

THE REDEEMER RECORD

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March 2021



LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

Rev. James Erlandson, Pastor

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Tahnea Brown, Office Manager

Pastor's Letter from Home

*"Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."
(John 12:24)*

Dear Friends in Christ,

It's a bit early in Minnesota to be thinking about gardens, but as soon as the temperature rises above freezing, this is where many of our minds go. On the last day of February (on a Sunday) it snowed. On March 14 Daylight Savings Time begins. The first day of spring is March 20, although we know from experience that the weather is unlikely to seem like spring. But by the end of the month, Holy Week begins with Palm/Passion Sunday on March 28. Christians around the world celebrate Easter on April 4 this year, and from then on, we are more sure of spring.

Last year, on March 15, the State of Minnesota and most of the United States was shut down by the coronavirus pandemic, and we have not met physically in person since. We will spend another Holy Week and Easter this year worshipping from our homes on Zoom. However we will enter the Easter season with much more hope this time around. Although the pandemic is far from over, and many more thousands in our nation will die from COVID-19, new vaccines have brought us more hope that by summer we may be worshipping together again, in person!

In the meantime, we continue our Lenten journey with familiar cautions - wearing our face masks in public, searching online for vaccines, meeting online or keeping personal contact to the people we live with. On Sundays we will explore the gospels from John, which include Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (overturning money changers tables and chasing them out), his meeting at night with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, when Jesus said *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."* On the last Sunday in Lent we hear Jesus say that *"the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" - that is, like "a grain of wheat that falls...if it dies, it bears much fruit."* Then we will enter Holy Week and tell of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem to crowds shouting "Hosanna", a week which ends with Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion on Good Friday.

During this journey we continue our book study *Dear Church*, in which the author Lenny Duncan challenges us (and the ELCA) for our exclusivity around race and our ways of “being and doing church”, and to open ourselves with faith in God to those who may change us drastically, but ultimately, save us. For what would it mean for a grain of wheat (like the Church as we know it now) dies, is planted in the ground, and grows into a new plant, bearing fruit? This is the question before us, as we consider our future as a congregation beyond this year.

I wish you all peace, health, wisdom and courage these days.

Pastor Jim Erlandson



Sunday worship will continue on Zoom at 10 am in the New Year 2021. We will also continue Wednesday evening prayer at 7:00 pm on Zoom, with Bible study or book study at 7:30 pm.

- March 28 is **Palm/Passion Sunday**, the beginning of Holy Week, at 10 am. We have ordered palm branches that can be picked up at church for home use.
- April 1 is **Maundy Thursday** and April 2 is **Good Friday**, both on Zoom at 7:00 pm.
- **Easter Sunday** is on April 4 with festival worship also on Zoom at 10 am.

MARCH SCRIPTURES & READERS

We invite members and friends of Redeemer to read the appointed scriptures for each Sunday. This is a meaningful way to prepare for worship. It also binds us to our homebound sisters and brothers who we also encourage to read the same scriptures weekly.

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| March 7 | Ruth Belmonte |
| March 14 | Eloise Paddock |
| March 21 | Joan Foreman |
| March 28 | Chris Avery |

| | First Reading | Psalm | Second Reading | Gospel |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| March 7th <i>3 Lent</i> | Exod 20:1-17 | Ps 19 | 1 Cor 1:18-25 | John 2:13-22 |
| March 14th <i>4 Lent</i> | Num 21:4-9 | Ps 107:1-3, 17-22 | Eph 2:1-10 | John 3:14-21 |
| March 21st <i>5 Lent</i> | Jer 31:31-34 | Ps 51:1-12 or Ps 119:9-16 | Heb 5:5-10 | John 12:20-33 |
| March 28th <i>Palm Sunday</i> | Isa 50:4-9a | Ps 31:9-16 | Phil 2:5-11 | Mark 14:1—15:47 or Mark 15:1-39 [40-47] |

LENTEN EVENING PRAYER



We continue to gather every Wednesday evening in Lent for Evening Prayer online, on Zoom. These are 30-minute services of prayer, based on a psalm, with scripture and reflection. They are followed at 7:30 pm with a discussion of chapters in the book *Dear Church* by Lenny Duncan.

Worship leaders are:

March 3, Diana Rankin

Chapters 3 *Repentance, Reparations, Reconciliation*
& 4 *Dylann Roof and I Are Lutheran*

March 10, Diane and Paul Jacobson

Chapters 5 *Decolonizing the Liturgy and the Power of Symbols*
& 6 *The Church Is Queer*

March 17, Pastor Jim Erlandson on The Feast of St. Patrick

Chapters 7 *Toxic Masculinity Is Killing Us*
& 8 *Resisting Nationalism Is the Way of Jesus*

March 24, Pastor Trudy Cretsinger

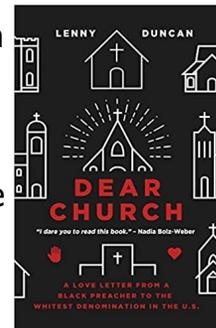
Chapters 9 *Dear Church, I Love You*
& 10 *Stretching God's Tent Is Frontline Freedom Fighting*
Holy Week focus - chapter 11 *It's Time for a Revolution*

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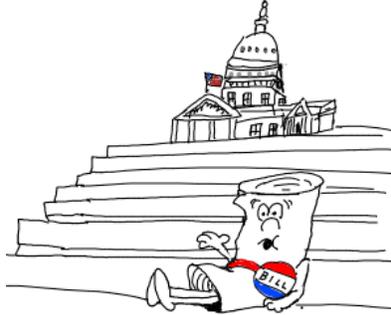
### ***Dear Church: A Love Letter From a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.***

*by Lenny Duncan*

Lenny Duncan is an unlikely pastor. Formerly incarcerated, formerly homeless, and formerly unchurched, he is now a black preacher in the whitest denomination in the United States: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Shifting demographics and shrinking congregations make the headlines, but Duncan connects the church's lack of diversity to its lack of vitality. Part manifesto, part confession, and all love letter, *Dear Church* offers a bold new vision for the future of the church.



## CORE TEAM NEWS



We're now a over a month into the 2021 Legislative session and there are still over two months left. A number of bills have been introduced, the governor has made his budget proposal, and last week the current forecast for the state budget was released. There is so much going on, it can be hard to keep track. However, there is help:

- Know what issues are important to you
- Find out the House and/or Senate File numbers for bills that are important to you
- Sign up for MyBills on the MN Legislature website:  
<https://www.leg.mn.gov/mybills/login?ReturnUrl=%2fmybills%2f>  
*Note: you will not be emailed alerts; however, you can login and quickly find out what's happening on matters of concern to you*
- Contact the bill authors and express your appreciation and support
- Contact your state representative and senator to voice your support for the legislation
- Write letters to the editor for local papers on matters that are important for you

If you are interested in being part of a rapid response effort for action on certain issues, contact Stephanie Stoessel to be signed up for the Amplifier Alerts.

Remember, it's even more important to let your government representatives know when they are effectively representing your concerns. Positive support counts for a lot more than criticism. Our faith calls us to act with gratitude, love, and hope.



Our Church Vestry was opened by Sybil on February 9, 2021 on zoom with prayer. Newly appointed to three-year terms, Mr. Robert Paddock, Treasurer, and Mrs. Bonnie Hughes, Member at large, were welcomed.

Worship is now entering Lenten Season. After Transfiguration, we will celebrate Ash Wednesday and continue with Wednesday Lenten services followed by discussion of the book, "Dear Church". Mrs. Irene Markley is now in hospice care. Attention to Redeemer participation in MN Sanctuary Coalition for immigrant justice was given. Links to Zoom services can be found by search of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer on YouTube.

The Congregation minutes confirmed that the annual meeting was conducted properly. Isaiah had an all MN zoom meeting with over 3000 and local meetings are planned for 2021 activities. Congregation finances are discussed in a separate article in the Record.

The Future Committee shared its discussions with Neighborhood Development Center, St Paul, Incarnation Lutheran Church, Shoreview, and Saint Paul Area Synod on collaboration for shared social justice ministry. Further information will be shared coming in February.

The Vestry's visioning this was month was pointed at the mission of the church. What does God say is the church's mission? Are we attentive to our neighbor's search for healing and salvation?

**The next Vestry meeting is planned for Mar 9, 2021.**

## On Church Finances and Other Plagues

*Bob Paddock: Church Treasurer*

If you read my first finance article in the Redeemer Record last month, you ought to remember my indicating an intent to submit further reports on our finances during the course of the year. This is my attempt number two! Before I ramble on, however, let me give you an update on the state of the finances as of the end of January, presented to the church Vestry earlier in the month.

The basics are that we remain 'in the black' as far as money in the bank is concerned. **Offerings**, rental payments and such that pay for our budget came to a bit over **\$18,000** during the month. **Expenses** from the budget were slightly over **\$21,600**. As you can see, we were **\$3,600 short** in being able to meet the month's expenses. The difference here was made up by paying the bills from the funds that were already in our checking account. In the short term, that's okay, but continuing that practice will eventually erode our ability to pay, and that is NOT okay!

Part of the January expenses included a \$700 payment for snow plowing and \$3,600 to Excel Energy for gas and electric service. Keep in mind that, even though the congregation has not been meeting in the church, we could not in good conscience allow our staff as well as renters (who ARE at church) to sit in the cold, huddled around a tiny hibachi like Bob Cratchit in the Dickens's novel, '**A Christmas Carol**' in an effort to stay warm. That would be 'bad press', for we as a congregation would sit here with frozen egg on our faces! The energy bill, by the way, was considerably lower than it had been for the previous two years when we were in church. January's expenses reflect the cold season, so our costs are typically higher than later months.

As of the end of January, we had **\$18,842.68** in the **checking account**. However, \$17,296.86 of that amount is earmarked as 'dedicated' funds, monies given by members of the congregation for specific purposes, such as food shelf, flowers, music program, pastor's benevolence fund, etc. So these funds cannot be used to pay for budgeted expenses. Consequently, I urge church members to remember your pledges and submit them on a regular basis so that we can pay the bills each and every month.

Our mortgage balance as of January 31 was \$84,911.73.

Now, on to other things - **Investments**

For some time now the church has kept monies in a mutual investment fund called **Vanguard**. This is our "rainy day fund", and over the years it seems to have rained quite a bit, for we have dipped into the fund numerous times.

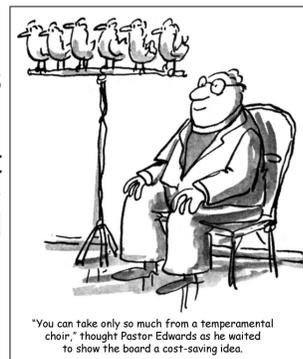
Like many investments, this offers a variety of investing modes, ranging from high risk to absolutely safe. Currently our funds are tucked into a very safe fund. It has been in moderate funds in the past, but not at the moment. There are advantages and disadvantages in each instance. In their present fund, they are relatively safe from the wild swings of the stock market BUT give us a return that is virtually nil. During 2020 we earned a grand total of \$133.03 in dividends, an amount one might be able to conjure up by looking under all the seats at a movie theater. Well, maybe not, but you get the picture.

As of the end of December, when we received our year-end statement, the Vanguard fund had a total of **\$114,811.76**, enough to make anyone smile. In early 2020 we received \$4,600 from a member of the congregation to be put in the account, and in May, we paid back the \$13,000 which we had borrowed from this account the previous year during a hefty financial pinch. To our delight, we received a benevolence gift of \$100,000 in September. Such a generous windfall does not come our way very often, and it was decided that the best course of action was to put it safely into the Vanguard Fund until we could determine just what would be the best use of these funds. That has yet to be determined. Then, come November, we ended up withdrawing \$25,000 from Vanguard to help pay for the \$53,800 bill we received for tuckpointing portions of the building, work for which we had little choice but to have done. So these were the highlights of the Vanguard Fund during 2020.

As I stated earlier, the Vanguard Investment Fund is our "rainy day fund". It has saved our collective fannies several times, and I would hate to see it frittered away or used excessively without a good deal of thought and prayer. For anyone who has owned a house knows that disaster can strike at any time. The roof leaks and needs immediate replacement; the furnace gave up the fight; the electrical system is ancient and MUST be updated. These could run into many thousands of dollars in a house. That is also true of our aging church. You never know when money will be needed. Now these funds are certainly not sacrosanct, but thoughtful stewardship of them should be a high priority. The Vanguard Fund looks grand right now. I would love to see that it stays healthy if at all possible.

Now, I cannot end this financial article with at least a bit of humor. So, I searched the internet for something "churchy" with a financial bent. Enjoy

Yours in Christ,  
Bob Paddock



## **FOCUS ON OUR FUTURE:**

***What Seems to Be Happening? What Possibilities Do We Face?  
What Are We Going to Do About It? ... and most of all:  
What is God up to in this?***

Rev. Trudy K. Cretsinger, Theologian in Residence

Although we still do not have an end date for all the shutdowns, physical distancing, masking requirements, and contact limitations required by the pandemic, we know the day is coming. Part of the struggle in all of this has been the lack of a clear end date. If we knew that, we could count down the days, cross off dates on the calendar, something to give us some indication we are making progress, that we're getting there. This is anything but a clearly defined 40-day (minus Sundays) Lenten journey.

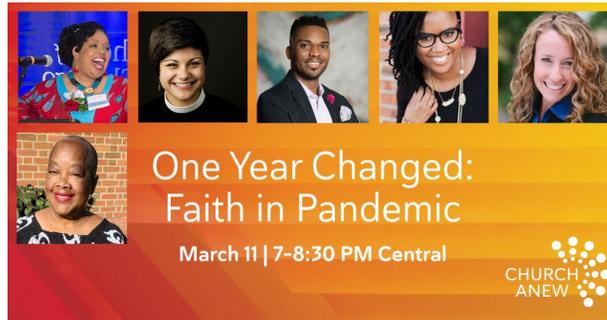
Lacking that, we can only watch and wait ... wait for restrictions to lift and life as usual to resume ... watch for signs that the day is near. Vaccines are being distributed. The medical and scientific experts are starting to predict that this summer ... maybe fall ... sometime within the remaining nine months of 2021, we'll be able to move about more freely, socialize more normally, and resume in-person events and gatherings.

Like the confused disciples in our Lenten gospels as they follow Jesus to Jerusalem and to the cross, we cannot be certain where this hard, challenging path we've been on for the past year will lead. All we can do is take the steps as they come, try to understand, and do what we find to do along the way. So, what have we been finding?

During this (shut)down time, the Ad Hoc Committee exploring future options for Redeemer has continued meeting and researching and talking to various potential partners for future ministry from our building (to which we shall one day return!). The committee is preparing a proposal to discuss in the near future at a forum following our worship service. There's a lot we won't yet know at this point – especially where the suggested direction may lead. This is nothing new for followers of Jesus ... and one of the lessons from the pandemic has been to find ways of moving forward in the midst of uncertainty.

Be watching for announcements about the forum and plan to attend. In the meantime, be in prayer with openness for the voice of the Spirit. God has a record of making ways where there seems to be no way at all. What door might God be opening for us in the midst of a time when everything is shut down?

***For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord ...  
to give you a future with hope ~ Jeremiah 29:11***



### **FREE Lenten Retreat - Hosted Digitally**

You're invited to a FREE, online Lenten retreat!

- *How might we be moved into a different sort of spirituality this Lent?*
- *Seven-minute talks from faith leaders and more*
- *Time in prayer and reflection*
- *FREE to attend live*

Learn More at:

<https://churchanew.org/events/2021/3/11/one-year-changed-faith-in-pandemic>



Former Director of Christian Education, organist and Choir Director, Glenn Geffert passed away on Monday, February 15th due to congestive heart failure. If you would like to send a card, it can be sent to:

Country Junction  
Attn: Charlene Hall  
153 Hwy. 54  
Toronto, KS 66777



**Girl Scout cookies are here!** If you already placed an order, we'll be contacting you about delivery soon! If you would like to place an order, you can contact Tahnea in the church office. We are planning a camping trip this summer since camp got cancelled last summer ☹️ Thank you for all your support! ~ Troop #55386

## LABELS

A Reflection by Diana Rankin  
March 2021



Do you read labels in the grocery store? I always check them for sodium content, added sugars, and calories per serving. When I shop for clothing, I read the label for size, kind of fabric, care instructions, where the garment was made, and special qualities like moisture-proof. When buying plants, I want the label to give me the name of the plant, how much sun it needs, whether it is an annual or perennial, and what special care it might need. Yes, labels provide important and useful information to consumers.

We also label people. Some we hardly think about – mother, father, parent, infant, toddler, teenager – and they certainly do not come with any tags giving care instructions. We make all kinds of assumptions, however, about what it means to be a parent or an infant. Some of these are culturally based; others are based on our personal experience, remembering how you were parented or how you observed infants being cared for. These assumptions can be positive or negative and, hopefully, somewhere along the way we learn to challenge these assumptions and correct those that are destructive.

People are also labeled according to their occupation, language, religion, education, and other categories. Some of these labels can be hurtful while others are sources of pride and respect. Where we really get into trouble with labels, however, is when we place people into large, generalized groups based on ethnicity or sexual identity and then use an acronym to name the group.

A new (to me) acronym is LGBTQIA+. Now, I know that LGBTQ is shorthand for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer or Questioning. But the "I," "A," and "+"? According to Wikipedia, "I" refers to people who identify as intersex, the "A" to asexual, and the "+" is intended to cover spectrums of sexuality and gender. Persons who identify themselves as one of the newly added groups have driven the expansion of the acronym, forcing journalists, sociologists, and even pastors to adopt the acronym.

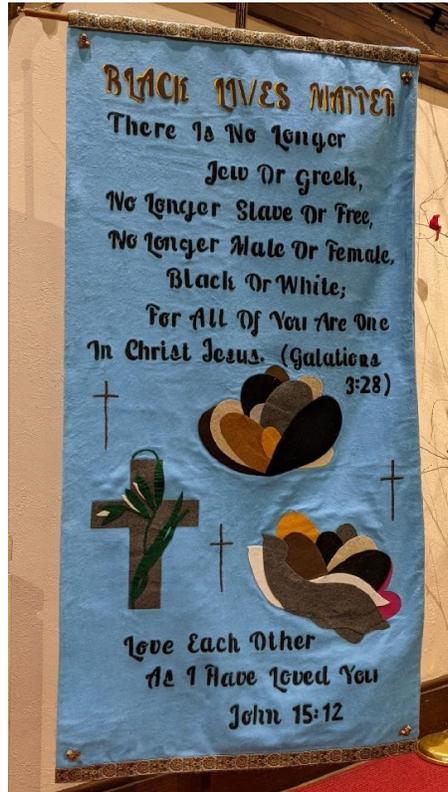
Have you heard or read the term BIPOC? It took me a while to figure this one out. BIPOC is shorthand for Black/Indigenous/People of Color. I do not think that people who identify themselves as Black or Indigenous or Asian or Southeast Asian or Somali or Guatemalan or any other self-named ethnic or nationality group or subgroup came up with this terminology. Instead, I suggest that academics or journalists or sociologists who are NOT BIPOC, i.e. white Euro-Americans, came up with this handy acronym. Its advantage is that it reduces word count in the article being written and many would argue that it assures not leaving anyone out. But it reeks of institutional racism – a white power dynamic that tells non-white people that their own identify – their humanity -- is reduced to a very generalized, "easy to remember" initial.

I am writing this reflection as a white woman who is easily identified as white and, therefore, eligible for all the privileges established primarily by white men for the benefit of other white men and most women. If I were BIPOC, my identity would be suspect because my skin is not white. Furthermore, I would be clumped together with all the other non-white people in a group we did not select for ourselves. This reduces all who are non-white to fighting with each other for scarce resources, influence with white power structures, political stature, and the attention of the media.

My dream for American society is that people will reject the labels that divide us and the world. As a Christian, I pray that we will adopt only one label – child of God. No matter skin color, language, ethnicity, nationality, or any other manmade label, the only label that matters is the one God gives us.

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

A NEW BANNER has been created by Leilani Drake, and placed in Redeemer's sanctuary during the month of February.



On a light blue background, these words from Paul's letter to the Galatians, which we quote in Redeemer's Affirmation of Welcome:

BLACK LIVES MATTER  
"There is no longer Jew or Greek,  
No longer slave or free,  
No longer male or female,  
Black or White,  
For all of you are One in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)

Then, a cross, followed by the words of Jesus:  
"Love each other as I have loved you."  
John 15:12

Thank you, Leilani, for another beautiful banner using your artistic gifts, so fitting for us.



**The large bell in the Redeemer bell tower has been repaired, in time for Holy Week and Easter.**  
The repair work was paid for with memorial gifts in memory of Sam Rankin.

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**Daylight Saving Time** starts on Sunday, March 14. The clocks will spring forward starting Saturday, March 13

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