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| **Sabbath Keeping** This October I attended a conference in Baltimore called “Community Organizing and Congregational Development” with the financial help of Albany Presbytery through the Development and Vitality Committee. I learned a lot over those five days about organizing and was challenged in many helpful ways. On the last day, we were challenged to “do an action” on our calendars. Essentially, we were encouraged each week to set aside time to intentionally examine our calendar/schedule.At this time of the year, when calendars can get overcrowded, I find myself thankful that I have gotten into the habit of intentionally “doing an action” on my calendar. Just as I wouldn’t walk down the street and throw away my money, I wouldn’t do it with my time. But unless I’m intentional, my time gets thrown away, pulling me in too many directions. It’s easy to be spread too thin.Glenn and I began intentionally keeping Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday about 20 years ago. Some weeks I’m better at keeping Sabbath than other weeks! Wayne Mueller in his book Sabbath captures what Sabbath keeping means to me: *“Sabbath time can become our refuge. During Sabbath, we set aside a sanctuary in time, disconnect from the frenzy of consumption and accomplishment, and consecrate our day as an offering for healing all beings… Sabbath is more than the absence of work; it is not just a day off, when we catch up on television or errands. It is the presence of something that arises when we consecrate a period of time to listen to what is most deeply beautiful, nourishing, or true. It is time consecrated with our attention, our mindfulness, honoring those quiet forces of grace or spirit that sustain and heal us.”* My Sabbath keeping has changed over the years as my life has changed. However, central to my Sabbath keeping is the question, “Is this life-giving or life-draining?” Currently I keep Sabbath Sunday afternoon through Monday night. If you send me an email during my Sabbath, you’ll get an automated reply (as long as I remember to do this) telling you that I won’t be checking email until Tuesday. This has given me great permission not to check email or answer the phone or go on my computer during my Sabbath. I am blessed with congregational members who will ask me when I slip up, “Why did you respond on Monday? Isn’t that your Sabbath?” Also, if they see me at the church on Monday and/or Friday which are my days off, they’ll say, “What are you doing here on your day off?” I appreciate that support in holding me accountable.Sabbath keeping isn’t always easy, and emergencies come up and life happens. But I am a strong believer that God honors our intentions. So, each week I try to be very intentional in keeping Sabbath.The space-creating practices used in Sabbath keeping can be helpful when applied to Advent. Setting aside time for life-giving activities as well as time that is free of distraction and unnecessary busyness are crucial.At this time of the year when gifts are being exchanged, I hope you will accept with open hearts and minds the gift of Sabbath which God has given to us.Blessings,Miriam Lawrence Leupold, Co-Pastor[First Presbyterian Church, Albany, NY](https://albanypresbytery.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=1de5767854754952c81dca6b0&id=665f53ea23&e=5aa178679b) |

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