

Lent Reflections...by Rev'd Randy Webster

For many of us one of the very first Bible stories that we learned as children was probably the story of the creation of humankind by God out of the dust of the earth. God took a lump of dust and breathed into it the "ruah" or breath of God, and it became a living being. Fantastic stuff, this notion that ordinary dust could become alive through the ruah of God.

A little later, probably about the time I was in late elementary school I learned another bit of fantastic stuff, that our human bodies are made up of about 99% water and a little bit of solid matter, "dust" if you will. Perhaps, if I had only thought about it then, I shouldn't have been surprised at that epiphany, and the thought that, if all of the water were removed from my body, all that would remain is a bit of dust.

And so it all comes together for me as an adult on the first day of Lent, which we call Ash Wednesday. We receive a mark of ash in the form of a cross on our foreheads with the admonition, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return..." The prayer at the imposition of ashes says, "Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes be for us a sign of our mortality and penitence, and a reminder that only by your gracious gift are we given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior."

In that action of inscribing an ashen mark on our foreheads there is perhaps one of the most paradoxical of all our liturgical acts if there ever was one. That little smudge of ash is superimposed upon another cross, the indelible one made at the moment of our baptism.

The mark of the ash reminds us of where we came from and where we are going, "from ashes to ashes and from dust to dust," a stark reminder that there is an ultimate defeat of our mortal nature, of all of our hard-won and cherished progress and all of our earthly accomplishments. And superimposing this mark upon the indelible mark on our souls tells us that we cannot come to the full and eternal life promised in baptism without taking seriously our need for the total and sacrificial offering of ourselves, "our souls and bodies."

Sooner or later we will all wash the ash smudge off of our foreheads, but even if the material ash we receive is gone, the spiritual mark remains until Easter Day.

I would suggest that each of us, as we mark these forty days of Lent daily place on God's Altar a new and figurative batch of ashes each morning. Where might those ashes come from?

The first source is everything about you and your life which has been taken from you without your consent—the hurts, the unkind words and deeds, the power plays that sent you reeling, the withdrawal of recognition and support that someone else decided you should no longer have and had the power to take from you. Let God take those things and burn them up in God's consuming fire.

The second source is everything about you and your life that has special significance, either positive or negative, that you choose to offer to God for both transformation and renewal. There are things about each of us that may have had value once, but their day is past and they are ready either for burning or for renewing by God's ruah.

So daily, in your mind, take something from each source and place it before God and ask that God's fire come and consume it. Offer it up totally so that only the very residue of the ash remains. Then mark the sign of the cross on your own forehead as a daily reminder that which has not died cannot be raised, and anything not surrendered cannot be made new again, except by the creating, redeeming and sustaining love of God.

I invite you to keep this paradoxical and great truth before you as you seek to walk a holy Lent.

Warmly,
Randy+

Glimpses of God's Grace

You are God's beloved child.

Blessed are you ...

We began the year celebrating Epiphany, and the baptism of Jesus, including a reaffirmation of our baptismal vows. Then we began looking at the Sermon on the Mount, which begins with the 'blessed are' promises, and continues through the Lord's Prayer. What I am continuing to learn as we make our way towards Lent, which begins Wednesday, Feb. 18th, is that Jesus' message doesn't change all that much. From the beginning of His ministry to His death and resurrection, certain truths keep on being repeated: You are God's beloved; blessed are you ...; love God with all that you have and are and love your neighbor in the same way you love yourself; forgive as you have been forgiven; God's kingdom is in our midst and it's not like the kingdoms of this world.

The question is, why do we have such a difficult time believing these truths are true? Why do we have such a difficult time living as if they are true, and then sharing this good news with others? Philip Yancey has written a book called *Vanishing Grace, What Ever Happened to the Good News?* in which he wonders something similar. The Carter small group is engaging the DVD study series based on this book and has been wrestling with similar questions as well.

As usual, there are no simple answers, but Yancey has some wonderful quotes for us to ponder as we enter into this second month of 2015. The first I came upon a few weeks ago. He says, 'Here's a good test of how well we love: Are other people glad to be with us? Somehow Jesus managed to attract the kind of people frowned upon by most religious types, and yet those renegades clearly liked being with Jesus.' (pg. 36)

Think about the people you enjoy being around. Why do you enjoy their company? Because they love well? Do people enjoy being around you because you love well? When was the last time you told someone you enjoy being around them and are glad to know them? Yancey notes that as humans, we long for community, a sense of being loved...and where better to experience that but in the family of faith? And yet we also take it for granted ...which is why I encouraged and will continue to encourage us to bless each other whenever possible. 'God bless you' need not be reserved for sneezing alone! It may make someone's day; it may be the word of grace they need to hear during a tough time; it definitely does something in the spiritual realm as we are asking God's blessing and presence to be with them.

Yancey also quotes German theologian Jurgen Moltmann, who came to faith during WWII as a captured German soldier in a British POW camp. 'The church is where Christ is,' he wrote. 'But Christ is also in the place where the poor, the hungry, the sick, and the prisoners are to be found: 'As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' ... You cannot read the Bible without hearing the loud message that God cares for the displaced, the downtrodden, the oppressed, the humble, the needy—in other words, those who know their lostness and who long to be found.' (pg. 53)

At First Presbyterian Church, we try to be where Christ is as we seek to love and serve our neighbors. We all have experienced some lostness as we journey this road of life, and we all long to be found, to be known, not only by God but by others. Again, what better place to do that than in our fellowship, our worship, our ministries in 2015?

God bless you!

Deb

Hymn Festival...by Rev'd Randy Webster

Dear friends,

This coming Sunday, January 25 at 4 p.m. First Presbyterian Church will host a hymn festival called *The Conversion of Saint Paul*. The program tells the story of Paul's conversion in scripture, wonderful poetry by Susan Palo Cherwein, and a variety of music which includes both solo vocal and instrumental music, organ literature and hymns. The hymns include *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound*. A reception will follow the Hymn Festival in Fellowship Hall. You are cordially invited to attend and bring your friends.

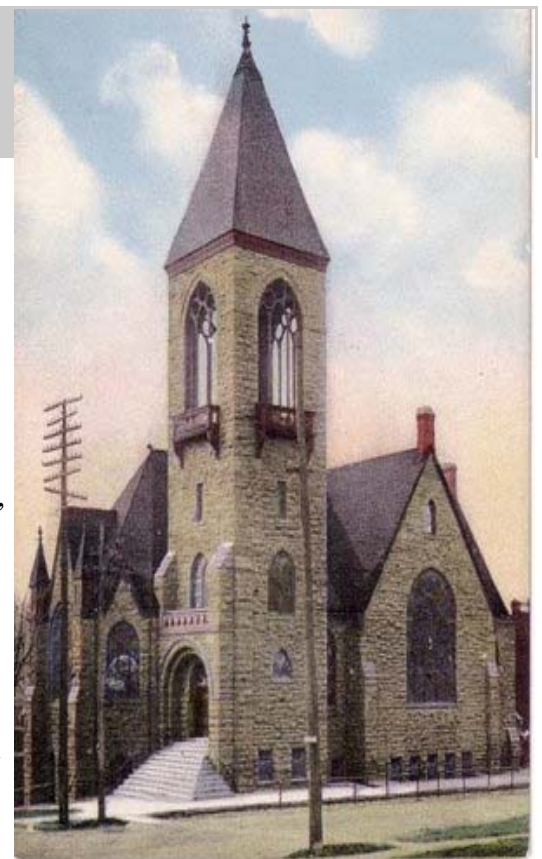


There is an invitation to sing in the choir for the two very accessible anthems. The rehearsal is at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday. The anthems are a two-part setting by Robert Hobby of *Beloved, God's Chosen* and a largely unison anthem by Donald Callen Freed called *Love divine, all love's excelling*. For those wishing to practice the anthems prior to Sunday you may attend a rehearsal on Thursday, January 22 at 7 p.m.

Did You Know??

In 1836, Rev. Launcelot Graham Bell came to Burlington on the Mississippi to establish a Presbyterian Church of the "Old School." Services were held in homes or schoolrooms. After a General Assembly charter was issued, plans for the church building were made and the lot selected. Our present church building is on that same lot, which was purchased for \$400 in 1845. The building was completed in 1848, costing \$4000. The pews had doors, the church was lighted with tallow candles in sconces nailed to the wall and heated by stoves, supplemented with tiny foot stoves filled with hot coals in the coldest weather.

First Presbyterian Church has two historical remembrances during late January and early February. On Sunday, January 25 we will sing two hymns that were sung at the dedication of our present building on January 22, 1888; they were also a part of the rededication of the building following its remodeling in 1951. In February we will remember the meeting of seven men and women who "chartered" First Presbyterian Church in 1845, 170 years ago.



Trustee Report

Statement of Income & Expense December 31, 2014

	Budget	Actual	Variance	Percent of Budget
Balance Forward	\$28,020.00			
Income				
Pledge	175,325.00	171,015.00	4,310.00	97.5%
Non Pledge	24,000.00	30,017.41	-6,017.41	125.1%
Investment Income	21,000.00	22,260.63	-1,260.63	106.0%
PerCapita	3,000.00	2,255.02	744.98	75.2%
Misc Income		5054.79		
Total Income	251,345.00	230,602.85	20,742.15	91.7%
Expenses				
Personnel	167,195.00	155,513.81	11,681.19	93.0%
Educational Minis-	4,150.00	1,330.16	2,819.84	32.1%
Fellowship	1,550.00	908.95	641.05	58.6%
Deacons	750.00	576.23	173.77	76.8%
Property	73,000.00	75,501.23	-2,501.23	103.4%
Worship	4,700.00	3,137.02	1,562.98	66.7%
Total Expenses	251,345.00	236,967.40	14,377.60	94.3%
Differential		-6,364.55		
Estimated Income Han-	\$28,800.00	\$31,368.33	-2,568.33	108.9%
Mission Budget	\$26,295.00	27,208.88	-913.88	103.5%
Differential		4,159.45		

**Per Capita
Apportionment
for 2015 is \$34.27**



Newsy Notes

Angel Tree Update

What a joy it was, being able to hand out all of the gifts for our Angel Tree! Each of the recipients thanked us several times, two with tears in their eyes. Because of your generosity, 37 children had a very special Christmas this year! Thank you to all who helped us; a special thank you to the Presbyterian Women for their extra contributions, as well as to a member's bridge club who purchased gifts for our families.

Our Cozy Tree is down; but we were blessed with many hats & gloves, scarves, sweat pants/shirts and children's underwear.

Thank you!!!

Cathy Brink, Cheryl Lotz & Coleen Francik-Young

Come to Church with a Can

Our goal of 1200 cans for 2014 was exceeded. Thanks to all who contribute to this worthy cause. Our goal for 2015 is 1200, so keep those cans coming!



Bake Sale to Benefit Domestic Violence Shelter



Toddy Gorman and **Susan Hoisington** will host a bake sale to benefit the Shelter on February 1 after worship. Please come and support this worthy cause.

News from the Valdes Family

Dear Church Family,

Happy New Year! We want to say thank you to everyone in the church. This year has really been a blessing for us. We are going to move to Georgetown, Kentucky with Julian's job. It was a very sudden decision.

We were so happy last year with all the church family. Thank you all so much, we will miss you.

We have some happy news, another miracle has happened and we are expecting a baby in August. Please pray for the new baby.

Also please pray for my mother, who has been diagnosed with cancer. We are sad but our faith is strong and we are hopeful.

Blessings,

Julian, Grace, baby Julian and new baby Valdes

Staff Reports

December, 2014

Pastor Deb Kinney

Worship 3 Sunday worship services 1 Christmas Eve service 2 funerals 1 wedding 1 baptism	Church Activities/Events Attended Knitwits Justin Randall's bb game Salvation Army bell ringing Christmas Social Reception for Randy Webster Staff luncheon
Christian Education Led 6 Bible study groups	Other <i>Connections</i> articles & coordination Spiritual Direction session Worship services prep Meet with Egyptian Coptic leaders Separate meetings with staff (9)
Connections 19 Drop-ins/appointments/calls 3 hospital/home visits 15 cards sent	Vacation 1 Sunday
Church Meetings Trustees Deacons Personnel Staff meeting	

Dir. Of Educational Ministries

December, 2014

Tammy Hulett

Worship Young Disciples (3)	Education Children's Sermon Prep (3) KidZone Prep (4) Taught Middle School Sunday School (1) Practiced the Children's Pageant
Church Meetings & Events Meetings with Pastor (3) Working in KidZone (3) Children's Christmas Pageant Bible Study (2)	Other <i>Connections</i> articles Working on 4 th Sunday Working on material for Christmas Pageant Working on Middle School Sunday School
Contacts Phone-calls and e-mails: 30+	Material

From Tammy

After having moved the Godly Play time to 11:00 a.m. for the past 2 weeks, I have decided to move it back to the original time. The kids were having a hard time sitting still and concentrating knowing that fellowship hour was going on in the next room. Starting February 1 we will go back to the original 9:00 a.m. time for Godly Play. Randy will still be holding the children's choir at 11:00 for those who wish to attend. Practice will only last 15-20 minutes.

February's neighbor of the month is The Homeless Shelter and The Domestic Violence Shelter. Sunday, February 1 we will be having our own "Souper" Bowl. We encourage everyone to come to church with a can. Some of the youth will be carrying a soup pan to collect money. All cans and money collected will go to the Homeless and Domestic Violence Shelter. Also, after worship in Fellowship Hall, Susan Hoisington and Toddy Gorman will be selling bread and cookies and the proceeds will go to the Domestic Violence Shelter.

Church Happenings

PW News



February 4, 2014

At 9:45a.m.

Co-Hostesses: Pauline Johnson @ Church
Donna Siefken

Study Leader: Nancy Lazenby

Mission: CCC (bring a can)

Twenty-one Presbyterians and one Methodist feasted on a great meal at the Great Wall on Thursday, January 15th. A long table was set up which resulted in great conversation. The next outing for the **Yum Yums** will be on Thursday evening, **February 19**. We will meet at 6:00 at **The Broadway** in West Burlington. For more information and reservations, call Bonnie White or Sue Carter.



Thank You Notes from Angel Tree recipients:

Thank you for all of the cool make-up and shoes and clothes. I will get a lot of use out of all of my new stuff. Thank you.

Dear Church,
Thank you for the shoes.

Dear 1st Presbyterian,
Thank you for everything that you got me. I really like the shoes and the grey top. I really appreciate everything that you do. Thanks again.

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP TEAM: Charles Bell, Carol Brotherson, Vickie Carhoff, Dick Fischer, Jim French, Steve Hemphill, Marilyn Nuss, Julie Schulthies, Bonnie White, ruling elders. Ted Francis, Clerk.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP TEAM: Nancy Beetner, Rex Beetner, (moderator), Cathy Brink, Adele Coulter, (secretary) Kevin Eibes, Ruth Francis, Barb Garcia, (vice moderator) Sandy Russell, Pat Saldeen, Jay & Jolene Schafer & Sandy Smith.

GOD'S STEWARDS TEAM: Connie Bowen (Secretary), Terri Huddleston, Larry Lazenby, Francis McAllister, (Treasurer), Kel Stensland (President).

FROM JANET CALVIN

On December 18, we delivered Christmas gifts to University of Iowa Children's Hospital for 3 needy families, children and adult cancer units and also Treasure Chest gifts.

Gwen and several of the staff told us how they appreciated the gifts sent every month from our church family, It makes such a difference to each child having treatments to be able to choose a gift.

Thank you for your continued support and for the gifts you have placed in the Treasure Chest.

There is a list in the Treasure Chest of appropriate items for the hospitalized children.

I will ship gifts at the end of each month throughout the year. Thank you for sending God's love to each child.

From Community Action

Thank you so much for your donation in December of \$500.00. Today is a critical time for our families. Decisions must be made whether to pay rent, utilities or buy food.

Because of people like you who care, we are able to make life better for families in crisis.

Sharon Ford, Executive Director

Join the:



- Feb. 8 Ruby McCormick
- Feb. 9 Jesse McCormick
- Feb. 11 Dick Wells
- Feb. 12 Leona Byars
- Feb. 14 Dick Fischer
- Feb. 15 Marcia Bailey
..... Edie Blom
- Feb. 20 Linda Cochran
- Feb. 22 Mr. Shirley Webster
- Feb. 25 Caleb Kunz
- Feb. 27 Jay Schafer

Minutes of the Stated Meeting of Session

November 17, 2014

1st Presbyterian Church, Burlington, Iowa

A Stated Meeting of the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Burlington, Iowa was held in the church parlor on November 17, 2014. Moderator **Rev. Debra Kinney** opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with devotions on gratitude and giving thanks to God. Following devotions the business meeting opened with prayer by **Rev. Debra Kinney**.

A quorum was present.

Present: Moderator Debra Kinney, Clerk Ted Francis and Elders Carol Brotherson, Vickie Carhoff, Dick Fischer, Jim French, Marilyn Nuss, Julie Schulthies, Bonnie White
Excused: Charles Bell

A motion to approve the agenda as amended was seconded and approved by voice vote.

A motion to approve the minutes from the Special Called Congregational Meeting on October 5, 2014 was seconded and approved by voice vote.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the session meeting on October 20, 2014 with a correction in the Fellowship Committee report for the date of the All-Church Birthday Party. The event was incorrectly identified as being on March 5. The correct date is March 15, 2015. The motion was seconded and approved by voice vote.

A motion to receive the staff reports of **Rev. Debra Kinney** and **Tammy Hulett** and reports from Session Committees, Trustees and the Financial Report was seconded and approved by voice vote.

Report of the Clerk

A motion to re-affirm the following motion electronically approved on November 3, 2014 was seconded and approved by voice vote:

A motion to approve a Special Called Congregational Meeting following worship on Sunday, November 23, 2014 to receive a nomination from the Nominating Committee and elect a member of the Session to fill the unexpired term of **Deb Scott** (2017).

A motion to approve a request from Mariners to host fundraisers to aid in their support of a college student in Satur, India via Vision Trust was seconded and approved by voice vote.

A motion to approve the baptism of **Madden Ray Keith Tibbitts**, son of **Sarah** and **Mark Tibbitts**, during worship on Sunday, January 11, 2015 was seconded and approved by voice vote.

Worshipful Work

The session needs to elect a non-serving elder to serve on the 2015 Nominating Committee. Elders are asked to bring names of non-serving elders who are willing to serve to the next meeting.

Elders were encouraged to pray for Middletown Presbyterian Church as they begin their closure process.

Clerk of Session, **Ted Francis**, announced that this will be his last term as clerk. He wanted to give the session ample time to find a replacement and offered to help train his successor before his term ends on June 30, 2015.

A motion was made to have the Annual Meeting of the Congregation following worship on Sunday, January 25, 2015 in Fellowship Hall for the purposes of receiving reports, presenting the budget, voting on the Pastor's Terms of Call, forming a Nominating Committee, and any other business brought before the congregation. The motion was seconded and approved by voice vote. A potluck will be held following the meeting.

Dr. Rebecca Blair, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of East Iowa, is available upon request to do a workshop for church officers on servant leadership. After discussion it was felt that the joint officer meeting in August might be a good time to schedule Dr. Blair's orientation.

The session received a report from the trustees on the current stewardship campaign.

A motion to cancel the December session meeting was seconded and approved by voice vote. The next meeting will be January 19, 2015.

Worship: Volunteers are needed to share a faith story during worship on each Sunday during Advent. Elders **Jim French** and **Julie Schulthies** volunteered to share a story. There will be a Community Worship Service on December 21, 2014. **Rev. Randy Webster** is organizing a choir for the service. Interim pianists **Camille Reynen** and **Vickie Carhoff** will be recognized and thanked during Fellowship time following worship on Sunday, November 23, 2014.

Nominating: The committee has four names to place into nomination at the Annual Meeting to serve as representatives of the congregation-at-large on the 2015 Nominating Committee. Agreeing to serve if elected are **Curtis Blom, Marilyn Leight, Camille Reynen** and **Ed Whitmore**.

Personnel: **Rev. Randy Webster** will officially begin his new position as Minister of Faith and Worship on November 30, 2014. Elders were asked to pray for **Rev. Randy Webster's** current church, Messiah Lutheran, as they grieve his resignation as organist.

Fellowship: There was a good response for the Veteran's Day recognition event on Sunday, November 9, 2014. There will be a sign-up for volunteers to bring cookies for the social following the Christmas Eve worship service.

Mission: The Boomerang Backpacks are now going to families at North Hill Elementary School. Ten families per week are being served. The Shoebox fundraiser has been completed. The well in India that the church is supporting through Vision Trust has not been drilled yet. During Advent the Angel Tree and Cozy Tree are ongoing mission opportunities for church members. Volunteer bell ringers are needed on Thursday, December 11, 2014 at the HyVee grocery store on Agency Street. Fourteen families in the community received Thanksgiving food baskets.

A motion to adjourn was seconded and approved by voice vote.

The meeting closed with prayer by **Rev. Debra Kinney**.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Francis, Clerk of Session

Rev. Debra Kinney, Moderator

Minutes of the Special-Called Congregational Meeting November 23, 2014 1st Presbyterian Church, Burlington, Iowa

A Special-Called Congregational Meeting of First Presbyterian Church, Burlington, Iowa was held in the sanctuary on November 23, 2014. Moderator **Rev. Debra Kinney** opened the meeting at 10:59 a.m. with prayer.

Quorum

The Clerk reported that a quorum was present.

Reading of the Call

Clerk of Session **Ted Francis** read the call for the Special-Called Congregational Meeting:

There will be a Special-Called Congregational Meeting following worship on Sunday, November 23, 2014 in the Sanctuary. The purpose of the meeting will be to receive a nomination from the Nominating Committee and elect a member to the Session to fill the unexpired term of **Deb Scott** (2017). There will be no other business conducted at this meeting.

Election of an Elder

Marilyn Nuss, Moderator of the Nominating Committee, reported that **Steve Hemphill** is the nominee to fill the unexpired term of **Deb Scott** (2017) on the Session.

Rev. Debra Kinney asked if there were additional nominees from the floor. No nominees were offered from the floor. A motion to close nominations was seconded and approved by voice vote of the congregation.

Steve Hemphill was elected to the Session by voice vote of the congregation.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was seconded and approved by voice vote.

Rev. Debra Kinney closed the meeting with prayer at 11:01 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

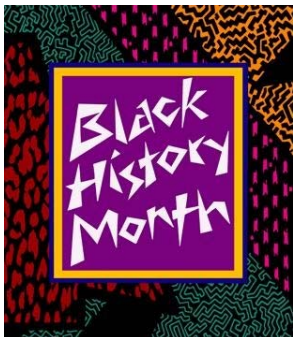
Ted Francis, Clerk of Session

Rev. Debra Kinney, Moderator

February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM DVS Bake Sale (benefits the Domestic Violence Shelter)	2 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 5:00 PM Trustees Meeting	3	4 7:15 AM Men's Bible Study 8:30 AM Women's Bible Study 9:45 AM PW 6:00 PM Handbells	5	6	7
8 10:00 AM Worship	9 10:00 AM Staff Meeting	10	11 7:15 AM Men's Bible Study 8:30 AM Women's Bible Study 9:30 AM Knitwits 6:00 PM Handbells	12	13 7:00 PM Moms Group	14
15 10:00 AM Worship/ Youth Sunday	16 Office Closed	17 6:00 PM Deacons Meeting	18 6:00 PM Handbells 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Service	19 1:30 PM Hope Haven Birthday Party 6:00 PM Yum Yum Group	20	21
22 10:00 AM Worship 11:30 AM - 2:00 PM Birthday Celebration for Mr. Shirley Webster	23 Connections Deadline 10:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:00 PM Mission Committee	24	25 7:15 AM Men's Bible Study 8:30 AM Women's Bible Study 6:00 PM Handbells	26	27 7:00 PM Moms Group	28

You are cordially invited to celebrate the 90th birthday of Shirley Webster at a luncheon reception on Sunday, February 22 following the Morning Service until 2 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Cards can be sent to him at 5459 Madison Avenue, Burlington, Iowa 52601.



Black history is a special observance for many in February. We will recognize the African Diaspora in this country and its part in American history over the first three weeks of February. Our sanctuary will have the addition of several pieces of African art, and our services will use some African-American music.