



August 20, 2025
A Note from Beth Palmer

Hello Friends!

In late July I started back to work after almost ten weeks of sabbatical leave, and I'm so glad to be back with you!

But before I tell you about that I want to **thank you for your prayers** last week — after only two weeks back to work, my husband Frank and I unexpectedly flew to eastern Massachusetts for a week because it appeared as if Frank's mom was nearing the end of her life. But she isn't ready to go yet! Last Wednesday she was discharged from the hospital to a rehab place, which feels like a miracle. We're so grateful!

Now the sabbatical story:

The first three weeks were hard! I felt unmoored without my work, without structure to my days. Untethered. I've been working since *forever*, and it was *really hard* to be still, to move more slowly through my days.

I had a lot of anxiety! I was really a mess. Initially the angst seemed connected to a big 11-day trip I had planned to visit friends, and it took me a bit to figure out — with the help of two incredibly important people, thank you! — that it went *much* deeper than that.

Once I worked through that, I went on my big trip and had a blast! **And the whole rest of my leave I was able to let go and just play!**

After six years of pretty big responsibilities around taking care of my Dad (memory loss), I parked my "shoulds" over *there* and just ignored them. I mean, I paid bills and stuff, but mostly I just played! What a gift! (Thank you!)

Usually I'm so focused on being *responsible* that I forget about adventure and fun.

I visited dear friends I haven't seen in way too long, people I absolutely adore. We had amazing conversations. We laughed so much!



I wandered around Granville, Buckeye Lake, Millersburg, Wooster, and Sunbury. I poked around Amish country, Pennsylvania, then suburban Philadelphia. I walked New York City for 3 days — hadn't been there since the early 1990s! I got a two-hour personal tour of Riverside Church in NYC, a huge cathedral-like church with amazing history. (*A spiritual experience.*) I climbed up (most of) the bell tower! I went to a Broadway show!

I also went sailing on a 44' sailboat! I got to spend time at my beloved seminary, Yale Divinity School — haven't been back in at least 25 years! (How am I this old?!) I reconnected with friends from elementary school! I went shopping! (I hardly *ever* go shopping. You can probably tell, haha.)



I got some extended vacation time with Frank, too — he took two weeks off with me in July — and we visited his family in Massachusetts again.

I took walks and rode my bike! I played disc golf with Frank and my brother! I ate *a lot* of ice cream.

I saw the happy, relaxed kid in me again.

And God showed up. Of course.



God dropped a couple of big insights into my lap, mostly around letting go.

I made some healing connections between the anxiety and the traumatic life events of my young adulthood, which always happened in July — I'm grateful to get more of that processed and released.

I got some really good clarity around my Dad and our relationship, and I was able to let him go more (he died a year ago). I feel lighter and freer in all the healthy ways.

I gained some good perspective around my work, what lights me up, what drains me. I'm excited to be back at it with you all! I celebrate *twenty years* on staff at HUMC on September 1!

I feel like I've hit the reset button. I didn't realize how much I needed some extended down time.

I'm so grateful to you all! Thank you to the Staff Parish Relations Committee and to Church Council for being willing to engage the larger questions around how we care for our staff, and for granting me this amazing benefit.

Thank you to Pastor April for suggesting it and advocating for it with SPRC & Council. It's incredible to work in a place where your supervisor and the lay leadership have your back in such affirming ways!

Thank you to you all for your support and encouragement, and for your financial generosity to the church, which made this possible for me! I'm so grateful.

My encouragement to you?

I hope you can find ways to play and adventure, in big, grand ways or in little mini micro ways! We're living in some difficult times, and **we simply *have* to take care of ourselves so that we can do the work of love and justice that God has for us.** Practicing stillness, going on little adventures, playing, connecting with people who are dear to us — these are all critical for our well-being. (Plus, obviously, *ice cream*.)

I thought all those self-care things had to be *serious*.

Turns out I'd just lost sight of the value of play amidst all the heavy responsibilities.

With gratitude,

Beth



Beth Palmer

Director of Adult Discipleship

bpalmer@hilliardumc.org

<https://hilliardumc.org/people/beth-palmer/>

