

# Trini Tidings 2020



## Spring

### Trinity United Church Portage la Prairie, MB

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Website:

[www.trinityunitedportage.ca](http://www.trinityunitedportage.ca)

### Trinity's "why" goal...

To build an inviting community so that we can connect and engage meaningfully with God, ourselves, and others.

### Connecting online



Find us through our webpage [www.trinityunitedportage.ca](http://www.trinityunitedportage.ca), at our Facebook page, or in our active Facebook Group – Trinity United Church, Portage la Prairie. Our youtube channel is Trinity Portage, at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCifQQLFZrDcGyY-J3xjDoKA/videos>

You can also follow us on Instagram at [trinityportage](https://www.instagram.com/trinityportage), and our Twitter handle is @ChurchPortage.

## Coming Up in Worship

As a church community we are committed to the health, wholeness and wellbeing of all people. At this time, due to public health recommendations, all "in-person" worship services are suspended. Here's what we are doing instead: Everyone is welcome to join us Sunday mornings online via "Zoom".

Instructions and links are found on our website and in our facebook group. Julie and Beth are available to talk you through the log-in process during the week. This forum allows us to make a face to face connection with the community of faith; to sing, pray and connect bible stories with our lives.

We provide an online sermon reflection each week via our Youtube channel. Here's the link for easy access: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCifQQLFZrDcGyY-J3xjDoKA>

You can also ask to have the sermon link emailed to you each week or you can receive a print copy of the sermon text via regular mail if you do not have access to digital technology. Please be in touch with Jacquie in the office (204-857-4471) to sign up for these options.

### May 31

As we conclude our May month of parables, we celebrate the story of Pentecost and the birthday of the church. We will have communion this Sunday in our various locations so please plan to have some bread/crackers and juice available for this.

### June 7

Given recent changes in gathering numbers, we plan to hold baptism/confirmation with some people in the church and

most people on Zoom (see separate article for details)

### June 14

This is Beth's last Sunday with us at Trinity. Join us to worship together and say farewell.

### June 21

It is the weekend summer begins. It is National Indigenous People's Day. It is Father's Day. How can we mark special days in these socially distant times?

### June 28

This week we will celebrate the gifts of summer before we take a pause from worship together.

### July 5 - August 9

Trinity will not offer worship services on these Sundays. Other online worship resources will be made available.

### August 16

Trinity Weekly worship returns! A sermon will appear on youtube, and we anticipate that we will continue to worship remotely by Zoom. Look for an email in your inbox that week to confirm plans. If you are receiving materials through the mail or email, those things will also resume.

## Worship Tech Support

Once public health guidelines allow worship to resume in the Trinity sanctuary, we

expect that there will be a time before an adequate vaccine or treatment makes it safe for all to attend in-person worship. We assume that we will continue to offer online worship experiences. Would you be interested in providing technical support to allow us to do that? Do you have time, interest and energy for that on Sunday mornings? If you are interested, please contact the church office.



## Trinity's COVID-19 Response

You may remember how very irrelevant our March issue of Trinitidings was by the time it reached your mailbox or inbox.

The only current thing was the letter we quickly attached to it on Sunday. On Thursday when we printed it, we expected that the events listed in it were going to take place as planned. Then on Friday afternoon everything changed when school closures were announced. On Saturday, the Leadership Team hurriedly consulted and decided to suspend in-person worship for at least three Sundays. By Monday, virtually all the functions listed in the newsletter had been cancelled or postponed and we were rapidly making plans for how to hold worship and other activities in new ways. That was a little more than two months ago.

We have all had to radically change our habits and expectations. The church has had to rethink just about everything we do. We have been sharing what's happening at Trinity through weekly email (if you haven't received it and would like to, contact the church office). We know that email misses some of you so we hope this newsletter will help everyone to have a clearer idea of what is happening.

### Worship

Worship is at the heart of our life together and was one of the first things we reimagined.



**Sermons -** We have had a Youtube channel for several years ("Trinity Portage") to which we upload

weekly sermons most Sundays. We decided to continue to use this format to offer theological reflections that connect a bible story to our contemporary reality. For the first two weeks, Beth and Julie recorded sermons in an empty sanctuary. Since then, recordings have happened from their homes. You can view these sermons on any device that can access the internet (Smart-TV, cell phone, tablet, computer). There is a link to each Sunday's sermon on Trinity's webpage ([www.trinityunitedportage.ca](http://www.trinityunitedportage.ca)). Previous sermons are still available so you are welcome to go back and watch any sermon from the past few years. We also provide to anyone who requests it a copy of the sermon text (unedited and with no guarantees about spelling or grammar since it was written to be spoken) via email including a link to the recorded sermon. Since the start of the pandemic, we started a distribution list for those who wish to receive a sermon copy in the mail. If you would like to be on either the email or mail distribution lists, contact the church office.

**Zoom Worship -** We also wanted to find some sort of interactive way to allow us to continue to feel connected to one another as a worshipping community even if we couldn't be together in our building. To respond to this desire, Zoom Worship came into being. We gather as a community on-line every Sunday morning starting at 10 a.m. with worship starting at 10:30. The format of these times together varies but generally includes singing, listening to a Bible Story, talking about faith and life in a smaller group of 5 or 6 people, and prayer. The prayer concerns shared have been particularly moving. If you are interested in joining us on Zoom, check out our webpage for sign in instructions or contact any member of the staff and we will help you get on. If you don't have a computer, it is possible to call in with a phone and several households have been doing that each week. You won't be able to see us, but you will hear everything that is going on and can participate in discussion and add your prayer concerns.

**Holy Week and Easter –** As it became obvious that we would not be back in our building for Easter, we started to think about ways to mark this special time in the church year. Julie and Beth did daily "Holy Week at Home" reflections on Facebook Live that were also uploaded later to Youtube. On Good Friday, we had a Zoom Worship service and on Easter we sang "Hallelujah" on Zoom and shared communion with each of us in our own homes.

### Education

As a church we also gather to learn from and with one another and we have been able to move several of our programs to a distanced format.

### **Confirmation Classes –**

Confirmation classes were winding up just as we were first practicing physical distancing. We held what was supposed to be our final class on Zoom and the youth expressed a desire to remain connected in this way while they were not able to go to school or church or activities in their usual ways. Robin Young and Beth have continued to connect with the youth every Friday afternoon via Zoom for conversation and connection.

**Friday Study Group –** The Friday morning study group that usually meets in Barb Jones' living room moved to a Conference Call format mid-March. They wrap up their study of Brene Brown's book [Rising Strong](#) at the end of May.

**Activity Packages for Sunday School Children -** Before Easter, packages were sent out to children connected with our Sunday School with activity sheets from the curriculum for them to engage with the Easter story at home.

**#parables4today –** In May we are offering reflections on social media about parables for our times and inviting you to contribute your own parables as well. How is faith like toilet paper? What does forgiveness have in common with baking soda? How are birds an image for hope? Check us out on Facebook or Instagram to find out more.

### **Pastoral Care**

We continue to care for one another as a church community even when we cannot be together in person.

**House Groups and Church Friends -** We know that some house groups have been able to check-in with each other and

that others have been making a point of calling their connections in the congregation to say hello and find out how one another is.

**Easter Greetings and other cards -** Jacquie sent Easter greetings to all of the Trinity folks in Personal Care Homes on our behalf in the week after Easter. Diana Aune continues to send cards to Trinity connected people at times of joy and sorrow on our behalf.

**Grief Team –** The Grief Team Coordinators met via Zoom at the beginning of May and are working on contacting volunteers to connect with those in our community who have experienced a loss since the beginning of March.

**Checking in with People -** Jacquie, Julie and Beth have been responding to email, connecting on Facebook, responding to text messages and making phone calls to many Trinity folks over the past number of weeks. If you know of someone who would appreciate a check-in call, please let us know at the church office.

**Keep us in the Loop –** We are aware that we often learn about who might appreciate a pastoral contact from people before or after worship or before or after meetings. Since we are not having these more informal connections in the same way, please let us know if you are aware of something that is happening in the life of someone connected to the Trinity community. We would rather hear many times than not at all.

### **Community and Fun**

Being the church together also includes having fun. While we cannot have concerts or church suppers or coffee after worship,

we have tried several things to help us stay connected.

**Games Nights –** We held two different Games Night on Zoom for folks to come together for fun.

**Selfie-Scavenger Hunts –** Two selfie-scavenger hunts were publicized on social media with lots of very amusing photos being taken.

**Coffee Check-In Times –** At the very beginning, we had some coffee check-in times on Zoom. These were sparsely attended so we discontinued them.

### **Governance and Organization**

**Meetings -** Trinity's various committees and groups have found innovative ways to meet in this time. Weekly staff meetings are on Zoom. Leadership Team and the Stewardship Team have each met twice via Zoom. The Structure Support Team, Grief Team Coordinators and the Ministry Profile Team (looking at staffing needs after Beth's departure in June) have all met via Zoom. M and P met in May with physical distancing in the Lower Hall.

**Church Office –** In keeping with public health recommendations, our office was closed for several weeks. It has now reopened with physical distancing. The office is open from 9-12 and 1-4 from Monday to Friday. Jacquie can be reached through the church office at 204-857-4471 or [trinityu@mts.net](mailto:trinityu@mts.net). Beth and Julie are working from home. Beth can be reached at 204-872-2370 or [trinitybeth@mts.net](mailto:trinitybeth@mts.net). Julie can be reached at 204-857-3769 or [julieb@mts.net](mailto:julieb@mts.net).



## Celebrating Confirmation with Our Youth

Each confirmation class I have had the privilege to work with here at Trinity has been unique (I remember the giant

Christmas blow-ups, Spiderman and the Easter Bunny telling the Easter story, and just about dying in the heat during a summer confirmation intensive). Nevertheless, I think the 2020 class has had the most unpredictable journey.

We began our work together in the winter on Fridays after school. Robin Young co-facilitated the group with me and we had a great time talking about what church is all about, what baptism means to us, how to get along with people in an imperfect world and much more. Many thanks to everyone who provided snacks for our meetings.

We were scheduled to hold our final class on March 20, take time off for March break and then hold Confirmation on Easter Sunday, April 12. As you are all aware, that could not happen. We moved our "final" class on-line to Zoom and decided that we wanted to keep connecting electronically throughout this time of physical distancing.

Since Easter was not going to be in person in the church building, we postponed Confirmation hoping we would be able to do it in the way we envisioned with a church full of



family and friends at some future point this Spring.

However, as it became apparent that we weren't going to be able to hold a service in that way for the foreseeable future, we looked for alternatives. How could we honour the commitment of these young people to be part of the church in these incredible times? What kind of celebration could we plan?

In the end, we decided we will hold confirmation on Sunday, June 7 with just the confirmation class and their immediate families in person in the church building (observing physical distancing) and the rest of their extended families and their broader church community on Zoom. This will be a new experience for all of us. **We hope that you will participate by logging onto Zoom on Sunday, June 7 for 10:30 a.m. to share in the celebration with our youth.**

## Summer Vacation Schedule for Trinity Staff



- Jacquie Bennet will take vacation July 2-19. While she is away, the church office will be closed.
- Don Morrison will take vacation June 29-July 10. Urgent property needs during this time will be dealt with by the M & P Committee or the Trustees.
- Julie Baker will take vacation June 29 - August 3. For emergency pastoral care while she is on vacation, please call the church answering machine to find out who is available.

## Prairie to Pine

We are part of the United Church of Canada in Region 5, now called "Prairie to Pine". The regional meeting was scheduled for May 28-30 in Steinbach, attended by Trinity ministers, as well as Lesia Case and Brenda Brand, as lay representatives. As with most church gatherings, that meeting has been postponed. The Prairie to Pine executive is now considering meeting virtually this fall, to attend to the urgent decisions of the region. It is proposed that the regional meeting will now be held on two successive evenings: Wednesday September 30 and Wednesday October 7 via Zoom technology. Prairie to Pine staff and volunteers continuing to do as much as they can to support the ministry of all of the communities of faith in our region.

**Trinity's  
Financial Update  
Operating Income  
for April 2020  
\$18,090  
Operating Expenses  
for April 2020  
\$18,585**



**Anticipated Operating  
Expenses for  
May 01 – August 31  
\$81,650**

*Your generosity is greatly appreciated!*

## A Thank You, and an Update...

Thank you to Julie, Beth and Jacquie for adapting to a new way of working, from home or in a closed building. Thank you for adapting to a new way of providing pastoral care and worship, for all your many phone calls, for learning how to do Zoom and setting up Sunday morning worship, committee meetings and for doing Facebook live. Thank you for guiding congregation members as they set up their devices to join these activities. Thank you for providing a way for individuals to meet virtually, worship and share on Sundays.

Thank you to everyone that gave or is giving to Trinity during this time. We are pleased to report that we still receive offerings through PAR, some individuals have provided financial gifts by way of sending cheques, eTransfer and Canada Helps and some have increased their PAR contributions. All of these contributions are appreciated as Trinity continues to have its regular financial obligations.

Although our regular renters continue with their rent obligations, our other sources of income have come to a halt. Sunday offerings, lunches, brunches, fundraisers and other rentals are not occurring. As there are no funerals, there currently are no UCW funeral lunches and honoraria. And, as with other investments, our investment fund has dropped in value.

UCC has deferred some of the church's financial obligations to later in the year. We have also been able to receive a 10% TWSE (Temporary Wage Subsidy for Employers). UCC has been providing guidance as to what

we are and are not eligible to receive.

The good news is that in April 2020, our operating income was \$18,090.00 and our operating expenses were \$18,585.00.

Your continued financial support is appreciated. Now that the church office is open, a donation can be dropped off or donations can be made via eTransfer and through Canada Helps. If you are on PAR and wish to increase your monthly contributions, please contact the office. If, as a result of your circumstances, you need to reduce your PAR contribution, this can be done by contacting the office.

*The Stewardship Team*

### **Are you on P.A.R.?**

Through PAR, you can donate to the church simply and easy through automatic monthly withdrawals from your bank account. PAR is easy to set up, simply email or call Jacquie at the church office ([trinityu@mts.net](mailto:trinityu@mts.net) or 204-857-4471). If you are already on PAR, don't forget that you can increase or decrease your PAR donation by contacting the office any time.



## Trinity's Memorial Fund

In the past few months, we have not been able to gather to say remember and give thanks for the lives of those who had died in the same way we usually would but that does not mean they are not held close in our memories. We mourn together yet separately for all those who have died. We will find creative ways to remember

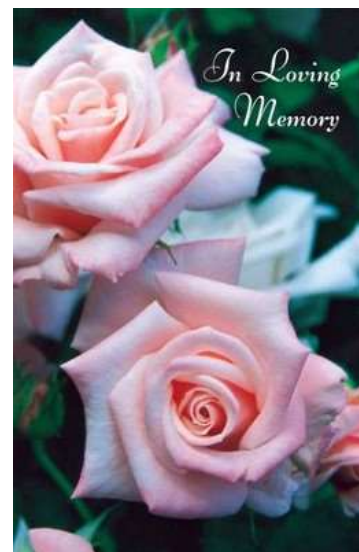
and give thanks together once it is safe to do so again.

In the meantime, our Memorial Fund at Trinity has helped us to respond to the challenges of this time. The Trinity Memorial Fund replaced a laptop that died our first week out of the church building, is paying for our monthly subscription to Zoom and has covered a few other miscellaneous expenses that we would not have incurred without the COVID-19 challenge. While the people whose memory the fund honours might not have anticipated that we would have these needs, we know that their faithfulness helped us to build a church that is adaptable and responsive to the world in which we live.

We thank God for the lives of these faithful people, in whose memory we have received donations since March 2020:

*Lynne McKibbin  
Mabel McCamis  
Olive Ferguson  
Peggy Tidsbury*

*Gifts were also received to Local in memory of Steve Cheverie, and a gift to the Mission & Service Fund was received in memory of Rick Blight.*



Summer  
  
**WORSHIP**

The road to 're-opening' will provide challenges for church communities. Many of the activities that are at the heartbeat of church life are high risk activities in the context of COVID-19. We have had to be creative and cautious as we considered what comes next in our life as a church community.

When the leadership team met to consider what we should do for the summer, they appreciated the work of our staff who have been helping us maintain our connections as a church community over the phone, across the internet and through the mail. In order to give our staff some vacation rest, the leadership team decided that Trinity will take a complete sabbath for part of the summer. **The church building will be closed from July 1-19. The office will re-open July 20.** Worship services will be suspended July 5-August 9. Alternative online options will be made available during this time. **Trinity services will resume August 16.** While Julie is on vacation, alternative emergency pastoral care will be available. The leadership team will meet in August to discern how we can be the church in the fall, as more information becomes available regarding public health recommendations and group gathering size.

**UPDATE 2020**  
 Trinity Deaths since the March 2020 TriniTidings

*Mabel McCamis*  
 March 15, 2020

*Joyce Painter*  
 April 26, 2020

*Peggy Tidsbury*  
 April 29, 2020

**FOCUS – Plans for Spring Seeding 2020**

Our local project for the Canadian Food Grains Bank is making plans to grow crops this year to help alleviate hunger in our world. COVID-makes challenging situations around the world more difficult for those experiencing food shortages. With this added stress on the food supply chain, your support is critical. In 2019 our FOCUS Grow Project raised \$140,000 for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. After the matching contribution from the Government of Canada at 4:1 the total money raised for the developing countries aid was \$700,000.



For 2020, we have rented 500 acres of land in Portage la Prairie, Oakville, Elie and MacGregor areas to grow canola, cereals, and soybeans. After harvest, net proceeds will be donated to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Donations to help with inputs can be made out to FOCUS and sent to Tony Peters, RR #2, Box 37, Portage la Prairie, MB R1N 3A2. Receipts available for donations of \$20 or more. If you have questions or want more information, talk to Dave Falk (204-856-6626).



**Rendez-vous 2020**

will bring together youth (entering grade 9 and up), young adults, and their leaders from across the United Church of Canada. Due to the ongoing health crisis, the United Church of Canada won't be able to hold a large in-person gathering in Calgary like we had planned. Nevertheless, Rendez-vous will be going ahead in August 2020 from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> —just in a different way.

It's still possible to be a dynamic, exciting, and fun-filled community of faith, even if we can't all be in the same (physical) space. In fact, the dispersed nature of the event might make it possible for some youth and young adults to participate who would otherwise have been unable to travel to Calgary in August.

Through real-time online events, recordings, and DIY workshop kits, Rendez-vous will celebrate bold faith, brave space, and brazen grace. Here's what participants can expect:

- Inspiring speakers, powerful worship, and singing awesome songs
- Fun, engaging and interactive workshops and activities
- New friends from across the country and around the world
- Awesome t-shirts (yep, it will be a Rendez-vous to remember!)

Pass the word along to the youth and young adults in your life and invite them to check out <https://www.uccrendezvous.ca/> for up-to-the-moment information as it becomes available.



## Farewell, Beth...

June is drawing near, which also means Beth Kerr's time at Trinity is drawing to a close. It is difficult to imagine

how to say goodbye when we are still not seeing one another face to face. However, as we have been doing with everything else these days, we are forging a new path without an instruction manual. We will have a special farewell worship service on June 14 - her last day of work with us, and you are invited! Regardless of whether or not there are shifts in public health guidelines, we will do so over the computer/phone as we have been doing for the last couple of months. This approach will allow the greatest number of us to talk and sing and pray with Beth one last time. So Zoom it shall be! You can join us by telephone or computer. If you have not yet made the foray into that technology and would like help to be present that day, please be in touch with Julie or Beth before then and we can talk you through the connection process. Sadly, sharing cake is not something we can do remotely, so you'll have to bring your own snacks to the party.

We are also gathering memories of Beth's time at Trinity. Do you have a memory to add to our collection? We invite you to write something down - it can be in a card, on a scrap of paper or in an email.



Maybe you will remember a time when she listened to you or visited with you. Perhaps it will be a youth group gathering, stewardship meeting, or changing the governance model of our church. It might be a particular worship service, or a retreat day that sticks with

you; a Lenten breakfast or an outreach learning event. Perhaps you will think of a communion where Beth invited people to form a circle around the sanctuary, or a time when you worked together to welcome refugees into our community, or a day when you explored the heating and electrical eccentricities of the Trinity building together.

Whatever your memory, Jacquie Bennet in the church office will be collecting those. Drop them off at the church office, put them in the mailbox (or send through the mail) or email [trinityu@mts.net](mailto:trinityu@mts.net). It can be a picture, or point form, a page or a sentence fragment. Please have your submissions in to the church office by June 1 if possible.

Please note that if you are putting them in the mail or mailbox, don't address them to Beth, because Jacquie won't open anything addressed specifically to Beth. (If you have something private for Beth, by all means, address it to her directly!). Remember that Beth and Julie are available by email and phone even if they are working from home, so please feel free to call Beth (204-872-2370) to have an individual conversation - as

those of us who have been worshipping on computer can attest, it's harder to seek someone out individually for conversation! Over 12 years, Beth has had a great impact on us at Trinity, and we on her, so please join us as we find ways to come together in Spirit and Community to honour this goodbye.

## Dear Friends at Trinity,

As I stood with Julie behind the table on March 15 as we sang ourselves out into the world, I was flooded with sadness. At that point, we had suspended worship for three Sundays and I, in my pre-pandemic mindset, expected we would be back for Easter or shortly thereafter. Yet, in that moment, my soul knew that something monumental was happening. We were dispersing to be the church in the community rather than as a gathered body. Such a dispersal is not completely new in the life of the Christian church. There have been epidemics before. Yet, it was not yet part of my lived experience or anyone else gathered there that day.

Now it seems that March 15 was my last service in the building at Trinity with a fully gathered congregation. We plan to hold a confirmation service on June 7 with just the confirmands and their immediate families present (less than 25 people) and everyone else on Zoom but it will definitely not be possible for all of us to gather in the building in the same way before I leave. My 12-year call to serve God with you here at Trinity-Portage concludes at the end of June and my final service will be June 14 on Zoom with my remaining vacation coming after that to give me time to move.

I will begin ministry in July with a two-point pastoral charge (Trinity-Listowel and Atwood United Churches) in southwestern Ontario just north of Kitchener-Waterloo. For more than 20 years, we've been over a day's drive away from our families in Southern Ontario. With this move, all of our immediate family will be within a 3 hour drive of our new home. Once these things become possible again, we look forward to be able to share birthday parties, hockey games, dance recitals, dips in the pool and more with our family.

It is a very strange time to be making a transition and I am sad that I will not be able to see most of you face-to-face to say goodbye. Like so many other postponed and cancelled functions, this is just how it needs to be at this point in the world. Your safety is far more important to me than whether

we get to say farewell in the way I imagined we might. So this is my farewell letter because Trini-tidings connects with most people in the Trinity community even if they don't have computers.

First, I would like to say "Thank You!" It has been an incredible gift to serve as your minister. I have learned so much from you. I have grown in ways I didn't even know I needed to grow when I came here. I have been privileged to walk with many of you through fragile and holy times. I am also grateful for the ways in which you have accompanied me with grace and compassion through times of change and struggle in my own life. Thank you for words of

encouragement when I needed them. Thank you for bringing me asparagus and baking, parsnips and honey, flowers and homemade face masks, and so much more. Thank you for asking good questions and sharing great stories with me. Thank you for all the times you said "I can do that" when I was looking for someone to help with something. Thank you for welcoming my gifts and inviting me to be creative in my ministry amongst you. Thank you for laughing with me when my efforts at trying something new didn't quite work out the way I hoped. Thank you for sharing such precious parts of your life with me. I will miss you. I have been blessed to serve amongst you and I am changed by the experience in ways I will probably continue to notice for years to come.

Second, I would like to say "God bless you!" Good bye comes from the phrase "God be with you". Endings are sad even at the best of times. Yet, if we do not have the courage to honour our goodbyes, we will not be able to embrace whatever new adventures await us as we follow the Holy Spirit's nudging. As much as this ending is really hard for me, I am also feeling the Spirit's quiet but persistent invitation to make a change. Regardless of what the future may hold, I am confident that God goes with me into my new challenges and adventures and that God will abide with you as you embrace whatever comes your way as individuals and a community of faith. Nothing in heaven or on earth, not even a pandemic, can separate us from the love of God.

Finally, I want to invite you to "Keep on being the church". Keep telling the stories of your faith and your lives with honesty and love. Keep working for justice for those whom the world counts last and least. Keep welcoming everyone's gifts and experiences. Keep learning and growing and changing and responding. Keep dreaming of a brighter future and doing your small part to help bring that dream to life. Never forget that no matter how many times you stumble, God is working in and through you to rise up again.

As we sang on that Sunday in March before we ate stew and biscuits and cake together in the auditorium "*We shall go out with hope of resurrection; we shall go out, from strength to strength go on; we shall go out and tell our stories boldly, tales of a love that will not let us go. We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted; we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed, we'll weave a cloth of all the world united within the vision of new life in Christ.*" (June Boyce-Tillman, VU 586)

Blessings,  
Beth Kerr

