

At a glance the months of July and August look blank on the church calendar. Notably, Sundays stand out with worship at 9:30 a.m. each week. There may be fewer meetings and less on the calendar, but Sundays remain the same OR do they?

Summer time is a time in the life of a church when choir does not sing, church school does not happen and worship attendance dips to new lows. Summer is a time when for some the pace is slower. Things remain the same or do they?

From a spiritual standpoint, it may be important to note that summer is a time for growth just as flowers bloom and green tomatoes, strawberries or squash show their colors. It is a time for reflection and for waiting. Things don't remain the same or do they?

I use a devotional book, *All the Days of My Lives*, each morning before I journal then walk. It is a ritual I have practiced for more years than I can count. Marv and Nancy Hiles of the Iona Center write, *"Summer is more than nature; it is a season of the soul. Those who prefer to be securely moored, mistrust summer and hug the shore. It is, however, an opportunity for those who are learning to trust, to shut their eyes, loosen their grip, let go and drift."*

As we continue to practice our faith as a community, I welcome the slower pace and the open quality of each day. My time will be well spent in prayer and in planning as your intentional interim. I hope to do some visits in homes. I hope you will invite me to walk with you or have a meal or just chat. With changes for all of us, it is essential to identify a vision from God that will ignite our mission. This can only come in reflection. One cannot "make" God work for us or "make" decisions that will last for the common good without conversation and contemplation. Same old, same old is not going to grow the church. Time is needed to see how God might be leading us into this unknown future. The church is an organic creation. The garden needs tending. This is tough toil.

I have a personal fear that the habitual speaking about finances with less conversation about our works of faith, Bible study and general spiritual malaise will be a tough habit to break. Part of this summer will be national meeting of the United Church of Christ called General Synod. The theme is: "To Be Washed by Waves of Grace."

In discernment together, let us use that theme to enliven our minds to ideas and new energy from God. There is hope. There is promise. There is life. May we use our rituals of the summer season and of the Holy Spirit to empower our church.