

Voice of The Redeemer

Episcopal Church of

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

May 2023

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“NEWSLETTER SIGNUP”

CONTINGENCY, COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION Refocusing Mission and Outreach

BY PETER VANDERVEEN

According to the Surgeon General, there's a new and significant threat to individual and public welfare. It's isolation and loneliness, stemming from an increasing lack of social and personal engagement. In short, we are spending more time staring into computer screens than we are gazing at one another. Our most significant interactions are with data rather than persons. The effect of this isn't immediate, but, as with smoking, drinking, and overeating, the damage creeps in slowly, over time, often taking us by surprise. We're discovering—as the pandemic recedes but its habits remain—just how much we need one another and just how much the reasonable facsimiles of ourselves that we offer electronically fall short of true human connection.

Think of the last time you witnessed an accident—or suffered an accident. In the blink of an eye all the usual conventions of social exchange drop away and a very different kind of intimacy takes over. Injury or fear of injury can draw perfect strangers into an immediate closeness. Someone may require care,

or, more radically, touch. And this need can override timetables and agendas and whatever had been the business at hand, as well as the many mores of social distancing.

Accidents can be a fairly severe form of the contingency that is always at play in our lives. The unexpected interrupts. We can also be surprised by a chance encounter; we can be alarmed by running into someone that we'd have preferred to avoid. A package we've ordered might arrive early. It might have the wrong contents. Those contents might be serendipitous. Every story is a tale of contingency; otherwise, all it would be is a rulebook.

Digital interactions don't allow much contingency. This contributes to their efficiency, but also to their sterility. People can't wander unexpected into them. Accidents don't happen, or at least they can't interrupt in the same way. Information can be shared, but intimacy can't. As Sherry Turkle from MIT has noted, we are together but alone; we expect more from the technology we use than we do from one another.

The same is true when our personal interactions are defined and limited by transaction. Something is exchanged,

and the focus is on the object. If a merchant sells a product, we don't expect this to become a story, nor do we expect to be engaged with a story as part of the process. Transactions, in general, are clean and easy and free of much social. Or they don't have to be.

Much of the mission and outreach work of the church has become almost exclusively transaction, whether by design or not. Parishioners give things away, and the focus is on what is being given: food to food banks, clothing in clothing drives, grants to organizations—all with good reasons. And this meets personal needs. And it's efficient and easy. But it doesn't address the isolation and loneliness that may be an intrinsic part of real poverty experienced by those to whom these things are given. No one has to get involved in the stories of others. There's not much room for contingency, or dealing with the unexpected or serendipitous, or experiencing intimacy with a stranger that creates a communal bond—when all the while these may be the things that are really wanted and most transformative. Donations can help people subsist in poverty. Discovering that they are seen and can share stories of themselves and are not excluded from the intimacy of friend-

ship and true humanity can alleviate the poverty that runs deepest—that of being alone.

In the effort to highlight that our first work as a Christian community is to build community, we are changing how we refer to the work that has traditionally fallen under the easy titles of “mission and outreach.” The fundamental goal of these efforts isn't to give things away; it's to create connections with others who, for all sorts of reasons, would otherwise remain strangers. It's the work of being present and, thereby, being vulnerable to contingency. It's actively seeking to provide a balm for isolation and loneliness by risking the kind of unusual intimacy that shows the best of us. One way of reading the accounts of Jesus' own ministry is that he chose to make his whole life encountering the contingencies of others—and his grace wasn't in his solving of their problems, it was always in the way that he let them know just how deeply he saw who they were.

As we move forward in all our community connections work, hopefully we'll increasingly shift from transactional giving to the realization of the mutual benefit gained when we can share the same grace.

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Garden Party PARISH PICNIC

We're puttin' the two together
Sunday, May 21 at 4:00pm
Parish House Courtyard

tents and music along with
hot dogs, hoagies and drinks provided

Bring food to share. If your name begins with

A - I Salads

J - R Desserts

S - Z Entrées



PROGRAM

THE SWEET SOUND OF CHILDREN IN THE PEWS

Ministries with Children

By TORY DUNKLE

I am admittedly coming off an Easter high, but there are few things as sweet in this world as the sound of little ones breaking through the hum of a full congregation. I know what you are thinking. Seriously? I enjoy the sound of constant fidgeting, inopportune bathroom breaks and loud chatter? I'd be lying if I said this all helps me to focus on worship. But in the midst of all these distracting sounds are those that remind me why we all gather together as a community of believers.

The challenge of worship is to put aside the distractions of the world and enter into God's presence as a communal body. As grown-ups, we are prone to assume that children should be included as one of those distractions to quiet during worship. Their chatter and wiggles are just one more thing

that prevents us from fully focusing on worship. If only they would be still and quiet, we could finally experience the fullness of the liturgy.

By relegating children to statues in the pew, we fail to recognize and celebrate their status as members of the body of Christ and limit their ability to fully participate in the life of the church.

To include and welcome children in worship is to acknowledge them as



members of the kingdom of God. Let us remember Matthew 19:13-14. While the disciples tried to keep the children away from him, Jesus welcomed them with open arms and proclaimed to the crowd their place in the kingdom. By virtue of their baptism, children are received as full members of the body of Christ and are invited to fully participate in

the life of the church.

Worship is one on the few truly

intergenerational spaces left where children and adults are invited not only to interact, but more importantly to enter into God's presence as fellow believers. It is through regular inclusion and participation in liturgy that our children learn how to live and love as fellow members of God's body here on earth.

So yes, there is nothing sweeter than the sound of preschoolers stumbling through the Lord's Prayer, friends holding hands in the pews and siblings skipping as they come forward to receive communion. If we wade through all the distraction, we catch a glimpse of the beauty of the future church forming right before our eyes. And that deserves a loud "Amen" from toddlers and grown-ups alike!

LIVING INTO THE EASTER SEASON

By REBECCA NORTINGTON

Happy Eastertide from RYG! As we celebrate the season and witness rebirth all around us in the beauty of spring's spectacle, I realize that not everyone can get beyond the Good Friday

of our tradition. For many, the resurrection is confounding and hard to accept, but the betrayal and brutality of Good Friday, the not knowing of Holy Saturday: this guilt and uncertainty can resonate with us more easily.

I wrote a couple of weeks ago about how comfortable I find myself in Lent.

Lent is a time to consider our own journey in the wilderness. It can be a time to reflect on the challenges that life has brought us, and to prepare for the next event: Holy week and ultimately Easter. In this preparation we still have some control. We can control when and if we resist temptation; when and if we search for God's guidance and voice in the darkest of moments. In Lent and in Holy week we can still pretend that we have some power over our own outcome.

In Easter we are asked to let all of that go, and to trust in God's redeeming love for us. For many of us, it is the letting go of our own control and our own ego, that is the most terrifying.



The Episcopal Church in Navajoland

As RYG prepares for our trip to Utah and Arizona to work with the Navajo people in June, we consider how the life of Christ and the Christian tradition can appeal to a people who have felt—and feel—occupied, suppressed, cheated and ignored.

Christianity may offer hope to the Navajo people, as Christ offered hope to the first century Jews (who were similarly occupied, suppressed, cheated and ignored), but it is a relationship inherently complicated by the role that the Church has played for the last three centuries in the lives of Indigenous peoples across this nation. This trip will allow us to better understand that complicated relationship, and to learn more deeply about both the Navajo, and ourselves. We may find that the Navajo people are more comfortable living into the Easter season of surrender and faith, while we linger in a Good Friday, Holy Saturday uncertainty.

Or we may not. We may find more answers to the riddles of our own faith through living with those whose faith has been deeply influenced by a life and culture that has a different relationship with control.

We talk about metanoia in theology: a conversion or change of heart, that Christians often experience. This metanoia can be, and I argue should be, an ongoing process throughout our lives; every Lent, and every Easter, every week and sometimes, on a small scale, every day. It is a turning to God.

I believe it is in experiencing other people's hospitality that we learn true hospitality. It is in experiencing other people's grace that we understand the profound impact of grace, and it is in witnessing other peoples transformation that often we are transformed. My hope for this trip to Navajo Land is that the kids, and the leaders, experience metanoia. My hope is that their hearts are transformed and that they find love in the stranger and hope in surrender. Because it is when we let go of ourselves as the very center that we are truly liberated and can turn ultimately to God as the Alpha and the Omega. This is what Easter is all about!

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Deadline for the June issue: May 17

PROGRAM

WHAT DO YOU SEEK?



By WINNIE SMITH

Photo credit: David Cruz

At our diocesan clergy conference in mid-April, our presenter, the Rev. Dr. Mark Bozzuti-Jones, posed this question to us. He asked us to sit in silence and really consider it. What do we seek? What are our spiritual desires? What do we long for, for ourselves and parishes, and what do we think God desires for us?

My first responses had to do with love: to love God and others deeply and to recognize that I, too, am deeply loved. My next thoughts were about a reordering of my priorities: I desire to put God, not myself, at the center of my world, and to help others do the same. These are deep desires that will not be accomplished or solved quickly. To recognize and share love takes time and intention; to reorder my thinking and my worldview requires constant work.

Perhaps that is why we have trouble allowing these large-scale goals to guide our everyday lives. The return on investment for loving and putting others first is not immediate, nor is it easily quantifiable. To live into our deep spiritual desires is to play a long game; it is to make small changes every day, knowing that ultimately our behavior is transforming our own lives and, by extension, making a difference to all those we encounter. But it's incremental. These are not seismic shifts.

The Rev. Dr. Bozzuti-Jones had us sit in silence at various periods during his presentation. "Silence is the language of God," he said. I think he is right. We cannot possibly listen for God or for our own deep desires in the hustle and bustle of our normal lives; stuff and events always get in our way. So, the Rev. Dr. Bozzuti-Jones suggested that we adopt the practice of beginning every meeting, maybe even every day, with a period of silence. I encourage you all to do this. In that silence, consider Jesus's first question: "What do you seek?" Really focus on it, and try to block out the many other thoughts and distractions that will try to creep into your brain. And when you discover what you seek, go after it. God wants us to honor these spiritual desires, and the hurting world needs us to.

50 DAYS OF EASTER

By JO ANN JONES

This question occurred to me. Why is Eastertide fifty days long? Theories abound. Some are rooted in church history, some in an understanding of Jubilee, and some in a reading of Jesus' genealogy.

Church History: Determining the date for the observance and celebration of Easter triggered a major controversy in early Christianity. The process led to disension between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Church. The dispute, known as the Paschal controversies, was not definitively resolved until the 8th Century. In Asia Minor, Christians observed the day of the Crucifixion on the same day that Jews celebrated the Passover offering—that is, on the 14th day of the first full moon of spring, 14 Nisan. Easter, then, was observed two days later, on 16 Nisan, regardless of the day of the week. In the West, Easter was celebrated on the first day of the week, Sunday, when Jesus had risen from the dead. Consequently, Easter was always celebrated on the first Sunday after the 14th day of the month of Nisan. Increasingly, the churches opted for the Sunday celebration, and the Quartodecimans ("14th day" proponents) remained a minority. The Council of Nicaea in 325 decreed that Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox (March 21). Easter, therefore, can fall on any Sunday between March 22 and April 25.

The Genealogy of Jesus: According to Matthew's account, there were 49 generations, culminating with Jesus, the 50 generation. This, too, finds expression in the number 50 for the celebration of the Easter season.

Jubilee: In Jesus' time, every seventh year was to be a year when there would be no planting or sowing of crops; the land would rest: be given a Sabbath. The year of Jubilee follows, grows out of, and completes seven Sabbath years (49 years in all) being the 50th year, the "Super Jubilee." This celebration of the Super Jubilee is identified with Jesus, hence the Easter season is 50 days long. This is, quite literally, 50 days of feasting. Easter is the high point of the Church year. The Lenten fast only lasts 40 days, while Easter is 50 days long. Fasting will pass away, as Jesus said, but the Great Feast of the Lamb will last for ages of ages (a Hebrew into Greek idiom for eternity).



Caring Collections for St. Gabe's

May 7 to 21

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of unsheltered individuals coming to the Saturday lunch program at St. Gabriel's Church where, in addition to a meal, they can obtain some legal aid and other assistance. As a way of helping these individuals maintain a sense of health and well-being, St. Gabriel's parishioners offer customized bags of **travel size** toiletries and grooming items. We can help by donating any of the following: packets of wet wipes, small hand sanitizer, small liquid or cake soap, small shampoo, deodorant, small mouthwash, toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving items, sanitary pads, Band Aids, comb, brush, socks-any size, underwear-any size. A gray hamper in the Parish House hallway is marked for toiletry donations. Please drop off your items between Sundays, May 7 and May 21. They will be taken to St. Gabe's when Jan Clarke and her team deliver their regular meal on Saturday, May 27.



Many thanks to all who donated clothing for the refugees from Ukraine and to Jenny Kirkpatrick for spearheading this drive. Earlier this week Jenny, along with John Herzog, delivered a carload of clothing to the Ukrainian Cathedral in Philadelphia.

PARISH NEWS

NEWCOMER PROFILE



INTERVIEWED BY KEN GARNER

Following a respite due to COVID, our Newcomer Profiles return. We hosted twenty newcomers at a recent Newcomer Coffee at the Rectory and we hope to feature them in coming issues.

This issue we feature the **Winfield family: Zachary, Rebecca, June and Henry.**

Thank you very much for sharing your story with us about your entry into The Redeemer community.

How long have you been attending services here?

We have been attending services occasionally for several years alongside my sister's family, the Zafirious. However, over the last year, we have been attending more regularly.

If you are newcomers to the Episcopal Church, what is your previous church experience, if any?

I grew up as an Episcopalian, however I never regularly or consistently attended church until now. Pre-covid, our family enjoyed attending Quaker Meeting.

How did you find The Redeemer?

We found out about The Redeemer through my sister, Jessica Harper and have had children in the Cherub choir since 2018.

What inspired you to attend?

I felt a need for a consistent grounding presence in our family's lives. Peter's sermons are relevant, thought provoking, and inspiring.

What would you want to tell others about The Redeemer to encourage them to come and explore our parish?

The music program is outstanding. My children love the choirs and the children's Sunday school program. The community is very welcoming and accepting of all, regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey.

Tell us a bit about yourself outside of The Redeemer—your job, your family, your hobbies.

Rebecca is an Emergency Medicine Physician Assistant and currently works in Urgent Care. Zachary is a consultant, primarily focusing on Zoos, Aquariums, and Gardens. Our children, June (9) and Henry (7) both attend choir at The Redeemer. June loves to read and draw. Henry enjoys singing, piano, and imaginative play. Both practice Jiu Jitsu.

EASTER AT THE REDEEMER

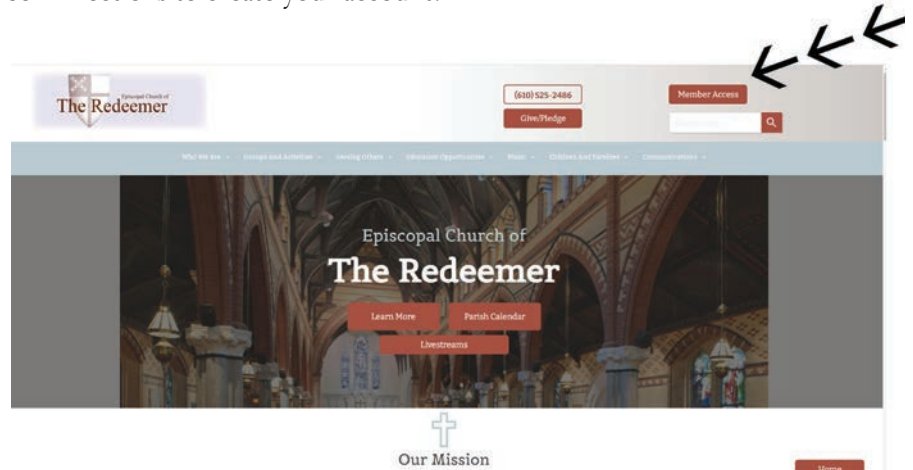


More photos online
at TheRedeemer.org

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

To facilitate all of us getting to know one another, we'd love to get your photos into our database. That database is accessible to all members who have given us their email address through our website **Member Access** button.

If you have already established an account in Member Access, just login. If you need a login account, go to the homepage of www.TheRedeemer.org and click on the Member Access button in the upper right corner and then follow the on-screen directions to create your account.



Once inside Member Access, here are directions for uploading your family and individual photos to Member Access.

- Click on HOME (far left at the top of the page in the MENU options)
- In the dropdown menu, click My Profile
- Click the Edit tab (upper right corner)
 - **For a family photo click** on Family Info tab (upper right corner)
 - Click Upload New Photo and find it on your computer
 - Once it is there and you've previewed it, click SAVE.
 - **For an individual photo** click on Personal Photo tab (upper right corner)
 - Click Upload New Photo and find it on your computer
 - Once it is there and you've previewed it, click SAVE.

UPCOMING JUNE DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

JUNE 11 AT 4:00PM

Swing into Summer

swing band concert in the courtyard

JUNE 17 TO 23

RYG Work Trip to Navajoland

JUNE 18 TO 25

IHN Guests In-House

Our Sunday worship schedule will continue with

8:00am Rite I Holy Eucharist without music

9:30am Rite II Holy Eucharist with hymns

Last Sunday Choral Matins will not take place during the summer.

The 4pm services will not take place during the summer.