



June 2013

Beloved First Church in Cambridge, friends in Christ,

When I began serving First Church in 2007, I came with a passion for transforming the way the church and its members experience the reality of mental illness, to being a gateway rather than a barrier to lives of deeper faith. I never could have foreseen how both it and an early call to ordained ministry would come to fruition here in such an astonishing way. And so it is with a heart that is both heavy and hopeful that I must take leave from First Church for a time of healing of my own mental health challenges. The Spirituality and Mental Health Group will also be on hiatus for the summer and will return in the fall.

As with many chronic diseases, the degree of mental illnesses' symptoms can fluctuate. For many, periods of health and struggle can alternate rapidly. For others, extended periods of wellness (some use the language of remission) can be interrupted by a recurrence of symptoms. Whenever it's possible, those who are able will do their best to mask visible signs while struggling internally in order to continue work and private lives with minimal disruption until those symptoms abate.

This can be a costly coping mechanism. Sometimes a period of recurrence or fluctuation extends beyond what one can struggle through or mask, making life as normal no longer possible, and this is where I find myself for the time being.

Not everyone is so fortunate as to be part of a community like First Church that can support an extended time for healing, but I pray that one day this will be the case for everyone. I'm deeply thankful for the support, care, and prayers the staff, deacons, and all of you have given.

Though I can't predict how long I'll be away, I have faith that God is with us all in this season of transition at First Church. I keep finding myself humming and singing *This is a Day of New Beginnings*, remembering that ours is a God of transformation, renewal, and new possibilities, often in unpredictable and surprising ways. May God surprise us all with growth, healing, and blessings when and where we least expected them.

I ask for your prayers as I pray for you. And may we always remember that it is God on whom all our hope is founded.

Yours in faith,
Terry McKinney
Minister of Mental Health and Healing

"This is a day of new beginnings – our God is making all things new." – Brian Wren