

When I served on the board, my perspective on church life significantly broadened. Instead of solely focusing on strengthening the impacts of projects I was involved with, my attention shifted to finances, bylaws, legalities, strategic planning, and other governance-related matters. Increasingly, I found myself guided by a critical question: What is best for the long-term health of our congregation?

What is best for the long-term health of our congregation? Among the many vital aspects required for this, few match the importance more than the care and support of our minister. In recognition of this, the board recently approved a sabbatical leave for Rev. Jane. This decision highlights our commitment to her well-being and spiritual nourishment and reflects our dedication to sustaining a vibrant and healthy spiritual community.

Ministers, like Rev. Jane, often take sabbaticals to refill their spiritual wells, a crucial element of effective spiritual leadership. Typically, sabbaticals may be used for all forms of professional, religious, spiritual, and personal growth. The daily demands of church ministry can diminish a pastor's spiritual reserves, potentially impacting their ability to lead effectively. Sabbaticals offer a vital respite, enabling ministers to rejuvenate their spiritual connection and return to their duties refreshed and revitalized.

Ministerial sabbaticals are a well-established tradition within Unitarian Universalism. Typically, these sabbaticals are built into the calling process and included as a contractual benefit, as is the case with Rev. Jane. The Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association guidelines call for ministers to accrue one month of sabbatical leave for each year of service, with sabbaticals taken every five to seven years. Rev. Jane will be taking her sabbatical in her fifth year of service to our church, aligning with these practices. While exact dates have yet to be determined, the sabbatical will begin sometime in February 2025.

Rev. Jane and the board are currently developing a plan to ensure continuity in ministerial responsibilities during her leave. This includes identifying inspirational ministers who can continue our tradition of transformational worship services and deeply compassionate pastoral care. At the center of this work is a commitment to align with our church's mission: to invite seekers into a spiritual community, connect souls in mystery and wonder, and ignite compassion into action.

There are many details still to come regarding Rev. Jane's sabbatical. The board plans to use various communication channels to answer questions, address concerns, and keep the congregation updated on the progress. Please stay tuned for opportunities to gather both in person and via Zoom, and keep an eye on our newsletter, weekly emails, and direct email communications for the latest information.

The upcoming sabbatical for Rev. Jane will not only provide her with an opportunity for personal renewal but will also offer opportunities for growth to the congregation as a whole. During this time, we will have the chance to welcome visiting ministers who will bring new perspectives and ideas, enriching our worship services and spiritual explorations. This period will also enable us to strengthen connections within our congregation as we support each other and the Liturgy

Team during Rev. Jane's absence. Ultimately, this sabbatical will help us build resilience and improve our spiritual well-being as a community, preparing us to welcome Rev. Jane back with renewed energy and fresh insights to further our mission and vision well into the future.

*~ Kris Tyssowski*

*Sabbatical Co-ordinator*