

Dear Beloved Community,

Today in worship, I reflected on climate grief, and on how we are invited to lean into it to save nature. I also shared an invitation to lean into another hard change on the horizon.

As many of you know, I have been in South Carolina with my family to be present to my mom in her struggle with cancer. My parents and my children are very close; the kids grew up in their care while Steve and I worked. The doctors tell us this cancer is incurable, and she is now on multiple chemotherapies with radiation. This will be a long battle though, and this is a blessing. A blessing that invites us into the precious gift of family and spiritual healing.

Answering this invitation, my dearest beloved community, means that I must stay here in South Carolina. And you will need someone to be present with you in Virginia. These past months, I have been present to my family and to you. But we are not limitless beings, we are humans. As the next church year unfolds, little by little, you will return to physical presence at the church, and I will not. You will need a minister who can be fully present to an inclusive multiplatform return from social distancing. You will need someone to support all aspects of your ministries, to continue the beautiful new missional growth of the congregation. And I will need to give still more presence here in SC. Beloved community, I have just told the Board that it is time for me to depart and for you to move on.

Pause for a moment, to take in this news. Remember that there is always something new possible when there is a big change in life. As Frank Ostaseski writes in “The Five Invitations,” part of what makes us each so beautiful is buried in the truth that none of us lasts forever in this form, only our love lasts. And so, I must go and you must stay, but what we mean together, the love we have all shared together, our dreams of justice and healing for the world, these continue.

My last Sunday will be June 13, and the Board is launching a search committee who will likely find a new minister within the next month or two. The Board will send a letter to the congregation in the coming days that will provide a more complete update on this process and ways to stay in communication with the search committee and process. I will also be holding open office hours on Tuesday at 11 AM – 12 PM and Wednesday at 6:30 – 7 PM, drop in as you desire. [Click here to join either meeting](#), or dial in by phone: 301-715-8592; Meeting ID: 859 3534 9703; Passcode: 990241

A deep breath. Sometimes we do not get as much time as we expect. This is true for vanishing ecosystems, and it is true for our time together. I had hopes for our long journey, we had plans

together, and now I will entrust you to carry forward your dreams and joyfully serve our mission in the world.

We are invited to embrace the limits on our time together, just as we are called to embrace the fragility of nature. Yet unlike the risk to earth, I am not ending, and you are not losing this church. You are the church. And I know fully that you will be fine. You will continue to blossom and grow and bring joy to this world. Since I came to you a couple of years ago, I have walked beside you, cheered you on in your efforts, celebrated your successes and your learning. You have done all the growth. The Board's growth in governance, the financial system and new gifts, small group ministry, racial justice team, True Accotink Colors, greening our lives as a community, and so many more joyful moments and ongoing partnerships. You have done this. And you will continue to carry all of this forward. I will still delight in all that you do—only I will be watching at a distance—following your good news on Facebook and the web and the ministers' grapevine.

On our last Sunday together on June 13, we will have a time to celebrate what we have meant together, honor our feelings and our hopes. We will part in power, embracing our grief and lean into what has been made possible because of our time together. Our paths will always be entwined.

Beloved community, let us go forward in service to our mission, to heal the earth, to bring justice and equity, to dismantle oppression and heal Earth harm, and to bring into being the beloved community to which we all belong. Let us always be together in this journey.

Blessed be, and I love you.

Yours always,

Reverend Pippin