

Dear Friends,

Summer is my favorite time of year. Like most of us, I love the foods, and the activities. I have even been known to say I love the heat and humidity! But recently, as the world grows hotter and hotter, I'm beginning to wonder whether we all collectively romanticize summer because of our childhoods. Then, summer was a time away from a structured day, when we could be at camp, or playing, or swimming or on our bikes. When we could read for pleasure, or hang out with our friends without the task of writing or arithmetic. Even if summer was an intense time of harvesting and farm work, it was out in the sun, with family and friends – and when you were done a dip in the lake, or an evening of fishing were in store.



In short, I've begun to wonder if summer is so popular because we associate it with Sabbath. And boy, do we need Sabbath. We are *terrible* at it. Sunday is just another day to do chores, or errands, or catch up before the week. We use our phones *all the time*, and are never out of reach – even when we are on the lake. Even the NIH recently published research titled [“Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice.”](#)

So, here at First Church, the staff is going to try to practice a bit more of what we preach. We are going to be practicing a summer of Sabbath. Starting July 16, we will be reducing our presence at 38 S. Winooski, until the fourth week of August. Both JUMP and the Possibility Shop will remain open and volunteers are being lined up to help ensure the continuity of essential functioning (phones, email, mail etc.). We will *definitely* still be checking our email or voicemail if you need to be in touch. While we might not be present at meetings or events that happen, you can be assured there will always be someone on-site during regular business hours, to maintain the property. Do not, however, assume you will be able to ring the bell and find someone – we might be out and about, helping clean the property, or somewhere we can't hear the bell.

While it might look like it – *this is not a vacation* for your staff! (Although we do have a few of those scheduled, too!) We will simply be using this time to slow down a bit, to give us space to think about longer-term projects, and make the most of our recent staff transitions.

We were reminded about the importance of this work this week at Peace Camp. In the adult “cabin” we spent the week thinking about how to be intentional in our relationships. How do we slow down enough that our time with one another feels more like a “Nashville minute” than a “New York” one? How do we listen to form relationship, rather than listening to respond? How do we treat people less like oranges? If you know, you know! If you don't know – come to church on Sunday to find out!

Indeed, this Sunday we will do a Peace Camp celebration in worship – AT COLLEGE STREET CHURCH - as we have done since Peace Camp started in 2018, we will gather together with College Street folks in their sanctuary after a week here at camp. We will not only spend some time reflecting on the lessons of the week, but this year, we are excited to have the youth come talk to us about their service trip to Philadelphia. As you heard from Tegan Bushey two weeks ago ([CLICK for video](#)), the trip was transformative for the youth. Come on Sunday, and it just might be the same for you.

This is, after all, what Sabbath is all about – taking the time to slow down enough, that we can renew our relationship with God, strengthen our relationships with one another, and re-focus our vision on what's most important. We're starting this Sunday, and hope you do, too!

In faith,

[The Rev. Elissa Johnk](#), Lead Minister



PEACE CAMP 2024

