

Citations:

1. Adapted from *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur: Weekdays, Shabbat, Festivals and Other Occasions of Public Worship* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), p.121
2. An early Christian Hymn, this version is from *The Saint Helena Breviary* (New York: Church Publishing, 2006), p.57
3. Adapted from *Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community*, by Pádraig ó Tuama (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2017) pp.7-8.
4. Adaptation of Psalm 51:10-15, in the spirit of the Modeh/Modah Ani by Stephen Mitchell, quoted from the *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur*, p.361.
5. The first part of this prayer is from *A Prayer Book for Remembering the Women*, by J. Frank Henderson (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), p.161.
6. Isaiah 52:7, as used on Shabbat afternoon in the *Mishkan T'filah*, p.359.
7. Numbers 6:24-26, as used on Shabbat afternoon in the *Mishkan T'filah*, p.359.



Retreat developed by Rev. Jane Patterson,
Communities of Calling Initiative Project Director

Retreat booklet designed by Jessie Bazan,
Communities of Calling Initiative Program Associate

Visit www.communitiesofcalling.org for more information & resources.

Sabbath as a Vocational Practice

Retreat Worship & Discussion Guide
Communities of Calling Initiative

Friday Evening Prayers for Welcoming the Sabbath

Have a table with a candle for each person present. One person may light all the candles or each person may light one.

While the candles are being lit, the people pray:

Leader: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Savior.

**All: As these Sabbath candles give light to all who behold them,
so may we, by our lives, give light to all who behold us.
As their brightness reminds us of the communion of saints
who have kindled light,
so may we, in our own day, be among those who kindle light.¹**

**All: O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the everliving God in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!**

**Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the vesper light,
we sing your praises, O God:
Holy and Undivided Trinity.**

**You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Word of God, O Giver of Life,
and to be glorified through all the worlds.²**

Jesus regarded the Sabbath as a holy space and time for healing. Here we see God's healing extended all the way to resurrection, healing when all appears lost. When the first day after the Sabbath dawns, Jesus has already gone ahead of his disciples to Galilee, the place of their vocations to work, to relationship, and to ministry. There they will see him, just as he promised. May we also meet Christ in the places of our callings.

We return to our homes changed by the Sabbath and by all that we have experienced together. We return as messengers of peace:

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."⁶

May God bless you and keep you.

May it be so.

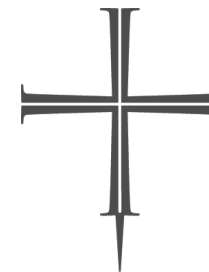
May God's radiance shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May it be so.

May God's presence be upon you and grant you peace.

May it be so.⁷

Amen. Amen.



Saturday Afternoon Prayers of Leave-taking & Re-entry

Gathering up Thanksgivings for the Day

Stand or sit in a circle, if the space makes that possible, and allow each person to contribute a single word of thanks, naming specific experiences, words, emotions from the day. When all that needs to be said has been said, then proceed to the reading below.

As we end this day of rest, we prepare to re-enter the world of work and activity. This is the same shift in time experienced by the women who got up early on the first day of the week to anoint the body of Jesus in the tomb:

When the sabbath was over,
Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome
bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.
And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen,
they went to the tomb.
(They had been saying to one another,
"Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?")
When they looked up,
they saw that the stone, which was very large,
had already been rolled back.
As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe,
sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed;
you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.
He has been raised; he is not here.
Look, there is the place they laid him.

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee;
there you will see him, just as he told you." (Mark 16:1-7)

Leader: Creator God,
whose life-giving Spirit
wells up with streams of living water,
sustain all whose spirits are heavy
and whose wells have run dry,
through Jesus Christ,
the rock of our salvation. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
let us pray as our Savior has taught us.

The Lord's Prayer

Conversation 1: *Visio Divina*

Each person briefly shares the images of rest that they brought, and why they are significant to them. Place them where they can be seen (such as a central table), and spend a few moments in quiet, walking around and looking at all the pictures, before considering the following questions:

- What are the surprises, common themes, and hopes that you see there?
- Is there an image that you want to hold onto in your mind?

Friday Night Prayers & Thanksgivings

Leader: For the love shared

People: we are grateful

For provision and nurture

we are grateful

For kindness given

we are grateful.

For the sorrow we've caused,

we pray for forgiveness

For injustices ignored,

we pray for forgiveness.

For encounters with God today, in stranger and friend,

We bid you welcome.

For encounters we missed today,

We know that you always see us

even when we don't see you.

For tomorrow,

May we see you

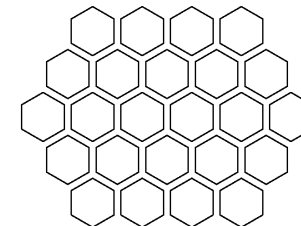
in ways expected and unexpected.

We welcome the dark of the night.

We make space for it, and we mark our place in it.

We remember that you, Jesus of Nazareth,

lived through nights of consolation and desolation.



Conversation 4: Sabbath and the Needs of the Wider Society

Now we turn to reflect upon the wider community. We do so, remembering that Jewish Sabbath observance is a communal practice, not an individual discipline. Sabbath is communal and it is also a practice of resistance against a culture of measuring human worth by work alone. When at rest, people come to know their value simply in being a part of the fabric of a beloved creation.

- What values are held by the culture at large that shape how people value work and rest?
- Looking at society as a whole, which people are in most need of times of rest and renewal? Who never gets to rest? How does that fact fit into your other social justice initiatives?
- We often think of prophetic ministry in terms of energetic action. But Leviticus contains a strong warning to the people that relates their incomplete sabbath practices to the future exile. God speaks of scattering the Israelites among the nations in the time to come, and says, “Then the land shall enjoy its sabbath years as long as it lies desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbath years. As long as it lies desolate, it shall have the rest it did not have on your sabbaths when you were living on it.” Rest is not just for ourselves, but for all who work for and with us, and for the creation that we are charged with stewarding. Rest is part of our prophetic ministry. What part of this prophetic aspect of rest calls to you?
- Sabbath has always been an economic issue, because it requires that people stop earning one day a week. The practice requires not only trust in God’s provision, but also a grounded trust in the community’s economic justice. For the ancient Israelites, the practice of the sabbath included all servants and resident aliens. What practices of yours as a congregation might show forth both your trust in God and your willingness to work, as citizens, toward the economic justice that makes regular times of rest possible for all?

And you walked into the nights of those people you met
inviting them to justice and truth, love and life.

We welcome this night,
as we welcome you into all our nights.

Name people and concerns on your hearts this evening.

We pray for those who work at night,
whose day is marked by moon, cloud, and stars.

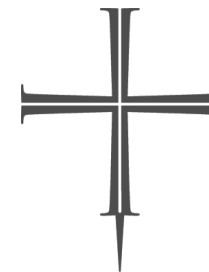
And we pray for those whose nights are desolate,
**that they may have the consolation of prayer,
peaceful solitude, and community.**

For a peaceful night,
we pray.

For a hopeful day,
we pray.

For a deeper generosity,
we pray.

Amen.³



Saturday Morning Prayers for Gathering

Divide your group into two sections for praying these verses from Psalm 51. Let yourselves slow down inwardly before you begin. As the first half is slowly reading their verse aloud, the other half simply breathes in. Pause at the semicolons, and leave a full breath in and out between verses. The idea is to create a slow rhythm of speaking, silence, and rest, of breathing in and breathing out. When you are not speaking, you are resting and receiving what is spoken by others. The last line is spoken by all together.

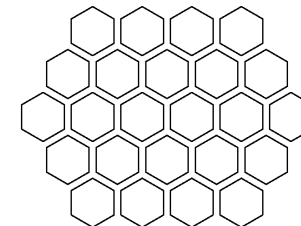
Create a pure heart within me;
let my soul wake up in Your light.

**Open me to your presence;
flood me with Your holy spirit.**

Then I will stand and sing out
the power of your forgiveness.

**I will teach your love to the lonely;
the lost will find their way home.**

**All together: Adonai, open my lips
and my mouth will declare your praise.⁴**



Conversation 3: Sabbath and the Needs of Your Congregation

Now we turn to the question of rest in congregational life, rest as a ground for wholeheartedness in answering a call to service. Call to mind the people of your congregation. Reflect on the various vocations they are balancing (work, family, community, friends). Now call to mind how these people show up for the ministries of the church: Sunday morning duties (ushers, lay preachers, choir, readers, teachers...), social ministries (food pantries, care for the unhoused, racial justice initiatives...), infrastructure ministries (church council, finance committee, adult formation committee...). You yourselves are some of the people to keep in mind as you reflect on the culture of your congregation with regard to rest.

- What values is your congregation committed to that interfere with everyone's need for rest, empty space, leisure?
- Which ministries seem most truly alive, and which seem to be experiencing fatigue or lack of energy?
- What times are you already setting aside for people to experience rest (silent retreats, spaces in the Sunday service, times of renewal for parents)?
- As you reflect on the congregation as a whole, where do you see the most need for rest?
- What are some small, non-heroic experiments you might try, to let people experience rest as a vocational practice? Where would you start?

Leader: From the beauty of darkness
to the beauty of light
we come again, creating God;

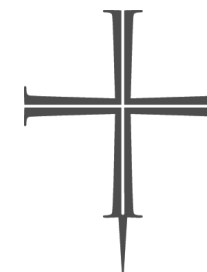
**People: and from the praise of sleep
to the praise of waking.⁵**

Give us this day a taste of your rest,
for we are your image,
made according to your likeness.

**Help us to experience the blessing of this day together,
the crown of creation.**

We ask this in the name of Jesus,
who healed on the Sabbath.

Amen.



Conversation 2: Sabbath and Our Own Needs

These questions are designed to help the group think together about what makes it hard to set aside time for rest and leisure pursuits. But some in your group or in your congregation may have a very different experience – time may hang heavy on their hands. So you may want to discuss other questions like, “How is Sabbath rest different from just empty time?” Here, the sense that Sabbath is integral to the rhythms of our vocations may be important. For some, discerning a life-giving calling may be most important, while for others, establishing a rhythm of rest may be most important.

In a recent Collegeville Connections conversation, the writer Jonathan Malesic spoke about interviewing monks at St. John’s Abbey and sisters at St. Benedict’s Monastery about how they manage the discipline of stopping their work for the regular times of prayer established in the Benedictine Rule. One monk said, “We don’t rest because our work is done, we rest *as though it were done*.” Jon pressed for more, “What if that is really hard and the work is really important?” The monk said, wryly, “You get over it!”

- What values are you committed to that compete with your need for rest, and your attraction to a regular practice of Sabbath?
- On the other hand, what values do you hold that support a commitment to rest?
- As you get to understand these competing values more thoroughly and compassionately, what is a small, non-heroic experiment in rest that you could commit to do and reflect back upon?
- If you have been experimenting with rest already, what connections have you observed between rest and honoring your vocations?
- How has God shown up in your times of rest, or afterwards in your callings?

