



# UPDATE

February 201

## Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church

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### Pastor's Reflection

As I write, winter is upon us. In January, one day it was 50° and the next day six inches of snow fell. With cycles of freezing and thawing travel is hazardous. Tires spin, cars stall. Schools close. Meetings are cancelled. A Chicago winter.

*Its breath like silver  
arrows pierced the air,  
The naked earth  
crowded shuddering at its  
feet,*

*Nature lay frozen  
dead – and still and slow  
A winding sheet fell  
o'er her body fair,  
Flaky and soft, from  
its wide wings of snow.*

-France Anne Kemble

Winter is waiting and promise. Winter knows that respite is coming – eagerly awaits its coming. But it is not yet. A winter of disruptions confounds us. We do not choose to slow down, but we are slowed

down. We may not be comfortable with silence, with solitude, with time in God's presence only, but these are givens. In winter, "Be still, and know that I am God." "Be still and know..." "Be still..." "Be..."

Winter is not forever. "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Indeed, the season of Lent (from the Latin for "lengthening" of each successive day) begins in February. Winter will give way to spring, and we will prepare for new life, new birth, for Easter. We will begin our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 22). We will mark the weeks in Sunday worship and in a short course that I will teach on Thursday evenings called "Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace."

But until then, may God hold you close in winter.

-Kent Organ

## **Clerk's Clippings: Session Shakes Things Up!**

New approaches: At each recent meeting, our moderator, Interim Pastor Kent Organ has asked the following questions at the beginning of the meeting: "What's gone well in the last month? Not so well? And what are we learning?" This has helped us start each meeting in a reflective way, but also has encouraged us to think creatively about accomplishments, bumps in the road, and how we might learn from each. Another new approach is a different type of agenda, helping us focus on what we can accomplish quickly and what might need more air-time, more discussion and deliberation. And at the end of each meeting, Kent has asked us the following concluding questions: "What's on your radar screen? What are you planning that you might want to consult others about?" These questions help ministry teams work together on what might become joint projects, or they can also elicit ideas from individuals that the whole group might want to consider.

From the Transition Team: We adopted the Transition Team's approach for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, which was to use a significant portion of the time for "holy conversations" around the lunch tables about the future of LPPC, and then to get people engaged in doing some research. Some people will be discovering about other city churches and what we might learn from them, and others will explore why some people might have chosen not to stay at LPPC. Further, we agreed to ask the congregation to gather again on Sunday,

March 4 to discuss what we have all learned after the explorations listed above.

Changes in Structure: We decided at the January meeting that, given this busy time of transition, the Session needs to meet more often. So we will be meeting 11 times during 2012, instead of seven. We eliminated the Administration Committee; its human resources functions will be addressed by a new Personnel Committee, which will meet on an as-needed basis. The Interim Pastor and the Clerk will determine the Session agenda, with input from ministry teams and other groups. We hope all these changes will make the best use of people's time and energy, and will make us a more effective governing body.

New Policy: At the December meeting of Session, we approved a Safe Child policy, after several drafts, study by the Session and careful review by several of our congregation's attorneys. This policy is based on a similar policy developed by the Presbytery of Chicago, and will protect our children, while helping teachers and others to recognize the importance of their roles.

Budget Decisions: We reviewed, discussed and adopted a budget for 2012, after significant deliberation. While it's proposed that we will need to draw some funds from the endowment principal (\$4,500), that figure is much lower than previous recent draws, because of good pledge results, some special gifts, careful budgeting, and not having an installed full-time pastor. Also, a task group was appointed from Session to work on planning for the financial future of

the congregation, especially for the next three to five years. That group is: Ben Ho, Steve Hunter and Allan Wilson. We look forward to hearing from them about potential new directions.

New Ministry Team Leadership: We approved new ministry team elder leadership for 2012:

- Church and Society: Robert Guenther and Gale Morgan-Williams
- Congregational Life, Outreach and Care: Alice Burton, Steve Hunter and Kenny Walker
- Property and Finance: Gerri Mead and Allan Wilson
- Worship and Education: Ben Ho, Don Hunter and Emily Waldren

**-Gail Russell, Clerk of Session**

### **Women's Book Group**

All women are invited to participate in the book group. We read an eclectic selection of fiction and nonfiction and often have widely diverging reactions to the same book, making for lively discussions. While we argue, we eat —pastries and coffee. Regulars who cannot attend are asked to let Norma Bennett (773-929-4400) know so the refreshments can be adjusted.

We select our books by consensus from books that meet the following criteria: a member has to have read it and sponsor it, it is available in paperback, it is available from

the public library, and it is available as a talking book, i.e. in audio form.

### **Books**

February 11: “Madonnas of Leningrad” by Debra Dean, fiction, sponsored by Laurie Brown. The main character is a staff member of The Hermitage Museum, who survives the 872-day siege by the Germans during World War II. In her later life she lives in the United States in Seattle.

March 10: “The Omnivores’ Dilemma” by Michael Pollan, sponsored by Monna Ray. At the March meeting we will select the April book. We are actively searching for shorter and somewhat less somber books compared to our last few.

Logistics: We meet on the second Saturday of the month, at the Kenwood, 3121 N. Sheridan Road, Room 703, entrance on Briar Street where you sign in. If you drive, a few guest parking spaces are available and are assigned by the person at the front desk. You may pull directly up to the garage entrance on Barry St. and telephone the front desk at 773-404-9800 and ask to be assigned a parking space.

To find Room 703, our meeting space, take the first floor elevator to the mezzanine (push the M button). Exit at the mezzanine, turn right, and walk down a long corridor that jogs to the right until you find another elevator. Take that elevator to the seventh floor, turn right, and proceed to Room 703.

**-Virginia Braxton**

## **Erwin Helfer Rocks Our House**

What a great birthday celebration! Erwin Helfer, our neighbor and legendary Chicago blues pianist, turned 76 on the 20th of January and turned the snowy blizzard into a warm musical event. He and his partners, Katherine Davis and John “Boom” Brumbach along with more than a 100 of his closest friends (most of whom walked to the church) did indeed “Rock this House.” The weather was terrible, the traffic was a mess, but the venue glowed and the spirit was glorious. Fernando was everywhere, so were a collection of young volunteers from the Lincoln Park Village who sponsored the event. Many in the audience had never been inside our church and several marveled at the way the sounds filled the space.

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### ***“Let’s do this again sometime”***

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Katherine Davis wondered aloud if it was permissible to sing “drop a little sugar in my bowl” in the church. The clapping and the hoots suggested that it was not only permitted but praiseworthy.

Jim Zartman introduced his old friend Erwin and at intermission presented him with cake full of candles. In turn Erwin presented us with a range of blues from New Orleans and St Louis as well as boogies that provoked some very un-presbyterian stomping. His left foot, encased in an old tennis shoe, never stopped moving the whole night.

Neither did most of the audience, and I kept thinking, “Let’s do this again sometime.”

**-Bruce Hunt**

## **Of Sunday’s, Silence, and a Short Course; What’s Coming Soon to LPPC**

### **Lincoln’s Birthday**

This has been an interesting season for special days arriving on Sunday. Consider: Christmas 2011 and New Year’s Day 2012 came on Sunday. Martin Luther King’s birthday also. And now, this month, February 12 comes on a Sunday. Kent Organ in his sermon that morning will recall something that most American historians, in the main, have overlooked, that the 16th President of the United States was a profoundly wise Christian theologian. This is odd, given his lack of formal schooling and the fact that he was never a member of church. But Lincoln’s impressive knowledge of the Bible and his experiences of anguish, both public and personal, honed his need for God and his reflections on God’s ways. The sermon, February 12th, will be titled “Abraham Lincoln’s Theological Legacy.”

### **Ash Wednesday, February 22**

Lent is an opportunity for us to consider our life journey, to shift gears, to weigh our values, to reflect. It is a time to remember Jesus’ self-giving and sacrifice, and our sin and brokenness. It is a time to ponder the relationship between our Christian faith and the living of our days. Lent is a time to rediscover our need for God.

The word “Lent” denotes spring. As we move toward Easter and the celebration of

Resurrection life, spring also comes toward us – believe it or not – bringing new life to the created world.

We will begin our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday evening, February 22, with a service at 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. In this service, we recognize and acknowledge our failings and our mortality, and turn toward our God who alone is everlasting and the source of our deliverance. At the end of the service, for those who wish it, comes “the imposition of ashes,” reminding us that “we are dust, and to dust we shall return,” reminding us of our need for the Eternal One.

### **To Observe a Meaningful Lent**

Each year in Lent we may wonder whether we should organize our lives differently during this season. We are invited in Lent, by prayer, acts of devotion and self-discipline, to prepare for Holy Week and Easter. But how, really? Peter Gomes of the Harvard Memorial Chapel suggests three S’s for keeping a good Lent. What he recommends is so manageable that busy people (you and I) can actually do it.

**Silence** – The world is a noisy place. Silence is therefore a rare and precious thing, particularly if we realize that silence is not just the absence of sound but also the presence of that which sound obscures. Gomes proposes securing for yourself fifteen minutes of silence at least one day a week in Lent, during which you do nothing at all!

**Study** – Some ordered spiritual reflection engaging your mind is a good discipline for Lent. Set aside fifteen minutes for study one day each week. Think in advance what you will read. If you wish to read from the Bible, try one of the Gospels or the Psalms. Or try a devotional book, maybe one on your shelf, *These Days*, or something from the church library.

**Service** – Lest we become too self-absorbed in Lent, find a way to give time to some work of kindness. Fifteen minutes seems miniscule given the pressing needs, yet this can set the stage for more extended self-giving. Where can you do some good? Who needs your help? (Don’t forget the One Great Hour of Sharing offering.)

Peter Gomes suggests making every alternate day the occasion for Lenten disciplines. For example, devote Monday to silence, Wednesday to study, Friday to service, or try a Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday schedule. Use the off days for reflecting on what you have done or are about to do, perhaps recording your thoughts in a journal. Sunday is a time to gain support from our faith community.

What good can come of such little time? You may want to extend the investment by doing three exercises per day, or one each day, or you could increase the time from fifteen minutes. But it is not the quantity of time but its regularity and quality that count. It is better to succeed at a little than to fail at much. Spiritually, as in other matters, we crawl before we walk. Lent begins February 22.

## **“Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace”**

This is the name of a short course that Kent Organ will teach on four Thursday evenings, 7:00 -8:15 p.m., during Lent. Thankfully, American military involvement is scaling back in the Middle East. Our combat troops are out of Iraq. We are working to wrest ourselves from Afghanistan. But complications and dangers loom there and in many other places in the world, e.g. Pakistan and Iran. This Lenten course steps back from the headlines and invites us to look at religious attitudes that inform our policy makers and the American public as we consider how to engage global hostility. The three “Christian attitudes” are: the Crusade (Mar. 1), Pacifism (Mar 8), the “Just War” (Mar. 22), and on March 29th a consideration of how these historical perspectives apply and can inform the contemporary

**-Kent Organ**

## **Almost Across the Goal Line**

As our stewardship campaign nears its close, there is much good news to report and much generosity for which to give thanks. As I write this, we have received thirty-eight pledges for a total commitment of \$161,000. Of the members and friends who pledged, twenty-two increased their support. Seven were able to keep the same commitment and five found it necessary to pledge less. We’ve also been pleased to receive four new pledges. It’s quite clear that there has been much prayer and considerable sacrifice

behind this year’s stewardship decisions. Such heart-warming response is very encouraging for the life and future of our church.

Thanks to everyone who has responded so generously, we are within “scoring distance” of our goal, which is \$170,000. And it’s not too late to add your pledge if you haven’t yet done so. Every amount gets us closer and helps us continue God’s ministry on our corner and also in the larger world.

**-Gerri Mead, for the Property & Finance Ministry Team**

## **Moving Forward**

At our January 2012 Session meeting I gave the opening reflection. Someone suggested that others might appreciate it too. So here it is. The story goes like this.

One afternoon, a little three-year-old named Crystal came running to her mother holding in one hand her great grandmother’s vase. The other hand couldn’t be seen. It was stuck inside the vase.

Crystal’s mother tried to move quickly without panicking, because the vase was precious to her – not just in monetary value, but because of all the memories connected with it. So, holding the vase and her little daughter, she moved quickly to the kitchen sink. She used warm soapy water to try to loosen the little one’s hand, which was indeed stuck. When soap didn’t work she reached for the butter. While greasing her child’s wrist like a cake pan she asked the

obvious “mother question.” “How in the world did you do that?” Crystal explained that she dropped candy down into the vase to see if she could still see it when it was at the very bottom. She couldn’t. So she reached in for her candy and then found she couldn’t get her hand back out.

The more time went on, the more serious the whole situation became. Mother called grandmother to come over and help assess the situation. While they waited, a neighbor turned up and suggested Vaseline. Then the apartment manager got out the WD40. Still no luck. It seemed like the only way to get the child’s hand out was to break the heirloom.

Finally, Grandma arrived with her calming presence and went over to Crystal, who was very upset and still very stuck.

“Sweetheart,” she said gently, “Mommy says you reached in the vase for candy. Is that right?”

“Mmmm hmmm,” the child whimpered, still breathless from crying.

“Honey, tell grandma the truth now. Do you still have a hold of that candy?”

“Mmm hmm,” she sobbed.

The grandmother patted her back to comfort her and then said, “Let it go, child. Just let it go.”

The vase slipped off as smooth as silk.

The past twelve months have been quite a transition for this church and for all of us who care about it so much. We have struggled with budget decisions and the faithful stewardship of our financial resources. We’ve said good-bye to a pastor, an associate pastor and an organist/choir director – celebrating their ministries even as we felt the loss in each departure. We’ve shared preaching and worship leadership, all the while managing the myriad of details that needed our attention just to keep our ministry going. We’ve poured the energy necessary into a successful search for an interim pastor and a new choir director/organist. And, as the fall and then the Advent season arrived, we’ve found ourselves in a sometimes exciting, sometimes anxious time when we wondered where God was calling us next – and certainly how we could ever get there.

Over and over again during that time we’ve had to let go of many things familiar. Like the three year old in the story we’ve had to release some of our old methods and some of our old understandings in order to prevent being stuck in the past (even as we honored all the good that had been). And we’ve had to free ourselves from some of the things we’d been holding onto in order to build a faithful future.

I believe we can give thanks for all the ways, with God’s help, we have managed to do this so far. I also know how much we need to pray for guidance, patience and inspiration as we move forward together.

**-Gerri Mead**

## Contribute to Lenten e-Votionals

Please consider writing a devotional for Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church's annual Lenten Devotional Book. A yearly tradition, our Devotional Book contains meditations written by members and friends of Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church. This year, we'll be reflecting upon the Gospel of Mark and distributing the devotionals via email. If you'd like to write a short devotional please sign up in the back of the sanctuary following worship, or contact Emily Waldren at ewaldren@fieldmuseum.org or 312-593-8345. We ask that should you feel moved to contribute, to please turn in your meditation to Emily by February 15. And please check for your "e-Votionals" on Tuesdays through Fridays during Lent.

**-Emily Waldren**

### February Birthdays at LPPC

1	Lily Hope Cerjak
2	Amy Carlozo
14	Amanda Schulze
17	Gale Morgan-Williams
23	Scott Cerjak
24	Kai Stangenes
25	Norma Bennett

## Volunteer Opportunities at LPPC

The first Saturday of every month as LPPC Night at the Shelter. LPPC provides a team of cooks to make dinner for the shelter guests. You can sign up on the volunteer sheet in the back of the sanctuary.

## A Heads-Up on ,“The Interrupters”

On Tuesday, February 14, PBS' Frontline will feature the award-winning documentary “The Interrupters.” The “interrupters” are mostly former gang members and ex-convicts who are members of Chicago’s CeaseFire. The film follows them as they monitor gang activity and attempt to prevent and intervene in retaliatory violence. Since this is hardly a romantic film, you may wish to record it. Show time is 8 pm on Channel 11. Google “The Interrupters,” Frontline, or CeaseFire for more information.

**--Church and Society Ministry Team**

## Here for You

Into every life, there is sunshine and some rain. Sometimes it is an illness for ourselves or a loved one. Or it can be the death of someone dear to us, loss of a job, or one of many possible travails that life brings. Rest assured, you are not alone. On the other hand, if you have a joy you want to share, if you are getting married, or had a baby, or some other joy, we want to share it with you in any way you would like. If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact Rev. Kent Organ through the church office. If you have something you want to share with the congregation or need some assistance with, please contact a member of the Congregational Life and Outreach Committee, including Kenny Walker, Alice Burton and Steve Hunter.

**-Congregational Life and Outreach  
Committee**