

... for now the winter is past,
 the rain is over and gone.
 The flowers appear on the earth;
 the time of the singing of birds has come,
 and the voice of the turtledove
 is heard in our land. (Song of Solomon 2:11-12)

Birds are amazing and inspiring creatures, and often a sign of new life. At the end of the Great Flood in Genesis, a dove brings an olive leaf as a sign that the deluge is over and life is beginning again on the earth. Here in the northeastern US, robins are seen as a hopeful sign of spring when they reappear as winter loses its grip. We call people who go south for the winter “snowbirds” because many birds do migrate seasonally, and in some cases they travel stunningly long distances. The little Blackpoll Warbler, for instance, which weighs about as much as a ballpoint pen, migrates from the northeastern US (including Western NY) to South America for the winter and then back to their northern homes in summer. How do they find their way? What enables them to fly 1,200 miles in a single non-stop three-day flight (and in some cases up to 12,000 miles annually)? Bird migration has been studied extensively for



numerous decades. I listened recently to a panel of three experts discussing this mystery. They all agreed the bottom-line answer to how birds find their way with such precision across such long distances is, “we don’t know.” It is one of the miraculous wonders of our world. One of millions, or millions of millions. At bottom, all life is miraculous, and all that happens is mysterious—we never truly know why or how. But we don’t need to know. We just need to marvel with appreciation and gratitude and do our best to live in

harmony with the unfolding life of the world as the miraculous gift of God. The birds don’t know why or how they migrate as they do. They just do it according to and in harmony with their God-given nature. And it is a beautiful and wondrous thing.

As I look back across the journey of my life, I don’t really know how or why I came to be here in this particular place, living this particular life. As a young person I imagined many different futures, and I took many unplanned paths along the way to get here. I do know things have gone best for me when I have been most in tune with the leadings of God, the deepest yearnings within me, and the miraculous unfolding of life around me. I think that is how the birds live, and how they find their way season by season.

I am glad to have spent this season of my life, these past seven years, as your pastor here at Faith United Church of Christ. It has been, and I will remember it as, a beautiful and wondrous thing. God led me here, or drew me here, and I now feel led to move on into a new season of life.

As of June 1, I will no longer be your pastor. Transitions can be difficult. But truly, all life is a continuous transition as we travel along life’s way. The best we can do, as I have already said, is marvel with appreciation and gratitude at the miraculousness of it all and do our best to live in harmony with the unfolding life of the world as a miraculous gift of God. I’m sure there are many gifts ahead for Faith Church, and for me, and for all of us. We just need to allow ourselves to be drawn toward them.

May it be so,

Ted