



“Adoration of the Kings”

“BITS AND PIECES”

The Knoxville United Church

(Presbyterian Church, USA)

“A Vibrant Church Serving in Vibrant Times”

148 Jucunda Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15210

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Rev. Gilbert J. Fitzsimmons, Ph.D., Minister
Mr. Akil Chaney, PTS graduate student

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Mrs. Ann Downey, Secretary
Mrs. Mary Wittmer, Collator

Bits

PASTOR’S CORNER

Sing to the Lord a New Psalm

The Rev. Dr. Donald Kettering, Organist Emeritus of the East Liberty Presbyterian Church, stated in his book, “A Singing Church,” that “hymns are theology set to rhyme and reason.” For him the art of musicology was a gift of the spirit which finds its peace and direction in the very hearts, spirits, and souls of those “created in his image.” It is the element which is the elixir that counterbalances the stresses and strains of a burdened soul and distraught mind. Many music therapists will attest to music’s impact upon the calming of a troubled mind, a fretful spirit and an unrest sense of being. One only has to take a look at Saul’s need for David’s refreshing harp playing in I Samuel 16:14-23. The effects would be best associated with an antidepressant whereby Saul would immediately experience its benefits; but, with time, the effects would wear thin and once more he would be after David’s life. Already as a church year we are within several weeks of Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent which is the forty days prior to the Resurrection. During that time, Jesus instructed his disciples:

“God and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it...And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer...’ And he took a cup, and he had given thanks he said,

‘Take this, and divide it among yourselves...’ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body...’...” (Lk. 22:7-28)

Then in Mark’s Gospel we read:

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (Mk. 14:26)

Rev. Donald Strobe wrote that “this little verse in Mark’s Gospel which occurs at the end of the Last Supper account,...may well be one of the greatest pictures of quiet courage and confidence in all of literature. For Jesus and His students were singing in the very shadow of the cross!”

The hymn which they sung was probably the famous hallel Psalm 118:

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures for ever!...Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can man do to me? The Lord is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in princes....Thou art my God, and I will give thanks to thee; thou art my God, I will extol thee.” (Ps. 118:1-28)

In the darkest night and days of John Hus, a reformer in the church predating Martin Luther and John Calvin, he was tried by the Roman Catholic Church in 1414 in a trial that would be described as one in which “vice persecuted virtue.” The council stripped him of his priestly garments, degraded him, and put a paper mitre on his head, on which were painted three devils, with this inscription “Heresiarch” (chief Heretic). Having been found guilty, he

was sentenced to be burned alive at the stake. Having reached the place of execution, he fell on his knees, sung several portions of the Psalms, and looked steadfastly towards heaven, saying, *"Into thy hands, O Lord! Do I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O most good and faithful God."* As soon as the chain was put about him at the stake, he said, with a smiling countenance, *"My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this for my sake why, then, should I be ashamed of this old rusty one?"* As soon as the faggots were lighted, the martyr sung a hymn, with so cheerful a voice, that he was heard above the cracklings of the fire and the noise of the multitude.

In the "darkest hour" of Martin Luther's life when Charles V was seeking to wipe out the Lutheran reform movement, Luther wrote: "A mighty fortress is God." He was under threat of personal death and the likely destruction of his reform movement. His convictions, his calling, his very life were in the balance each day. In that darkness, he sang a song which became the marching song of the Reformation:

"Let good and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever!"

The "Wesleyan Revival" of the 18th century came on the "wings of song," as phrased by Rev. Donald Strobe. He commented that John and Charles Wesley were prone to using popular drinking song tunes to which "theology was set to rhyme and reason." They were criticized for writing music in this fashion to which they responded: "Why should the Devil have all the good tunes." In the dark of the night, Charles Wesley wrote "Jesus Lover of my soul, Let me to thy bosom fly." He went on to write over 6,500 hymns, a feat almost to be matched by the 6,000 written by Fanny Crosby. One of her hymns is: "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine..."

I often wondered if the disciples or others of Jesus' day had conflicts when in regards to the psalms to be sung or played, the like of which would rival the conflicts of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches when they developed their new hymnals. Questions of which favorite hymns would be included and which ones would be eliminated, which ones spoke more to the currently sociological musical winds of the day and which ones best encased the history of a singing church which at times best is equated to a praying church. In the Methodist church many opposed "Onward Christian Soldiers" thinking that it glorified war. Those who were opposed to including it were singing into its wordings sentiments of the political winds and not being aware that the source of it was Paul's use of metaphors to describe the Christian's struggle against the forces of evil in this world. Paul did so, not to glorify war, but to remind the early Christians that they were engaged in a spiritual warfare which ought to engage their commitment every bit as much as worldly warfare.

What about that favorite hymns during the 1900's to our grandparents, "Faith of our Fathers"? Being sensitive to gender equality, it might have been more inclusive if our mothers somehow had been included. We Protestants would do well to recall how the original went. It was originally written by an Anglican-turned-Roman Catholic priest who wanted England to repeal the work of the English Reformation. It originally read: "Faith of our Fathers, Mary's prayers/shall win our country back to thee;/ And with the faith that comes from God/England shall then indeed be free." I would imagine that most Protestants would not wish to have that hymn appear "as originally written."

From the first century until now, hymns/psalms have been a source of God's spiritual power for his people. For countless prisoners, as recorded in the annuals of history's wars, the ability to keep their sanity was in the recalling of the words of a hymn/psalm.

"When they had sung a hymn" Jesus and the disciples were renewed having had their spirits replenished from the breaking of the bread and the sharing of cup. In the singing the Psalms they linked themselves up to go out and face the unknown because much of what their Lord had told them was confusing and foreboding. Into the darkneses of their nights, they walked with their Lord having sung together, in other words, having worshipped together. With the words of the hymn/psalm still ringing in his ears, Jesus found the strength for the struggle ahead. Likewise, the disciples discovered that their restless spirits would find their rests in the reassuring melody of His love and eternal presence.

As we prepare for the Lenten weeks of this year of our Lord, begin by reading the words to two hymns per day. Take a sheet of paper and fold it lengthwise in half. On the left side, write the words to the hymn, line by line, verse by verse; and, on the right side, briefly freely associate with the words on each line. At the end of the hymn, sum what the hymn means to you. Keep all the hymns you have written, and if you would, share a copy of your reflections with Dr. Fitzsimmons.

Special Welcome
to
Mr. Akil Carney
Graduate Student at Pittsburgh Theological
Seminary's S.T.M. program

My name is Akil Chaney. I was born and raised in Philadelphia Pennsylvania on January 30th 1975. I was raised by both of my parents in a conservative Christian family with three other brothers and one sister. I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior when I was 12 years old. Although I have held memberships in three different churches, I have always considered myself to be apart of the Pentecostal denomination.

I accepted my call to the ministry at the age of 21. Shortly after declaring my call to the National Board of Elders of The House of the Lord Church, I immediately began serving as Youth Minister at the church where my father is pastor.

A few years later, I graduate from college and began working as a computer programmer at QVC, Inc. Shortly after I graduate from college and began my career as a computer programmer, I felt the Lord calling me to not only resign from my job and move to Ohio to attend seminary school but to lend assistance to my District Elder who, at the time, had a fledgling ministry which was rapidly growing.

I struggled with the new commission the Lord had placed on my life for about a year and a half. The love I had for my career was only displaced by the joy and fulfillment I received while serving as a Youth Minister in my father's church. As such, I was not in a hurry to abandon either. Finally, in July of 2003, the urge to obey the Lord commandments had become too much to ignore. I subsequently submitted a letter of resignation to the Director of my department announcing my departure date of October 29.

I moved to Ohio in November of 2003 and my District Elder welcomed me into his home with open arms. Instead of being obedient to the Lord by making my application to Ashland Seminary, I spent the next seven months trying to find a job in my chosen profession; Computer Science. I believe that, since I had chosen to be less than completely obedient to the Lord's will, God decided to use the time to discipline me by stripping away from me all the things I had placed my trust in.

During this time, I suffered in so many different ways until I decided to place all my trust in the Lord. I finally decided to apply to Seminary school and obey the Lord. It was only during this time, that the Lord showed me all the opportunities for growth that he had for me. As soon as I was accepted into Ashland Theological Seminary, I had a meeting with my pastor who told me to join a organization called Young Life as a student volunteer. My pastor strongly recommended this organization to me because he said they would show me how to reach out to those who truly needed to see the love of Christ.

My pastor also asked me to consider serving the church as a Student Pastor in Beaver Falls, PA. He went on further to say how the current Pastor, Elaine Solomon, had just recently had triple heart bypass surgery and needed another minister to come down and step in while she recovered. I

readily accepted and began serving as a Young Life volunteer during the week in Ashland Ohio and as a Student Pastor on Sunday in Beaver Falls, PA.

Over the past six years, since I have been serving the community as a student Pastor in Beaver Falls and volunteering with Young Life I have grown by "leaps and bounds." I have had the opportunity to apply the knowledge I have gained in Seminary. Through my experiences in Young Life, I have also learned how to actually reach out to young people who need Christ in a way that is most relevant to *them*. This notion of articulating the gospel to various people groups, as well as performing evangelism in context that leads me to pursue serving the community of Christ with *The Knoxville United Church*.

"The Secrets in the Mirror"

(James 1:23-24; 1 Corinthians 13:12)

by

Miss Emily Ours

Western Michigan University, Senior

(Niece of Dr. & Mrs. Fitzsimmons)

We look in a mirror everyday, and we see our outside appearance. We see our hair might be a little messed or for women you use it to cover your face in make up. But what if we look deeper into that mirror? Do you ever see the real you? The you only God knows in your entirety. It's easy to get up every morning, look into that mirror and do your morning routine. In fact most of us leave the house hoping that what we see in the mirror is what everyone else sees- the together look, the fashionable clothes, the make up and hair done right.

But what if we strip away all the make up and accessories and fashionable clothing. What would that mirror reveal? Like in many of the magazines on shelves at the end of the check-outs counters that frequently have "Guess the un-made-up celebrity?" If that were a picture of you, would people be able to tell? The truth is, we use aids to hide our true selves from each other, in hopes no one can see or tell what we really are or what we really have done.

The world is full of stories about the "can-do," all involved soccer mom, who is revealed to be having an affair or has a drug addiction or has committed serious federal offenses. But what if she that part of herself had been exposed to the world, would her world have accepted her? Probably not! Even as Christians, we look down on the adulteress, drug users, criminals, etc.

In 1 Corinthians 13:12, Paul wrote: " Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely."

I like to think of this as stepping out of the shower. The glass and the mirror are all fogged up from the heat. When you first look at that mirror, you can't really see yourself. You can make out an outline and maybe a few things here and there. But as the heat leaves the room and the cooler air comes in, the mirror starts to reveal more and more. Not usually all at once, but slowly it happens. And that is exactly like our relationship with the world and with God. The world sees us, as we see ourselves without God, through the fogged mirror. The world can make out an outline and maybe a few other little details. But the greater we know Him and see through His eyes, the mirror slowly un-fogs and we see the real truth and our knowledge is then complete only in and through Him. He is the only one who can complete our partial knowledge, and wipe that mirror off for us so we can see who truly is beneath the fog.

In James 1:23-24, we read: "For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away and forget what you look like." How often do we stop to see ourselves in something reflective? I know people who constantly look at themselves either in hand held mirrors or in reflective windows. Your face isn't going to change much from the beginning of the day to the end of the day.

God is never changing; yet, how often do we forget about his book, commandments and works. The difference is, we aren't constantly looking in mini-bibles or online testaments or other various religious texts to remind ourselves of what he was like. Are we that vain that we care so much about our own appearance that we forget about the creator of it?

We can hide ourselves, our true beings from each other, and not many of us would know. But God knows, his knowledge is complete, he doesn't forget our faces our minds and our actions. But the mirror, a reflection of who we are will always be incomplete without Him.

"The Holy Spirit"

by
Mrs. Merrie Beth Samways

While reviewing some hymn texts recently I found myself reflecting on the subject of the Holy Spirit—and the notion of being open to the promptings and whispers of the Spirit in our lives. As I now settle into a comfortable spot with my leather journal and a steaming cup of Chai tea, I find myself thinking about—and now writing about the Holy Spirit.

I close my eyes and listen to the song of the chickadees, sparrows and other delicate winged creatures flitting about my backyard and eagerly munching on the seed I have provided for their nourishment. Spirit is here. I open my eyes to the gently swaying branches and the melody of the wind over the freshly fallen snow. Spirit is here.

A bushy-tailed-squirrel, curious about this contemplative state of mine as wander outside—and perhaps wondering if I have a secret stash of peanuts in my pocket—watches me watching him. We stare at each other for several seconds and he convinces me to toss him a handful of shelled walnuts which were supposed to find their way into banana bread (but now have served a nobler purpose). The squirrel gobbles the walnuts, stares at me a few seconds longer and with a chatter of gratitude scurries over to the nearest cluster of trees, Spirit is here. All of nature sings its unique melody and dances to unseen rhythms as we go about our daily moments—often oblivious to the song and dance. We get so caught up in the responsibilities of everyday life and become so consumed by the mundane and routine moments of our existence that we miss the treasures of the ever-present Spirit. We mourn the losses of the past and worry about the complexities of the future with the consequence of a lost present moment and experience what is already before our eyes and ears. We open ourselves to the song and the dance of the Holy Spirit—and we feel the undeniable presence of the Spirit in our lives.

Prayers for the Season

In the midst of the rush and hectic pace of the days and weeks assaulting our minds, bodies and spirits in the early weeks of the new year, take a deep breath, swallow it into your lungs, and slowly exhale it. As you do, feel the relaxing of your mind, body and spirit. In this altered state of being, slowly read the following prayers and allow their words to become your meditation and supplication.

Epiphany & Lenten Prayers

We thank you, O God our creator, that you are ready to listen to our prayers as soon as we are ready to pray. We often neglect the power of your presence in life and turn to you only in our time of need. Yet you are always present, and patient. For those times when your Spirit has come to our need even before we have prayed, we thank you. For those times when you have spared us from our own solitude, we thank you. We thank you that Jesus taught us how to pray and when to pray. We thank you that in the solitude of our room at night, you are near to us, ready to converse, ready to give us your guidance, your counsel, and the assurance of your love, in Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Lord our God, for all your bounty to us we give you praise and thanksgiving. We thank you for your presence and sovereignty over all of life; for your guidance in the paths of the good, the right, and the just; and for your sustaining and strengthening power as we seek to live the lives you would have us live.

We are deeply grateful for the freedom you have given to us in this land, especially that freedom to seek a more just order for all people. As we live amidst frequent confusion over the best ways to build and maintain a society which is fair to all, we pray that the counsel of your Holy Spirit might help us to be patient and loving toward all people and faithful to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Amen.

New Year Prayers

O God, our help in ages past, we claim your promise to be present in all the times and seasons of our lives. We face the future knowing our own inadequacies and vulnerabilities. As you led Abraham out of the known into the unknown land of Promise, so lead us. Even as you guided and sustained Moses and the Hebrew people in the desert, so guide and sustain us as we make our ways into uncharted tomorrows. You have been companion to those who trust you, their guide in confusion, their light in darkness and their life in death. We begin this new year trusting ourselves to you for you have proven repetitively your trustworthiness. Amen.

O Lord God, whose mercy is wider than all our sin, deeper than our necessity, and never wearying in its seeking for the souls that wander through the starless dark; we thank thee for thy patience and our willfulness and thy love unsleeping which keeps open for our returning the door of home. We bless thee that hast pity on our weakness, remembering us though we forget thee and with unceasing tenderness calling across life's sorrow for thy children who have lost the way of thy purpose. We thank thee, Father, that when all was lost and no man knew whither to look for pity or for help, thou didst set the hope of the world toward the manger bed at Bethlehem where lay asleep the childhood of fresh promise of love and faith in Jesus, the Son of righteousness promised from of old. As you guided the shepherds, magi, Mary and Joseph, so may you continue to guide us in these our days of darkness to the gift of "peace on earth and goodwill to all peoples." As they were guided on different paths home, and were sustained by your presence, so direct our paths and so sustain us. Amen.

For the coming days and celebratory new year cause thy grace, O Almighty God, to triumph over our infirmities and grant us inwardly such increased steadfastness and in our lives such a larger harvest of good that through sunshine and storm we may trust and not be afraid, work and not be weary, suffer and not complain, overcome all evils with patience; and in humility and peace possess our souls in full

assurance of righteousness and sanctification and wisdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

"And He that sitteth upon the throne said, 'Behold I make all things new!'" Almighty God, the unfailing Source of light and mercy, who hast brought us to the beginning of this new year, and art sparing us to love thee and to keep thy commandments; prepare us, we beseech thee, for the coming days and year. Let thy grace enlighten our darkness and strengthen our weakness. Help us to forget the sins and sorrows of the past, cherishing only the wisdom and the humility they may have taught us. Inspire us with new purposes and new hopes. Deepen within our hearts the love of truth and goodness. Renew in us the life of that which alone makes life worth living. Suffer us not to be unfaithful to thee. Whatever light may shine or shadow fall, keep us in the fellowship of those who trust and obey thee, and in the love and service Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.



BIRTHDAYS

January

4 Karly Novak	5 Elaine Henderson
12 Toni Lynn Vespaziani	23 Robert Weaver
25 Kathy Everitt	25 Keith Krut
30 April Bowen	

February

6 Larry Marchetti	7 Tammy Novak
8 Nellie Hoffman	22 Alice Marchetti
23 Harriet Young	27 Virginia Smith

March

8 Harold Hartdung	21 Kayla Novak
22 Angela Benz	22 Ann Downey
23 Ruth Beahm	28 Helen Isaacs
31 Becki Bittner	

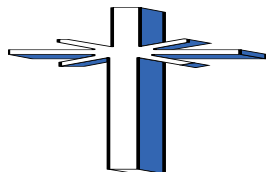
Lord, we affirm in the words of the Psalmist that it was you who created us and put us together in our mother's womb, and that we were created in your image. Therefore, O Lord, we celebrate our birth each year as a blessing from you and for others. May our years be a transparent message of faith and hope. Amen.



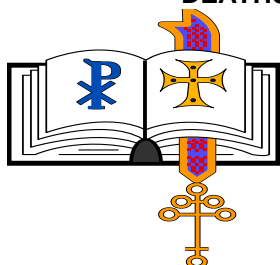
ANNIVERSARIES/WEDDINGS

Ms. Roxanne Dille and Steve Sortino (1/09/00)
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kolenda (2/18/69)
 Mr. & Mrs. Curtis Widman (3/09/02)
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Foley (3/17)

Almighty God, our Father: you created us for life together. Strengthen us in your eternal love and peace. May your blessings be upon all who celebrate another year of marriage in which there is a sharing of life and spirit. May the transparency of their love be representative of your love for all your people. Amen.



DEATHS (in 2009)



**"The Lord is my
 Shepherd...."** (Psalm 23)

MEMORIAL SERVICE: GIVING WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

Mrs. Dorothy Scott	7 January 2009
Mrs. Rosecina Despert	12 January 2009
Mrs. Marie Binder	1 February 2009
Mrs. Margaret Day	19 February 2009
Mr. Herman Knell	20 February 2009
Mrs. Dorothy Davis	27 March 2009
Mrs. Betty Ann Rodler	10 April 2009
Mrs. Helen Killmeyer**	20 April 2009
Mr. Ron Senn***	5 June 2009
Mrs. Betty McNally Loeffler	19 June 2009
Mrs. Kim Marchetti**	2 July 2009
Mrs. Eleanor McDivitt****	12 July 2009
Mr. Robert Brown4	October 2009
Mrs. Grace Senn***	17 October 2009
Mrs. Lucille Yochum*	24 October 2009
Mr. Charles Beckman	19 February 2010
Mrs. Donna Doerr	4 March 2010

*non-member

**Former Member

***Father of Mrs. Holly Widman; Grandmother of Mrs. Holly Widman

****Daughter-in-law of Rev. Dr. McDivitt, former minister

Almighty God, source of all mercy and giver of comfort: deal graciously with those who mourn, that, casting all

their sorrow on you, they may know the consolation of your love; through your Son, Jesus the Christ our Lord do we pray, Amen.



HOSPITALIZED or HOME-BOUND AND IN OUR PRAYERS

Many are the words of heartfelt thanks being expressed for your cards and prayers by those of our family who have been hospitalized or confined to their homes or are in nursing homes. Please religiously send your cards to those listed and include each in your daily meditations.

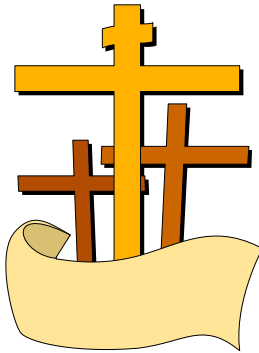
Mrs. Ruth Beahm	53 Goetsch Rd., Meadville, PA 16125
Mrs. Mildred Hayes	124 Redlyn St., 15210
Mrs. Ruth Hehman	Country Meadows, 3560 Washington Pike, Bridgeville, PA 15017
Mrs. Nellie Hoffman	2117 E. Carson, Apt. G-16, 15210
Mrs. Betty Nagel	2716 Jonquil Way, Pgh., PA 15210
Mrs. Grace Kennedy	99 Corbett Crt, Apt. 702, Pgh 15237
Mr. Emil Lester	615 Ottillia St., 15210
Mrs. Alice Marchetti	3203 Mayflower, 15227
Mrs. Betty Nagel	2716 Jonquil Way 15210
Mrs. Gloria Petrolio	320 Rochelle Street, 15210
Mrs. Edna Piper	143 Zara Street, Pgh. PA 15210
Mrs. Virginia Smith	371 Antenor St., Pgh. PA 15210
Mrs. Eleanor Weaver	221 Stamm Ave., Pgh., PA 15210
Mr. Robert Weaver	2447 Kingwood 15210
Mrs. Dorothy Williams	2108 Salisbury St., 15210
Mr. William Wilson	Manor Care, 60 Highland Rd., Bethel Park, PA 15102
Mrs. Harriet Young	2611 Brownsville Road, 15227

HOLY WEEK READINGS

Monday: Isa. 42:1-9; Ps. 36:5-11; Heb. 9:11-15; John 12:1-11
Tuesday: Isa. 49:1-7; Ps. 71:1-13; I Cor. 1:18-31; John 12:20-36
Wednesday: Isa. 50:4-9; Ps. 70; Heb. 12:1-3; John 13:23-32
Thursday: Exod. 12:1-14; Ps. 116:1-19; I Cor. 11:23-26
Friday: Isa. 52:13; Ps. 22; Heb. 10:16-25; John 18:1-19:42

Sunday: Palm Sunday, 28 March 2010
 Mark 11:1-11; John 12:12-16; Ps. 118:1-29
 Isa. 50:4-9; Ps. 31:9-16; Phil. 2:5-11
 Mark 14:1-15:47; Mark 15:1-39

Sunday: Easter/Resurrection of the Lord, 4 April 2010
 Acts 10:37-43; Isa. 25:6-9; Ps. 2118:1-24
 I Cor. 15:1-11; Acts. 10:34-43
 John 20:1-18; Mark 16:1-8



Burglaries Befuddle Church

To update the church, there have been four breaking and entries to the church: Wednesday, January 20th; Friday, January 24th, Sunday, January 31st, and Sunday, 7 February. Each time windows were broken, doors jammed and broken, offices ransacked. The first time, both front offices were trashed with a projector being taken. The second time Ann's monitor, computer tower, and back up operating system were taken. The third time, the door to Dr. Fitzsimmons' office was destroyed, and the computer, printer, and monitor taken. The main headaches in regards to these warrantless actions pertain to the stored historical information pertaining to the life and ministry of our church on the backup disc. Currently, we are attempting to reclaim as much information as possible acknowledging that a lot of formatting needs to be replicated. Since each of these events were individual ones, each claim carries with it a deductible of \$2,500.

In addition to these losses, snow and ice brought water damage into the sanctuary, bent the parking lot lights, and thoroughly destroyed the air conditioner unit to the chapel.

The Session-Trustee Board authorized a Special Offering to be received to underwrite the deductible losses of \$12,500.