



UPDATE

January 2016

Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church

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A new year is upon us, and with it, a feeling of rebirth. Slates are wiped clean, and we are encouraged to start anew, try again, and not be discouraged by what has been. The New Year is a symbol of hope, and one especially needed in our cold and wintry part of the country, where the month of January can otherwise feel a bit bleak. The wind bites hard, the days are short, and the sight of the infamous "snirt" (snow/dirt) on our streets would be enough to sadden the most persistent of optimists.

But I find that in the darker days of winter, there is more time for contemplation. The bright days of summer can cause a frenzy of activity as we rush from softball game to beach to hotdog stand, but in the post-holiday time of January to March, there is a general hunkering down and hibernating in our homes. I see this time as a gift, a way for Nature to tell us to stop for a moment and

be still. Be still in your home, in a coffee shop, or in restful companionship with those you love. Take time to think about the year you have just had, and what your hopes are for this one.

Whether you form New Year's resolutions or not, you can share in the possibility of a new chance, and another chapter to your story.

Happy 2016!

-Alice Burton



Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! This time of year is always enjoyable for me as I like taking time to think back on the year that is ending and to think forward to the year that is arriving. What about you? Do you try to take some time to consider both? Do you make resolutions? Do you set intentions? Do you choose a word?

After Christmas Eve, I had several days off to rest and recuperate. On New Year's Eve, I gathered with friends and the hostess invited all of us to choose a word that we would like to live into and practice this year. It wasn't easy to choose just one word! In the end, I chose the word "enjoy." You know me well enough by now to know that I typically work and play hard. What is more difficult for me to do is to stay present in each moment and actually enjoy what I am doing. So this year, I hope to focus on enjoying all that I do (or at least as much as is possible!). What word would you choose?

What word might we choose as a congregation? Wisdom? Hospitality? Change? Adaptability? Cooperation? Community? Love? Welcome? Home? On the fourth Sunday of Advent, I preached a sermon titled, "What is Your Song?" In it I was asking what our song might be as a congregation. It's a similar idea as choosing a word, but a song gives a fuller picture, perhaps. I am still curious about what song we would each choose individually and what song we would choose as a congregation.

While I was taking time off over the break I was thinking about vision. As we spend the first part of this year gathering more information for our options for the future (our swimming lanes), the one task that is still before us that is the most exciting and difficult is to articulate a compelling vision. What are we being called to be and do in Lincoln Park in the coming years? We still have not identified that piece and it is the most crucial piece. The LIFT Team will continue to work on what

we think we are hearing as vision possibilities and we would invite you to do the same. Have you heard anything in this past year that you think is a part of our compelling vision? If so, please share it with me or a member of the LIFT Team.

This year promises to be exciting and challenging all at the same time as we face forward and make decisions about our future. I hope you are committed to participating in whatever processes we end up inviting everyone to so that your voice and your wisdom will be heard.

Grateful to be beginning a new year with you,

Beth

Clerk's Clippings: Paying Attention to the Signs



Our regular December 16 Session meeting was abbreviated, because we met earlier that evening with the LIFT team to learn the results of the Congregational Assessment Tool, which had been filled out by members of the congregation. The Rev. Shawna Bowman, pastor of Friendship Presbyterian Church in Chicago, representing the Presbytery of Chicago, met with us to interpret the results of the survey, and to lead us in discussing the responses. Also part of the interpretation team was the Rev. Barbara Wilson, Community Organizer for the Presbytery. After that, we held our regular business meeting.

Jerry Homsy offered the opening reflection and prayer at the Session meeting. The following is his very powerful and personal reflection.

Jake

Today we said goodbye to our little white dog, Jake. He became very sick about two months ago. He developed ulcers on his eyes. Then he lost the capacity to eat. He vomited, turned in circles looking to find a comfortable spot, fearful and un-understanding what was happening to him. In the end he told us that it was enough

Jake was a teaching dog. By that I mean that he had qualities that made one reflect, that gave us pause. He was called "gentleman Jake" because he was always gentle. He would give ground if you asked him....space on the couch, moving to the back seat of the car with a gesture by one of us.

He was a demander of affection and he gave affection and love in turn.

He was a concerned dog. When we would take him and our other dog to the woods in Door County, if our other dog bolted, Jake would seek him out and call to us in a slightly higher pitched bark...and there they would both be.

Gentleness, love and affection, concern and loyalty. That was Jake.

Jake was a teaching dog.

Let us pray. Almighty and Loving One, you have given many signs to point to the right way of thinking and living. Let us pay attention to those signs, even when you speak them from a small creature.

Mercy, pity, peace, love and gentleness. Amen.

We were excited to welcome elder-elect Ronda Howell to the Session table, and to discuss with her why she chose to say "yes" to being nominated and elected to serve on Session, starting in 2016. Ronda shared with us that at first she had reservations about being elected to Session, because she thought she might be moving back to Michigan soon. However, it turned out that is not the case right now, so Ronda decided she would accept the nomination. Serving on Session is the way that she can give back to the community and the church.

Ronda shared with us that her young granddaughter Elise had asked her soon after she came to Chicago, "'Donda', where's our church?" As they walked around Lincoln Park, Ronda noticed a fair trade sale sign at LPPC, which made her want to learn more about us. So she came, bringing Elise, and then her daughter Janie came along.

We asked her how we could equip her for the ministry that we share, and/or what she would need from us as she joins Session. Ronda said that she needs lots of grace from us, because there are many things she would like to do, but cannot, due to her work and schedule. She thanked us for the opportunity to serve, and expressed that she experienced this election as God's call to her to work in a community where everyone is loved and respected.

While we welcomed Ronda, we also said goodbye to Rebecca Devlin, as she will be leaving the Session table. We spent time offering thanks to Rebecca for the many gifts she had shared with us

on Session. Some of the gifts we highlighted were Rebecca's thoughtful input on so many issues, her spirituality, the many years of leadership, watching her grow over the years, her excellent organizational skills, the many times that she helped mediate varying points of view in discussions, and her patience, enthusiasm and energy. We had special praise for Rebecca's leadership on the LIFT team as well as the Pastor Nominating Committee. Rebecca thanked us for our gifts, and said that she had learned so much from us.

Paying attention to the signs, as Jerry reminded us, is so important! Ronda paid attention to an LPPC sign, which brought her to us. We paid attention to the signs of Rebecca's gifts for leadership. We also paid attention (and are paying attention) to the signs from congregational responses to the Assessment Tool. And as we look to the future, we need to pay attention to all the signs of gentleness, mercy and love that surround us and lead us on. What an important thing to think about as we enter the new year, and the season of Epiphany!

-Gail Russell, Clerk of Session

Women's Book Group

On **Saturday, January 16**, the Women's Book Group will discuss "Orphan Train: A Novel" by Christina Baker Kline at 9:30 a.m. in the Lighthouse Lounge on the 14th floor at **The Admiral at the Lake, 929 Foster Ave.**

Between 1854 and 1929, so-called orphan trains ran regularly from the cities on the East Coast to the farmlands of the Midwest, carrying thousands of abandoned children whose fates would be determined by pure luck. This is the story of one such child who as an old woman meets a teen who also is an outsider and how their lives intersect.

All women are invited to join the conversation beginning Light refreshments will be served.

Those with questions about the book group or in need of transportation, see or call Sharon Stangenes, 312-203-4666 or sharon.stangenes@gmail.com.

-Sharon Stangenes

Save the date!

Would you like to help welcome people from around the globe as they flee war, terror and persecution? Would you like to learn how to help individuals and families assimilate into life here in the greater Chicago area? Would you like to hear a perspective on how refugees are selected and vetted for entry into the U.S.?

If the answer is yes to any of those questions, then circle the date, Jan.10, for a special presentation by RefugeeOne during a luncheon forum here at LPPC.

We are scheduled to welcome Maureen (Mo) Meyer from the board of RefugeeOne during that luncheon. Since its inception in 1982, RefugeeOne has helped about 16,000 refugees settle into new lives in the Chicago area. She will provide information about the organization and its mission, and help us learn what we can do as a community of believers to show hospitality to God's people in need.

The Social Justice and Education ministry welcomes everyone to the event. Also, the organization has a website, RefugeeOne.org - providing great information about its history, processes and how we can help in practical ways.



Women's Retreat: Don't Miss It!

The 2016 Women's Retreat will be here before you know it. That's right. So it's time now to make plans to attend this **February 5-7** gathering of the women from LPPC and First United Church of Oak Park. In mid-December you will receive our brochure with all the details about this, so watch for it. In the meantime, mark it on your calendar as a definite "YES"!



January Birthdays

- | | |
|----|-------------------|
| 2 | Nadine Cummings |
| 2 | Mary Randall |
| 15 | Min Won Song |
| 17 | Claudia Gladstone |
| 18 | Jeanne Hale |
| 20 | Kim Wilkinson |
| 24 | Janie Howell |