“Sabbatical”

Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” Mark 6:31

In February 2020, two years ago, I wrote to the Diocese of Alaska about my planned sabbatical for April through June. At that point, I was 5 years beyond the sabbatical period that was anticipated in my letter of agreement with the Diocese of Alaska. I reread that article recently and was flooded by the spiritual rawness of my own words of confession. I wrote:

“I’m tired.  I feel overwhelmed.  Instead of energy, joy, excitement, and sense of adventure that have always marked the challenges and twists of my ministry as bishop of Alaska, I’ve allowed cynicism, dread, and, dare I say, apathy to take hold.  Worse, I’ve sacrificed my prayer life on the altar of busy-ness and schedule.”

Those were the words of a spiritually and emotionally exhausted person.

Then COVID-19 hit and my sabbatical plans were again put on hold.

Two years later, I am grateful for the blessing of having been able to walk through this season of pandemic with you. Though weary, we have shared the burden; and for that I give thanks. While it remains true that there is never going to be a good time to step away from my responsibilities and ministry as your bishop, following Jesus’ example, I will be taking a period of sabbath over the next three months: February through May 7.

This will be a time to renew my prayer life, strengthen my faith, and to restore worship to the center of my life.  Additionally, it will be an opportunity for me to study, pursue some interests beyond the scope of my ministry, and to engage in some opportunities that will strengthen my vision and ministry as the Bishop of Alaska.  I am especially interested in furthering my understanding of Community Discernment and the development and formation of Lay Ministry and leadership. Finally, perhaps most importantly, it will be a time for me to grow in self-awareness of who I am in the loving image of Christ.

To fully honor this sabbath season, I will be unavailable.  This includes telephone, email, text, and social media responses.  I may post an occasional update to Facebook, but these will be informational.  I will not attend deanery meetings.  I will not be available for funerals.  I will not be taking appointments.  I have no parish Visitations scheduled.

Suzanne Krull, as Chief of Staff, will be in-charge of all day-to-day operations and management of the Office as well as all requests for Episcopal Pastoral support. She is the point of contact for *all* congregational, clerical, and pastoral concerns, including any Title IV matters. Suzanne will have access to ecclesiological resources (bishop consultants) and other support systems as necessary. You may contact her at the Diocese Office (907) 452-3040 or [skrull@gci.net](mailto:skrull@gci.net). Non-emergency matters for information or general questions should be directed to Melissa Ward, Bishop’s Assistant.  You may reach Melissa at the Diocesan Office (907) 452-3040 or by email: [bishopsowl@episcopalak.org](mailto:bishopsowl@episcopalak.org).

I give thanks for this invitation and opportunity to rest awhile with Our Lord. May His grace bless you and strengthen you always.