

March 27, 2012

Dear Congregation of ELPC,

Blessings to you during this special season of Lent and Easter! As many of you are aware, I recently applied for and received a Clergy Renewal Grant from the Lilly Foundation. This is a special award designed to allow pastors and their families to take an extended sabbatical break from ongoing ministry responsibilities. The grant asks pastors to imagine "What makes your heart sing?" and then design a program that will revitalize them in their personal and professional lives.

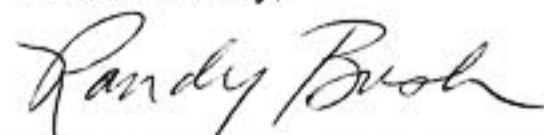
The three things that "make my heart sing" are travel, study, and playing the piano. My grant proposal involves a 3-month stay in Auckland, New Zealand, where I will do some independent study in both theology and piano through the University of Auckland. We will travel to New Zealand as a family, with our two children being enrolled in an intermediate school for one school term. Our travel dates have us departing Pittsburgh on July 9 and returning to Pittsburgh on October 6, with me resuming duties at the church around October 15.

During our time away, there will continue to be a combination of staff and guest preachers leading the various worship services. Pastor Heather will assume the role of acting Head of Staff, with additional pastoral support provided by other ELPC pastors such as Patrice Fowler-Searcy, Christiane Dutton, and Mary Lynn Callahan. The Lilly grant does provide funds to help underwrite additional staff costs, so the Personnel Committee will help ensure that the basic pastoral needs are well covered. Also, the grant underwrites three special presentations on how each one of us can better understand "Sabbath rest", so a series of three, monthly programs on this topic are being organized through our Spiritual Life and Educational Ministries Committees.

There will be a "Bon Voyage" Reception as part of the fellowship time following worship on July 8, as well as a "Welcome Back" reception in late October, when I will be able to share some highlights from our time away. Also, the goal is to present one or two chamber music and piano recitals in the months after my return to highlight the new repertoire I was able to learn while in New Zealand.

I would ask for your prayers for myself and my family during this time of renewal. I also ask that you each consider ways that you too can use the coming months for personal renewal, reflecting on how God is moving in your own life and in our congregational life. As I settle into my seventh year here at ELPC, I look forward to how God will actively use each of us in the years to come!

Yours sincerely,



The Rev. Dr. Randy Bush, Pastor