

THE REDEEMER RECORD

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LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Pastor's Letter from Home

Dear friends,

As I write this, I am watching the laying of Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick's ashes with honors in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, who died protecting others from rioters. We are in the midst of a global pandemic which has hit the United States harder than any other country with death, because we have not been united in our response to the coronavirus or caring for our neighbors. We have been largely separated from each other and our loved ones in our own homes, unable to gather in person in groups for worship or community celebrations.

So one might ask, *what need is there for us to observe the season of Lent this year, to undergo individual repentance of our sins or contemplate our mortality, when we have been "living Lent" without a break since March 15, 2020? Why add another 40 days and seven Sundays of Lenten reflection, and live through another Holy week, when that's how we have been living our reflection for almost a year, surrounded by sin and death, without a joyful celebration on Easter?*

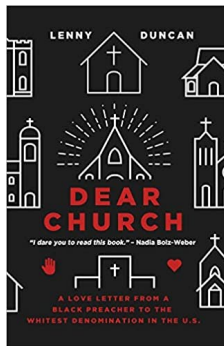
So this month on Ash Wednesday I once again invite you to join me in observing our Lenten *fast the disciplines of Lent: self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving of our tithes and works of love, Word and Sacrament - a fast we have been on for way more than 300 days already. All with our feast and celebration once again delayed or forced online.*

But we will be creative, once again, in how we observe Lent and Holy Week this year. For we have learned that creativity and learning new ways to bring meaning to worship online is our new survival skill in the church! We will record new musical arrangements of our Lenten hymns. Familiar texts will find new meaning as we read them in our present context. We will prepare what feasts we do enjoy with love, and eat them at home with our closest family "pod" or share them on Zoom. We will even draw crosses on our own foreheads with charcoal (NOT Sharpies!) this Ash Wednesday, wave our own palm branches at home on Palm Sunday and light our own candles on Good Friday before our home crosses.

Like Jesus' in the wilderness or Israel wandering for forty years, this year has been a testing of our faith: in God, in one another, in ourselves. We have not been able to take anything for granted: not life, not health, not our usual patterns of community gatherings or rituals of faith. We have learned to make them all "new" - observing them at our own home altars. But one day, we have hope in gathering together once again as one, to celebrate our new life in Christ, restored and strengthened in faith by all our trials. We look forward to that day, and in the meantime, we hope, we pray, we love one another and care for our neighbor.

In Jesus' name,

Pastor Jim Erlandson



Redeemer Book Study
Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US

We have been holding evening prayer and book studies on Wednesday evenings on Zoom. We just finished discussing "*Sanctuary*", a book by ELCA Pastor Heidi Neumark.

We now propose to read and discuss a new book, published in July, 2019: ***Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the United States*** by Lenny Duncan, an ELCA Pastor. The author has an amazing story, once incarcerated, then eventually going to seminary and being ordained a pastor in the ELCA, and serving a congregation today. His thesis is that the reason for the decline of denominations like the ELCA is not sociological, but theological - based on race - and our lack of diversity. However, the response to this decline is also theological: it is found in the gospel we believe and proclaim, the truth that God's love and grace be proclaimed to all God's children. To reverse the decline will require those who are white in the ELCA to do some real soul-searching and make changes.

We plan to begin this discussion in February, Black History Month. You can purchase the book from any major bookseller, as it is available through Amazon, Target, B Dalton, Barnes and Nobles, etc. I invite you to join us on Wednesday evenings on Zoom at 7:00 pm, for evening prayer and the book study beginning February 10th.

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.



FEBUARY 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.

Feb 7	Renee Nunn
Feb 14	Lance Harris
Feb 17	Ray Hayes
Feb 21	Bonnie Hughes
Feb 28	Felicia Slaughter

	First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel
Feb 7 <i>5 Epiphany</i>	Isa 40:21-31	Ps 147:1-11, 20c	1 Cor 9:16-23	Mark 1:29-39
Feb 14 <i>Transfiguration of Our Lord</i>	2 Kings 2:1-12	Ps 50:1-6	2 Cor 4:3-6	Mark 9:2-9
Feb 17 <i>Ash Wednesday</i>	Isa 58:1-12	Ps 51:1-17	2 Cor 5:20b—6:10	Matt 6:1-6, 16-21
Feb 21 <i>1 Lent</i>	Gen 9:8-17	Ps 25:1-10	1 Peter 3:18-22	Mark 1:9-15
Feb 28 <i>2 Lent</i>	Gen 17:1-7, 15-16	Ps 22:23-31	Rom 4:13-25	Mark 8:31-38

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP



Lent begins on February 17, with the observation of Ash Wednesday - this year in our homes, connected by the internet. We will gather as we have become accustomed at 7:00 pm on Zoom. We will begin as always with Psalm 51, confess our sins, hear God's Word in scripture and receive holy communion. We will also observe the ritual of ashes - but, with a twist. As we are not gathering together in the church, I invite you to mark your own foreheads with ashes in the sign of the cross, or mark others with you in your home. To make the sign of a cross you can use a piece of charcoal, or a charcoal stick (used for drawing), a used burnt match stick, or a soft drawing pencil. You could even mix ashes with olive oil yourself as we do at the church - we have plenty of ashes available from last year's palm branches. So we invite you to be creative in how you observe Ash Wednesday.

LENTEN EVENING PRAYER



We will gather every Wednesday for Evening Prayer at 7:00 pm on Zoom. We begin with an evening hymn, scripture and prayer. Then we will have our book discussion on *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.*, written by Lenny Duncan (described below). Join us in this weekly devotion and book discussion for the whole season of Lent. We will begin on **Wednesday, February 10** by reading and discussing the Introduction.

After Ash Wednesday, we will resume discussions of chapter 1 & 2 on Feb. 24.

CORE TEAM NEWS



Thank you – Thank YOU – THANK YOU! To all who took the time and made the effort to sign into the We Make Minnesota virtual launch Zoom meeting on January 24th. The number of people signed in was counted and communicated to the public officials who participated in the meeting. There were more officials participating in the meeting than those who were featured in speaking roles. With the launch event behind us, now what?

During the launch meeting, Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman pointed out that our legislators hear a lot more from people who are displeased with the actions taken than from people who are supportive and appreciative of their work. That's one thing we can do: when our representatives work for policies we want, we can say thanks ... write a note or send an email or call the office.

The launch meeting included a rather extensive commitment form full of opportunities to be involved and take action to support further efforts in building a vibrant, multi-racial democracy and a caring economy in which all can thrive. People will be following up with those who turned in the forms. Participation can be even easier right now with the physical distancing because a lot of actions involve Zoom meetings, virtual town halls, on-line commenting, and emails – no need to be at the capitol.

Nonetheless, there will be the usual unexpected twists and turns as the current session unfolds. Keep an eye on reports and updates. If you'd like to be contacted for specific actions, make sure that Stephanie Stoessel has your contact information; help is sometimes needed on very short notice. As always, if you'd like to be more involved, you are welcome to join the Core Team meetings on Zoom.



Our Church Vestry was opened by Sybil on January 12, 2020 on zoom with prayer. Pastor Jim noted that the building is being clean, and that staff are operating. He suggested we use a service prepared and recorded by Redeemer, Minneapolis for this coming Martin Luther King Sunday, Jan 17. We will add communion. Pastor also emphasized the Isaiah mobilization meeting on Jan 24, 2p for 3000 participants. He also received a call from Irene Markley's sister for visitation.

Links to Zoom services can be found by search of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer on Youtube.

The end of December 2020 financial report indicates that the total cash balance is \$132,606.47. Giving for 2020 was \$227,983. With gifts and covid PPP of \$138,885, a total of \$366,868 was received. Budgeted expenses were \$236,086 plus \$60,222 for building and furnace maintenance, for a total \$296,309 paid out. Our Vanguard account has a balance of \$114,802. Savings has a balance of \$2000.46. Checking balance is \$15,804 and includes \$11181 for the Dedicated or Restricted account, of which the Music Fund is \$9673. Mortgage due is \$86,476 plus interest.

The Annual Congregation meeting will be held on Jan 31 on zoom, following worship. The Vestry approved a resolution to permit electronic meeting. The Vestry submit a 2021 budget with income of \$225,600 and with expense of \$244,795. Bob Paddock is nominated for Treasurer for 2021-2023. Members were suggested for the vacant at large position.

The Ad Hoc Committee met on Dec 13 to review possible directions. They will meet on Jan 13 to brainstorm further with Neighborhood Development Center, Incarnation Lutheran Church, and Saint Paul Area Synod and report at the coming Congregation Meeting on Jan 31, 2021.

The next Vestry meeting is planned for Feb 9, 2021.

On Church Finances and Other Plagues

Bob Paddock: Church Treasurer



This past Sunday, January 31st Redeemer had its first 'Zoom' Congregational Meeting in which elections to the Vestry were held and the budget for the year 2021 was approved. As we can all agree, this on-line gathering via 'Zoom' was nowhere near so satisfying as actually being in our church as a congregation where we can sit with a cup of coffee and mutually discuss these church affairs. However, it was the best we could do given this disruptive Corona virus that has spread worldwide and caused havoc.

As the newly elected treasurer, I wanted to start my term off by stating that I will do my utmost best to handle the finances of the church. I know that it will not be an easy task, given the fact that we are not yet back in our building. This tiny fact has had an effect on our overall financial picture this past year. Weekly offerings were down somewhat, and the monies we received from groups and organizations that utilized our space were reduced to nearly half of what was anticipated, since the building was closed to their use much of the year. In spite of this, we ended the year 2020 with nearly \$16,000 in the church's checking account. There are several reasons for this good fortune, but let us simply leave it at that point.

At this recent Annual Congregational Meeting, a budget was approved in the amount of **\$244,785**. This is nearly identical to the 2020 budget, so there are no surprises or major changes. The big unknown, of course, is how we will fare until such a time as we are finally back in the building. I fully intend to keep the congregation apprised of our financial situation as the months go by. I expect to do so by having a monthly column in the ***Redeemer Record***. If you do have questions regarding church finances, please feel free to contact me, and I will do my best to address your concerns. Just give me a little time to settle in and to try out a few approaches.

Just for your information, the 2021 budget is relatively 'bare bones'. There are areas that are flexible, but most of the budgeted items are elements over which we have little control. The monthly power bill is what it is. That is also true for trash collection, water & sewer bills, snow removal, insurance, the mortgage and payroll. These expenses are monthly. We pay high heating bills from December to around April, before those amounts drop out of the sky to something more manageable. It is also during this time that we pay for snow removal. So our financial needs are higher in the winter. Overall, the church needs around \$20,400 per month to pay the bills. We are a small congregation, but by Heavens, we are still here and still going strong. I thank you for the support that I have seen over the past years but must pray that your support continue at a generous level. We must not be complacent. Redeemer's Ad Hoc Future Committee has been working hard to see that we continue to thrive at this location and will be coming forth with plans mapping out this enterprise.

This new year of 2021 will certainly bring us some surprises, but I am an optimist by nature and think that good things are coming our way. I ask that you continue to have faith in our ability and in God's guiding hand in our work.

Yours in Christ,

Bob Paddock
(r.j.paddock@centurylink.net) 651 295-1218

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

In the monthly email from the Central States Synod, Bishop Susan Candea observed that it was during Lent last year that the pandemic shutdowns and other restrictions to control the spread of COVID-19 went into effect. Like many at that time, she was expecting these to be very temporary measures ... a few weeks (like the remainder of Lent) ... and couple months (maybe by the end of April?) ... surely by Pentecost we would all be back in our sanctuaries. Yet, here we are, almost a full year later ... about to start another Lenten season ... and still we are not back to worship (and other activities) as usual.

The season of Lent is sometimes called a wilderness journey, starting as it does with the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. In the past eleven months, it may seem as though we never actually made it out of the wilderness ... as though Easter never quite fully came and even in our celebrations, we've been in Lent this whole time. The year-plus of pandemic has certainly been a time of testing on so many levels and we've been without our usual comforts: in-person gathering for worship as well as with our families, face-to-face interactions, physical contact like hugs or a clasp on the shoulder or even touching hands.

As we head into the wilderness of Lent once again this year – or maybe recognize we've never left it since the last Lenten season, it has been almost a full year. In addition to this theme of wilderness, Lenten observances began as a time of preparation for baptism, and one of the Biblical images connected to baptism is the story of Noah and his family and the animals and the flood. If you read the account in Genesis carefully, Noah and his crew were in that ark for over a year, not just the 40 days of rain. By the time the pandemic has ebbed, we will have been enduring these effects for over a year as well.

When Noah and his family and the animals finally emerged from the safety of the ark, they stepped out into a world that had been changed and re-made by the waters of the flood. Almost certainly, when things get closer to being normal for us at some point this year, life will not be the same as it was before. Our world has been changed; we have been changed.

What new ways of living and being in the world might God be calling forth right now? How is God preparing us for the changed future that is almost here? Right before we start another liturgical Lenten season, on Sunday, February 14th, the Ad Hoc Committee for Redeemer's Future will be presenting what they have discovered so far and where God might be calling us. Make plans now to be fully present for that – and be in prayer as we discern God's calling to us as servants of God's reign and realm in our community.

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

~ Jeremiah 29:11

Thank You

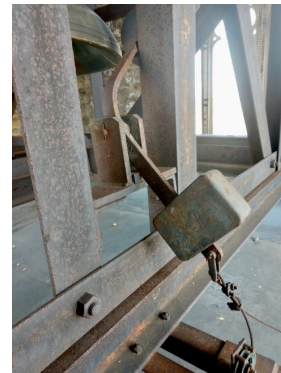
Thank you to every one of you wonderful people for your support and lovingkindness during my husband Sam Rankin's struggle with Lewy body dementia and then his death on January 7, 2021. Many of you shared your memories of Sam and I have received several memorials in his honor.

As you know, Sam was devoted to reviving use of Redeemer's tower bells. He researched how church bells are traditionally used and made sure that they were rung at the beginning of each worship service. He also ended each festival service with a plenum – a simultaneous, random ringing of all 3 bells. Young people were fascinated with the bells and eagerly learned how to ring them, climbing to the bell tower with him whenever they could.

For several months now the largest of the 3 bells has been inoperable because its clapper is bent. There are also other repairs that should be made to keep the bells ringing at their best. Bob Paddock and Dave Peterson have talked with professionals about how to restore the bells and what it might cost. After discussing the situation with them and with Pastor Jim, I have decided that memorial funds will be used to first repair the large bell and then make other repairs as feasible. If you would like to contribute toward this memorial, you may send your check to Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, noting "Sam Rankin memorial" in the memo line.

It would be fantastic to have the bells ringing out over the neighborhood on Easter Sunday!

Diana Rankin



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