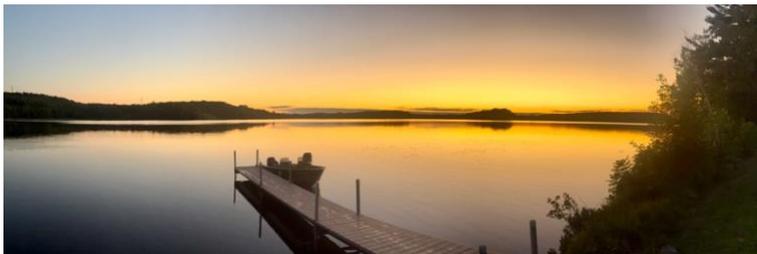
Summary and Reflections



On top of hill for sunset with brother, cousin and friends



Flying tour with son Eli, his friend and Gary



Our dock at sunset. Beautiful. Connection with nature

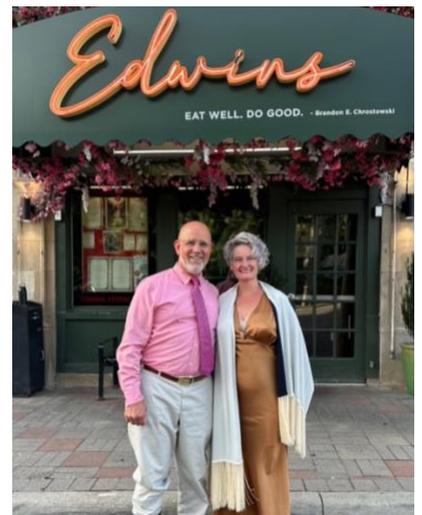


In the float plane

August 23-26: Return from Canada, Preparing for Return to MUMC. On my drive home from Canada, I was blessed to see a huge rainbow – a reminder of God's promise to always be with us and to bless us. On Sunday and Monday, I binged on MUMC YouTube videos of worship and Pastor Captures to get myself ready for returning to ministry. On Monday night, August 25, my last night of renewal leave, Cara and I went out to dinner to celebrate our 27th wedding anniversary. We went to a restaurant in Cleveland that Jan Robinson recommended. It was a wonderful way to bring my renewal leave to an end. I am back and eager to be in ministry. I feel blessed and called to serve as the Sr. Pastor at MUMC.



Rainbow on way home



Anniversary Dinner

Pastor Steve