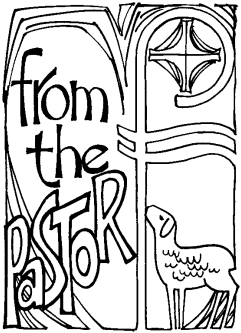




**Redeemer Lutheran Church of Leisure World and
St. Theodore of Canterbury Episcopal Church**
13564 St. Andrews Drive; Seal Beach, CA 90740
Phone (562) 598-8697; FAX (562) 598-8697
e-mail: redeemer_lutheran@verizon.net

Message from the Pastor:
From the Interim Pastor – July 2024

Sabbath = Taking A Break



Jesus said, *“The sabbath was made for humankind, and humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”* Mark 2:27

The word “*sabbath*” is defined most accurately as “a day or a time of rest.” Some might say, “taking a break” from the daily routines. The word found its way into our language from the Hebrew word, “*Shabbath*” meaning “rest.” *Shabbath* appears with some frequency in the Old Testament. The New Testament writers, writing in the Greek language of that day, used the word “*Sabbaton*,” from which we get the word “sabbatical.” Both words in the Old and New Testaments refer to a “time set apart for rest” and in both cases the word took on the added meaning of “a time set apart for worship.”

In the first few pages of the Book of Genesis we are told that after God created everything that exists, then God rested on the seventh day, blessing that day of rest and making it holy (Genesis 2:2-3). In the Book of Exodus when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sanai, we know the Third Commandment carved in those stone tablets said “Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11) “Holy” is biblical word that means “set apart.”) In giving the commandments, we are told God’s people were take a rest from their labor and God consecrated the holy day. It was in the mind and heart of God that we take one day each week and allow that day to be a holy time of worship and thanksgiving, and also a time of rest, relaxation, refreshment and renewal. The biblical writers tell us that God set the pace for us, carrying out sabbath rest from the very beginning of the creation of the universe. After all was set in motion, God took time to rest. (Genesis 2:2)

It is interesting that the three Abrahamic faiths each lift up the importance of *sabbath* time. Each of them worships on a different day of the weekend as they fulfill their Sabbath obligations and opportunities. Most Christians, of course, observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week, Sunday. The Jewish faith observes Saturday as their Sabbath. Islam sets Friday aside as their Holy Sabbath to worship and pray. Many of the other world religions have a day or a time of day for rest, reflection, and prayer.

Week after week, I see many of you, the members and friends of Redeemer Lutheran and St. Theodore of Canterbury Episcopal, “remembering the Sabbath day and keeping it holy.” It is wonderful to see how consistent so many are as you set the Sunday morning aside to gather to pray, praise, and give thanks to God, to listen to the Word of the Lord, and to share in Christ’s Holy Meal. God loves us so much that God even gave us a commandment telling us “to take a break,” to rest, and to have a holy day. God was also caring for our well-being, so God asked us to set time aside to rest from the busyness of our day-to-day living. God wants us to routinely nurture our faith, our bodies, and our lives by leaving behind all the other never-ending demands for our time and energy to be renewed... to rest... to be refreshed... to worship... to take a break... to meet God face to face in Word and Sacrament.

It has been a joy watching this congregation truly honor the Sabbath Day and listening to the voice of God. Oftentimes congregations noticed that a significant number of the membership “disappears” for the summer. People have for some reason decided to “take a break from their weekly spiritual disciplines.” That is not a correct understanding of “Sabbath.” Many congregations report that worship attendance and giving often declines somewhat significantly during the summer weeks. So far, as we are moving into the summer weeks, we are seeing the participation at Redeemer and St. Theodore of Canterbury remain steady and faithful. What a wonderful witness that is one to another. It speaks volumes to first-time visitors, who come and find the church filled with people heeding the call of God and gathering in God’s Holy Name. I hope that pattern continues for you and for the congregation throughout these summer days and weeks.

May we continue to be a people who are thankful each week for the gift that God gives us to rest and worship... a time every seven days to be especially renewed by the presence of God, by the promises of Jesus and his compassionate love, by the ongoing outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and by Christian community one with another.

I look forward to seeing you in the summertime Sabbaths. God’s grace and peace be with you.

+Murray D. Finck

The Rev. Murray D. Finck, Interim Pastor, Bishop Emeritus