

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is Pastor at First Baptist Church of Bainbridge, NY and serves on the Executive Boards for NYS Ministers Council and the American Baptist Churches NYS Region.

God, Birds & The Universe

The Jewish people begin their prayers this way: "ba-ruk'h at-tah Adonai E-lo-hei-nu **me**-lekh ha-o-lam." *Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the Universe....* All of their prayers begin this way, recognizing not only the sovereignty and majesty of God; but also that our God is *God of the Universe* - which includes Earth - the planet on which we live - but is so much greater than that! And so we are united as one world *within* this universe of which God is both King and Creator.

And so, even though God gave the Hebrew people Canaan, they realized that their God was bigger than Canaan and larger than Israel. And we know God is larger than these United States of America, larger than the European Union, and larger than any of the continents on this Earth and even larger than this Earth! Indeed, *God is King of the Universe!*

This realization was magnified for me when I began watching birds. It has been fun seeing different ones and trying to identify them from my limited understanding of identifying techniques. But I've also been



paying particular attention when people speak about their flight and migration patterns, and I heard something interesting the other day. In studying and observing birds and their migration routes, scientists believe that their migration patterns may be determined by the position of the *stars*. Imagine! God putting the stars in the sky with the intention of directing not only human beings by them - but other creatures as well! Imagine the winged creatures of the earth being in tune with the revolving of the earth around the sun, and the constellations of the solar system! And I also heard on the same program that birds may actually be able to *see* the magnetic field of the earth that to *our own* eyes is invisible! As human beings we feel we are superior to other life forms on earth - but a bird's

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ability to see what we human beings cannot see causes me to believe that *each* of God's creatures have their own unique superiority in God's kingdom.

We sometimes make God so small, don't we. After all, God gave *us* dominion over all the earth - God gave *us* care of the earth and its creatures. But we can only *do* that when we humble ourselves to the fact that we do not know everything. *We do not know the mind of God. (1 Cor. 2:11)* God gave us this earth so that we could live on it and have everything that we need. And God gave us power so that we could act on God's behalf, but that doesn't make us *God*. We are to *serve* God humbly, *trusting* in God's provision.

How great is our God! How great is the God of all the earth and the heavens that everything works so perfectly - that everything is so perfectly designed in the universe! So perfectly designed...

God tells me to *tend the flock that is in my charge, not under compulsion but willingly and eagerly, and to be a good example. (1 Peter 5:2)* The example I want to set is just to be in awe of what God provides, and to never take for granted what God has provided for me.

And, God tells me that my *brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering* that we are in this country. *(1 Peter 5:9)* We are all the same! We are one people, one world, one body in Christ, united through the blood that courses through veins, the blood that spills through violence, the blood that Jesus shed that we may all be one. We are One World, *when one of us suffers, we all suffer together, when one of us rejoices we may all rejoice together. (1 Cor. 12:26)*

There is so much we don't know about God and God's creation, and so much to learn about faithfulness and trust in God. Jesus *shows* us through the Gospel writers witness *how* to be faithful, how to *take up our cross* and *trust in resurrection*.

"ba-rukh at-tah Adonai E-lo-hei-nu me-lekh ha-o-lam." *Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the Universe.* Help us, O Lord our God, to be good examples to the flock you give to us, and help us to remember that we are all One in your kingdom, and help us to work to alleviate the suffering of our brothers and sisters all over the world!

Amen

Photo: "Black Bird Galaxy" by Linnaea Mallette
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