

UPDATE

February 2016

Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church

600 W. Fullerton Parkway, Chicago, IL 60614-2614 • 773-248-8288
Beth Buckingham-Brown, Pastor lppchurch.org Alice Burton, Editor

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Happy February!

February this year brings the women's retreat, the beginning of Lent and therefore Pastor Beth's Lenten study, and, of course, Mardi Gras and the Chicago tradition of the delicious paczki (if you have never had one, I highly recommend them).

Inside this month's Update, you will find more information on the Lenten study, the topic of which seems more relevant to our world, and especially our city, than perhaps ever; a rumination on a famous poem; an update on the future of our church and what the LIFT team is doing; an extremely helpful explanation of that mysterious "per capita" figure we have all probably seen; the exciting book choice of the women's book group for this month; and a helpful listing of LPPC birthdays.

hurdle of 2016. May the month of February prove to be a time of challenge, growth, and joy.

-Alice Burton

We have cleared the first



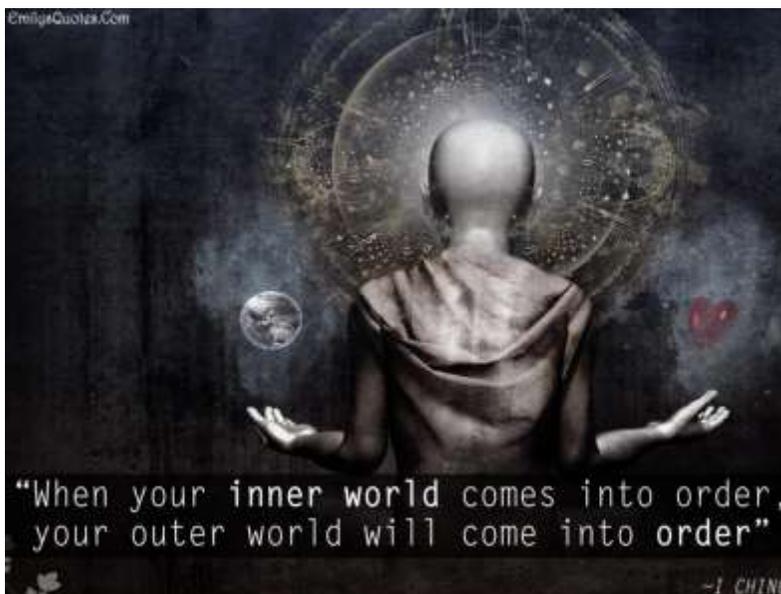
Dear Friends,

In the past year, the social justice ministry team has been conversing about how to best have a conversation in our congregation about race. Where do we begin? What is the conversation we think we need to have with one another? Who, if anyone, needs to help us in having this conversation? After much conversation, we decided we need to begin by having a conversation amongst ourselves about white privilege, white supremacy and systemic racism. I offered to plan and lead that conversation. We debated when to have the class and decided Lent seemed to be a good season for being honest in this conversation. The Worship and Hospitality Team then chose our Lenten theme to go with the class that will be offered. Our theme during Lent will be "Humility as Self-Honesty."

I hope you will attend our 6 week Lenten Study. We will meet in the Geneva Room from 6:30-8:30 pm each Monday, beginning on February 15th. Here is a description of the class:

How does a congregation that is primarily "white" engage in conversations about race? In the past couple of years with increasing publicity regarding police brutality against people of color and especially when the #BlackLivesMatter movement became known nationally, the conversation about race was moved to the forefront. As is often the case, the church has been somewhat slow to respond. Many congregations think the first step is to ask someone who is "black" to come and speak to their congregations about what "white" people could be doing to work against racism. This is an example of good intentions and a misunderstanding of the conversation and self-awareness that is needed. Those of us who are "white" need to have a long overdue conversation about the origins of racism which usually begins with white supremacy. My contention is that the biblical and faith narratives we claim have resulted in the claim of white supremacy for those of us who are "white" and without our even realizing the connection. This class is designed to wake us up out of our paralysis and lead us into recovering from the shame we often feel, sometimes

unconsciously, and move us into deeper self-awareness and empowerment for how to create a world in which all people can thrive and be whole. We won't change the world in a week but we will be able to change ourselves with God's help.



This class will not debate but accept and discuss some of the major assumptions that have led to the need for this kind of conversation. Those assumptions are as follows:

1. White supremacy is real and whether we intend to participate in it or not, those of who are "white" participate just by being "white."
2. White privilege is real and whether we intend to make use of our privilege or not, those of us who are "white" have it just by being "white."
3. Racism is systemic which means built into the very fabric of our systems (institutions and government) is an unjust favoritism of those who are "white."
4. Race is a social construct and not a biological fact. Racial identity is different from race and racial identity is fluid. The social, political and economic meanings of race have not been fluid.
5. More than 50 years ago, Congress enacted the most comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in history, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Half a century later in 2015, the same gaps in racial inequality remain or have grown deeper.

My personal guarantee is that you will not feel worse about yourself as a result of this class and this conversation, but will, instead, feel empowered to make positive changes and take direct action. Feel free to invite your friends.

I hope to see you for this important conversation and work that we will have and do together.

Peace,

Beth

Clerk's Clippings "The Road Not Taken"

We began our January 26 Session meeting with Gerri Mead offering the opening reflection and prayer. Below are her words.

Ever since I was a young adult, Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken* has been a favorite of mine. Never mind that it is one of this country's most frequently remembered poems – and that it is often given a rather simplistic interpretation. Still its words have always struck a chord with me. And in 2007 during a vacation Gail and I spent in New England we were actually able to visit Frost's home. We thought it was probably appropriate that the directions were a little vague, and when we made the last turn onto the property it even felt as if maybe we were on the road we shouldn't have taken. Anyway, let me read Frost's poem to you now.



The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other; as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear:

Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black,

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I...

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

When I look back on my own life, I can see so many places where I had to choose one direction or the other. At the time I wasn't always sure what the choice meant. But looking back it's clear how it did "make all the difference."

And I think that we, as a church, can say the same thing. There are so many choices we've made throughout our history. Taken separately when they occurred, I doubt that our members were totally clear where those choices would lead. But when we look back and see the pattern we realize how much our choices created an ever increasing commitment to social justice – to being God's hands and heart in our extended community. Often those choices took us on roads less traveled. But what a difference our presence on those roads has meant.

Now we have come once again to a place where the road splits – and not just into two directions, but several. At the moment we're calling them swimming lanes. And in the next few months we will choose one of them. It's an exhilarating time - and also a challenging and maybe even fearful time. But I think we can and should take heart as we look back and see how much God's Spirit has been present as we've made past decisions and chosen a road to travel. Most assuredly that same Presence is with us now and will never leave us.

Let us pray.

Loving and gracious One. You are the one who has promised to accompany us always. As we begin this new calendar year and enter this time of important decisions, we claim that promise. Grant us Your wisdom. Fill us with Your vision. And especially we pray for laughter and for new ways to remain your joyful people in the midst of all these swimming lanes.

In Your name we pray. Amen.

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Our first item of business was the budget for 2016. Treasurer-Elect Steve Hunter met with us to present it, and to present a proposal from Property and Finance about our investments and the need to sell some of our equities, in order to help balance our income and expenses. We supported their proposal to sell \$42,000 from a specific fund.

Steve shared that our pledged income for 2016 was higher than we had hoped for: \$173, 276, which is an amazing amount of commitment from our small congregation! He noted that while the budget is a deficit budget, it is realistic and reflects our situation as a congregation. Property and Finance projects the need to withdraw \$107,000 from the reserve funds in order to meet expenses. With that information, we approved the budget as presented.

Our focus topic was again the efforts of LIFT. The first aspect of that was to discuss the results of the Congregational Assessment Tool, which we had received at our last meeting, but not had time to digest or discuss. At this meeting, we received the executive summary of the report, and agreed that at our February meeting we would discuss the results of the survey in more depth. We also talked about LIFT's work going forward, as we move together to the "big discussion"; the discernment of our future as a congregation. LIFT suggested that we are still missing an articulated mission and vision for our congregation, and that's where we need to move next. They proposed that there be three congregational gatherings in the upcoming months. The first one, Sunday, February 21, would outline several different choices for our mission and vision, and begin receiving feedback from the congregation. The second, March 13, would use a discernment process with the congregation to determine which mission and vision to choose. The third gathering, April 10, will offer the opportunity to the congregation to determine the future of our building and property.

Going into this process, there are no assumptions about what the priorities are, nor about the building and property. Those need to be developed with everyone (or at least, with everyone who is able to participate in the gatherings). LIFT presented four different possibilities for mission and vision, none of which is at all yet fleshed out. Elders were invited to choose one of these options that, in small groups with members of the LIFT Team and interested people in the congregation, will be more thoroughly developed into mission and vision statements. These statements will then

be presented and discussed at the February 21 gathering. And we'll see where the road leads from there!

Later in the meeting, we voted on a number of actions. First, we voted to approve an "omnibus" motion: a page long list of actions to elect elders to serve on the Nominating Committee, Elder Commissioner to Presbytery and the Personnel Committee; to determine when Communion would be served during the year, when Session would meet, and when two congregational meetings would be held; to decide when seasonal denominational mission offerings would be received, and when the offering for the Lincoln Park Community Shelter would be taken.

We also considered two different overtures to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), one focused on healing actions needed for LGBTQ individuals who have been injured by the denomination, and one urging the denomination to divest itself from investments in fossil fuels. Both of these overtures received serious consideration and discussion. In the end, the Session approved sending both of them forward to the Presbytery of Chicago for a vote. After those votes are taken (and if the Presbytery Assembly supports them), the actions then get sent on for action to the denomination's General Assembly, which will meet this coming June.

It was a very full and meaningful meeting. As usual, and as Gerri pointed out earlier in the meeting, we never know exactly where our actions and deliberations will take us. And we don't know just how these upcoming conversations and deliberations will turn out. Will we take the right road? And which road, after all, is "right"? God's Spirit has been with us before as we have made decisions and acted on our convictions. And God's Spirit will continue to be present with us as we find the next way/ways to be God's hands and heart in our community. May it be so!

- Gail Russell, Clerk of Session

What Is This Mystery Called Per Capita?

If you are an LPPC pledger and have a box of pledge envelopes, you may have noticed a subtle little sticker near the top of your box that says "Per capita \$33.00. Also, tucked in with the January envelopes is a blue one marked Per capita.

The Per Capita is not part of your pledge. Your pledge is to our local congregation. The Per Capita is your contribution to the larger church. Per Capita is the way that we share equally, responsibly and interdependently in the costs of governing our denomination, no matter the size of an individual congregation. Per Capita contributions support the work of presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly. For LPPC that means the Presbytery of Chicago and The Synod of Lincoln Trails as well as our national denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Our church has committed to paying the per capita whether our members do or not, so please consider contributing your Per Capita portion this month.

Women's Book Group

On **Saturday, February 13**, the Women's Book Group will discuss "Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg" by Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik at 9:30 a.m. in the Lighthouse Lounge on the 14th floor at **The Admiral at the Lake, 929 Foster Ave.**

This lively biography of the octogenarian Supreme Court Justice traces how she built a career despite the odds and now is celebrated in serious law annals to tourist kitsch.

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

- Sharon Stangenes

February Birthdays

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|----|----------------------|
| 1 | Lily Hope Cerjak |
| 2 | Amy Carlozo |
| 11 | Mike Sordill |
| 14 | Amanda Schulze |
| 17 | Gale Morgan-Williams |
| 23 | Scott Cerjak |
| 24 | Kai Stangenes |
| 25 | Norma Bennett |
| 28 | Brooke Mallick |