

Voice of The Redeemer

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*Attention is the highest form of prayer.
Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.*

Simone Weil

NEARLY 400 DAYS OF DISCOVERY

BY PETER VANDERVEEN

The Dominican monk Herbert McCabe once noted that “prayer (like loving) is something you only begin to understand, something you only see as justified, if you do it.” This always made sense to me; but in the past year I’ve come to realize this with much greater depth. When the initial Covid-19 lockdown began, we initiated a nightly service of Compline via Zoom. It has continued now for nearly 400 straight days. And across that span of time, those who have made this service a habit in their day have discovered just how beautiful and powerful prayer can be. It has been its own balm in troubling times. But it has also spawned conversation and exploration of many issues of faith. It has created a special community of affection and pastoral bonds. And it has shown how the world itself can be reshaped through communion, with God and one another. Much of what follows here has been printed before. But I can fairly say that I didn’t know then how true it was. I see the same convictions differently, more profoundly, after having “done” prayer with others in such a consistent manner. These things bear repeating.

If Simone Weil is right, then there is nothing more important—for the good of the world—than prayer. And this is not to be understood merely as an expression of religious piety. Weil meant it seriously and practically—as the first and foremost way that we can address the gritty needs of those around us. Prayer is the greater and more efficacious responsibility: more than protest, more than demonstrations, more than work projects. If we’re honest, we’d probably have to admit that this doesn’t seem right. It’s certainly not our natural inclination.

For as much as we may say that prayer is central to faith, it’s hardly talked about and largely misunderstood. We’ve come to think of it as our last resort, rather than our first. It’s what we do when all else fails. Weil, however, never claimed that prayer is a form of divine intervention, as if, by our petitions, God might be moved from indifference and swoop down to do what we cannot. Nor did she suggest that prayer simply leaves our problems up to God, so that we are not as burdened. Prayer is, rather, the habit

through which the truth of God is made manifest in our lives and, thereby, no less, within the whole of the creation. It’s the discipline by which we consciously let go of our own perspectives so that we might better see as God sees.

Thus, prayer begins with listening, rather than speaking. It doesn’t originate with us; it’s not dreamt up on the spot, as if from nothing. Prayer isn’t made up. It arises. It arises best, as Weil noted, in attentiveness, in our being so aware of all that is around us that we cannot help but hear God’s speaking—which changes the entire logic of our praying. For prayer then becomes our reply in light of all that is continually being given us. Before all else, we are recipients. And this directly reflects the nature of our lives; life is not owned but received. And prayer does not begin out of need or some perceived lack. It begins as the register of our astonishment at how much God is continuously bestowing. The Psalmist’s opening lines are prayer: “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.”

Prayer is the discipline of paying attention. And as Weil was keen to add, this kind of paying attention is unusually gracious. It’s an act of generosity that touches everything. For paying attention is our intentional participation in the generosity of God, as those who give witness to the giving that is divinely given, sustaining all that is and ever will be. Those who are most accomplished in this kind of prayer are considered wise; all their perceptions are informed by the trust that God has triumphed for the good. They embody this trust. It gives them real presence, an intangible sense of resilience and vitality. This is the gift of prayer, begun and honed in our worship. And this is what we have to give



More photos “From the Windows” on page A8.

as the church—“the rarest and purest form of generosity.”

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

8:00am- Worship in Church & via Zoom

10:00am- Worship in Church & via Livestream on TheRedeemer.org

Daily

9:00pm-Compline via Zoom

Wednesdays

Noon-Eucharist in the Church

Zoom links may be found on the
Parish Calendar at
TheRedeemer.org/calendar

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PROGRAM

LOOKING FORWARD TO FALL

BY TORY DUNKLE

If the 2020-2021 program year was marked by the continued call for flexibility and the acceptance of the “new norm,” we enter this summer with hope and optimism of a return to full programming in the fall of 2021. Having spent the majority of this past year focused on articulating the mission and scope of our programs through the lens of the Arc of Formation, we look to a new season of Church School with renewed energy and purpose.

It is certainly tempting to simply return to our “pre-pandemic” routines. But to simply hit the replay button would be to squander the unique perspective and opportunity this past year has given us. This past year has allowed us, as staff and volunteers, to review, evaluate and dream. We emerge from this dark year with renewed confidence in our



Beautiful new classrooms await our return to Church school.

program offerings and excited by plans to further strengthen our mission.

As we move into the fall, our children’s programming will be focused on three primary objectives: creating lesson synergy between all classes, supporting parent engagement with weekly “parent cues,” and creating regular opportunities for family formation.

Synergy: Prior to the pandemic, each of our classes followed their own unique lesson schedule centered on the liturgical year. This approach gave our programs variety, but didn’t support easy collaboration between levels, or reinforcement outside of the classroom. With all classes on the same lesson schedule, we can plan for more intra-level activities and better help support families with children in multiple levels.

Parent Cues: A large part of the work of the Arc of Formation has centered on better supporting parents as they nurture their children’s faith formation. This fall, our pandemic Table Talks will evolve into weekly parent cue cards. These cards will include a brief lesson synopsis and level-appropriate conversation/activity starters for parents to reference throughout the week. The goal here is not to create more work for parents, but rather to facilitate a greater understanding and interaction with the content shared on a Sunday morning.

Family Formation: One bright spot in our pandemic programming has been Family Chapel. Created out of necessity, Family Chapel has become a unique opportunity for our parents and children to worship and learn together in a more informal setting. While we are still working out the specifics, we want to continue to foster and support this type of formation.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

The Rev. Peter T. Vanderveen
Rector
ext. 17
pvanderveen@theredeemer.org

The Rev. Jo Ann B. Jones
Associate Rector
ext. 16
jjones@theredeemer.org

The Rev. Michael A. Palmisano
Associate Rector
ext. 13
mpalmisano@theredeemer.org

Michael Diorio, DMA
Organist & Director of Music
ext. 22
mdiorio@theredeemer.org
(M, T & W office hours)

Tory Kline Dunkle, MTS
Director of Children’s Ministries
ext. 20
tdunkle@theredeemer.org
(Wednesday office hours)

Jay Einspanier
Parish Administrator
ext. 21
jay@theredeemer.org

Ken Garner
Director of Communications & Stewardship
ext. 19
ken@theredeemer.org

Francesca (Fran) Merritt
Program Assistant
ext. 14
fmerritt@theredeemer.org
(M,T,W,Th 9-2 office hours)

Paulo Reyes
Sexton
ext. 18
paulo@theredeemer.org

Betsy Wolford
Parish Accountant
ext. 11
bwolford@theredeemer.org
(M & W office hours)



What is the Arc of Formation?

The Arc of Formation is the framework by which all The Redeemer’s children, youth and adult formation is structured. Centered on four major themes (Scripture, Theology, Liturgy and Vocation), the Arc of Formation seeks to develop an understanding of how faith evolves and deepens throughout one’s life. Our hope and prayer is that The Redeemer’s formation programs provide participants with a greater context for understanding God in their lives through what they know, experience and act.

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Voice of The Redeemer
Church of the Redeemer
230 Pennswood Road
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
610-525-2486 ♦ Fax 610-525-8547
www.TheRedeemer.org
Facebook: RedeemerBrynMawr
Twitter: @TheRedeemerPA

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MANAGING EDITOR: Ken Garner
CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE:
Peter Vanderveen, Tory Dunkle,
Michael Diorio, Bob Mikrut,
Jay Einspanier, Michael Palmisano,
Jo Ann Jones, Ken Garner

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PROGRAM

THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS

By MICHAEL DIORIO

Even as this article is being written, I am mindful that situational fluidity is a very real matter with which we all have had to contend over the past year. Though the pandemic has put either a hold or full-on stop to many things in this world, signs of hopefulness are beginning to emerge, and we must do the important work of planning in efforts come together once more.

Over the past nine months 90 percent of our choir's voices have been silenced. So much of the usual expression found in our music program has been horribly muted. However, we have had the great fortune to offer up the voices of eight of our staff singers, who, for all this time, have been doggedly committed to being present and providing music that supports the liturgy and enhances the worship experience. It is time to start thinking about how we can fold in the other 70 singers who once raised their voices alongside these great eight.

As the diocese begins to lessen restrictions, and the COVID situation continues to trend in a more favorable direction, it is our great hope that we will be able to bring all of the participants in our music program back together by the fall start-up. Though I cannot predict exactly what future relaxed protocols will involve, I believe that the real possibility exists that our Wednesday evenings will find us in full swing with rehearsals: Cherubs, Choristers, Schola, and Redeemer Choir with our usual Choir Suppers in between the two rehearsal blocks.

Due to the close quarters and poor ventilation of the Choir Room in the

church, the majority of rehearsals may take place in the Parish House. With the new renovation, we have plenty of ability to rehearse with some distance between singers. Burns Hall, Masterman Hall and Room 125 all offer ample room and acoustic properties ideal for our groups. Additional precautions may include requiring singers to wear specially designed masks for singing. These masks filter out 93% of aerosols—not to mention provide uniformity in appearance and greater comfort and design for singing.

While we cannot force participants to be vaccinated, we may determine that it is imperative to make vaccinations a prerequisite for participation. The very nature of singing in a choir exposes everyone to all other singers. Vaccinations provide a much greater insurance against catching and spreading COVID. With an activity that brings one into close contact with others, where breathing deeply and exhaling with force is par for the course, participants would have greater peace of mind in choosing to return if this were a policy.

At this moment the best we can do is plan for the best of all possible worlds and go from there. The nature of choral activities requires special attention. Once we have a clear sense for how we can invite people back, we will communicate it to the parish community. We so miss all of our programs, fuller congregations, our hymn singing, and our wider community of activities. Know that we are now doing the important work to be responsible, to love one another, and to exercise care in how we determine the best path forward.



MOVING ON, MOVING UP, AND ADDING ON



By BOB MIKRUT

On May 16, we celebrated Graduation Senior Recognition at the 10 am Live Stream service, seven of which are Vergers.

We said goodbye to Bo Aldridge, Eliza Aldridge, Cyril Leahy, Aaron Leyland, Nicke Masterman, Jack Susanna, and Caroline Vauclain.

When I first arrived at The Redeemer, all these seniors had begun as Torchbearers in the Acolyte Ministry and moved up through the ranks as Crucifers, Junior Vergers and finally to Vergers.

Now they are moving onto a path beyond Redeemer's walls. As I end my tenth year as Head Verger, I see that all seven of these young people have grown to be well-rounded adults. Their absence on the altar will be sorely missed. We wish them Godspeed!

The clergy, staff and I have gone through the roster and feel that many Acolytes are qualified to move up in ranks for the 2021-2022 year, beginning in the fall.

Those moving up from Torchbearer to Crucifer are Christopher Jodz and Annarose Speidel. Moving from Crucifer to Junior Verger are Mick Brunelli, Savina Copas, Sev Fahr, Jr., Maddie Jodz, Amanda Leahy, Cormac Rae, Henry Seward and Olivia Stephan. Samantha Manogue and Ainsley Steele will receive full responsibilities as Vergers.

This is by far the largest class of in-coming Vergers I have had since taking on the responsibility of Head Verger. Training will begin in mid-September.

Since I was not able to recruit new Torchbearers last year because of the COVID shutdown, more boys and girls ages 10 and up in the third and fourth grades will be needed for the Acolyte Ministry. Servers are needed for the main service and holiday services. Commitment involves perhaps one Sunday a month.

The function of an Acolyte is to serve the clergy in ways that help them conduct the worship services smoothly, purposefully and meaningfully. Recruiting will be held throughout September with training beginning in October. Please contact me, Bob Mikrut, vergerbob@comcast.net or the Parish Office, 610-525-2486. Parents, kindly make sure of your child's interest before volunteering their name.

Every member of The Redeemer community appreciates the volunteer efforts of its youth ministries.

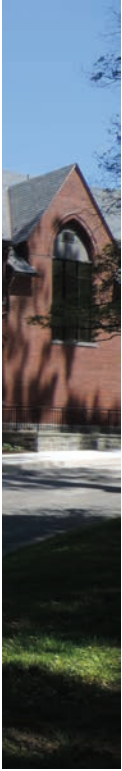
PROGRAM

NEW PARISH HOUSE LANDSCAPED TO



PROGRAM

TO INCORPORATE INTO ENTIRE CAMPUS



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By

AROUND THE PARISH

CONGRATULATIONS TO GRADUATES

By PETER VANDERVEEN

It's now the season of graduations, which indicate the finishing of many levels of schoolwork. Degrees have been earned. All the lab and class work is now over. People celebrate what has been done. And, in line with most speeches that accompany this, the future for graduates is wide open.

Graduation, however, is not merely a culmination; more to the point, it's our recognition that one has gained the capacity to move forward, engaging new skills. Graduation acknowledges an incremental increase in abilities that can be exercised for further development. And what is to be celebrated is not principally, then, what has been accomplished; it's what one now can do and employ in the hope of progress.

The prime purpose of education is not to grant certification. Education is meant to create fascination. The more one knows, the more compelling any subject is. Education opens the world to exploration and development and to review and revision. It widens our perspectives and hones our focus. It makes the world interesting and worthy of a passion for finding ways to appreciate it all the more. This understanding is what makes the celebration of graduation inspiring. And we're especially pleased to be able to recognize our high school seniors, as they move up and move on.

Elizabeth Ruth (Eliza) Aldridge
Robert Williams (Bo) Aldridge
Patrick Boken
Presley Daggett
Brandon Foust
Reiley Kreiser
James Lane
Cyril Devinder Leah
Aaron James Leyland
Peter Lim
Dixie Lissack

Nicholas (Nick) Masterman
Lachlan Northington
Jeffrey O'Neill
Tyler Peterson
Fiona (CeCe) Rae
Jack Susanin
Susanna Ulrich
Tylerm Unruh
Caroline Vaclair
James H. Wang Jr.

In honoring their graduation, we hope that this serves as our invitation for them to extend their fascination all the way to their religious belief and practice — which, for many, is something far too seldom done. For the great presumption of our times is that faith is simply giving assent to a series of propositions about the world, and the church is chiefly an institution intended to maintain the dogma of Christianity.

Such a view implies that there's nothing much to learn once the tenets of faith are accepted; and thus, faith becomes dull. But faith, by very nature, isn't static. It develops; it's open for review and revision; it challenges our presumptions; it can surprise us in its newness. It rewards our attention by expanding our finite world with a sense of infinite richness that never becomes stale. It's an ever-changing engagement. We hope that our seniors will find the joy of living into this as they move forward.

COME FOR A TOUR

We will offer staff/docent tours of the new Parish House on Tuesdays & Thursdays at 4pm and Sundays at 11am. Groups will be limited to 10 and advance registration is requested. You'll find a link to the signups at www.TheRedeemer.org.



SO WHAT NOW PARISH BUSINESS

By JAY EINSPANIER

A very good question.

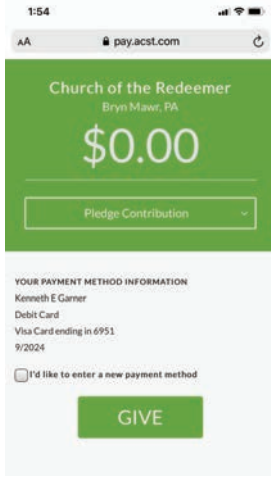
The new landscaping design plays well with the building and accentuates the many positives of the new Parish House. The key is to keep the installations healthy as we enter the upcoming summer months. Water is the key; the higher the temperature the more water.

To dive into the technical stuff, our water pressure at the street is just about 50 psi. According to the design engineers, this is just about the minimum for the building to operate effectively. Any less, and things just do not work as well. For example, we have installed a beautiful dog watering station for our four-legged friends who deserve a sip of cold water during their walk. Additionally, we may want to eventually add an irrigation system to take care of the new plantings. That new system will require around 70 psi. The little I remember about hydraulics tells me we need a pump.

While we wait to install a nifty new pump, we still need to keep things wet outside. As a result we have installed a series of soaker hoses and sprinklers. The timing of how long we water and at what time of day is critical. We want to hit the sweet spot for happy plants versus seriously ill plants.

Take a walk around, step over the hoses, and guess all the plant names.

NEW TEXT GIVING



There's a new and exceedingly easy way to give to The Redeemer. Simply text TheRedeemer (no space) to 73256. The first time you will be asked to set-up your debit/credit card or bank account information, but going forward you simply text TheRedeemer to 73256, click on the link and enter the amount you wish to give and chose the fund where you want the gift to go. (Most times Pledge Contribution). Easy, peasy!

FORMATION

REWIRING THE SUBCONSCIOUS CHURCH

By MICHAEL PALMISANO

About a month ago, I had my first real indoor dining experience in over a year. The restaurant was relatively full, and Theresa and I shared a table with her parents. Consciously I was comforted by the fact that everyone at our table was two weeks past their second vaccination date, and even further comforted by the CDC guidelines welcoming indoor dining for those who have been vaccinated. However, my subconscious must have been urging my body to be concerned by the density of mask-less people masticating and gesticulating all around me. I found myself tense and skittish, and having a difficult time enjoying the good food before me.

I will undoubtedly face more and more of these scenarios in the coming weeks and months, and I don't think that I am alone in these feelings. I've heard from a number of our youth who have noted an increase in anxiety upon returning to full-time in-person classes. I've even heard from some of my most gregarious friends that they have felt an increase in

what they perceive to be social anxiety bubbling within them.

As The Redeemer looks towards the fall with an eye toward new opportunities and a wider means of engagement, we may be faced with similar subconscious wrestling. When we safely begin lifting restrictions on singing, how will we feel on that first Sunday back? When we gather for formation and fellowship events with food and drink, how will we feel then?

The staff continues to think boldly about the possibilities for the fall of 2021. When we receive updates on gathering permission from the bishop's office in mid-May, we will be able to provide a more concrete picture of our worship and programming for the year ahead. Despite the present lack of clarity, there are a few things that we plan to look forward to:

- **Middle School**—In consultation with our parents and committee members, we are considering a restructuring of

the Sunday morning offering for 6th and 7th graders. We hope it will be a more synergistic and wholistic offering. We also hope to schedule more, regular fellowship and service opportunities for this age group.

- **Confirmation** — We will welcome a new class of confirmands (8th grade+) for the 2021-2022 program year with a Confirmation date of 2/6/2022. The program will involve Sunday morning formation, a group service project, and visits to other houses of worship.

- **Adult Education/Formation** —The Adult Forum will return to its regular in-person format. Remote access to the forums via Zoom or Livestream will be available indefinitely. We're also envisioning the addition of a year-long formation program that would mirror our Children and Youth Church School. The timing and format for such an offering are still being considered at this time.



We hope that in the coming months our subconscious anxieties will be replaced with an eager readiness to be with one another again as the Church. Stay tuned for next month's edition of *The Voice* for concrete information on these and other offerings for the 2021-2022 program year.

RECONCILIATION

By JO ANN JONES

The first anniversary of the death of George Floyd has just passed. A year ago his brutal and shocking murder spurred an international response of protests and calls for police reform. Both feelings and tensions ran very high. There were differing feelings with respect to how The Redeemer should respond. While we did not give explicit voice to the shock, grief, deep concern for Floyd's family and for change in policing, we considered one thing deeply: To what end? What would any statement accomplish beyond a satisfaction that we had in some manner "done the right thing?" Moreover, in the heat of the moment, what could be gleaned from a perspective not yet achieved? What did we hope to accomplish? Did our reaction help or hinder that? We would have been reactive, yes, but intentional?

In a recent newspaper article, the Tree of Life, or L'Simcha synagogue in Pittsburgh announced its plans for its building. You will recall that on an October morning in 2018, a gunman interrupted the Shabbat services there and killed 11 worshipers. The building became a crime scene, a place of mourning and then the subject of



extended emotional discussions about its future. In time, in the course of much deliberation, the congregation of the Tree of Life reached the decision that the building would be both a home for worship and a commemorative site, a center for communal events and a place for people the world over to learn about confronting hate. Rabbi Hazzan Jeffrey Myers said, "To me, in the end, the most critical thing is not that people stand there with their jaws literally hanging on the ground as they look at it. But that they can be able to say, 'Look what the Tree of Life has accomplished in the wake of what happened to them: that they could be at this incredible moment.'"

As the acute trauma receded, charged conversations took place among the

families of those who were killed, the members of the three congregations that worshipped at the synagogue, the Pittsburgh Jewish community, the city, the country and people, Jewish and non-Jewish. A consensus eventually formed among members of Tree of Life that they wanted to come back. The other two congregations did not. As time went on, this became clearer for the Tree of Life: *We must return. If we don't, the message becomes that evil won. It chased us out of our building.* Tree of Life chose to refurbish the 58-year-old sanctuary, retaining the tall stained-glass windows that are the synagogue's most striking feature. They will rebuild the rest of the campus, creating classrooms, communal space and creating something new: a Hall of Memories dedicated to

the attack and a home for exhibitions and public programs of the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh.

We must not lose sight of this reality—that in these moments of deep loss and the wrongs inflicted and experienced, God does see all. It is best if we wait upon His revelation to us, so that we may faithfully hallow, remember, learn and grow from evil happenings. There is no quick fix, no feel-good outcome. In the wake of the jury's verdict of Derek Chauvin, many have reassessed what justice looks like in this case, the larger context, and what realistic expectations we might have. It is always the Church's aspiration that our regard, respect, appreciation, and love for all of humanity might undergo careful examination and rededication, and that our subsequent actions reflect our intentionality.

The critical work of reconciliation, of changing hearts is something that cannot be done effectively at a distance and by means of statements and slogans. It is the fruit of conversation carried out face to face with one another, and physically present to one another.

AROUND THE PARISH

FROM THE WINDOWS

One of the stunning features of the design of the new Parish House is its windows and the amount of light that flows into the building along with providing views of the campus, particularly the churchyard, never before experienced in this way drawing the campus into a unified entity.

