

Dear Beloveds,

Many of us are familiar with the idea of sacred space. As a people of faith, we gather together in a house of worship every Sunday, a holy and sanctified space in which we pray, sing, and restore our spirits. Christians find their God in a church bearing the symbolism of the cross, Muslims find meaning in a mosque as they prostrate in prayer, Jews find purpose in a synagogue reciting the Torah, and others find the divine in the light of the sun spilling through the trees of a dense forest. Sacred space, yes. But what about sacred time?

Sacred time is sabbath. It is a time to pull away from the busyness and demands of daily life. It is time to be with whatever it is we hold sacred, whether that be the essence of love, a great mystery, or that still, small voice within. It is a time to commune with love and awe and hope. It is not a passive pause of idleness and boredom, but an active pause of introspection and prayer and contemplation.

To me, this is connecting to God, to all that is sacred and holy. I find this in the depths of nature, I find this while paused in loving kindness meditation, I even find this while reading a favorite novel. The caress of the wind, the awe of a sunset, or a moment of prayer, communing with my God.

Life is one rushed moment to the next, crossing off items on an endless, mental to-do list. In order to remain peaceful, calm, and centered, we need to pause with that sacred time; moments of spiritual renewal and health. We need to step away from work and laundry and family demands, if only for a moment.

How can we incorporate sabbath into our lives? Can we do this daily? Weekly? I try to do so, however imperfectly. This may be an afternoon prayer or an evening break with a favorite novel. This may be a Sunday afternoon immersed in the intricate wonders of nature with my dear husband as we hike through rural Pennsylvania. So, I invite you to pause. What kind of sacred rest can you intentionally incorporate? What calms your mind and feeds your spirit? Often, at least in the beginning, it is a deliberate practice that we do imperfectly. But we can grow.

A wise colleague once told me, reflecting on the life of a parish minister, "If you give them all of you, you can't give them the best of you." It is my intention to give you the best of me. And so, I'll take some time for sabbath this spring by leaving for a sabbatical. I will graciously use this time to attend a month-long retreat, to partake in Buddhist meditations and teachings, to spend time with family, to cultivate hobbies, and

learn about world religions, theology and faith. It is a sacred time that I will not take for granted. I hope this can invite a time for sabbath into your own lives.

So may we each make time for sabbath. May we intentionally step away from the busyness and urgency of life and instead pause in sacred stillness, even if just for a moment. And may that moment become an hour, become an afternoon, become a day, become a week. We each need a time of healing and restoration so that we can bring our best selves to the world with refreshed spirits and deepened minds. May we remember, as we tend to family or friends or patients or clients, "If you give them all of you, you can't give them the best of you."

With love,
Rev. Jane