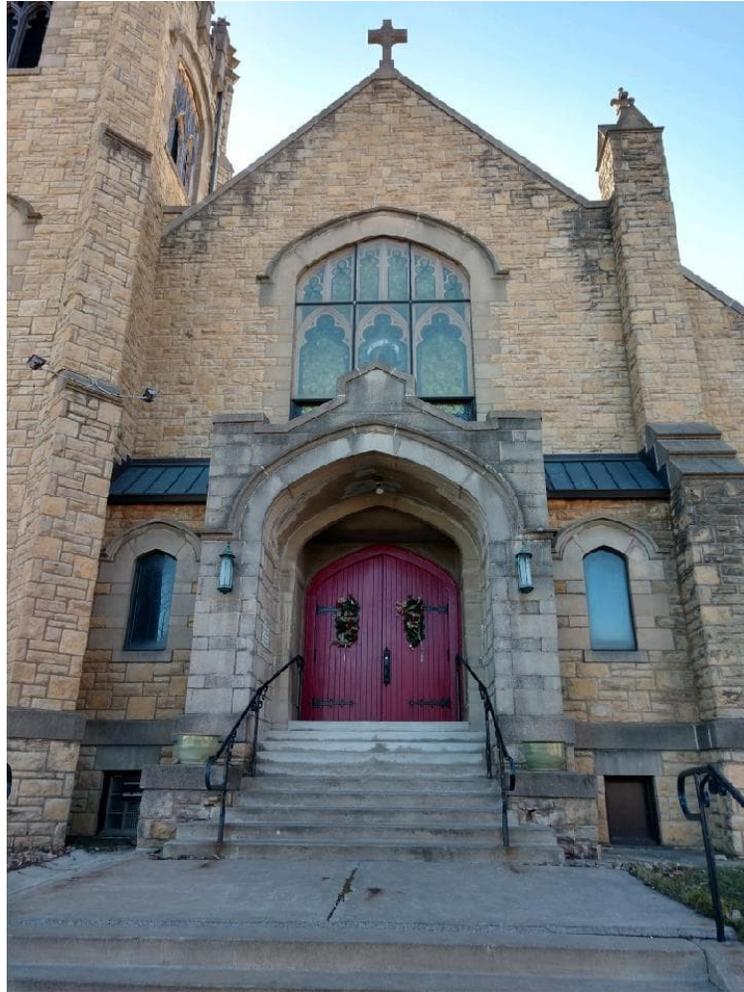


THE REDEEMER RECORD

Vol. 116, No. 1

January, 2021



LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Pastor's Letter from Home

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only Son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1, 14)

Dear friends,

As I write this, we are in the midst of the Twelve Days of Christmas, which last from December 25 through January 6. It's a twelve day feast, if you can keep up the pace, from Christmas to the Epiphany of our Lord, when Jesus was first born to his revelation to the nations of the world. I'm glad it is a celebration lasting two weeks, because one day just wouldn't seem worth it, anti-climactic after a month of preparation during Advent in December! Besides, we need this to bring us from a mostly awful, forgettable year in 2020 into a New Year in 2021, from a pandemic and the death of many, to a vaccine, and new life for everyone.

It makes me recall what my professors told us in seminary: to preach every Sunday throughout the year like Easter - the promise of new life for us all because of Jesus rising from the dead. Last week another seminary professor, Matt Skinner, said this: "*Preach like it's Christmas every Sunday!*" We should all bring the wonder of Christmas eve - God coming into the world - the Incarnation of God's Word becoming flesh in a child named Jesus, born in a manger - combine it with the joy of telling the world about it on Christmas morning, and stir it all up with the good news preached every Sunday throughout the year. Then live out that good news reflected in our daily lives, with love, joy, peace, and goodwill to all.

That's not bad, is it? Keeping up with our joy in knowing that God is with us, present in the person of Jesus, the Word of God made flesh (really present!), in words and in sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), all year long! What a witness that can be to the world!

Instead of the impression that far too many people "outside" the church's walls have of Christians and churches - that we are judgmental, exclusive, mean-spirited and no fun to be around. We know better, right? But let's face it, 2020 has been a hellacious year, that we would love to forget and put behind us. Too many have gotten sick or died from this pandemic, which has lasted far too long because too many of us have ignored the protocols and acted like it's "just the flu", not worn masks and gathered when we shouldn't. Oftentimes Christians were at the head of the "bad witness", wanting to gather for worship in our churches, saying "your faith will make you well", and supporting leaders who failed to lead.

But there was also a lot of good ministry, and faithful witness going on this past year, that we would do well to repeat. When we understood the danger, our church (and almost all ELCA Lutheran congregations) closed our doors to public gatherings and worshiped online. We still do - which shows *we can learn new things - we are not too old to learn "new tricks" like ZOOM when we have to!* Preaching God's Word has not stopped - we just don't use pulpits or sit in pews. We have learned to record music for hymn singing. We gather in living rooms and receive communion on our tables at home. We have opened our doors for community COVID testing when we aren't open for worship, and to the NA support groups that keep those in recovery from relapsing. We hold our meetings on Zoom so that weather doesn't cancel or postpone our work. Much work by staff can be done from home. We hold book or Bible studies on Zoom, also. So some of our folks who have been excluded now are included, because they can participate online. Many of these things can and should continue in 2021, even after we are able to gather for worship in the church building, together again.

So the future in 2021 is bright, when you consider that WE CAN find new ways to "be and do church" - because being church is about a community faith that worships God with joy, proclaims the good news of God in Jesus, and shares God's love with our neighbors - *the Word is made flesh among us, full of grace and truth!* So let's share God's love in Christ like it's Christmas and Easter every Sunday, and every day of our lives. May the peace of Christ be with you in 2021 and beyond.

Pastor Jim Erlandson

SUNDAY WORSHIP ON ZOOM

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. We'll begin with a Wednesday evening prayer on the Feast of the Epiphany, with a blessing of the home, on January 6, at 7:00 pm on Zoom.



ANNUAL MEETING



JANUARY 31, 2021, 11:30 am

The Annual Meeting of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer will take place on **Sunday, January 31, 2021 at 11:30 am** immediately following worship -on ZOOM. In order to ensure the health and safety of everyone because of COVID-19, and to follow the state mandate against gathering physically in large groups (the whole congregation), we are holding this meeting electronically. We will limit our action to the minimum necessary to continue our ministry as a congregation: reporting and updates of the congregation's work, approving a ministry budget for 2021 (very similar to 2020), electing officers and Vestry representatives, and thanking staff and volunteers. We will receive a progress report from our Redeemer's Future Committee, with more opportunities to discuss and participate in this work on Sundays following.

Later in the year, when it is safe to meet in person, we will consider changes to our constitution and by-laws regarding electronic meetings and bringing our constitution current with the ELCA Model Constitution, which require in person participation and voting.

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*Please get your annual meeting reports to Tahnea by
Monday, January 25th*

Reports can be email to redeemerstpaul@gmail.com

JANUARY 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.

Jan. 3	Diana Rankin
Jan. 10	Ben Cretsinger
Jan. 17	Stephanie Stoessel
Jan. 24	Lyle Nelson
Jan. 31	Sybil Harris

	First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel
Jan. 3 <i>2 Christmas</i>	Jer 31:7-14	Ps 147:12-20	Eph 1:3-14	John 1:[1-9] 10-18
Jan. 10 <i>Baptism of Our Lord</i>	Gen 1:1-5	Ps 29	Acts 19:1-7	Mark 1:4-11
Jan. 17 <i>2 Epiphany</i>	1 Sam 3:1-10 [11-20]	Ps 139:1-6, 13-18	1 Cor 6:12-20	John 1:43-51
Jan. 24 <i>3 Epiphany</i>	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	Ps 62:5-12	1 Cor 7:29-31	Mark 1:14-20
Jan. 31 <i>4 Epiphany</i>	Deut 18:15-20	Ps 111	1 Cor 8:1-13	Mark 1:21-28

CORE TEAM NEWS

Even in a time of physical distancing, our societal public world continues to function. The 2021 Minnesota Legislative Session will begin on Tuesday, January 5th, same as usual. As always in odd years, this session will be focused on the biennial state budget. This is a contentious topic in any session; however, in the throes of economic impacts from the pandemic, it will be a particularly contentious one this year. People and businesses that were impacted by the shutdowns need financial help. Yet, to have the funds for this needed relief, the state will need more money, which would require tax increases.

As usual at the start of the session, ISIAIAH will be having a large gathering to express our interests and expectations for the session, specific actions that will move our state closer to an inclusive vision of full equality and a caring economy that works for everyone involved in it. Like most other events in these times, the gathering will be in cyberspace on Zoom. This will be in a webinar format, which is different than what we've become accustomed to on Sunday mornings. Video and microphones will only be available to the speakers and leaders for these events. Participants will be able to use other functions such as chat and "raise hand."



ISIAIAH's **We Make Minnesota Virtual Launch** will take place on **Sunday, January 24th** from **2:00-5:00pm**. This gathering will include people from ISIAIAH's member groups: Barbershop and Black Congregation Cooperative, Latinx Coalition, Muslim Coalition, Young Adult Organizing, Greater MN, Metro Area, Kids Count On Us Childcare Organizing, and One Body Catholics. Invitations have been made to Governor Tim Walz, Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman, and other elected leaders at state level as well as local, regional leaders. Speakers and officials who will be attending are being confirmed at the time this article is being published.

Members of the Core Team will be calling in the next few weeks to help with registration for this event. You are welcome to go ahead and register at the following link:

https://secure.everyaction.com/rbaBEJ3bzkq_TI0mKyWMHw2



Our Church Vestry was opened by Sybil on December 8, 2020 on zoom with prayer. Pastor Jim reported that the use of Redeemer by Minnesota Department of Health for 2 days a week for 3 weeks this month has enabled several hundred persons to be tested for covid. The music group will continue to record for Sunday service following the departure of Molly. The Lessons and Carols service will be recorded with St Paul Reformation. Pastor Trudy assists with Advent Services followed by a continuing book study on Wed. Links to Zoom services can be found by search of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer on Youtube. This is the link for the First Sunday in Advent https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y31Q_wPNt1I
The end of November 2020 financial report indicates that the total cash balance is \$140,176.91. Giving and partner payments stands at 155% for the year, that is \$372,813 for budgeted \$240,000. Expenses are at 112% for the year, that is \$272,217 for budget \$244,000.

Our Vanguard account has a balance of \$138,866.63. Savings has a balance of \$2,000.46. Checking balance is \$51,511 and includes \$10,766 for the Dedicated or Restricted account, of which the Music Fund is \$9818. Mortgage due is \$88,045 plus interest.

The Annual Congregation meeting will be held on Jan 31 on zoom, following worship. Steps will be taken to assure participation by all members. Treasurer David announced that he will not be able to serve another term, as he and Pastor Trudy expect to move to New Mexico early in 2021. Eloise announced she will not serve another term as member at large.

The Ad Hoc Committee will prepare a report for the coming Vestry meeting to be given at the coming Congregation Meeting.

The next Vestry meeting is planned for Jan 12, 2021 and the annual Congregation meeting for Jan 31, 2021.

THEY WERE NOT FORGOTTEN THIS CHRISTMAS!

While most of us have been able to participate in worship via the marvels of Zoom and the internet, some of our members and friends have not. We miss seeing their faces and hearing their voices on Sunday morning. While we have kept in touch via phone calls, we wanted to find a way this Christmas to assure them that they are not forgotten.

Thanks to a Thrivent giftcard secured by a Redeemer member, we were able to purchase 22 poinsettia plants. We printed special Christmas cards to accompany the plants and then 8 members volunteered to deliver the poinsettias to 22 special people who needed to know they are not forgotten.

This was all done with utmost care, wearing masks and practicing safe social distancing. Each recipient was thrilled with this gift from their Redeemer community and the volunteers were rewarded with sincere thank yous. This is just one small way in which it is possible to share the Love that came down to the world on that Christmas night.



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

So here we are ... the new year is upon us at last. Glad as most of us are to have 2020 behind us, some of the more distressing aspects are going to be with us for quite sometime into the new year. The pandemic continues to be active around us. Eventually enough people will be vaccinated and the virus will be unable to find host bodies. But until then, we will have to keep on keeping on ... wearing the masks, maintaining physical distances, limiting contact ... you know the drill. Each new year, with the sense of a fresh start, we often resolve that this one will be different. This new year, however, much will be the same for the foreseeable future.

"But we had hoped that ..." two dejected disciples on the road from Jerusalem to a place called Emmaus lament to the resurrected Jesus they do not recognize. (See Luke 24:13ff) We had hopes for 2020 that did not materialize; instead, those hopes dissipated as a global pandemic trampled our hopes, plans, agendas into nothingness. Given what happened in the past year, we may struggle to summon much, if any, hope for a new one. Like those dejected disciples explaining their situation to the stranger walking with them, things did not turn out as we expected. "What next?" is a question best left unasked these days.

All kinds of stuff is happening in our gospel readings this month. *Immediately* is one of Mark's favorite words. Jesus goes immediately from one place to another. Jesus calls and people immediately respond, setting aside their agendas, plans, previous occupations. Everywhere Jesus shows up, unexpected, surprising, and even disruptive things happen.

Imagine being well into 2021: The vaccines have stopped the pandemic spread of SARS-CoV-2. We are starting to recreate some sense of normal ... gathering again ... without masks ... able to touch ... shake hands ... hug. As we put those pieces back together and start getting on with life, where might Jesus suddenly appear? Where might he ask us to follow? What new future might he be calling us to? Keep your eyes and ears open because you never know where Jesus might suddenly show up and do something.

"Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ~ John 1:50

Redeemer in review . . .





As Nancy Nord Bence of Protect Minnesota leaves us to take a call as an interim pastor, she sent a lovely letter of thanks to the Redeemer congregation:

To the good people of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer,

Before I start my new call as interim Senior Pastor at St. James Lutheran Church in Crystal, Ken and I want to thank you all for the amazing hospitality and generosity yo showed during the two years we were members of LCR. Although we didn't make the trek from New Hope often, worshipping at LCR was always a warm and wonderful experience. I deeply appreciated being invited to preach, preside and teach among you - and the whole family loved being able to sing in the choir at Christmas! Thank you so much for making the love of Christ incarnate to us when we were feeling "churchless." We will carry that love forward to the people of St. James.

In the words of St. Paul: *"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ."*

Rev. Nancy Nord Bence

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