

**Deacon Jeanette M. Burgess, Administrative Liaison for Leadership**

On January 2, I returned to the Synod Office following my three-month sabbatical. I deeply appreciate the synod staff who covered for me during that time, the Personnel Committee and Synod Council for granting this respite, as well as the congregation of St. John's, Atlanta, who agreed to a coinciding sabbatical.

Though my schedule relaxed somewhat the first month, it was also a time of intensive work since my sabbatical project was quite ambitious. I am strongly committed to making worship more accessible and using creative means to heighten the worship experience; along that line, over the years I've written about 40 psalm paraphrases (rewording psalms so they can be sung to hymn tunes). During the month of October, I wrote an additional 93 paraphrases, thus accomplishing my goal of at least one for each Sunday in the three-year lectionary. On November 6, I submitted them for publication and hope for an answer by mid-February.

In November I travelled to Florida to see friends, visit Harry Potter's haunts at Universal Studio, and laugh at the penguins of Sea World. December I checked another item off my bucket list by travelling north to attend the Boston Pops Holiday Concert with my brother and sister-in-law. Other things I rarely have time for while working my usual two jobs included making holiday wreaths, reading at the library, bible study with ecumenical friends, baking, Christmas shopping for actual gifts rather than gift cards (!), and providing more frequent lap space for Keeters the Cat.

Because my jobs are both church-related, I decided sabbatical worship would be in a non-ELCA setting. The first few weeks were at a nearby Presbyterian congregation but I was less than satisfied with things like using only one scripture each week and the fact that no one ever contacted me in welcome. I moved on to the UCC; again something was missing, not just because I'm Lutheran (!) but from the aspect of simple hospitality. By week five, I'd visited the Episcopalians and decided to do a secondary project from notes on my experiences. Bishop Gordy has agreed for me writing a series of blogs sharing my observations as a "single, introverted" visitor and I hope they might serve as conversation starters for our congregations regarding how we welcome visitors.

Again, I thank you for this opportunity to give my mind, body, and soul some rest.