

**The Called Together Church**  
**Theme: Summer Sabbath**

**The enduring importance of summer as a time of Sabbath...  
of work slowing down a bit.**

How can we equip laity for listening for God in the summer, a season replete with its own ways to pay attention? And what is the relationship between Sabbath and our work in the world? We know that it is August, and already we have begun to turn our attention to the fall.

Our invitation to you, and the people you serve, is to not go there yet!

**Words to Live By**

Quotes to support lay ministry

*During the hours of my sleep how will God prepare to use my obedience, service and speech when morning breaks? I go to sleep to get out of the way for awhile. I get into the rhythm of salvation. While we sleep great and marvelous things are happening, things far beyond our ability to create. Then when we rise, our work can settle into the context of God's work. Our human work can be integrated into God's holy work.*

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places, Eugene Peterson

VI

*Sit and be still  
until in the time  
of no rain you hear  
beneath the dry wind's  
commotion in the trees  
the sound of flowing  
water among the rocks,  
a stream unheard before,  
and you are where  
breathing is prayer.*

Wendell Berry, from Sabbaths 2001

**Lay Empowerment Reflection Questions**

Small group/Bible Study questions to use anytime

To the degree that summer involves rest... stopping... letting down your Busy-ness and perhaps your guard... you can end up hearing and feeling things that the pace of the rest of the year conveniently keeps hidden, and these things lend themselves to small group discussion.

Sabbath does indeed involve doing less, and when you stop long enough to hear yourself think and feel again, without filters, it can be like a tub draining out water: you notice how truly tired you are, rest for oh, a day or so, and

then can't understand why you aren't back to "normal." The tub stays empty. Or, to shift metaphors, you have lost your salt. As in Jesus' parable in the Gospels of both Matthew and Mark:

**"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It is no good for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown away. Listen, then, if you have ears!"**

We are scared of these moments, and tend to scramble to try to go back, to try what worked before. According to Jesus, that effort will fail; it's not even good enough for the manure pile. Enough said. At the heart of these shifts in energy, these sudden warnings, is a creative invitation. These fadings are transitional states, and what makes them scary, is not knowing where the energy will next come from. The Jungian analyst James Hollis, in "Swamplands of the Soul," thinks of losing energy as a crucial signal from the soul:

*"...the ebb and flow of energy, which is a natural function of our mortal state, nonetheless is a vital guide to whether the choices we are making are right for us. **If what we are doing is right, the energy is available.**"* (Emphasis ours)

#### **Group questions:**

- Do an inventory of what has faded for you and what is still potent.
- Where are you still "salty"?
- How might the remaining days of summer renew that focus... and where do you need to put something down for now?
- What steps are involved in acting on what you hear?
- What is the cost... and the promise... of acting? Of not acting?

## **Screen Savers**

*Good movies for equipping*

### **CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN**

"Cheaper by the Dozen" is a mediocre movie at best, but hey—it's summer. It does provide some good clips around the themes of balancing family and work; the complexity when both partners have work that is important to them. If you are just looking for a humorous clip to portray the chaos and stress of 'typical' American family life, go to the scene where the frog gets loose during breakfast. It could be used as a humorous way to begin a conversation or sermon on the need for Sabbath.

(2003, starring Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt)

## **Sermon Excerpt**

*Connecting the Word with Life*

"You know our resting places." (Psalm 139)

"The psalmist talks about resting places and I love this expression of deep spirituality. It is a theme that runs counter to our present culture. If the Bible refers to resting places, then is it assumed that all people have them or ought to have them. They are to be seen as important. Have you resting places?"

What images are brought to mind when you think of resting places? Do you think of a place, experience or an attitude? For me it is about all three.... Rest is an essential part of what remakes us. ; It is an essential part of soul care—real us, inner us care.

In my life journey to date I have learned that I can only do and achieve what I do because rest is an intentional part of my daily life. If God needed to rest on the Sabbath, so I need my Sabbath times.

This summer will you join me in both making time to rest—going to restful places, having restful experiences and resting the mind from its normal full program. I wonder if any of us would be brave enough that when someone is moaning about how busy they are we would say:

“I am so sorry that you have to talk about your busy-ness. We are all busy but actually it is more interesting and of equal importance to rest and talk about how we are resting. Can you tell me how you are resting?”

Enjoy the summer. May you know your resting places and spaces. They are crucial for a healthy soul. May we also always remember to allow each other to have our resting and rejuvenating times. It is self care, congregational care, and community care at its best.

Rev. Simon Foster, Priest-in-Charge,  
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## The Call to Collaboration

*Share the resources you have found and like*

Please send us your resources on mutual ministry: Sermons on equipping people for lay ministry, church newsletter articles, quotes, questions that invite people into reflection on their call, relevant books, etc.

If you send it to us, it could make a big difference for someone who needs to hear just what you wrote.

**How to be in touch**

Simply email us at [info@lumunos.org](mailto:info@lumunos.org)

## The Final Word

Summer can be that time when you idly reach for a book you have wanted to read, and find something wonderful and unexpected. On a recent retreat I (Nina) brought along Jon Kabat-Zinn’s book from a couple of years ago, “Coming to Your Senses.” Late one night I opened it randomly (ha!) to a chapter called “The Infidelity of Busyness.” He quoted a favorite author of mine, the poet David Whyte, and this quote, so utterly uncompromising and unexpected, hit me hard:

**“Stress means we have committed adultery with regard to our marriage with time.”**

- David Whyte, “Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity”  
I love this quote for its sheer toughness, its unblinking, uncompromising premise that if there is any stress, well, you have already blown it. But how? I assume by overloading, by not focusing on one task in the present, the thing

before you. As Jesus said, "Let your eye be single." Easier said than done, but the goal is clear. And I confess I hate this quote for its lack of wiggle room. I mean, really: everyone has too much to do, and no one else to do it. Stress is a natural, inevitable response... isn't it? Is it really my fault, on a par with breaking a commandment? Isn't that over-reacting? In my desire to fiddle with the precision here, to lighten the quote up a bit, I am stopped by that lovely phrase, "our marriage with time." And for a moment, I get it: the sheer sacredness of our brief life and the time allotted to us, and our duty to use that time well.

In the many days of summer that remain and beckon, may you all find ways to enjoy your marriage with time.

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