

CRIBB<S>NOTE – January 18, 2009

It is good to be back with you after traveling a great distance to be in covenantal relationship with our global partners in Christ's ministry. My son, Arthur, and I return with hearts filled with love and joy as our brothers and sisters in Ghana extended warm hospitality. We shared your expressions of greetings as we exchanged the gift of one people in the Spirit of Christ.

There is a special feeling in the air these days. It feels like the dawning of new history. For people across this nation and around the world, this is a moment that has been very slow in coming. While we do not know what is going to happen, we can attest to the shifting tide and changing winds that usher an era of hope and expectation. Are we putting too much of ourselves into the hands of a politician who speaks the eloquence of displaced persons? That is possible, but I believe there is much more to this moment in which so many of us believe change for the better is coming.

The public role of religion in society is being redefined to include voices that have been muted for a long time. Faith communities like our congregation have voluntarily silenced ourselves and hidden our gifts. We have been timid about speaking on behalf of the poor, disenfranchised, weak, and discarded souls in our country. Too often, we have depended on others, including insensitive and careless politicians, to do what was right. And, just as often, they have failed us. Now, it is time for us to do more.

When we take inventory of our resources, we discover an abundance of talent, funds, and unrestricted opportunities to be the change we so desperately desire. God has blessed us unconditionally. In many ways, our sacred space is like so many silos filled to the brim with commodities that could be used to relieve suffering and feed the hungry. This is the moment in which we can free ourselves and end our dependency on callous, unconscious politicians and public figures who refuse to address the needs of the most vulnerable.

Our sisters and brothers in the international community have faith in the good people of the United States and the United Church of Christ to do more to bring real change to the world. We have the capacity to make a significant difference to elevate the hopes of those who suffer. That is what this particular moment is all about. This is the time we have been waiting for to act with courage and demonstrate God's love and Christ's healing touch.

God calls each of us by our given names. God has appointed us to go peaceably into the world with a spirit of justice and goodwill. In fact, God has anointed us with oil to be a balm among people who are hurting.

As we await the inauguration of our president in the next two days, we celebrate the cries for change. One who has sat in the pews for 20 years of our sister congregation in Chicago will take the oath of office to lead this nation. This is more than a casual event. With God's grace, this is the commencement of an epoch of fantastic unfamiliarity.

God is still speaking and we are lulled to listen intently. God speaks to call us into repentance. God speaks to inspire us to renew our Covenant. God speaks so we will be attentive to the needs of all peoples and forge peace where there is war, brokenness, and strife. God speaks and calls us by name as we are known. Today, we speak as well as we offer prayers of mercy and ask God's guidance and protective hands to surround our president in these terrible and troubled times.

Change has come. Are we ready?