2023 Sabbatical Explorations – Rev. Sophia Ducey
Multi-generational Ministry and Engaging Younger Adults in Ministry of the Church
Trauma-Informed Awareness from Ancestral Explorations

Purpose of Sabbaticals:

~ *Excerpts from Pastoral Relations: Supporting the Pastoral Relationship,* The United Church of Canada 2020.

The essence of sabbatical is rooted in the biblical practice of the Sabbath day described in the creation story. Jesus kept this practice when he took time in his ministry for renewal. He often went away to pray and reflect in silence and meditation "on mountain tops and by lakesides." The daily practice of ministry may involve the pressure of many tasks compressed into too few hours, leaving little opportunity for reflective, prayerful time.

Sabbatical time is for learning through reflection, revitalization, and recreation. It is, therefore, personal and individual in nature. It may include study, spiritual retreat, and rest and will probably be a blend of all of these.
When ministry personnel take a sabbatical, communities of faith benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their mission and ministry and experience different gifts of lay leadership. The sabbatical offers the community of faith a minister who returns with new energy and clarity about the tasks at hand.

The United Church of Canada policy requires every community of faith to provide a paid sabbatical of at least three months to members of the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada who have completed at least five years of service in one call or appointment. The sabbatical is in addition to the minister's vacation time and regular study leave for the year in which the sabbatical is taken.

Period of Sabbatical: May 20 – September 4, 2023

(3 months Sabbatical with intertwined work weeks for Camp Spirit, Jazz AWE and Shift Unfinished)

Sabbatical Theme: Multigenerational Ministry:

Engaging younger people in the ministry and life of the church,
and exploring updated theology that are rooted and grounded in practice.

With specific focus on:

Multi-generational experiences of spiritual practice and service in community
Healthy Relationships with Land and People – Caring for our Earth and Each Other
Practices of Attunement and Sourcing Individual and Community Discernment with Inner/Holy Listening
Exploring Indigenous Roots to relate to and support the trauma of Indigneous people in our community

Scripture Passage to support sabbatical theme:

Isaiah 43:18-19

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Ephesians 3:20

...there is a power at work within us
that is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine…

Books Read and/or to be Explored as part of Sabbatical:

- **A Community Called Taize:** A story of Prayer, Worship and Reconciliation by Jason Brian Santos
- **Braiding Sweetgrass:** Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- **The Multigenerational Congregation:** Meeting the Leadership Challenge by Gil Rendle
- **Journey in the Wilderness:** New Life for Mainline Churches by Gil Rendle
- **Leading in Liminal Times:** How to Lead when you don't know where you're going by Susan Beaumont
- **Reinventing Organizations** by Frederic Laloux
- **Undivided Love:** Navigating Landscapes of Living Faith by Janet Gear
- **Sabbath:** Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives by Wayne Muller

2023 Sabbatical Goals – Rev. Sophia Ducey

Based on my past 6 years (or 19 years) of ministry, I have had a deep longing to immerse myself in communities that have taken time to explore new ways of engaging spirituality - rooted in Christianity, but also beyond and before the life of Jesus' time on Earth. With the decline of the mainline Christian churches, and in particular, younger people's participation in the life of the "church," I have spent the past years in conversation with younger people exploring what they are looking for in spiritual/faith community, and how might the "church" revive itself to engage in multi-generational community experiences of faith, practice, conversation, service and justice.

I have also been on a journey of wondering how might the participants/members of the church heal and move forward in reconciliation with the land and its native people. Beginning to explore my own ancestral journey of disenfranchisement and relocation to the Americas has helped me gain some perspective and more compassion for the indigenous people of Canada that I find I've connected with in my ministry with United Churches of Langley.

The Goals I have set for my Sabbatical include:

1. **Explore new ways to engage younger people in multi-generational ministry**
   The 3 sites I have chosen for my sabbatical programming all have a focus on younger adult ministry, and alternative forms of ministry, spiritual practice and service. All 3 properties have a made a shift to engaging deep and meaningful worship and spiritual practice, while also focusing on ministries of justice and care for the Earth and its people. I got a glimpse of this in my one day at Iona in 2019, and have continued to engage in learning about Iona, Findhorn and Taize and the work they are doing to transform ministry in the 21st Century.

2. **Explore updated versions of Christianity**
   As we have all noticed, mainline church structures and theology aren't attracting new people as fast as they are losing them. Previous beliefs about who and what is God, human, nature and the inter-relatedness of all life has shifted tremendously in the new millennium and before. We have heard from UCC church leaders that there are multiple theological streams in our churches, and we have witnessed this variety in our Skeptics, *SHIFT* and Contemplative worship gatherings. The two Scottish facilities I have selected for my sabbatical learning environments have updated the form of Christianity taught and practiced in their communities. I look forward to learning more about this and finding ways of bridging their insights to enhance the spiritual lives of those connected to United Churches of Langley.

3. **Rest deeply, play and restore:**
   After 6 years of intense ministry, 4 years of extreme neurological vertigo, 3 years of a pandemic, and 2 years of engaging in support of indigenous people and the church's journey of reconciliation… all of my doctors are saying my central nervous system needs a rest. The long-term effects of the PPPD type of vertigo I have as well as CSS (central sensitivity syndrome) has caused my system to remain in "overload" mode. I need time to empty my bucket, and rest and play in nature to rejuvenate my body, mind and spirit.

4. **Re-indigenize myself:**
   I hosted a multi-generational book study on Braiding Sweetgrass during the pandemic. We explored the importance of place, home, and family. As I journey with many indigenous people who are sorting through their trauma from the church and wanting to find ways to feel "home" in/around the church, and also learn and embody their indigenous roots, I opened up a desire within me to explore the journey of my ancestors who were killed or sent from their lands in the Highlands. After they left the Urquhart lands on Loch Ness, they first went further north in the Highlands to Black Isle and other areas on the northeast coast, and then were stripped of their culture during the Highland Clearing. They fled to the Outer Hebrides and then in Nova Scotia, far from their native land and people. This is just a simple way of understanding a bit of the inner and outer journey of the Indigneous people of our community. I believe this will help me guide our congregation in deeper levels of care – for our land and its native people.

5. **Re-establishing Pastoral Relations: (plans after sabbatical)**
   Upon my return, I hope to offer *Playshops* on:
   - New forms of ministry and worship we can offer through the church
   - Community of Practices incorporating updated Christian theology and broadened spirituality
     - Offering practice groups myself as well as training others to lead
   - How to engage younger people in service and spiritual practice through the church

2023 Sophia Ducey
Sabbatical Schedule

<u>Sabbatical Preparation</u>: (January – May 2023)

Findhorn Living from Within – Spiritual and Leadership Development (8 weeks started Feb 1)
Leadership Discernment Group (Annual program – started January 21)
Meetings with other ministers re: their sabbatical plans and funding; meetings with M&P
Reading and discussing several books on life, community and ministry in the 21st Century

May 1-18: Balance of Overage from Lent/Easter; Vacation / family
Travel to Scotland and to Iona

Sabbatical Week 1: May 20-26 Iona Time & Space Retreat

Sabbatical Week 2: **May 27 - June 2:** Ancestral / Indigenous Explorations in Scotland (Outer Hebrides, Highlands)
(May 31-June 2 - 1st ½ Findhorn Experience Week Program**)**

Sabbatical Week 3/4: **June 3-17:** Permaculture & Community Certificate Program, Findhorn
Multi-generational ministry of healthy relationships with the land and the people

Sabbatical Week 5: June 17-23: Findhorn Experience Integration and travel to Taize, France
(June 17-21 - 2nd half of Findhorn Experience Week Program)
June 22-24 – Integration & ancestral explorations – travel to France

Sabbatical Week 6: **June 25-July 2: Taize Young Adult ministry engagement**
Week of engaging in daily prayer, community and service

Sabbatical Week 7: July 2-8 Integration and Travel Home

Sabbatical Week 8: July 9-15 Integration *(1 day work – touch base re: CS & Jazz Awe)*

Sabbatical Week 9: July 16-21 Integration / Incorporate learnings at Camp Fircom

Work Week: July 22-28: Jazz AWE as part of Jazz Festival and Camp Spirit Planning
4 days Work + 1 day from July 9-15 = full week work

Sabbatical Week 10: July 30-Aug 5 Integration / Incorporate learnings at Camp Fircom

Work Week: August 6-12: Camp Spirit @ UCoL

Sabbatical Weeks 11-12: Between August 13 - September 4
Intertwined with some CS wrap-up, Fall Organizing, final prep Shift Unfinished, hosting Shift Unfinished on the 20th, Engaging/Researching local ministry partnerships A Rocha, Gleaners, Indigenous groups, Sabbatical Report Writing

Return to Work after Labour Day: September 6

September & October: To plan "playshop" engagement with Sabbatical learnings and emerging ministries

Sabbatical Programming Description

Findhorn Living from Within – Spiritual and Leadership Development

Together in this course we will build trust in our inner knowing, move from overwhelm to inspiration, enhance resilience, foster the spirit of connectedness and community, and harness our gifts to make a positive contribution. Explore the spiritual foundations of the Findhorn Community as a practical approach to daily living and community life. When grounded in our connection to spirit we are guided in every moment, whatever the circumstances. When in touch with the intelligence of all life forms – visible and invisible – a world of possibilities pens before us. When we are centred, we can better understand how to move through the planetary shadow of this time. We will explore the changes that happen in the birth of a new consciousness – a purpose that Findhorn strives to serve and demonstrate - and why it continues to resonate with so many today.

Leadership Discernment Group

Dream-weaving and mastermind support for refining dreams, goals and plans. This has been a supportive group process for refining my sabbatical plans and will help me discern and report back the learnings I receive while away.

Meetings with other ministers re: their sabbatical plans and funding; meetings with M&P

This too has been supportive of me discerning my sabbatical plans, what to schedule, what rhythm might be supportive for me. I also took time to read and/or review books on multigenerational ministry, leading liminal times, updating theology and structures, etc. as part of my preparation for sabbatical.

Iona Time & Space Retreat (to begin my Sabbatical time away)

Experience life in community and explore the here and now through creative expression and shared reflection on the Iona Community concerns for inclusion, sustainability and mutual accountability. You will have the opportunity to experience the 'thin place' between heaven and earth. We'll invite you to join the pilgrimage to St. Columba's Bay and to become part of the rhythm of work and worship that frames community life at the Abbey. Includes participating in regular worship, sharing in meals and joining in community tasks, and reflection and discussion on issues of inclusion, ecological justice and peace through creativity.

Findhorn Experience Week Program (before/after Permaculture & Community program)

Findhorn's Experience Week will help you to pause, take a step back from life's challenges and changes, and step forward into a personal journey of transformation. Share with a group of curious explorers like yourself from all over the globe, ranging in age from 18 to 80+. Living as part of a vibrant community, you will have the opportunity to join its rhythms and adventures – sharing circles, outings in nature, singing, dancing, and more. Plus space and time for solo contemplation and exploration. The programme guides participants through our core practices to enable one to live with more love, consciousness, and a deeper sense of purpose and meaning. By starting with ourselves, we can all help to bring a kinder, more compassionate world into being, where we live in greater harmony with each other, the earth and all beings. There'll be a variety of opportunities to see life through a different lens, to slow down and awaken connections with all life, as well as taking the time to explore or deepen a meditation practice.

Permaculture & Community: Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share (aka Future Care)

This is a two-week comprehensive introduction to permaculture principles, design practices and their application, with a particular focus on permaculture in community. Permaculture is about living lightly on the planet and making sure that we can sustain human activities for many generations to come, in harmony with nature. We will explore Social Systems: personal and community resilience, communication skills, economics, land tenure, governance, and decision-making, community building: attunements, team building, morning meditation and group singing

> *'Permaculture is about stability, about deepening soils and cleaner water,*
> *thriving communities in self-reliant regions, biodiverse agriculture,*
> *and social justice, peace and abundance.'* ~ Bill Mollison, 'father' of Permaculture

Taize: Practice, service and Community Building with Younger People

This week includes opportunities to engage in the daily rhythm of the Taize community, centred on the thrice daily common prayer, with Bible studies and small group sharing. Live and work in a multi-generational community that is focused on engaging people 30 years and younger in spiritual and service community.

I am more details on the background of Sabbatical planning as well as the programs. Happy to chat about any of it!