

# Voice of The Redeemer

Episcopal Church of

*Worship-Outreach-Fellowship of the people of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr*

March 2023

More coverage online at  
[www.TheRedeemer.org](http://www.TheRedeemer.org)

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“NEWSLETTER SIGNUP”

## ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

BY JEN LEITH

The 171st Annual Meeting last month was a great opportunity to see and to meet many individual members of the Redeemer community, and to also witness the collective spirit and interest of those in attendance.

Formal remarks were provided by Chris Chojnacki, Chair of the Stewardship Committee, Chris Zafirou, Accounting Warden, Tracey Steele, Rector's Warden and the Rev. Peter Vanderveen.

It was a business meeting, so it was a conventional process with reports on fiscal health and general overviews of the year. In addition, four impressive nominees (Lisa Raymond, Win Shaeffer, John Black and Joe Spadaro) were duly elected through in-person voting with 60 ballots cast. Heartfelt thanks were given to Elisabeth Cooke, Melanie LeBouef, Al Greenough and Harry Miller for their time and contributions in serving on the Vestry for the past three years.

While in their various leadership roles, Chris, Chris, Tracey and Peter were responsible for reporting on different aspects of ‘the state of the Parish’ (all positive reports), there were common themes in their remarks. The overarching sentiment was gratitude for the strength and generosity of the Redeemer community as well as opportunity and growth via engagement.



Summarizing the call to action by leadership, over the next few months, Parishioners are urged to:

Talk with Vestry members and to share their thoughts and ideas on how to engage more of our current Redeemer members in the happenings and work of the Parish.

Share the good things happening on the Parish campus with friends, family, and neighbors who are not a part of the Redeemer community (yet).

Attend ‘something different’ at the Redeemer which one might otherwise not have thought to attend; and bring a friend along.

You can view a recording of the annual meeting here:  
<https://vimeo.com/781941908>

### 2023 Stewardship Stats

Pledges Received	320
Total Amount Pledged	\$1,090,370.51
Average Pledge	\$3,407.41
Median Pledge	\$2,400.00
Overall Increase	8.37%








We are incredibly grateful for your generous support. It's not too late to participate in this successful effort. There are still 28 household who pledged last year that we have not yet heard from. You can make your pledge online at: [www.TheRedeemer.org/pledge](http://www.TheRedeemer.org/pledge).  
THANK YOU!

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Organized around principal themes of:  
Parish News,  
Program Reports,  
Arc of Formation,  
Budget & Stewardship,  
Outreach,  
Choirs & Music


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On March 12, we will fête Michael Diorio following the 9:30am service as he departs for new ventures. Later that day at 5:00pm the Music Series continues with an all-Mozart concert featuring the choirs performing the Coronation Mass and the Piano Concerto in A played by Alexander Leonardi and all conducted by Michael Diorio. A reception follows the concert.



### MUSIC AT THE REDEEMER

ENGAGING COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSIC, SONG AND EDUCATION.  
Church of the Redeemer - 230 Pennswood Road, Bryn Mawr, PA



#### A Festive Mozart Concert followed by a fully catered reception

#### Sunday, March 12 at 5:00pm

\$30 per ticket \$10 for children 12-16, free admission for children under 12.

Conducted by Michael Diorio, Alexander Leonardi plays the 23rd piano concerto in A major, followed by the beloved "Coronation" Mass in C, featuring the choirs and staff singer soloists of The Redeemer, and orchestra members from the Academy of Vocal Arts Opera Orchestra.

For tickets and more information visit [www.TheRedeemer.org/musicseries](http://www.TheRedeemer.org/musicseries) or call The Redeemer Music Office at 610.525.2486, x. 22



# PROGRAM

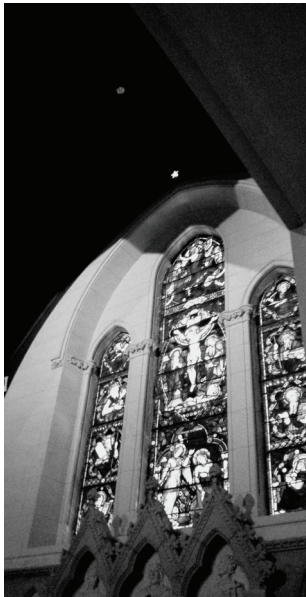
## REMEMBERING THE EASTER LIGHT IN LENT Ministries with Children

BY TORY DUNKLE

Childhood in Central Pennsylvania has its weird quirks: one of the most universal being spring field trips to caverns. I cannot count the number of times I have been loaded up into a school bus with the destination being a giant hole in the earth. And no trip to the caverns is complete without the tour guide slowly turning off all the trail and overhead lights, plunging a whole class of kids into darkness; a darkness so deep that you can't even see your hand in front of your face.

Why am I talking about caverns? As I sit here during the last full week of the season after Epiphany, I have

been reflecting on the Sunday readings in Advent, Christmas and Epiphany and their stark contrast to those coming in Lent. In so many ways, it feels as if the readings for these seasons are constantly pointing to coming light or basking in the glow of divine revelation. By contrast, the readings for Lent feel as if all that we have realized has suddenly been covered up and muddled. There is a darkness that seems to shroud everything.



Lent is often categorized as a penitential season marked by self-deprivation and flagellation. This tendency is dark and gloomy yes, but not the same darkness that seems to permeate the Sunday readings. Rather these lessons seem to leave the hope and light underlying all these narratives and point us to the darkness to come. While we end Epiphany with Jesus standing on the mountain top all aglow,

we begin Lent with Jesus' temptation in the desert, and the story just gets darker and darker from there.

Yet, just like in the caverns, the darkness does not consume us or the narrative. The story does not end on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday or Holy Saturday. It blindingly returns to us and the world Easter morning. So when the darkness of Lent is feeling a little too dark and heavy, open up the Easter narrative and remember that our redemption story rests in the brightest light.

## BEING AWAKE TO GOD

BY REBECCA NORTINGTON

Lent for me is an exciting season; it anticipates the coming celebration of Easter and the resurrection, yes. But for me the excitement is around the opportunity to become more engaged

with my faith and with my relationship with Jesus. These 40 days can really be a time to clean out space in our mental and emotional chambers, and to lean into a richer and more focused season with God.

We talked about our Lenten plans this past Sunday at RYG, with the Super Bowl festivities looming large ahead of us, and the allure of the next consumer driven holiday, Valentine's day, on the horizon. And we made the distinction between "self-help" practices and Lenten practices.

I have no quarrel with fasting and the resulting physical benefits. A classic Lenten practice among adults when I was a child was giving up alcohol. Now we do that for Sober October, or Dry January. Many people give up cheese or chocolate, the most decadent and yummiest things in their lives. Ostensibly they do this to be reminded of Jesus, of God and of the Holy Spirit. Every time we abstain, the thought goes, we remember Jesus resisting in the wilderness. Or Jesus entering Jerusalem a hero on Palm Sunday, only to die a scorned anti-hero, on Good Friday.

But do we remember?

We have talked a lot these last months about the role that smartphones and social media play in our lives today. They can be the ultimate distraction from some of life's most rewarding

activities. Science is showing us that the use of these devices have the capacity to alter our brains, and when abused, can be as addictive as many narcotics. I contend that they also alter our relationships, especially the relationship that is best served by being quiet and contemplative: our relationship with God. There is no doubt that they impact our mental health and that they can do a ton of amazing things. We have to navigate that tension.

As we concluded our discussion many in the group determined that limiting phone use would be a productive Lenten habit. This excites me because

such a practice could help us to become more alert to the role that God plays in our lives, and in the lives of those around us. I have long argued that these devices contribute to a kind of waking sleep. We are not truly awake to our real lives, but can live alternately through a virtual self. Being a Christian to me means being awake to God and to my faith. This is exciting, but it takes a lot of work, focus, time and attention. Perhaps putting away our phones with intent this Lent will give us that time, and as a result we can give God more of our attention.

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## PARENTS GROUP

### Sunday, March 5pm, Burns Hall

Parents, please join us for a discussion on the intersection of faith and mental health in our children and youth. Rebecca, Tory, and Winnie have observed an increase in anxiety and depression among our youngest members and know how taxing this is on parents and families. With the help of a licensed adolescent therapist, we will discuss what we're all seeing, how parents are feeling, and what role we all might be able to play in helping students cope. Please plan to attend this important and timely meeting.

### *Voice of The Redeemer*

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Submission guidelines are available at  
www.TheRedeemer.org/voice  
or by contacting Ken Garner.  
All submissions are subject to editing for  
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Trish Bennett, Copy Editor pro bono

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**Deadline for the April issue: March 15**



# PROGRAM

## REWARD TO TREASURE

BY JO ANN JONES

We have moved out of a time of feasting (Epiphany), and, if one chooses, potentially into a time of fasting (Lent). I have been one who fasts for most of my life. I have maintained a discipline of fasting every Saturday from 8:00pm until after I have received communion. What I found is that my appetite for food gave way to anticipation of communion. I did not feel deprived; rather fasting caused me to be more mindful and appreciative of the liturgy of the Eucharist. It opened up so many other possibilities, that fasting no longer appeared to be a sacrifice, but a gate to more, to other aspects of worship and life to which I would not have been attentive. Typically, in Lent I add an additional discipline of fasting from certain foods. Darkness does not descend on my life during Lent. Fasting gives me space to cast light on other possibilities. My needs recede. I became more present to God's presence.



In the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 6: 16-18) Jesus says, "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Fasting helps us keep our balance in life. How easily we begin to allow nonessentials to take precedence. How quickly we crave things we do not need—until we are enslaved by them. Our human cravings and desires can seem to have a power over us. Fasting helps to awaken in us the discipline to overcome the power of our cravings. That is discipline and discipline brings freedom. And this freedom turns us to God and God's purposes for our lives. That should be the reward to treasure.

## KEEP TRYING

BY WINNIE SMITH

In my Voice article last month, I wrote about fasting in the season of Lent. I asked the following questions: *What do I really need to live? What kind of excesses do I consider normal, and how might I recognize them and try to live more modestly?* Now that we are in the thick of the season, I wonder if you all have been taking stock of these things? Have you adopted a Lenten practice that helps you live more modestly? If you took on a practice or are attempting a fast from something, keep working on it! I am confident in my belief that God is not judging our every move and considering us failures if we slip up; the purpose of this kind of Lenten discipline is to try and shift our focus a bit and to spend more time on the things that really matter. So keep trying!

In our Adult Forum presentations



Ejaz Sabir

this month, we will examine the idea of fasting from a few different angles. We will hear from Ejaz Sabir, a practicing Muslim, on the fast of Ramadan, which begins later this month. How does one prepare for an extended fast such as this, and what are the spiritual implications and benefits of doing so? We will hear about social media and technology, and how a fast from those things can be incredibly beneficial - even life-

changing - for young people as well as adults. Finally, we will hear from a representative of the St. Francis Inn in Kensington who will speak both from a Catholic perspective on the importance and spirituality of fasting, as well as telling us about the unhoused population St. Francis Inn serves. This is sure to be a wonderful series, and I hope you will plan to attend.

## ASSISTANT ORGANIST



BY ALEXANDER LEONARDI

When I came to The Redeemer in 2021, I saw myself as more of a concert organist: one that would go out and spend their lives performing recitals in churches and concert halls. I had only limited experience in a liturgical setting; I had played in a local church for a few months, without choir, and I had had experience with substitute work for a number of years.

So, when I started my work as the Michael Stairs Organ Scholar, it was

quite the shock to say the least: anthems with choir every week, preludes and postludes, and hymns that needed a creative spark to encourage the congregation to sing with enthusiasm. These were just a few of the new responsibilities that I took on, in addition to my mounting college requirements and commitments. Thus, it was a bit daunting to take on so much responsibility so quickly. At times, the workload from The Redeemer and Curtis was so great that I was never sure that I could handle it all. I would sometimes question exactly what the purpose of taking on all of the responsibilities was, and how it was to help my musicianship.

It took only until after the Christmas season in 2021 for my mind to have a complete re-evaluation of who I was as a musician and what my goals in my career ultimately were. I had come to realize that I had wrongly considered the position, insofar that I realized just how much I was enjoying the work I was doing. I considered, and continue to consider myself immensely lucky to be able to work with such a fine choir every week and perform some of the

most beautiful anthems and canticles written for organ and choir. It was liberating to have an opportunity to improvise and create my own music in the moment, something I would never have been able to experience if not for this position. As the organ scholar, I came to the realization that liturgical music in a setting like The Redeemer's, with a fine organ and a wonderful choir led by a terrific music director like Dr. Michael Diorio, was something that I greatly enjoy doing. That epiphany helped me to consider a position and a situation like this as a possibility for my future. With that reevaluation, the stress of this position vanished, and I found myself enjoying the pressure; I knew that all of it was in service to something that was genuinely beautiful and unique to this career path.

With my promotion to assistant organist at Church of the Redeemer, I see myself growing into a different kind of organist than I was two years ago, and the position reflects not only the external changes in how I perform, but the internal changes to how I view myself and my career. At the same time, I am

honored that I would be trusted with the responsibility of this position, and I am eager to continue to make beautiful music with the Redeemer community.

## IHN GUESTS RETURN

From March 19 to 26 we'll be hosting Interfaith Hospitality Network families in person in the Parish House! We are thrilled to be able to relate face to face. There will be opportunities to provide meals, eat dinner with our guests, relate to them, stay overnight, set up or take down beds, or supply basic groceries. Parishioners of all ages can participate. IHN is part of the 3-pronged program of Family Promise of the Main Line. For more information on this work to help the temporarily homeless in Montgomery County, go to [fpmainline.org](http://fpmainline.org).

Visit the Signup Genius at [www.TheRedeemer.org/RSVP](http://www.TheRedeemer.org/RSVP) to indicate how you can help.



# PARISH NEWS

## STEWARDS OF TRADITION *conclusion*

By MICHAEL DIORIO

In last month's edition of The Voice, I gave a preview of an upcoming article on Redeemer's musicians that will be published in April by the Organ Historical Society. Last month I discussed one of Redeemer's organists, Uselma Clarke Smith (1879-1939).

In 1936 Smith's tenure was followed by organist Ernest Willoughby.

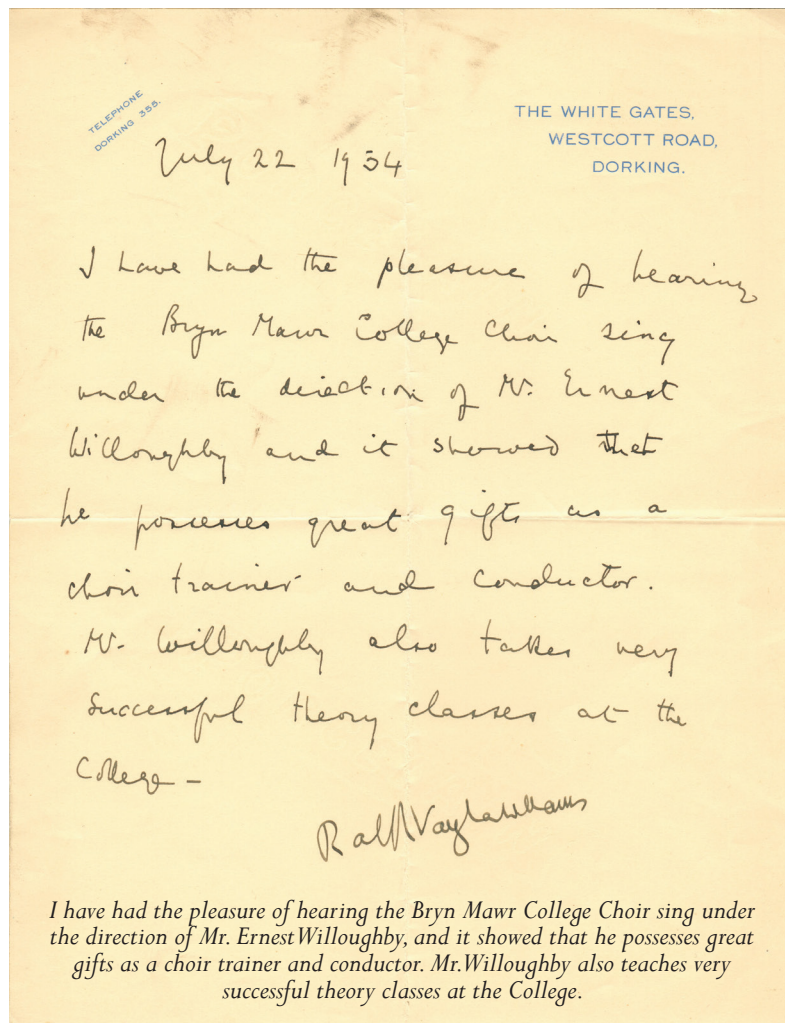
Willoughby came to the United States from England in 1921, after leaving his post as assistant organist of Hereford Cathedral. Willoughby also served as assistant director of the famed Three Choirs Festival, where he was accompanist for The Apostles under the baton of Sir Edward Elgar himself.

Upon moving to the United States, Willoughby settled in Bryn Mawr, taking up the position of assistant professor of music at Bryn Mawr College and later serving as director of music at the Baldwin School. At the same time, he served as organist choirmaster at the Church of the Good Shepherd in neighboring Rosemont.

In 1936 Willoughby came to The Redeemer and, as one might expect from his British heritage and musicianship, further developed the program into one of polish and precision. Willoughby was a prolific composer and arranger, having had several of his works published, and he performed frequently as a solo recitalist, concertizing throughout the country.

Willoughby was friendly with famed British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, who, by Willoughby's invitation, came to the U.S. to give a series of lectures at Bryn Mawr College in 1932. Willoughby and Vaughn Williams maintained a correspondence over the years, and in 1934 Vaughan Williams wrote this note in testimony to Willoughby's musicianship.

Though seemingly ensconced in the Main Line music scene, Willoughby pursued other professional opportunities. In 1944, much to the disappointment of The Redeemer, Willoughby took a position at Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria, British Columbia. He held that position for barely a year, however, before taking another position as organist and choirmaster



*Vaughan Williams' handwritten note from the files of Michael Diorio.*

at St. Marks, Locust Street, in Philadelphia: all of this before ultimately returning to The Redeemer in September of 1948.

In his time at The Redeemer, Willoughby oversaw the contract and installation of the 53-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ, dedicated on November 27, 1949. Ernest Willoughby remained at the Church of The Redeemer until retiring in 1970. His was the longest—albeit not unbroken—tenure in The Redeemer's history.

Following Dr. William H. Reese (organist and choirmaster from 1970-1976) was Norman Mackenzie, the brother of our staff singer Laurie MacKenzie. Norman was a child prodigy who made his debut as a pianist with the Philadelphia Orchestra at age 12, and as an organist at age 20. Norman is a multiple Grammy award-winning director of the Atlanta Symphony Chorus, where he succeeded his mentor, Robert Shaw. Norman's move to Atlanta marked the beginning, in 1983, of the long tenure of Michael Stairs.

Since 1851 Church of the Redeemer has enjoyed a formidable array of fine musicians—sometimes for a season and sometimes for decades. The tenure of each has laid the foundation for the succeeding generations of organists and directors to come. Their efforts show how each have worked toward the benefit of the choir, the liturgy, and the congregation's understanding of how and why a vibrant music program should be fostered by the entire parish community.

Each of them has been a steward of tradition who, if only for a while, served as an important custodian of song and as a champion for the organ. Their work has resulted in the continued effort of preserving, protecting, and building upon this beautifully transformative tradition of instruments and song.



*Michael Stairs & Michael Diorio*

## GOD CHOOSES

By PETER VANDERVEEN

In a recent symposium on technology published in the journal *The Point*, L.M. Sacasas quoted T.S. Eliot, who "wrote of those who 'constantly try to escape from the darkness outside and within by dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good.'"

Sacasas argued that this has, in fact, been the overriding dream of the last one hundred years: technology will save us. This, of course, assumes that all of our problems, from first to last, will remit to technological solutions, which is easy to take for granted in light of the overwhelming number of new products and applications that we employ, with increasing speed. And yet, for instance, one might wonder, now that we can put cameras anywhere and at any time,

why we would need to do so. Cameras may stop crime or help in the process of prosecuting offenders. But are they effective in deterring or preventing the very impulse to commit crime? Apart from being able to answer this both definitively and positively, true progress is dubious. Eliot had a point.

We could also note that many of the systems we now talk about most are noteworthy because they have entrapped us in doing what is evil. Systems are organizations of power. They have force and effect, and these are rarely, if ever, value neutral. So now we're highly exercised in the task of looking backward to uncover those systems that promoted wrong and, (in an effort that isn't critically examined enough), we are responsible to make

amends by creating new systems that will usher in justice. And personhood, individuality, and intentionality are almost wholly removed from consideration. We are all just pawns.

Christianity isn't a system. It's not meant to be. Nor is it, properly speaking, a religion—as a dream of God. What's most striking about the Scriptural text is its continual witness to the scandal of particularity. God chooses. Individuals are chosen. Nothing of importance happens in general. Everything is of its own time, instance, and consequence—which makes it meaningful. Good and evil are not systemic. They arise in the hearts of people. Lent puts this in an intensified focus. Eliot would probably approve.

### Wednesday Parish Dinners JOIN US

Please join us for Parish Dinner on Wednesday nights from 6-7pm. What started as a potluck community dinner for choir members and families is now open to the entire Parish. This is a wonderful opportunity to come together for a midweek feast as a community. We encourage parish and choir members to bring their families and friends to join in this weekly dinner gathering. In general, this is an informal potluck dinner, however on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, we will invite everyone to participate in BINGO night as well!

No dinner plans? No problem.  
Come to dinner at the parish house!  
Eating alone? No problem.  
Come dine with your parish community!  
Love to cook? Perfect!  
Sign up to make a meal!  
Not a great cook, but love to clean? Perfect!  
Sign up to help with clean up!  
Busy schedule and no time to cook? No problem! Stop by for a delicious home cooked meal with no prep or clean up needed.

Signups available at  
[www.TheRedeemer.org/RSVP](http://www.TheRedeemer.org/RSVP)