

SABBATICAL REPORT 2022
PASTOR ANGELA JACOBSON



2022 SABBATICAL REPORT

“Behold, I make all things new!” Revelation 21:5

Pastor Angela Fairbanks Jacobson, May, 2022

SYNOD SABBATICAL GUIDELINES

Minneapolis Area Synod Sabbaticals <https://mpls-synod.org/pastors-deacons/sabbaticals/>
We believe both congregations and pastors are strengthened “by providing opportunities for pastors to step away briefly from the persistent obligations of daily parish life and to engage in a period of renewal and reflection. Renewal periods are not vacations, but times for intentional exploration and reflection, for regaining the enthusiasm and creativity for ministry, for discovering what will make the pastor’s heart sing.” (Lilly Endowment).

Minneapolis Synod guidelines specify: "A written, personal report will be submitted to the Congregation Council *within 90 days* upon completion of a sabbatical. The report will include, among other items, material on (a) the value of the sabbatical for personal and professional growth, and (b) the potential impact on the individual’s service to the congregation."

SABBATICAL DATES December 28th 2021 through March 2nd 2022

HOPES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES/MET

- to be drawn closer to God
- to learn again to hear the Holy Spirit speaking
- to be renewed in mind, body, and spirit
- to experience silence and solitude
- to have my soul be refreshed, renewed, redirected, reengaged, and reinvigorated
- to read with sustained and uninterrupted focus (see Bibliography/book list*)
- to refine/edit spiritual memoir writing (4-5 pieces begun during spring 2021 course)
- to refrain from 24/7 news
- to worship with my husband and whole family together
- to explore other worshipping communities (cross-cultural, mission developments, etc)
- to become resilient for further life in ministry

PART I @ HOME

NEW RHYTHM

During my first month of sabbatical (January), I established my daily sabbatical rhythm of morning devotions, scripture, centering prayer, reading, some writing, and focusing on daily health & wellness emphasis on body/mind/spirit through walking, snowshoeing, and yoga.

The Sojourners Institute’s 4th Way Spiritual Direction Practice Group also provided a good framework for support and conversation bookending my sabbatical.*

PART II @ HOLDEN VILLAGE <http://www.holdenvillage.org/>

ON SPIRITUALITY OF PLACE

When I thought about where I might like to spend part of my sabbatical during a pandemic, Holden Village is the first place that came to mind – an amazing place of wilderness, quiet, solitude, retreat, worship, and community, in the midst of the wilderness of the Cascade Mountains of Washington. The beauty of the mountains also provided plenty of opportunities for cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, and exploring.

ON COMMUNITY

During my stay, I was able to volunteer part-time for one week, while overlapping/connecting with the college students, seminarians, professors & their families on their J-term from St Olaf College, Luther College, Augustana College, and LSTC Seminary in Chicago. I was also able to participate in the annual winter Women's Retreat – with the guest presenter who wrote and presented on "From Burnout to Beloved", a timely pandemic topic for all.

One of the many blessings from being in community for a month included cultivating new inter-generational friendships, in particular through daily conversations with young adults in their 20s and 30s in fellowship and over meals, as well as one-on-one conversations with young women regarding discernment, identity, relationships, grief and bereavement, and vocation, etc.

Holden Village gathers for "Sacred Space"/Vespers every evening, including once a week Anti-Racism Vespers with lament and conversation, and one lunch table conversation around the social justice issue of the week. Many informal conversations emerged in the village from these weekly conversations, most especially with my new friend Rosie, a Lutheran Social Services social worker for unaccompanied immigrant minors based in Seattle, who brought such a richness to my reflections and readings on race and culture throughout her stay.

Since Holden Village had been without a Village Pastor for a year and a half (although they welcomed a newly called pastor while I was there), I was invited to provide pastoral care back-up when the directors were out of the village, which I did so willingly, as well as presided over Holy Communion once as needed, plus "mutual care and consolation of the saints."

Finally, what a joy to discover distant cousins (!) – one of the directors Kathy Bach, along with her two brothers who visited while I was there with the German last name of Caemmerer – how we made the connection from my memory of our family tree. Lutheran small world!

ON WRITING

Although I read far more than I wrote, I kept a journal on my sabbatical, as well as continued writing/editing pieces from my Writing the Sacred Journey course (Wisdomways <https://wisdomwayscenter.org>) on spiritual memoir, including through the writing of some poetry of my grandparents, among the earliest influences in my faith formation.

PART III @ HOME/HOSPITAL

My sabbatical at Holden Village was brought to an abrupt end by a few days from an emergency call home with my husband Karl in the hospital with leukemia, where he would be for a month. The remaining 10 days of my sabbatical were mostly spent by his bedside in the hospital. The future is hopeful and yet unknown, as we await a bone marrow transplant for him this summer. We are sustained by faith in our God of mercy and steadfast love, and the prayers and support of the community of faith that surrounds us through this difficult time.

(*After my return, my 4th Way Spiritual Direction Group enveloped me with their support, love, and prayers, and we were able to conclude our 6-month cohort together with grace.)

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

What did you discover about yourself and your ministry? What were the impact of the experience on you personally, including family, vocationally, and congregationally? What are your plans for applying the knowledge and experiences from your Sabbatical in your ministry?

Throughout my reflection on sabbatical as pilgrimage, resilience, and jubilee (after celebrating my 50th birthday), I discovered ultimate rest and renewal through "longing for God" (per Julian of Norwich's life desires). I discovered my need for "Dwelling in the Word"/Lectio Divina in a deeper way over time, and chose several scripture passages for this purpose, reading them almost every day – including the story of the prophet Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath and the promise of abundance of oil in her vessels until the rain came; as well as several psalms - Psalm 42 (*as the deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God*), Psalm 63 (*my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water*), and Psalm 139 (*even there your right hand shall lead me*).

As a relatively new spiritual practice for me, centering prayer has become what I have learned I need like the air I breathe. I am ever grateful for Restoration Ministries, Director Kim Isaak, and the Clergy Centering Prayer Group for introducing me to this life-sustaining practice (<https://www.restorationmn.org/pastor-clergy-centering-prayer>), which has helped shape my understanding and experience of the presence of God in daily life, is a balm to my soul, and sustains me to be a better pastor.

At Immanuel, I have shared my sabbatical experience through Lenten reflections, Sunday sermons, teaching, staff devotions, and prayer, and will continue to invite others informally through contemplative prayer/worship/prayer walks, and more formally through our focus this fall on the new five pillars of focus for ministry, particularly difficult race conversations.

Finally, during this continued time of the pandemic, racial injustice, gun violence, teen mental health crisis, and climate change, etc., the grief and "compassion fatigue" that settles in and around us all cries out for a deeper experience of the presence of God, compassionate conversations, and renewed calling on our lives as followers of Christ. As pastors, lay leaders, and the communion of saints, we continually seek to renew ourselves so that we may minister to others in a broken world for the sake of Christ's kingdom.

***BIBLIOGRAPHY**

On Spiritual Growth, Prayer, Sabbath and Pilgrimage

- *Celtic Prayers from Iona* by J. Philip Newell
- *The Soul of a Pilgrim: Eight Practices for the Journey Within* by Christine Valters Paintner
- *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating
- *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Life in our Busy Lives* by Wayne Muller
- *Grateful* by Diana Butler Bass
- *Julian of Norwich: A Biography* by Amy Frykholm
- *Wild Woman: A Footnote, the Desert, and My Quest for an Elusive Saint* by Amy Frykholm
- *These Twelve Days* by Jim Kasperson and Marina Lachecki

On Theology and Leadership

- *The Gospel People Don't Want to Hear: Preaching Challenging Messages* by Laura Cressman
- *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Lecture Notes on "Theology of the Cross" by Jim Nestingen/Luther Seminary
- Excerpts from:
 - *The Freedom of a Christian* by Martin Luther
 - *The Prophetic Imagination* by Walter Bruggemann
 - *Mere Christianity* by CS Lewis

On Racial Justice and Cross-Cultural Understanding

- *Caste: The Origin of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nahesi Coates
- Excerpts from: *My Grandmother's Hands* by Resmaa Menakem
- *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi
- *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich
- *The Book of Delights* by Ross Gay

On Nature, Writing, Novels, and Poetry

(*"for regaining the enthusiasm and creativity for ministry"*)

- *Paddling to Winter* by Julie Buckles
- *Vesper Flights* by Helen MacDonald
- *Plainsong* by Kent Haruf
- *The Stone Diaries* by Carol Shields
- *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg
- *A Small Porch: Sabbath Poems 2014* by Wendell Berry
- *Without* poetry by Donald Hall
- *What Kind of Woman* poetry by Kate Baer
- poetry by Mary Oliver