



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Pastor's Page – February, 2016 Not Dead, Just Resting

This season of the year people talk about nature being dead. The trees are bare. The ground is frozen. Nothing is growing. But it isn't dead. It's resting. And that's an important distinction!

Rest is one of God's good gifts. It comes in many forms, all of which make us stronger, healthier, wiser, more effective disciples of Jesus Christ. Here are four.

1. **Sleep is rest.** John Wesley insisted that Methodists get enough rest but not too much. He said eight hours everyday was about right. Don't cheat yourself when it comes to getting enough sleep. When our daughter was young, you could always tell when she was tired. She got grumpy and hard to manage. That is true for a lot of folks. Nowadays many people are operating at less than peak efficiency because they don't get enough sleep. Spend quality time with your pillow each night – sleep!

2. **Sabbath is rest.** One of the Ten Commandments is devoted to rest. Since God had to command it, it must not have come easily to the Israelites. And it doesn't come easy to us either. They must have had to work at resting. That sounds strange but we have the same struggle. 'Don't just do something, sit there,' goes against the grain. Sabbath was an act of obedience and an act of faith. It blessed God's people by giving them time to spend with God and each other. Sabbath set Israel apart from its neighbors. It's meant to do the same for us. Keep a weekly Sabbath.

3. **Prayer is rest.** Especially the kind of prayer called 'centering' prayer. This is the prayer whose only agenda of simply sitting quietly before God. Empty your mind of all distractions and focus on God alone. Like Sabbath, this is rest that takes work. The thoughts in our mind are like bunnies in a basket. We try to keep them contained but they are constantly trying to escape. Gently but firmly keep putting them back in the basket. It's worth it. This kind of restful prayer energizes you physically and spiritually.

4. **Lent is rest.** Actually, there is more to the season of Lent than rest. During Lent we are to be actively engaged in acts of self-denial and sacrificial service. Like the season of winter, however, Lent is a time to quietly prepare ourselves for the new life that will come in due season (Easter). A good Lent has a healthy dose of rest, along with work.

Don't apologize for resting. If there's an apology to be made, it's to God for not taking the rest he means for us to have.

– Resting in the Lord, Pastor Pat