

Dear Theophilus:

As we prepare for the season of Lent, aware of our frailties and reminded of our doubts, clinging to the words of Jesus and finding strength in our community of faith, I offer this thought:

We can do great things for our own community, the community that surrounds us, and great things for Christ.

You may not feel that way. The old malaise of the mainline church, that familiar cadence of *we can't possibly do it now or we're not what we used to be*, seems as close to us as our own breath.

But it's time to dream again. We can be a real presence in our community with a little ingenuity and a lot of perseverance. We already will be providing affordable counseling to the congregation and community as we welcome the Rev. Susan Holderness as parish associate beginning March 1<sup>st</sup>. We will be part of a program called *Rebuilding Together* that will serve people with needs in our community.

We have the opportunity to repair and renovate our lower level meeting rooms to better use the space we have and to present ourselves in a better light to all of the community groups who use them.

A garden park is proposed for the front of the church. What is now only grass and a few isolated trees will become a space that will tell all the people passing by that we are a church that is inviting and welcoming.

Plans have been drawn up for these renovations and improvements and session will look at them at its February meeting. The next step would be to form a task force to oversee this initiative and take it to the congregation for its ideas. There is much work ahead and it will take the energy, time, creativity and money from all of us to see this vision come true. More on this later.

I am dreaming big along with religious leaders across Ohio--Muslim, Jewish and Christian alike—as we gathered for a retreat last week to discuss the direction of a nine month-old movement called *We Believe Ohio*, began by a seminary colleague of mine, that insists poverty, jobs, diversity, justice and fairness issues should take center stage in public policy. It was energizing to be part of a group like this and I look forward to future involvement.

The older members of our youth group are dreaming big as they once again participate in PeaceJam, the international organization that brings Nobel Peace Laureates and young people together. This year the Noble Road Presbyterian Church is joining us as we study the life of Rigoberta Mencha Tum, Noble Laureate of 1992, and learn how she helped the Mayan people of Guatemala.

We will travel to Michigan in late March to meet her and be part of a weekend with young people from five states. Our project this year will center on Fair Trade products.

What dreams do you have? Perhaps this Lent can be a time to recall and reactivate your dreams for a better world and a better life for all. Lent begins on Wednesday, February 21, with a Service of Ashes at 7 am and a Service of Healing at 7 pm, both in the sanctuary. Each following Wednesday we will have worship at 7:30 am followed by breakfast.

Many blessings,

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