

TOGETHER ON THIS ROAD
Randall Tremba
May 11, 2014
Fourth Sunday of Easter
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church

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Psalm 23
by Bobby McFerrin
(Dedicated to my mother)

The Lord is my Shepherd. I have all I need,
She makes me lie down in green meadows,
beside the still waters. She will lead.

She restores my soul, She rights my wrongs,
She leads me in the path of good things,
And fills my heart with songs.

Even though I walk, through a dark and dreary land,
There is nothing that can shake me,
She has said she won't forsake me,
I'm in her hand.

She sets a table before me in the presence of my foes.
She anoints my head with oil,
and my cup overflows.

Surely, surely goodness and kindness will follow me
All the days of my life,
And I will live in her house,
Forever, forever, and ever.

Glory be to our Mother, and Daughter,
And to the Holy of Holies.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen.

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In May of 1974, 40 years ago, I was packing up to leave So. California. I had four years of college and three years of graduate school behind me. I had a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree and certificate of Presbyterian ordination in my pocket and no clue what to do next.

I had just lost the love of my life. I felt as good as dead. It was the first big hurt in my life. And you know something: when you're young, it's hard to believe you'll ever survive a broken heart. Sometimes it's hard to believe that love can mend a broken heart or a broken world.

I packed my earthly possessions into my small car and hit the road. The road ahead looked dark and lonesome.

I took my time. I drove up California along the Pacific coast through Oregon and into Washington. I stopped in Seattle for a few days and then drove into Canada, across the

Canadian Rockies to Calgary, down through North and South Dakota and eventually to my parents' home in Youngstown, Ohio.

I moped through that summer. I painted houses with my father to make some money. At summer's end I flew to Amsterdam—gawked at windmills, hitch hiked, rode trains, took in Oktoberfest, trekked the Alps, paddled the streets of Venice and strode the ancient walls of Dubrovnik in Yugoslavia. I was alone most of the time. Or so it seemed.

I was looking for something I never found and came back as lost as when I left. But I was still on the road. That long and lonesome road eventually led me to Harpers Ferry in November of 1974, and then to Shepherdstown. I knew no one within 100 miles of this place.

It was here that I would first learn that life is hard, sometimes very, very hard; but grace abounds. Here I would discover more love and abundance than I ever had before. I learned that sometimes you have to leave home to find it, which may be a bit of advice for our high school and college graduates. Sometimes you have to leave home to find it.

Here in my new home, it would take me a while to realize that all along that long and lonesome road I had never really been alone. The Beloved Shepherd had been with me all along the way. Looking back, I could see that old friends and new friends and even strangers came out of the woodwork and out of the blue to join me time and time again on that road, making a hard stretch bearable.

And that's how I learned about the mysterious presence and power of love in this world, a presence known by many different names. It's a presence sometimes seen, sometime not. It leads us to still waters, into abundant pastures. It prepares a table for us even when enemies are all around. It anoints our bruised heads and broken hearts time and time again.

The Lord is my Shepherd. I have all I need,
She makes me lie down in green meadows,
She leads me beside the still waters.
She restores my soul.

Surely goodness and kindness
will follow me
All the days of my life,
And I will live in her house,
Forever, forever, and ever.

Life is, indeed, a journey and the road is often rough. But we are never alone. Friends, neighbors and even strangers show up in the darkest hour. And sometimes we get to be the one who shows up.