



Diocese of the

MID-ATLANTIC

Anglican Church in North America

August 4, 2016

Dear Friends,

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” (Mark 6:31)

As I was preparing to write this article, I commented to the staff that I certainly wasn't going to write about what I did on my summer vacation. But as I thought about it, I realized that that was just what I should write about. Taking time away from ministry and really resting is not exactly my strong suit and, blessedly, this summer has brought some needed renewal and refreshment for me.

Meg and I were able to enjoy a long weekend with both of our sons and their families, I traveled across the country to spend time with an old and dear friend who has Alzheimer's, and even dug into some overdue home projects (though I didn't take on the garage). Then we cashed in some frequent flier miles and flew to Calgary for five days of hiking in the Canadian Rockies.

As much as I'd heard about the spectacular beauty of that area (my mother always told stories of her visit there as a young girl), I was still overwhelmed by the splendor of God's creation.

There was just one “oh, my” view after another. And there's no doubt that some huffing and puffing up those trails at high altitude contributed to my successfully leaving ministry aside for a while. In fact, I'd say it was probably the most I've really disengaged from ministry in years.

(And the close encounter with a grizzly was, thankfully, while we were inside our car.)

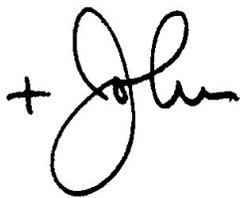
The Twelve had been sent out on mission and they'd come back to report to Jesus on their experience. Jesus took them to a solitary place "because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat." And that's when he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31). But just as Jesus took them away, they were interrupted yet again by the crowds who pursued them. And yet as Jesus responded to the people out of his compassion, the disciples, who hadn't had a chance to eat, ended up not only feeding the 5,000, but getting basketfuls of leftovers for themselves, as well (6:43).

Rest and reflection and time with Jesus are vital, but we know from Jesus' own experience that places of solitude and prayer can be battlegrounds where demands and expectations and temptations war against our times of quiet with the Lord.

Jesus showed us balance in ministry and in rest, in obedience and in intimacy. He always did what he saw the Father doing (John 5:19) and yet he also went off early to solitary places for prayer (Mark 1:35).

As we seek to pull away from activity in order to be still in the presence of the Lord, we know that there will be interruptions. And paradoxically, it is only out of that sought-after intimacy with Jesus that we will be able to discern the difference between an interruption and an opportunity, a distraction and an unexpected call.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a small cross symbol followed by the name "John" in a cursive script.

The Rt. Rev. John A. M. Guernsey