

## Summer 2015 Columns

On June 7 we affirm and celebrate the covenant between myself, First Congregational Church of East Hartford, the United Church of Christ, and the wider East Hartford community. As we approach this celebration, I continue to be overjoyed by the deep love of the people in this community and blown away by the variety of ministries and projects this congregation takes on and carries out like a well-oiled machine. We have had a busy and beautiful first "school year" together. As we turn to the summer months, may we practice a bit of sabbath.

Throughout college I joined with my Jewish sisters (we were almost all women at Smith College) in the practice of sabbath. On Friday evenings, we all gathered for a delicious home-cooked meal and singing. Some turned off cell phones and refrained from working (aka studying) on the sabbath. Some went to worship services, others went for nature walks. The precise way each one carried out sabbath mattered less than the overall feeling of sabbath. It was a time to break from the routine, to slow down, to praise God in a special way, and to just hang out with friends - talking about faith, adventures, families, or whatever was going. May you have a sabbath summer with space to connect with friends and family in unique ministries and the praise of God outside the regular routine.

May your sabbath summer include opportunities to praise God in uniquely summer ways. Our summer "kicks off" with a special service remembering the Tuskegee Airmen, with guest preacher Kenneth Williams (June 21). We will then turn to a simple and more personal order of worship. A number of Sundays will be led by groups of laity (non-clergy folks), and if it gets super hot we may worship in the ordinary, but much cooler, dining room. You may also find yourself praising God beside the beach or after a dip in a pool on a hot day (you may even want to throw up your hands and praise God aloud!).

May your sabbath summer allow for the practice of ministry outside your normal routine. Jerry, our music director, will be at Ocean Park. I will be engaging in some unique ministries this summer. I will be joining the senior high group on our workcamp trip to Pocahontas, Virginia, where we will grow in our faith via paint brushes and service (July 18-25). The week following, July 27 - 31, I will attend a racial justice training for UCC clergy and lay leaders as part of my continuing education. Two weeks later, August 8 - 16, I will be a dean for a conference entitled "food for thought", at Silver Lake, the UCC camp. Perhaps you will be joining me in one of these ministries or trying out another ministry (Open and Affirming video? Garden Club? Food bank? Soup Kitchen meals? Worship leader? Ice cream trip leader?). Every member officially receives a free pass to try any ministry once, just to give it a shot. No long term commitment necessary.

Most importantly, may your sabbath summer include time to chill with friends and family - both new and old. I'll be on vacation with my family at the beginning of the summer (June 9 - 20, except for Children's Sunday) and at the very end (August 17- 25). At First Church, we will join together to relax and hang out at the Church picnic (June 28) and during lemonade on the lawn following worship each Sunday. The first Tuesday at 1:00 pm we will gather for prayer and Bible study (June 2, July 7, August 4). The summer is a great time to gather church friends and newer folks for a casual dinner or ice cream trip. If you need someone's number, just give the office a call.

However you go about your sabbath summer, may it provide you space for refreshment and opportunities for the renewal of your Spirit.

In Peace,  
Rev. Kelly Jane