



January 29, 2025
A Note from Pastor Jon

Dear Friends,

I once heard it said that we are called human *beings*, not human *doings*, and we must remember the importance of simply being.

Even Jesus took time away from doing to focus on being.

Throughout his public ministry, he modeled the rhythm of retreating for prayer and renewal: spending 40 days in the wilderness after his baptism, withdrawing privately following the feeding of the 5,000, and even stepping away before choosing his disciples.

Jesus demonstrated that stepping back with intention allows us to be refreshed in God's presence, restoring our spirit for the journey ahead.



Unfortunately, we clergy have not always done a great job of following Jesus's example. If I'm honest, laity haven't always encouraged their pastors to follow it either. But if Jesus himself — who IS God — needed time to withdraw and renew his spirit, why would we ever think clergy could simply keep going without those same opportunities? (And let's be real, we clergy are nowhere close to being God, even if some might not admit it!)

I began my journey in the vocation of church ministry in the fall of 2003, serving as a quarter-time youth leader making less than \$300 a month. In that first year, I worked two other jobs just to make ends meet.

A little over a year later, I landed my first full-time staff role, and I've been serving full-time ever since. It is hard to fathom that for more than 20 years, I have been immersed in the life of the church without a significant opportunity to pause and reflect on my own sacred and beautiful call.

Yes, there have been retreats along the way, some lasting a few days or a week. But many of these were leadership responsibilities, and even when I was a participant, the schedules were full. By the time I began to feel space for rest, the retreat was ending, and I was already shifting my focus to the next task of ministry, or the next sacrifice my family would make due to meetings, appointments, or emergencies.



And my family has sacrificed. There have been midnight emergencies, out-of-town conferences, mission trips, and late-night meetings that disrupted family dinners and bedtime routines. Clergy families, too, carry the weight of this calling.

I am deeply grateful that in recent years, the United Methodist Church has enacted renewal leave policies for clergy under appointment, recognizing that healthy, renewed pastors lead to healthier, more vibrant congregations. Every six years, clergy are encouraged to work with their churches to take up to 16 weeks of renewal leave — creating space to rest, reflect, and reconnect with God, family, and the roots that sustain us in our calling.

With unanimous support from our Staff Parish Relations Committee and from our Church Council, I will be taking 12 weeks of renewal leave beginning on Sunday, July 13. I recognize what an incredible privilege it is to take 12 weeks of leave.

I also recognize that not everyone in every profession is afforded an opportunity like this, and I do not take it lightly. I wish we lived in a reality where everyone could experience renewal, sabbatical, or rest in their journey.

So, I promise this: I will fully embrace this time and truly become a human *being*. I will reconnect with the roots of my faith. I will focus on my family. I will rest. And I will return the first Sunday of October with fresh energy and clarity, ready to continue serving alongside you in the years to come.

With deep gratitude and anticipation,

Pastor Jon





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