

## 2016: A SABBATH YEAR FOR THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NEW YORK

### Introduction

- A. At its September Stated Meeting, the Presbytery of Western New York passed a series of motions from Council, designating 2016 as a Sabbath Year.
- B. The Council hopes Sabbath Year will help us: see why below
- I. The Need for a Sabbath Rest
  - A. Many wonder why we need a Sabbath in the presbytery, especially since many outside and inside the church do not observe a day of rest.
  - B. Both the Bible and the Confessions are clear about the need to keep Sabbath.
  - C. We know failing to get needed rest has physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences.
  - D. The two readings of the Sabbath commandment offer two reasons
    - i. Exodus reminds us that we are not God and even God took the seventh day to rest after creation.
    - ii. Deuteronomy reminds us that we are no longer slaves, doomed to produce.
  - E. Why Does the Presbytery of Western New York Need a Sabbath?
    - i. Stop what we've been doing long enough to gain perspective.
    - ii. Remember God's sovereignty and providence.
    - iii. Open ourselves to the fresh movements of the Spirit.
    - iv. Connect with one another, learning to worship and work together, and meeting around tables to share common meals.
  - F. Spiritual Practices for Sabbath
  - G. Specific Plans for how the Presbytery of Western New York will keep Sabbath.
- II. The Need for Branches
  - A. In John 15, Jesus says, "I am the vine and you are the branches."
  - B. As a presbytery, God calls us to live into that vision.
  - C. Through the branches, presbytery will fulfill the following marks of the church:
    - i. Provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard;
    - ii. Provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received; and
    - iii. Nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.
  - D. The branches will focus on the last of these three by following these practices:
    - i. We Gather.
    - ii. We Share a Meal.
    - iii. We Worship and Pray.
    - iv. We Engage One Another in Conversation.
    - v. We Explore How We Might Collaborate.
  - E. Specifics of the Plan
- III. FAQs

Conclusion: For What Do We Hope?

- A. The Sabbath Year is Not an End to Itself, but a Means to an End.
- B. In 2017, the Presbytery of Western New York will engage in a time of discernment.
  - i. What is discernment?
- C. 2016 lays important foundations for 2017
  - i. Reminder of God's Sovereignty and Providence
  - ii. Restoration of Broken Relationships
  - iii. Renewal of What It Means to be the Church as the Presbytery of Western New York
  - iv. Redefinition of Mission