



CHAPEL CHALLENGE

Chapel of the Valley

From Julie's Journal (an excerpt from Julie's Heartsongs and Epistles)

As part of the National Clergy Renewal Program grant application, pastors and congregations are asked to reflect on one deceptively simple question: **What makes your heart sing?**

It sounds like an easy question. It wasn't. It invited me to look beneath my calendar, my responsibilities, and even my ministry, and ask what truly gives life to my soul. This was part of the answer I wrote:

"At the heart of what makes my soul sing are faith and family—the foundational notes of my life's song. When faith, family, sabbath, and renewal align, life finds its sacred rhythm. This sabbatical is a season of renewal, deepening connection with God, loved ones, and the work of the soul. Sabbath is more than rest; it is restoration. It allows for a sacred pause, a time to step back so that one can step forward with clarity.

After 34 years in ministry—through personal battles with cancer, the loss of both parents, and the challenges of the pandemic—I have continued to serve faithfully. I now pastor two congregations in transition. As we stand on the threshold of change, this sabbatical offers a time to reflect and prepare for the future.

My renewal will come through pilgrimage. Walking the Kerry Camino with my family embodies both the outward and inward journey of faith. In Scotland and on the island of Iona, I will breathe deeply of the Spirit, while in England I will reconnect with my Wesleyan heritage. Each step will cultivate wonder and awe, helping me rediscover joy in God's creation and in the laughter of my grandchildren. A vital component of this sabbatical is a cancer retreat, providing space for reflection and healing with my husband. Wellness—physical, emotional, and spiritual—is essential not only to continued service, but also to modeling healthy rhythms for the congregations I love. This season will be one of worship through walking, writing, listening, and simply being present. Through moments of grace, reflection, and renewal, I will return with a deeper well from which to draw."

As I've spent the past months preparing for this journey, I've discovered something I didn't fully understand when I first wrote those words. Renewal doesn't begin on the first day of sabbatical. It begins in the preparation. There has been the rhythm of planning and packing. The rhythm of finishing sermons and arranging worship. The rhythm of trusting others to lead while I learn, once again, to let go. There has been the rhythm of anticipation mixed with gratitude, excitement mingled with a few anxious moments, and the gentle reminder that God is present in every season—not just the extraordinary ones.

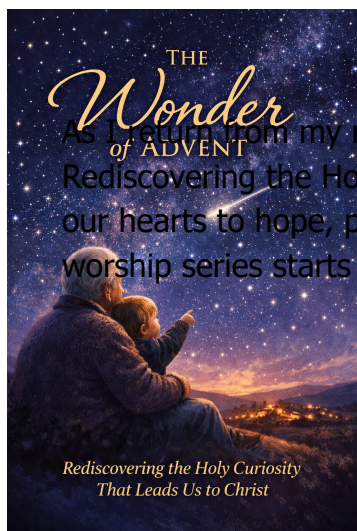
Perhaps that is one of the greatest gifts already. Life has a sacred rhythm. There is a time to work, a time to prepare, a time to journey, and a time to rest. Each season has its own music if we are willing to listen.

My sabbatical starts very soon and I can already hear the melody. My heart is singing. What about you? What makes **your** heart sing?

Together on the Journey, Pastor Julie

Worship Schedule while Pastor Julie is on Sabbatical

8/2	Sabbath Sunday. no formal service at church, worship in your own way
8/9	JoDee Rich speaking
8/16	Service Sunday join together to do service for the church and community Putting some kits for Good Shepherd Community Center. Bring some food to share
8/23	Andrew Strother Certified lay speaker
8/30	Andrew Strother Certified lay speaker
9/6	Andrew Strother Certified lay speaker
9/13	Communion – Rev. Tom Rothhaar
9/20	Service Sunday join together to do service for the church and community
9/27	Andrew Strother Certified lay speaker
10/4	Andrew Strother Certified lay speaker
10/11	Communion – Rev. Karin Ellis Director of Justice and Compassion
10/18	Service Sunday join together to do service for the church and community Bring food to share
10/25	Andrew Strother Certified lay speaker
11/1	Andrew Strother Certified lay speaker
11/8	Communion – Rev. John Griffin-Atil Dir. Imperial Beach Community Center
11/15	Service Sunday join together to do service for the church and community
11/22	Pastor Julie return - One service being held at Chapel of the Hills in Descanso at 10:30 a.m. followed by a meal



As I return from my renewal leave, we will begin our Advent series, The Wonder of Advent: Rediscovering the Holy Curiosity that Leads Us to Christ. Together we'll rediscover how wonder opens our hearts to hope, peace, joy, love, and the Christ who comes among us. The advent and Christmas worship series starts November 29 and goes through Epiphany in January. Please join us.