



**PEOPLE REACHING PEOPLE**

**A MINISTRY OF BISHOP TODD  
& REVEREND PATSY MCGREGOR**

Engaging Partners in Evangelism,  
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## Sabbatical Stories

**Sabbatical: a period of leave for study and reflection**

**Why take a sabbatical?**

**What happened during our time?**

**What are some of the takeaways?**

Over the next several weeks, Patsy and I will share reflections on our experiences during our long overdue sabbatical with answers to the questions listed above. As we bring you along on our journey, we trust you will see this as a time of reflection in your own lives and encourage you to devote time for prayer and meditation, opening yourselves to what God has in store for you.

### **Why Take a Sabbatical?**

I think only one person actually asked me why I was taking a sabbatical. Many asked what I was going to do with the four months of Sabbatical, but most people didn't ask why we need one. Perhaps they were being polite and didn't want to pry, but here I think it's appropriate to share with our friends and supporters.

First of all, I must confess that I didn't see it coming. I knew life as clergy was difficult and demanding, carrying lots of responsibilities and hard work. Over the past twelve years the Diocese of Tulear had progressed from only 11 churches to more than 100, and from 300 parishioners to over 8,000; from a staff of 6 to more than 40! Growth of this size took a great deal of time and energy, coupled with a team of dedicated people to move this new Diocese forward.

I began noticing that I was spending six to eight months each year away from home in Diocesan, Provincial, or International capacities. Over time, I was no longer able to take my day off because I was

either traveling or trying to catch up. Eventually, this meant I wasn't able to take any time off except for vacation time – which was *very* limited. What began as a happy, joyful, enthusiastic, exciting challenge and ministry endeavor of being a missionary for the Lord was turning me into an unhappy, grumpy, burdened, tired and workaholic old man. The ministry was growing, and yet, I was dying inside.

I recognized what kind of toll the ministry was taking on me personally and physically. There were some health concerns: I had gained weight, my blood pressure was high, and one late afternoon while on vacation, I thought I was having a heart attack (thank goodness, as we found out later, I wasn't!). I also found it difficult to concentrate, to stay focused in meetings and with friends. I found myself tending to be short with people and didn't like who I had become.

At the suggestion of SAMS mission personnel, Patsy and I decided to get some professional advice in October 2018. During the second day of this counseling retreat, it was pointed out that I needed to go on a sabbatical. *Immediately!* I tried to push it off to a couple years in the future when it might be easier to get away from daily ministry at the Diocese, but the advisers said waiting longer to take a sabbatical could have a negative impact in two important areas of my life: my marriage and my ministry in Madagascar.

This insight came as a surprise, and yet at the same time, spoke truth to my inmost being. These counselors saw the effects of being overburdened by ministry. They had the foresight of helping me veer away from becoming an unhappy, grumpy, burdened, tired, workaholic, old man and brazenly told me to take a break.

I realized the truth of needing a Sabbatical. There was no way I would jeopardize my marriage and my ministry, two of the most important areas of my life. But no one ever said anything like this so boldly to me before. It was as if a light went on! Taking a sabbatical became a "no brainer" for me. Patsy and I returned to Madagascar to hastily tie up loose ends and fulfill ministry commitments, and a few weeks later we were on a plane returning to the USA to spend time with family for the holidays.

The sabbatical was designed to restore, renew, and revive, bringing me back to the person God created; to be joy-filled and living this out in family, relationships and ministry. As Patsy and I wrote a list of joyful things we each like to do, some together and some alone, we found balance. Intentionally, these fun activities brought joy back into our lives, marriage and ministry.

In future messages, Patsy and I look forward to elaborating on how we spent the sabbatical time, some of the spiritual insights gained and lessons learned.

+ Todd

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## Serving Christ Together

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