



November 2026



For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. Ecc. 3:1

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be on sabbatical this summer/fall. When asked what I was focusing on during my sabbatical, my overall answer was, “less.” I wanted to be less busy, less frenetic, less torn between competing responsibilities. I wanted rest, renewal, and re-connection. I wanted to return following sabbatical with a new understanding of how to be in the office of bishop and also be healthy and whole. Unfortunately, while my weeks away were filled with many things, what I was hoping for did not materialize. Let me explain.

During my sabbatical many joyful family things happened including officiating at my niece’s wedding, a niece having a baby, several birthday celebrations, and my son getting married. Sadly, there was also tragedy: My uncle died, my aunt’s partner died, and my dad died quite unexpectedly. (My son got married on September 5, I left for a trip to Guatemala on September 8, and my dad died on September 11 – while I was in Guatemala.)

Before my dad’s death, the trip to Guatemala was truly a life-changing experience through a tour with Augsburg Center for Global Education. The stories and the new understanding of the country will inform my ministry for many years to come. I was encouraged to see hopeful signs of democracy and entrepreneurship as well as difficulties with farmers dealing with climate change, the poor not receiving what is rightfully theirs, and ongoing corruption. The beauty and resilience of the people along with the gorgeous land will stay with me.

All in all, as I return to my responsibilities, I celebrate the joys, grieve the deaths that have happened, and wish that my sabbatical had truly been “less.”

In the days and weeks to come, I am focusing on listening and learning what occurred in the synod while I was gone, speaking at three different gatherings against Christian Nationalism, gearing up to visit congregations, and continue planning for the good of the synod.

What did I learn/discover in this sabbatical? The fragility of life, family is precious, God is truly present in all things, people are beautiful and resilient, joys and sorrows can be packed together, and we cannot choose what happens on what timeline. Perhaps these are obvious and perhaps I knew them already ... but in this time I am feeling these things more deeply and holding them more closely.

Thank you for the many prayers, cards, and messages I have received from you. I feel surrounded by your care. Thank you for the time of sabbatical.

In Christ,
Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee