

*Sample meditation passage from a 2009 meeting:*

**Bryan P. Stone and Claire E. Wolfeich in *Sabbath in the City* (2008)** describe a Lilly-funded project which afforded 96 urban pastors nation-wide the opportunity to study in groups, take sabbaticals, and help characterize excellence in urban ministry. Identified characteristics of urban context and ministry include: dense population, multiple transitions, comprehensive social needs 24/7, negotiating identity (e.g. is this congregation for long-time residents, new residents, and/or commuters?), immigration and diversity, alienation, and limited resources (leading to longer work weeks).

Excellent urban ministry leaders **know and love their neighborhoods/cities**, appreciating their assets as well as their needs. In a culture where many places are single-use on the one hand and cookie-cutter on the other, urban leaders are **attentive to place and to God at work** in the complexity of the place where they are. Like the desert fathers and mothers, urban ministry leaders are ready to leave their defenses behind, to discern, to be transformed by God. Essential for all ministry, but perhaps especially ours, are: trustworthy and challenging **friendships, Sabbath time, study** (especially of Scriptures), and **spiritual renewal**. Urban ministry leaders are called to model resistance to our society's idolatry of work. We tend to minister outside the box, very publicly, so we must also seek **solitude, silence, listening, centering**. The **Daily Office** is especially important to ordering time, since we are so often in disordered places.

One program participant commented after a sabbatical: **Returning to active parish life has intensified my desire to reorder my days around prayer. It has been this activity which has most altered my daily urban ministry activity, giving it renewed power and clarity.**

Another participant found **praying the divine hours a way to get more in connection with: now it's morning; now it's evening; now it's mid-day instead of the round-the-clock hustle and bustle of the city. In this way, her experiences of the city and the people in the city were shaped by a more creation-centered and Sabbath-shaped rhythms . . . our experience of place is always shaped and hallowed by God in time**