

Acts 21:5-7

⁵When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach, we knelt to pray. ⁶After saying goodbye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home. ⁷We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters^(C) and stayed with them for a day.

On my journey as interim pastor, I come across a thought written by someone else that fits the moments I find myself in. Such is the case that guides my prayers for Christ UMC, Mt Tabor, myself, and the church as a whole.

In short, we have to develop some practice where we're not flying solo. We're called to participate. If we try to get away to someplace where it's just us and Jesus, or us and God, we're headed for trouble.

Participation is the essence of true spirituality: in particular: participation that is (1) not to our specifications, and (2) with people we did not handpick.

That means we're called to open our hearts to everybody, to welcome everybody, to be available to everybody—if and when they want us.

That is part of our vocation of love—and it is not for the faint of heart.

—Excerpted from Holy Desperation by Heather King

Writing these words, I knew it would be the last thoughts where I address you as your pastor. It is a time to celebrate our journey together. The race is not finished. It is the beginning of a new journey. The line Heather wrote about participation-what I call vocation or the call, means we open our heart to God's voice and embrace the paths the divine opens. It means, "we're called to open our hearts to everybody, to welcome everybody, and to be available to everybody-if and when they want us. "This is the great lesson I have learned from the people Christ and Mt Tabor United Methodist Church during this difficult time.

It is time to leave. How do I know? Over time I have realized my unique call and learned to discern God's voice. My work is finished. A new pastor is coming. As colleagues, we both participate in ministry together, each of us doing our particular call. It is the part of my vocation God has given me, and it is not for the faint of heart.

There are not enough words to express my gratitude and love for each of you. If I were to attempt to name them all, I would either forget or not adequately find the right words. Sometimes, there are no words. What makes this farewell difficult is, as far as I know, this will be my last appointment.

What I would ask you to do for your next pastor, is do what you did for Cindy and me. Love them, accept them, embrace them, and grow together. It is not a question of whether you will do this or need any encouragement. This is who you are, and you do what comes naturally.

In the military, we had a saying, we never say goodbye, we say "see you later." Thank you for your friendship, care, and nurturing. May the peace of Christ be upon you. Roger