

Good afternoon Board,

I will be away on Sabbath as you meet, and so I thank you for receiving my report in the consent agenda and I hope that we'll have an opportunity to connect at Annual Meeting or anytime upon my return on January 25.

In my October Board report we talked about the value of Sabbath and my future goal of helping the congregation to develop a practice of shared organizational rest. I continue that effort and still, it is time to create space for our employees to get some much needed restoration and head space for the work ahead.

I included this brief word to the congregation, visible on our website, in relation to our sabbath. I will continue to explore the idea of sabbath as good, holy, countercultural and life saving when I return!

Why Sabbath?

A Sabbath is a time to rest. Sabbath is an instruction from God to the people and in all things, God leads the way by living by good example. It is good; and holy, and counter cultural; and life saving, to find meaningful ways to rest through the day, through the week, in our careers, in our families. This year we have just spent in our homes was one of the busiest years we've ever known.

In January the church office staff begins a staggered and shared time of rest. This comes at the end of a difficult year for all of us -- and so we encourage you to consider your own practices of rest and work while we are doing the same.

Church office staff are taking turns resting - we aren't all gone at once -- and we have covenanted with one another to allow each person's work, while they are away, to rest too. We do not expect the co-workers remaining on the job to do twice the work while a teammate is resting. No, in fact, we will honor their rest by leaving that work alone, for a brief time. In the life of the church we have term limits for Elders, Board members, Deacons because we value not only sharing the work but we value the ability to rest, to take time to set aside work and find new work. Your pastors hope you will fully consider the practices of rest and restoration that are helping you survive the pandemic, and we pray that there is a seed of passion resting in you right now, stirring, growing, ready and waiting to be put to use at the right time.

Blessed Be. Pastor April

I will add an extra word of encouragement that I have shared with other church leaders and Pastor Jerri - I know we are facing enormous decisions right now, and that sabbath right now is questionable. I have debated it several times. But I also know that these decisions have been long in the making and the work will continue when I return. We will make each decision together, one at a time. We have the wisdom we need, in the bodies who comprise this congregation, and we will help this congregation make informed decisions one day at a time. You may find me "hiding" with no video and no sound in the zoom room at the board meeting, you may not. I do trust the work you are doing while I am away and I look forward to returning to the team and picking up wherever we may be when I return. Thank you for being at the board meeting and for doing this work now placed in your hands.

Things I celebrate from the last quarter:

- Giving of offerings and tithes continued through the end of the year, I am so thankful for the continued support of our members, especially in this very difficult time.

- The Youth Group held a group zoom over Thanksgiving break and it was a wonderful time of sharing.
- Some prayer pods continue to meet and Spiritual Formation is making plans for more small group activities, spiritual connections, fellowship and relationship building.
- We have successfully met the goal of transferring to Quickbooks from the CDM software system that was no longer serving our accounting needs.
- Transition Team is moving forward and their work brings me HOPE. I have HOPE!
- Interfaith Clergy began resuming a monthly lunch meeting (or every other month) and we have begun building new relationship connections, new partnerships. I participated in 2 peaceful transfer of power demonstrations with Interfaith Clergy and we will participate in the National Covid-19 Memorial on January 19 by ringing our chimes in remembrance of the lives lost this year to the virus.
- Advent & Christmas Eve worship were so meaningful and worship throughout the pandemic has continued to be innovative, filled with grace, and growing in their gifts and abilities and teammates. Sometimes worship is one technical glitch after another but I am always thankful for the spirit of the worship team, they are AMAZING.
- Not last, not least, working with Jerri as Interim is a blessing I will continue to thank God for long throughout my ministry. There's not enough time and space for all I value and all I've learned.

One Last Pastoral Note/Prayer for the next quarter:

We need to understand, more fully, with our whole body, mind, and spirit, that there is no “going back” to the building we knew

or the church we knew,
the people who used to be there.

There is grief as we understand this, as we live through this. We don't go backwards, only forward. It's important to we train ourselves to widen our eyes and experiences as we do the discernment work - because we deserve to go back after the year we've had; but we can't - but we can go forward

with the building we have,
the church we are,
the people and the gifts that are here.

We deserve to grieve fully, and to find peace of mind. Grieve how a year of traumatic events changes us. Understand how we will continue to adjust and find our way, but acknowledge we have all been affected. I know plenty about people's lives right now and -- still I know I'm barely beginning to learn just how the lives of church members have drastically changed.

People have moved, become unemployed, some have transferred their household back and forth more than once; Families have divorced, married, had babies, experienced multiple losses. People who were physically strong may now need help; this work from home environment has brought previously isolated folks back into leadership and fellowship! Some families have moved in another congregational direction, and others have been able to resume activity because of our virtual offerings. I have had church leaders step away from positions due to a variety of reasons - and I have had church leaders step into new positions in new directions because this year has provided growth and courage for change.

We are becoming. This is where my heart is for this congregation.

We are in a taking stock and re-establishing relationships phase as a congregation. We're gonna need all hands on deck - and I now assume that people's lives have changed so much and their physical, mental, spiritual gifts and energy may have likewise shifted. Everyone gets to grieve all this -- and then express how they can and will help this body move forward. I love you all. May your work be blessed. - April