



# Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church

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Pastor

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Dear Church Family,

For those of you who have not already heard, Brooklyn's first tornado in 150 years blew through our stained glass windows on August 8th. The church sustained much damage (windows, pews, carpets, bricks, plaster, flooring, etc), but we are incredibly grateful that no one was hurt. We are certainly mourning over the loss of the unforgettable windows, but as was witnessed at our 11am service on the following Sunday, Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church will continue to be the vibrant church home it has always been.

Over the course of last week, Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* has come to mind several times. It would have been wonderful to click my heels together and wish the tornado had never come; but it occurred to me today in between incessant phone ringing that Dorothy did not return to her life before the tornado. She returned home after the storm filled with thanksgiving for her life and family.

In the same way, over the course of the week I have been overwhelmed with thanksgiving for the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church family and our neighbors. It was never a question of whether church life would go on in this faithful community of survivors. The tornado has been perceived as an opportunity for us to become stronger as a faith community rather than as some tragic wound. I have also felt considerable pride for the church as we rallied together and showed the world (thanks to the media) our strength and uniqueness.

Many thanks this week could be given to most everybody, but I would specifically like to highlight a few names and some of their work: George Banat (tireless efforts with contractors, vultures, and insurance), Lisa Johnson (see George's note above, decorating the new bulletin board, and media relations), Carole Jabara (hours upon hours

of hospitality), Dick Merhige (late night construction supervision), Genaro Colon (hanging new bulletin boards), Esther D'Amico (buying and delivering the new boards), Sam Hlasney (emergency plumbing), Joe Coury (electrical help), Mona Johnson (our secretary), Jackie Merhige (counsel and media work), Al Farhood (counsel), Claire Notwicz, Ruth Combes, and Kathy Kelley (hospitality), Nesa Johnson (presence and counsel), Marie August (Sunday flowers), for the families coming from great distances on Sunday, and many others who helped in their own way (prayer, presence, etc.) during the week.

Additionally, we have met many in the community over the course of the week who have offered genuine support, encouragement, and assistance. In other words, this week confirmed our faith commitment to the city, and the city's commitment to us.

On a more practical note, over the course of the next few months we will be working with our insurance provider, stained glass experts, and contractors. We are hopeful that insurance will cover much of the damage, but it is too early to know. We are also hopeful that the church building and the windows, in particular, can be restored to their former glory. For that purpose, it would help us if you could send any pictures you might own of our windows before they were damaged.

In the meantime, we are thankful to God that church life continues.

Peace be with you,

Rev. David Aja-Sigmon