

Church of the Redeemer Update
May 2009

Message from Pastor Karen

I have a habit of not erasing my telephone voice mails. I listen to them, act on them as needed, but then I forget to delete them. So the red number on my phone at home which tells me how many messages I have keeps increasing. I tend to remember which number is current, but every so often I have to go back and listen to all of them, delete, and then start the saving process over again. I did that last week. And, really, it was interesting to listen to all those old saved messages, and to be reminded of the various intersections of my life with the lives of others. I had 18 old messages! The variety was quite amazing: a doctor's office reminding me of an appointment, a high school friend who lives in Oregon letting me know she was going to be in Berea seeing her parents and hoping we could get together, a church member thanking me for being with her family while she had surgery, my Dad trying to reach me about this and that, the high school giving me pertinent information, colleagues making arrangements about getting together; the video rental store urging me to return my overdue movies; and so on. Listening to these messages was sort of like looking back over an old diary -- hearing their voices again brought them to mind, and hearing their messages reminded me of what I had been doing the past several weeks. I was struck by all these life intersections, and how interwoven our lives are with the lives of others.

For most of us, each day brings numerous opportunities to be in connection with other people -- people we know, as well as people we don't know. Our paths cross in so many ways: in the grocery store, at the coffee shop, in the library, at the gas station, standing in line at the post office, over the telephone, taking a walk in our own neighborhood, going to a concert, dropping off clothes at the dry cleaners, going out to a movie, attending a meeting, coming to church, and so on. Chance encounters, planned encounters, regular encounters, once in a blue moon encounters -- we experience them all. Our lives intersect. Our lives influence the lives of others, and our lives are influenced by the lives of others.

I believe these intersections and interactions are important. I believe a chance encounter in the grocery store, for example, can re-direct one's whole day. I believe planned and ongoing encounters with each other in our church, for example, can re-direct our whole lives. So it matters, therefore, how we interact. Are we friendly and courteous? Are we helpful and encouraging? Are we willing to listen? Do we smile? Are we supportive or suspicious? Are we open or closed? Not every chance encounter, of course, is life-changing. But some are. Not every experience with others in our church is uplifting or meaningful. But for me enough of them are that I want to keep on having them, and I want others to have them, too.

This past Sunday someone asked me why I was smiling in such a way that my entire face lit up. Was I happy to be here? he asked. And I smiled even more, and simply said, "Yes." As I've thought about it since, I realize that my simple answer was enough -- and that's it an answer we all can have. "Yes, we are happy to be here. Yes, being in this place, with each other, makes us smile. Yes, our lives are made better by what we do and share together. Yes, yes, yes!"

I hope you're nodding your head right now as you're reading this – and I hope that you're already looking forward to the next time you're in this place, and I hope you're already thinking about the things you can do to continue to make this a place where others smile, and where everyone wants to say Yes. Yes to God's love. Yes to growing in faith. Yes to working together. Yes to making a difference.

“Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:1-3).

“All who believed were together and had all things in common Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2: 44-47).

“As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been ‘Yes and No.’ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not ‘Yes and No’; but in it is always ‘Yes.’ For in him every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes.’ For this reason it is through him that we say the ‘Amen’ to the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 1: 18-20).

Prayer Joys and Concerns

Congratulations to:

Dr. Corbin Covault, recipient of Case Western Reserve University's Carl Wittke Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching!

Our College and High School Graduates: Squire Lovelace, Jr. (Ashland University); Lauren Dugard (Cornell University), Kayla Bryant (American University), Ryan Wilson (University of Akron), Rachel Wilson (Northwestern University), Elysa Chao (Yale University), Ashlee Feemster (Xavier University); Melissa Mauter; and Grace Graham (Cleveland Heights High School)

Prayers of Healing and Encouragement for:

Dorothy Lewis, Rose Williams, Nancy Awig, Varina Riley, Harold Jackson, David Davis

Prayers for our Homebound Members and our Senior Members:

Ginny Goodwin, Wilma Gunderson, Doris Liambeis, Phil Opp, Louis Rhodes, Doris Sims, Alice Stills, Rev. Carl and Rosetta Willingham.

Financial Report

Because of our apportionment shortfall in 2008, our church was asked by the District Superintendent to work with the Conference Treasurer on developing a plan for improving our church's financial situation. A representation of Redeemer leadership met with Jessica Vargo on April 19, and then again on our own on April 26. We were given financial data comparing our church with other churches our size. From this data we learned that our operating costs are significantly higher. That information, paired with the reality that we are still experiencing a revenue shortfall, has led us to begin looking at ways to reduce current costs.

Our 2009 budget is \$240, 883. To meet this budget we need a little more than \$20,000/month. We are currently averaging about \$16,000/month. So it is imperative that we do one or more of the following: a) increase our revenues by \$4000/month; b) cut expenses by \$4000/month; or c) combine increased revenues with cost reductions.

The task group will meet again on May 13 to make recommendations. These recommendations will be shared with the congregation at a church meeting to be scheduled by the end of May. Options will be presented, and then action will be taken.

You are asked to give this matter your prayerful attention. If you are able to increase your level of giving, please do so. If it has been a while since you did a personal assessment of your giving in relation to your income, now is an opportune time. What percentage of your income do you give to the church? Can you move up a percentage level? How close are you to tithing (10%), and are you willing to make that step of faith?

This is something we should all care about as members and friends of Church of the Redeemer. The decisions we make will affect everyone. Therefore, everyone's ideas and questions are welcome. Realizing our goal will take our creative thinking. It will take our willingness to sacrifice. It will take our commitment to do things in some different ways. It will take, above all, our faithful trust in God. We are in this together, and together, with God's guidance and God's presence, we will meet this challenge.

Coming Up at Redeemer

May 16: Church Grounds Work Day: come help us beautify our grounds for the spring and summer! We'll meet from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. All volunteers welcome!

May 17: 4:00 p.m. Community Seekers Forum
Khalid A. Samad will be here to share with us the work "Peace in the Hood" does with youth and families in Cuyahoga County.

May 18: 7:00 p.m. Church Council

May 26: 5:30 p.m. Community Meal at Redeemer

May 31: Day of Pentecost

On this Sunday when we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the Christian church, you are invited to wear something red: a tie, socks, a dress, a hat, a shirt, shoes, a flower, etc. Don't be shy!

Other Events and Activities

May 22: 4-6 p.m. North Coast District Farewell to Debbie Bryant.

Potluck celebration of Debbie's 12 year ministry as the District program/ Communications coordinator. Celebration will be held in the North Coast District's third-floor conference room at Broadway UMC, 5246 Broadway Ave, Cleveland. Flyers are available in the church coffee lounge. R.S.V.P. by May 18

May 30: 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Farewell Reception for Rev. Daniel Drew

A casual brunch reception at the Berea Children's Home in honor of Rev. Drew's six-year ministry as our North Coast District Superintendent. You may "drop-in" when you can during this time; a brief program will begin at 1:00 p.m. Cost is \$8 per person. R.S.V.P. by May 22. Forms are available outside the church office.

May 31: 3:00 p.m. Lay Speaker Consecration Service

Service will be held at Broadway UMC (5426 Broadway Ave, Cleveland, OH). All Lay Speakers who have completed the Youth and Adult Basic Course or the Advanced Course will be consecrated. Rev. Karen Graham will be honored as the 2009 Lay Speaking Pastor of the Year, and will preach during the service.

May 17 – June 7 Worship Preview:

There will be a similar theme for our worship May 17 to June 7. I will be using the United Methodist resource, Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations by Bishop Robert Schnase. Here is an excerpt from his introduction: "Radical Hospitality. Passionate Worship. Intentional Faith Development. Risk-Taking Mission and Service. Extravagant Generosity.....These words are dangerous, edgy, and provocative. The practices are basic and fundamental to congregational strength, but the adjectives intensify them toward the unexpected and the exemplary. Vibrant, fruitful, growing congregations don't stop at practicing *friendly* hospitality, *helpful* service and mission, or *prudent* generosity. Their practices are *radical, passionate, intentional, risk-taking, and extravagant*. These words draw us in and cause us to ask provocative questions about our own congregational practices. No church that is vibrant, fruitful and growing performs its ministry exactly as it did in the 1950s, and no pastor leading such a congregation is practicing ministry as she or he did in the 1970s or 1980s. Effective congregations change, improve, learn, and adapt to fulfill their mission, and these words push us to rethink our basic congregational culture, organization, and practice" (p.9).

As we are doing some other re-thinking here at Redeemer regarding our finances and our ministry structure, I want us to look at these practices, and get on board with each other to become a "vibrant, fruitful, growing" congregation. Isn't that what you want for Church of the Redeemer? In advance of each week's fruitful practice you will be given a set of questions to think about and talk over with others. I hope you'll come prepared each Sunday, starting May 17, to be challenged and encouraged and re-energized! Some of you will be asked to share in these services in different ways -- so plan now on saying "Yes!"

Here's the schedule:

May 17: The Practice of Radical Hospitality

Scriptures: John 15: 9-17; **Romans 15: 1-13**

May 24: The Practice of Extravagant Generosity (Ascension Sunday)

Scriptures: Acts 1: 1-11; **2 Corinthians 9: 1-15**

May 31: Re-thinking Church and the Practice of Risk-Taking Mission and Service (Pentecost Sunday)

Scriptures: **Acts 2: 1-21; Romans 8: 22-27**

June 7: The Practice of Intentional Faith Development (Trinity Sunday)
 Scriptures: **Isaiah 6: 1-8; John 3: 1-17**
Important!!! – Worship time changes to 10:00 a.m.!!!

See you in church!

Flood Buckets

Annual Conference is approaching and with it comes the annual collection of Flood Buckets. We are looking for groups of people at Redeemer to take responsibility for buying a 5-gallon plastic bucket and filling it with the required items. Instructions are available outside the church office. Contact Mary Ann Carlson for more information.

Summer Camp Opportunities

Heading Down the Right Path is the 2009 theme for our East Ohio Camps. Brochures are available outside the church office. Register on-line at www.EastOhioCamps.org. Camperships are available.

May Birthdays:

Day

Patrick Mullen	1	Joannae Steinfurth	9	Phillip Hicks	18
Carolyn Hicks	2	Nadine Young	10	Arnette Rowell	19
Jennifer Prater	4	Joan Organ	13	Denise Jackson	24
Marge Kaercher	4	Jennifer Williams	13	Grace Finley	25
Mark Rodney	6	Marcia Burke	14	Carl Willingham	26
John Dugard	6	Tony Lewis	16	Dianne Covault	27
Victoria Johnson	7	David Dusek	16	Susan Quirk	27
Justin Mauter	9	Mim Conway	18	Kate Klaber	31

May Anniversaries:

Date

Robert & Gail Nevels	5-4	
Jim & Jane Finley	5-12	
Bob & Ellen Bair	5-13	
Eugene & Clara Williams	5-22	
Wayne & Ruth Spohn	5-23	
Bubba & Rose Williams	5-24	Happy 40th Anniversary!
Frank & Pam Holowach	5-24	
George & Carrie Hicks	5-25	
Corbin & Dianne Covault	5-27	Happy 20th Anniversary!