

Sabbath And Renewal Leave



By Barb Rich, Member of the Sabbath and Renewal Group

Faith UMC fully supports Pastor Steve's Renewal Leave from mid-June 2017 to early October 2017. Our congregation sees the benefit of such a time to renew, refresh, and grow spiritually not just for our Pastor, but for ourselves. The Renewal Leave supports our 20/20 Vision goals to include deepening discipleship and encouraging the congregation to participate in spiritual practices that will nurture our individual (and corporate) faith journey and support continued growth in vitality.

The purpose of the Renewal Leave for Pastor Steve is:

- a felt call to renew the practice of regularly taking Sabbath in his own life, as well as,
- feeling a call to invite and help Faith's congregation to experience Sabbath and to grow with him in the practice of Sabbath as a lifestyle...
- knowing full well that to make such a shift in our lives will not happen overnight, but will be a journey over time and one that will require 'intention' on everyone's part.

What does it mean to 'take Sabbath'?

1. Sabbath is rooted in our Jewish heritage. In the book of beginnings, Genesis, God teaches the people of Israel to share in the blessing of this 7th day. For God took pleasure in what had been made and on this day of rest declared love toward humanity, and all creation, in the form of time shared with them.

2. It is the Fourth Commandment – 8 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” Exodus 20:8-11, NIV.

3. And in Deuteronomy the commandment to 'observe' the Sabbath day is tied to the experience of a people newly released from bondage. Slaves (which they were under Egyptians) could not take a day off; free people could. “Together, these two renderings of the Sabbath commandment summarize the most fundamental stories and beliefs of the Hebrew scriptures: creation and exodus, humanity in God's image, and a people liberated from captivity. One story emphasizes holiness, the other, social justice. Sabbath crystallizes Torah's portrait of who God is and what human beings are most fully meant to be.” [Dorothy Bass, Keeping Sabbath: Reviving a Christian Practice.]

Keeping Sabbath [Shabbat] for the Old Testament religious Jew began a couple hours before sundown on Friday and lasted 'til sundown on Saturday. The historic practice of setting aside one day a week for rest and worship promises peace, joy and blessings in meals shared, scripture readings, music, prayer, taking walks, resting, and play. It is a festive celebratory time spent with family, friends, being with/assisting the sick or the alone, and being in nature. For the Jew, Shabbat powerfully alters their relationships to nature, work, God and others. It is a shared way of life, activities which become part of our natural rhythm.

Jesus, a Jew himself, took Sabbath. There are many New Testament stories which tell how Jesus constantly reminded the Pharisees and other Leaders of the Jewish people that God created Sabbath for us and our needs, not rules to be kept, but as a connecting point between ourselves and God. Here too we often read of Jesus going off to a quiet place - away from the crowds. Jesus saw the importance of a time of rest - to be able to hear God's voice, to be present to God so that He could be present with the people and the world around Him. This gave Jesus, and can give each of us, a sense of balance, and a renewed energy for the coming week/tasks, and the knowledge that we are only days away from another Shabbat [Sabbath].

It is hoped that by participating in this Sabbath journey we each will experience the joy of knowing that God just wants to spend time with us...meaningful, quality time which will bring joy and peace to our weary minds, bodies and hungry souls.

Membership Care Ministry Team



Happy Mother's Day:

On behalf of Faith United Methodist Church, we would like to wish everyone a Happy Mother's Day on Sunday, May 14th.



We extend our deepest sympathy to:

Don Adolph, Christy Kraemer, Brian Adolph and family on the death of Pat Adolph, who passed away April 26.



A Birthday party and open house to celebrate Delbert (Deb) Larrick's 100th birthday will take place at the Landings of Canton on Sunday, May 28th from 2 to 4 pm. All are welcome. Birthday cards may be sent to Deb Larrick at 4550 Hills and Dales Canton, Ohio 44708, Room #110.

Flowers on the altar, Sunday May 28th, are in honor of Deb Larrick's 100th birthday and in remembrance of beloved wife, Clara Larrick.