

ROGERS PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The People's Press

February/March 2009

From our Interim Pastor



Lent Begins on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 25)

Richard J. Foster begins his modern classic, *Celebration of Discipline*, with these words: "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people." These are inviting and challenging thoughts with which to begin the season of Lent.

Lent is the season that prepares us for Easter. During Lent we watch and listen as Jesus "sets his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem." During Lent we are invited to deepen our Christian perspective on life. Lent is about meditating on the reality of God, as God is revealed to us in the life and ministry and death of Jesus the Christ. Lent is about sustaining our lives with spiritual discipline. And, unexpectedly, Lent is also about joy and fulfillment as children of God.

The Lenten season begins with Ash Wednesday. Our congregation will observe Ash Wednesday this year. We will gather on the evening of February 25th at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary for a

service to begin our Lenten journey. At the conclusion of the service "the imposition of ashes" will be offered for those who desire it, which means getting ashes in the shape of a cross on our foreheads.

I vividly remember the first time I led an Ash Wednesday service. I was to make a sign of the cross with ashes on each person's forehead, and say, "Remember, you are dust, and to dust you shall return." I was nervous about saying that to my parishioners whom I loved. I didn't want to remind them -- or myself -- of our mortality. But after I did this and said this to 75-year old Walt Hileman, he said, "Thank you." And I realized what a blessing it is to hear the truth in Christian fellowship, to hear the truth knowing that in Christ we belong to God both in life and in death.

I invite you come to church on Ash Wednesday evening, to participate in this holy service. May God bless your Lenten journey.

Pastor Kent Organ

P.S. As this newsletter goes to press, we understand there may also be a 6 p.m. supper of soup, bread and Scripture, each Wednesday night in Lent, possibly beginning with Ash Wednesday. Stay tuned for more information to come.



Introducing our Interim Pastor

Meet the Rev. Kent Organ. He has been with us since the middle of December. Rogers Park is the third consecutive congregation that he has served as "interim pastor." Serving us on a half-time basis, Pastor Kent is in the church office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Kent Organ was raised in Ohio. He is a graduate of Ohio University and Chicago's own McCormick Theological Seminary. He also holds an advanced degree from Union Seminary in New York City. He has served urban, multi-cultural churches in Cleveland, Dayton, Detroit and Tucson. He has also served churches in university communities, in Iowa and Oregon. He was presbytery executive of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve (Cleveland) in the 1980s. In his leisure time, he enjoys sports, reading, politics, music, theater and travel. Pastor Kent and his wife, Vicky Curtiss, moved back to Chicago last September when Vicky began her ministry as associate pastor for mission at Fourth Presbyterian Church.



What is an "Interim" in the Church?

We presently have an "interim pastor."

What does that mean? Fundamentally, it means that our congregation is in a transitional period, in between "regular" pastors. Following Pastor Chuck's departure, the Session met with representatives of the Chicago Presbytery's Committee on Ministry who advised our congregation to take our time, and not move too quickly to get another "regular" pastor. The "interim" is a time for us to consider afresh who we are, what we do, the community where we are located, and what it is that God might desire of us. The Session and the interim pastor will lead us in a mission study. And, during the interim, we will take on five "developmental tasks," ways of getting us ready, we pray, for the future God has in mind for us:

1. Coming to terms with history
2. Discovering a new identity
3. Welcoming new church leadership
4. Renewing denominational linkages
5. Committing to new directions in ministry

During the interim, as we gain greater clarity on who we are as a congregation and what we are called to do and to become, we will have a better idea what kind of pastor colleague we will wish to invite to join us in the next chapter of our life and work together. If you would like to be involved in this process, please speak with the interim pastor or a member of the Session. May God guide and bless us in this interesting and fruitful interim time.

A Report on the Session-Deacons Retreat

Fourteen church leaders spent a Saturday morning in January in a planning retreat. We want you to know some of things that we did, as the Rogers Park Presbyterian "interim" begins.

+ We discussed the many activities that our church does, and filled a wall in the Fellowship Lounge with a visual display of these activities. The categories we discussed were: building and grounds, education, evangelism, leadership & administration, member care, outreach & mission, stewardship & budget, worship & celebration.

+ Next we filled another wall, recalling our history. This 17-foot-wide butcher-paper Wall of Memory time line is still on display in the Fellowship Lounge. It recalls events, people and surrounding realities in our 99-year history. Take a look. You'll see the names of our pastors, when the buildings were built (1912, 1925), when we had 1000 members, crisis events (the lightning strike, the fire), and other happenings. Participants especially reflected on the last three pastoral eras. The history wall ends with question marks, as we are just beginning to consider where we are and what is ahead.

+ We prayerfully considered which areas of church life especially require our attention now. Your elected leaders decided on these priority areas: outreach & mission, evangelism, and leadership & administration.

+ Then, out of our conversations, the two boards decided on these three goals:

- 1 Our church will offer opportunities that neighbors will want to be a part of;
- 2 Our church will set priorities for seeking members' involvement and commitment;
- 3 Our church will offer a positive context in and through the Spirit of Christ.

+ Subsequently, the Session assigned these goals to specific committees, appointed committee chairs, agreed to ask a presbytery consultant to assess the building, asked the stewardship committee to seek to reduce the 2009 budget deficit, approved resumption of the search for a custodian, decided to review the by-laws and to find second person to count the offerings, supported board of deacons' intent to follow up on worship visitors.



New Church Leaders Getting Started

On Sunday, January 25, new church officers were ordained and installed. Peter Horth, Wayne Kusy and Miriam Pukalo are now on the Session, which includes continuing elders: Maurice Glover, Essie Jones, Georgette Joseph (clerk), Maurice Glover and Franklin Rhodes. Daphne Chisholm, Henry Sarkodee-Adoo and Phillip Semrau (returning) join the Board of Deacons, whose continuing members include Joyce Annan, Elsie Djirackor, Fiifi Frimpong, Rob Gurley, Suzette Johnson (moderator) and Patricia Pointer.

Committee chairs in 2009 will be: Wayne Kusy for the Invitation Committee, Daphne Chisholm for the Nurture Committee, Peter Horth for the Stewardship Committee, and Georgette Joseph for the Worship Committee. If you have questions or would like to get involved, please be in touch with one of these chair people.



First Sunday Worship with Bethel Presbyterian Church

On the first Sunday of February, we worshiped together with our congregational partner, the Bethel Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Thus we resumed a tradition of sharing first-Sunday-of-the-month Holy Communion with our Bethel brothers and sisters. Brother Paul Asiamah and Interim Pastor Kent Organ co-led the service. The New Testament lesson and portions of the communion liturgy were read aloud in both English and the Ghanaian language Twi (pronounced Chee). We also sang the single Ghanaian hymn that is in the Presbyterian Hymnal, "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love." Participants of both congregations agreed that this was a high moment in our worship life, and we are delighted that we will continue to share first-Sunday worship and communion with Bethel. (Next time: April 5, because on March 1 Bethel celebrates the Ghana's Independence Day)

Christopher House Lease being Renewed

One of the most significant services that Rogers Park Presbyterian Church provides for our community is the Christopher House Head Start program. Christopher House has offered day-care, early childhood education services for five years, since July 1, 2004. The Session is now in conversation with Christopher House leadership in order to renew our lease agreement. We are pleased that this valuable program for the children and families of the Rogers Park community will continue.



We Welcome Guest Preachers in March

On March 1 and March 8, we will be led in worship by two guests, one well known to the Rogers Park Presbyterian family, the other whom we welcome back after many years. Rev Carol Allen, who has been of great aid to us in recent months, will preach on March 1, the first Sunday in Lent. The Rev. Donald Register will preach on Sunday, March 8. Don Register is pastor emeritus of the Sixth-Grace Presbyterian Church; he was moderator of the Presbytery of Chicago in 2007. During this week, our interim pastor will be involved in leading an eight-day CREDO conference for Presbyterian pastors in North Carolina.

CREDO is a ministry of the Presbyterian Board of Pensions, which seeks to further clergy well being in the areas of spirituality, vocation, health and finance. Kent Organ, as conference leader, heads a nine-member faculty team.



From the Clothing Pantry

The Clothing Pantry has donated toys to Africa, in particular, Ghana through our own Joyce Akogo. Frank Rhodes, Director, would like to thank the young people for reading in honor of Black History month: Charles Johnson, Jr., Rosa Lee Johnson, David Cowan, Falando Johnson, Omar Johnson, Queen Reed, Kamillia Richardson, Monique Johnson and Miriam Akogo.

L.E.A.D. 2009

The Chicago Presbytery's "Leadership, Education and Development for the Whole Church" Conference will be Saturday, March 7, 8:30AM to 3 PM at McCormick Seminary, 5460 University Avenue in Hyde Park. Early registration fee is \$15; it includes continental breakfast and lunch. Eric Law is the keynoter, and there are workshops on every aspect of the church life. For more information, speak to Georgette Joseph or Jeremy Cowan.



Personal Prayers

Please pray for *Michael Chisholm*, Daphne's husband. He is to have hip replacement surgery on February 16 and needs lots of prayer for recovery.

Elizabeth Rangel joined us for Church Sunday, February 8, after a long time of not feeling well. She is glad to be back. Barbara Comstock, Barbara Donner's co-worker is still in need of our prayers at this time. We will continue to pray for Brandi's recovery after her car accident. Brandi is like a granddaughter to the Richmonds. Elder Frank Rhodes' sister, Delores Hampton, needs our prayers because she had foot amputation surgery the second week of February, and is now in hospice care. Pray for the Rhodes family. Jomel Bobbitt and family are moving back to Rogers Park from Davenport, IA. Please pray that Jomel finds employment when settled back here. Our friend *Rev. Amy Snedeker*, on her third battle with cancer, is suffering with some side effects from her treatment. Please keep her in your prayers.

Please send articles for future issues to the church office at email address:

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