Dear 1st U family,

Some of you know this, some may have heard murmurings, and many of you do not yet know, so I am writing to tell you about my upcoming sabbatical period!

Similarly to the position of the minister, at this church the Lifespan Religious Education Director position includes a provision that the employee is eligible for a sabbatical after five years of employment, for one month for each year of employment. This being my fifth year with you all, I am eligible for that sabbatical this year.

A sabbatical is a period of time for rest and spiritual renewal, but also professional development. Think of it as an extended study leave. During my sabbatical, I will be working on a number of projects for professional development, including reading some of the many books on my shelf that I have been looking at longingly for the last few years and telling myself, “I really need to read that!”

I will also use the time to take some virtual classes related to spirituality, particularly with a pagan focus. I will be working on a project related to my trip to Kenya last summer, as part of the program with the University of Pittsburgh which sent me abroad, and presenting on that project in the spring. I will undoubtedly do some writing. I do not have a lot of plans for travel just yet, but I am going to try to do some small trips in the area to explore parts of Pittsburgh I have not gotten around to yet, and in April, I will be joining my BIPOC Unitarian Universalist colleagues in Puerto Rico for our annual professional conference.

When does this happen, and for how long?

My last service before my time away from you will be January 7th, the multigenerational Kwanzaa service I am leading. I will be on sabbatical from January 8 to June 8. During that time, a fantastically experienced, skilled, and passionate Sabbatical Team will be taking over my main duties involving running Sunday morning religious education, and other plans are in place for all events and activities that involve me to continue uninterrupted.

The members of my sabbatical team are Cathy Rohrer, Heather Masterson, Jean Schmidt, Heather Cunningham, and Ebe Emmons, all experienced volunteers in the religious education program for a number of years, and Rev. Kate will be working in close coordination with them. She will also supervise Kelly Reagan, the YA Ministries Coordinator, during my absence.

I am super happy and proud to have been with you all long enough to have earned this study and spiritual rest time, and admittedly looking forward to it, of course! I hope you will come to the service on January 7th to be part of the Kwanzaa celebration - I will be talking again about some of my insights from the Kenya trip - and to say “goodbye for now!” with a blessing ceremony organized by Rev. Kate. Please stick around to enjoy a reception hosted by the Sabbatical Team.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions between now and then.

Sincerely,

Erica