



The Episcopal Church in Delaware

The Rt. Rev. Kevin S. Brown, Bishop

all things in love

1 Cor. 16:14

April 12, 2023

Beloved of God in Delaware,

I have an amazing spring and summer planned. One month from today, I will be in the middle of a pair of motorcycle courses – the first to challenge myself to ride a dirt bike on a dirt course, and the second to hone my skills as an adventure (off-road) rider. A month later I will rent a motorcycle and make a two-week, 1,800 mile pilgrimage around the Wild Atlantic Way of Ireland and the Causeway Coastal Route in Northern Ireland. In three months, I will begin a motorcycle maintenance course in Pennsylvania to learn all the gory details of repairing and caring for a bike.

Why all this time on and with motorcycles? I planned this to help me carve out, in diverse ways, the time and space to connect anew with Christ Jesus. I will seek him in the solitary beauty of the Irish coast and spiritual sites, rely on him amid new physical and mental challenges, and rejoice in his providence in learning to care for a complex machine. The motorcycle is just the vehicle, if you will, for a closer journey with God ... and to have some fun, and experience new things along the way.

Such an extended time in Christ with is possible because I can take a sabbatical. What a gift this is! I will be away for four months, from April 24 through August 20, and while the motorcycle bits will be important, I am most eager to spend time with my amazing wife, Caroline, both in Ireland and back home. We'll also spend time with our daughters, both grown and on their own. I'll read books on discerning God's call in the second half of life, and I'll spend some time at a monastery in silent retreat. And on many days, the plan will be simply to rest apart from the 24/7 demands of episcopal ministry.

Throughout my sabbatical I will not be available for work. I will not check email or voicemail, and I will not drop by the office to check in. Instead, the great team at the Mission Support Office, led by Canon Martha Kirkpatrick, will keep things running smoothly in my absence. When she needs advice, the Standing Committee is ready to assist. And in case of an emergency or other immediate canonical necessity, a nearby bishop has agreed to be on call. All will be well without me. I have complete confidence in this team and in this entire diocese to press on with the excellent gospel work you always do.

Thank you, Delaware, for insisting that sabbatical be an expectation of your bishop and salaried clergy. We all know what a blessing this truly is. And yes, I definitely realize that for many (most?) of you a motorcycle has zero appeal – on a sabbatical pilgrimage or anywhere. I intentionally emphasize its role in my time away to make a point: successful, expansive, and restorative sabbaticals must be tailored to each person. There is no cookie-cutter solution. Please encourage your clergy to take the sabbatical time they have earned – and allow them to craft their search for the living God that matches their needs at whatever stage of life and career they are.

May you have a most blessed spring and summer, my friends!

+ Kevin