

Minister Emerita Sabbatical Reflections

Reverend Barbara Carlson, August 6, 2019

The field that is plowed unceasingly becomes barren.

The well that is pumped continuously runs dry.

Our ministers are neither fields nor wells. They are leaders, who preach, teach, pastor and counsel; lead workshops and retreats; administrate; represent us in the community and at the university; and are present with us in the intensity of both sorrows and joys.

In addition to being our prophetic pastors and spiritual leaders, our ministers are human beings like the rest of us, with gifts, frailties, and needs. Parish ministry is a great privilege - and it is emotionally and spiritually demanding. In recognition of this fact, Unitarian Universalism has a longtime tradition of providing ministers with periodic sabbaticals for recharging and renewal.

Sabbaticals are not vacations. They are designed and structured to provide time for study and reflection as well as rest and relaxation - to recharge the batteries and renew the spirit.

During my tenure as minister of this congregation (1993-2005), the congregation's support of my sabbatical was transforming for me. The opportunity for concentrated reading, study, and reflection; new ideas and perspectives; travel; and time with family invigorated my life and my ministry.

Rev. Macklin began serving this congregation in 2002, and continues to offer all of us, congregation and colleagues, her wisdom, wit, and unique spiritual gifts. She will be on sabbatical leave this fall, from September 2nd through November 30th. This sabbatical is our congregation's investment in the flourishing of her ministry and her gifts.

In closing, let me emphasize that since the basic purpose of a sabbatical is for the minister to take a complete break from the roles and responsibilities of ministry, I know you will respect this time of rest and renewal by refraining from contacting Rev. Macklin during the sabbatical period. Of course, if you should bump into her at the post office or the co-op (or yoga, or basketball, or Zumba), don't run away. As she would say, "greet her in a friendly manner," just don't discuss church business.

This is a dynamic, generous congregation. As you prepare to send Rev. Macklin off to sabbatical on September 1st, may you do so with your love and support and blessing. I am confident that all you give will return to bless you many times over.