

Redeemer Record



PASTOR'S COLUMN

... could Redeemer be like Joseph? Could we prepare for the leaner times by being generous now?

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STEWARDSHIP 2024

Take some time to review the Frequently asked questions on Pledging.

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HEALTHY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

The latest Healthy Spiritual Journey column on "A Future With Hope" by Lanny Wilson.

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Pastor's Column

BY PASTOR KATIE HINES-SHAH



The theme for Redeemer's Stewardship Campaign this year is "**A Future with Hope.**"

It seems like a challenging message in our modern church. In this post- COVID, post-Christian era we have seen a lot of change in the church, and not all of it is good.

Lately I've been thinking about Joseph the son of Jacob. You might remember his story from Sunday school, or from the Broadway musical. Joseph, among other things, was an interpreter of dreams about the future. Not all of those dreams were good.

When the Pharaoh of Egypt dreamed of seven sleek and fat cows eaten up by seven lean and thin cows, and seven fat ears of grain followed by seven thin and blighted ears, Joseph knew what that meant. He told Pharaoh there would be seven good years of harvest followed by seven lean years. Joseph told Pharaoh God had given him this dream so that he could prepare.

It makes me think about Redeemer. In many ways the last few years, and the years about to come, are set to provide Redeemer with a good harvest. We completed our major Renovation debt-free in 2019. We celebrated our 100th anniversary in 2022. We have ended each of the last few years with a budget surplus and expect to receive a major bequest at the beginning of 2024. And yet, we can also see challenges coming, not just for Redeemer but also for all of Western Christianity. Church attendance is not what it once was. We see fewer children in our Sunday school and getting confirmed. Congregations are aging.



But as Redeemer foresees challenge, we do not despair – we prepare. Just as Joseph did.

Pharaoh appointed Joseph as an overseer in Egypt. Joseph oversaw the harvests for the next seven years, storing up grain in such abundance that “it was like the sand of the sea.” When seven years of famine came, there was enough for all of Egypt and more besides. The Bible says, “all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain.” Even Joseph’s estranged family turned to him, and Joseph used this opportunity to reconcile with them.

It makes me wonder – could Redeemer be like Joseph? Could we prepare for the leaner times by being generous now? We can’t be stingy, using the plenty we experience as an excuse.

Like Joseph we need to be prudent, using our gifts to provide a future and a hope not only for our current members but for other people yet to come.

All this makes me hopeful. No matter what the future may hold, we, like Joseph, know that with God’s guidance we can overcome. With your help, we can find ways to persevere, even in lean years. And not just that. We can find ways to bless people from other communities and even to come to peace with those who were formerly estranged from us. With God all things are possible – even a future with hope.

Thank you for joining me in making a generous commitment to Redeemer’s future! Thanks be to God!



I WILL FULFILL TO YOU MY PROMISE AND BRING YOU BACK TO THIS PLACE. FOR SURELY I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU, SAYS GOD, PLANS FOR YOUR WELFARE AND NOT FOR HARM, TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE WITH HOPE.
+ JEREMIAH 29:10-11

Your tithes and offering not only pay for all the necessities of day-to-day church operations, but they also help shore up the future. Our Property Committee uses your gifts to make repairs and improvements to the church building so that it can be enjoyed for years to come. Your offerings are helping Redeemer expand our staff so that we can increase our reach into our community. Ten percent of your giving is shared with the wider church and our mission partners so that they can plan for the future too. Your generosity means that Redeemer has been able to dare to dream in new ways, reaching out to help refugees and joining efforts to aid in mental health crises, gifts that will continue to bless our community and world.



Associate Pastor Elect's Column

BY PASTOR KELSEY JOHNSON

Our stewardship message of “A Future with Hope” is a timely message for who we are as Christians, and it's a serious call to action for our community.

There is so much positive momentum in our ministry areas at Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit remains at work in this community. In our last year together, we have rebuilt post-pandemic Confirmation to be a community where youth form relationships with one another and explore faith in a caring and nurturing way. We are anticipating Confirming a class of around 9 this May. Redeemer has committed to funding a national youth gathering trip, an ambitious undertaking and experience that will surely make an impact on our youth.



The foundation that we set with this group of middle schoolers will encourage a high school program to be possible in the near future. The Hinsdale-Area Faith Youth Collective(FYC) was founded in the spirit of collaboration by myself and leaders from the Hinsdale United Methodist Church, and Community Presbyterian Church of Clarendon Hills. Our most recent event was September 24th, and over 20 middle and high school youth spent an evening together playing games, eating pizza, and sharing highs and lows: asking where they can support one another in the upcoming week. Area youth Pastors know that events like this are not #1 on the priorities list, but working together and re-imagining youth ministry allows a wider net to be cast where youth feel supported and seen by a larger social community, rooted in shared values of faith despite denominational differences. I think youth do see the value in this, and perhaps that shifts to be a higher priority as more opportunities to engage in this community arise or later in life.

Together, we have also re-imagined Sunday School, identifying that attendance and energy was low for a curriculum that wasn't meeting the needs of our families and children. Turning to families' needs, we've cast our nets where the Holy Spirit called and have embarked on a totally re-imagined model: Godly Play.



Not only this, Godly Play during the second worship service with a Pastor/staff person leading. The curiosity and wonder for the stories of our scripture I hear among the children in this space is reassuring that this program is worthwhile and is planting a seed for the future. Godly Play also sends an intentional message to our children: “There is space just for you in the wider story of God.” I truly believe this is a foundation for not just early Christian formation, but lifelong Christian formation.

These are just a handful of examples of how ministry is speaking to the present, while looking to hope in the future. I could go on about how Thursday’s 2gather continues to be an engaging and creative space for Christian community during the day. Or how about some of the adult education leaders we’ve been able to hear from in the last year, perspectives which allow us as a community to discern where we are being called forth, for example the Exodus international simulation on the refugee journey which led to us welcoming and supporting a refugee family from Syria.

I find great hope in this, and youth + life stages programming would not be possible without your pledge contributions. Thank you for supporting these ministries and having hope in the future community of Redeemer.

In the story of John 21, the disciples are frustrated and discouraged by their latest fishing endeavor: empty nets being cast in the same place over and over yielding no results. This is an illustration of what we sometimes do as church: the same thing over and over, expecting results that have all but dried up. With ministries especially relating to ages and stages; children, youth, families, senior adults, and broadening community outreach, we need to be adaptable and always asking the question of where we are being called to cast our nets. When the disciples of John listen to the call of Jesus to cast their nets to somewhere new, they find an abundance of fish.



Our Lutheran heritage is to reform: to speak truth to the current reality and, rooted in the grace and hope of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, adapt to meet the needs of our community. I am grateful and blessed to lead some of this ministry work to which I feel a deep calling towards as it is the present reality of the church. Your generosity has made this call possible, and in hope you prayerfully discern where you can deepen your generosity to make Redeemer’s future sustainable and full of hope.

I am grateful and blessed to know a congregation that is energetic to listen to the Holy Spirit’s wisdom and trust that casting our nets in new directions means abundance.

Thank you for your pledge this stewardship season, and investing in hope for Redeemer’s future.

Vicar's Column

BY VICAR BRENT ELLERBEE



Looking Toward a Future with Hope

It can be daunting to look toward the future. When looking ahead, it often feels like we can see crises looming on every level. On the global and national level, we see a worsening climate and humanity's slow and seemingly indifferent efforts to address it. We see soaring inflation and economic woes leading to greater financial insecurity at all levels of society. On a personal level, we see elderly parents whose increasing medical needs might be beyond our ability to provide. We see our own careers and retirements endangered by a volatile economy. We become increasingly pessimistic about the kind of world our children will inherit. Even



on the spiritual level, we see the decline of the church year after year, and we wonder what kind of future our faith has in this increasingly secular society. Even though these concerns may seem original in their immediacy, they are nothing new. Even in Jesus' own time, we see the disciples worrying about the immediate future of Jesus' followers.

In the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Mark 6:30-44), Jesus has been teaching a huge crowd all day. His disciples, seeing that it was growing late, worry about the people in the crowd being able to find food in such a desolate place. After hearing their concerns, Jesus tells the disciples to feed the multitude themselves. The incredulous disciples then ask if they are supposed to go out and buy thousands of dollars' worth of food for these people. Jesus' response is for them to feed the crowd with what they have. Well, what they had was a ludicrously inadequate five loaves of bread and two fish. And God, working through Jesus, made it enough to feed over five thousand people, with plenty to spare.

As the Feeding of the Five Thousand shows, God does not bring forth abundance out of nothing. God brings abundance out of what we have, and out of what we give. Where the disciples saw inadequacy in the face of crushing need, Jesus saw an opportunity for them to become part of God's great gifts of abundance. It didn't matter that they didn't have enough. It only mattered that they gave out of what they had. God, working through Jesus, took their gifts and made it so that everyone had what they needed. It is the same with us today. God takes our gifts, meager though they may be, and uses them to help create a future with hope.

In my short time here, I have already seen the people of Redeemer using such gifts to work toward a future with hope. I see you sponsoring and welcoming the Al Mistarihi family as they flee violence in their own country and seek refuge in the United States. I see in the quilts lining the pews and hanging in the narthex this congregation's desire to provide warmth and comfort to those in need of such thing both at home and abroad. And I see a congregation so hopeful of the church's future that they are committed to hosting, teaching, and guiding the formation of the church's future leadership through the internship program that brought me to you.

While the future can sometimes be daunting, it is clear that the people of Redeemer believe in and live toward God's future with hope. And that is what Stewardship is all about. It is about standing with the disciples in bringing our meager gifts forward for God to use in meeting the world's needs. And when we pledge, we are committing not just to meet the church and the world's needs today, but to meet their needs tomorrow and the day after that, and every day until God's future with hope finally arrives. A future when all will eat and be filled.

Redeemer Stewardship 2024 FAQ

BY VICAR BRENT ELLERBEE



A Future With Hope — Stewardship 2023 Frequently Asked Questions About Pledging

What is Pledging?

Pledging is an important way to express a commitment of the total amount of money you plan to give to your church over the next year.

Why Should I Pledge?

Although we are grateful for all gifts to Redeemer, asking members and friends of our church to estimate their giving for next year has both a spiritual and practical basis.

Can I designate how my pledge is used by Redeemer?

Your pledge represents a general gift to your church because we are trying to support the whole of Redeemer's ministry. Special designated gifts may be offered in addition to pledges.

What is the money I pledge used for? How does Redeemer support ministries outside its walls?

Contributions from our members and friends fund all that we do here at Redeemer. The budget created by our Finance Committee includes funding for all of the ministries, programs, operating expenses and upkeep of buildings and grounds of this church. We also budget money to give to service groups.

Does Redeemer receive financial support from a national or regional church body?

No. In fact Redeemer pledges 7% of our annual offerings to the Metro Chicago Synod of the ELCA, which, in turn, gives 55% of its annual receipts to the ELCA National Churchwide Office. These funds help to pay for foreign and domestic missions, direct aid programs, seminaries, Lutheran camps, as well as administration and oversight.

How much should I pledge?

We ask members and other supporters to be generous with their pledges, taking into account the value of your church to you and the importance of our mission together. There is no required amount or percentage of income. Consider this passage from 2 Corinthians 9:

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver...You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

In the passage above, Paul encourages the believers at Corinth to make up their minds ahead of time about how much they should give. This is what pledging is all about.



“The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”



Who knows how much I pledge?

The only people who know how much you pledge are the Financial Secretary and the Pastor.



I'd like to get into the specifics of Redeemer's finances.

Most questions can be answered by our Treasurer Kimberly Enders, or by our Financial Secretary Deborah Kraus.

What is tithing, and should I be doing this?

Tithing is the biblical concept of giving 10% of your income back to God. A tithe is a good goal and one worth working toward. This is analogous to how many people approach building their retirement account! They start working on a smaller percentage this year (for example 5%) and plan on increasing their contributions 1% per year. Many people find that they are able to work their way up to 10% faster than they imagined!

2024 is a puzzle for me financially. Wouldn't it be better not to pledge at all than to pledge and disappoint?

You are not alone! These are strange times, and God still calls on us to be faithful. A pledge is a plan to share some of what God has given us. Plans must sometimes change. God knows that, Redeemer knows that. What's important about making a pledge is that it helps us grow as good stewards and to put God first in our planning. On a practical level, pledges also enable the church to adequately project our next budget year so that we can equip our ministries to their fullest capacity.

How do I pledge?

You will receive a pledge card by mail on or around October 21st. We are asking that you fill out this card to indicate your pledge for 2024 and return it to the church on Pledge Sunday October 29 either in person, by mail, or by email – pledge@redeemerhinsdale.org. Pledges totals will be considered by the Church Council as they finalize the 2024 budget.

I pledged last year. Do I need to pledge again, or will you just assume that I will continue to donate the same amount?

Your pledge does not automatically renew each year. Please renew and update your pledge by completing a pledge card this year.

What happens if I fall behind in my pledge? Do I receive any reminders about my pledge?

A statement is mailed out quarterly that reminds you of your pledged amount and the actual amount you have given so far.

Can I prepay my pledge--that is, donate money by December 31, 2023 for tax or other reasons but have it apply toward my 2024 pledge?

Yes.

How to I pay my pledge?

You may pay your pledge on a weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly basis by placing a check or cash into your giving envelope and depositing that into the collection basket if you're at church, or by mailing it to the church office. You may also donate online by going to the Redeemer website and clicking the "Give Online" button. The site will guide you through the process of giving, using your checking or savings account or by using a credit card. (If you give through a credit card, consider giving a bit extra to offset the processing fee that the church must pay.) You may also give by making a gift of stock or of bonds. (Contact our Financial Secretary to learn how to transfer those assets.) Also, Required Minimum Distributions from an IRA or 401K can offer tax benefits as well as fulfilling your pledge.



Redeemer Budget 2023/2024



What can a budget say about a church? Should it reflect what is important to a congregation, or should it just be about mundane electric bills and necessary expenses? In our case, Redeemer's budget of \$622,775 for 2023/2024 covers these basic things but also lays out an optimistic vision with hope.

This is not money we have in our pocket right now but rather a look ahead to what positive things our community can share, grow and strive for in the coming year. It goes without saying that operating a robust church like Redeemer is an expensive challenge. Together, we are rising to meet this challenge through our continued commitment of doing and accomplishing so many wonderful things using the generous gifts that our members provide.

Mission

10% of Redeemer member tithes and offerings go to mission beyond Redeemer's walls. We share 7% of giving with the Metro Chicago Synod of the ELCA who, in turn, shares over 50% of their gifts with the ELCA nationally. This money supports missionaries and seminaries, educational and benevolent initiatives, the administrative support systems that provide for call processes, new church starts, and congregational help and so much more. 3% of Redeemer's offerings go to our mission partners – like Lutheran World Relief, ELCA World Hunger, Love Inc, HCS Community Services, and new initiatives like Redeemer Engaging Refugees.

Spotlight – Redeemer Engaging Refugees

Thanks to your tithes and offerings Redeemer was able to provide the Al Mistarihi Family of seven with items they needed to start a new life in the Chicago area after having been forced to leave their home in Syria. Redeemer provided sheets and towels, dishes and cookware, bathroom necessities, self-stable and fresh groceries, and even a brand new crib! Thanks to you this family is looking forward to a bright future!

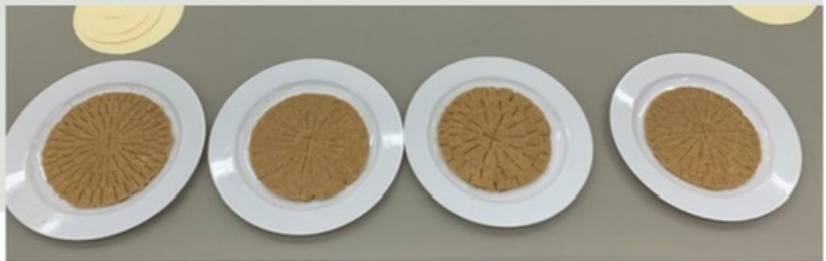


Worship

Worship is at the heart of all we do at Redeemer. Your tithes and offerings ensure that we have worship every single week, both in person and online. Gifts support organ and piano maintenance, section leaders for the choir, new music and altar guild necessities.

Spotlight - Communion

After a long hiatus, this year bread returns to the altar! Volunteers donate our communion bread and the altar guild sets the table using elements like wine and juice, and supplies like plastic cups and fabric napkins, that your gifts pay for. Your offering brings hope each and every time someone hears the words, "The body and blood of Christ, given and shed for you!"



Education

This year's Education budget was increased 58% to provide for new opportunities for children and adults to learn and grow. While the percentage is high, the actual dollar amounts are low – just \$11,057 covers all our education expenses thanks to the work of volunteers and staff. Your offerings provide weekly staffed childcare, adult forum speakers, and confirmation and Sunday school materials!

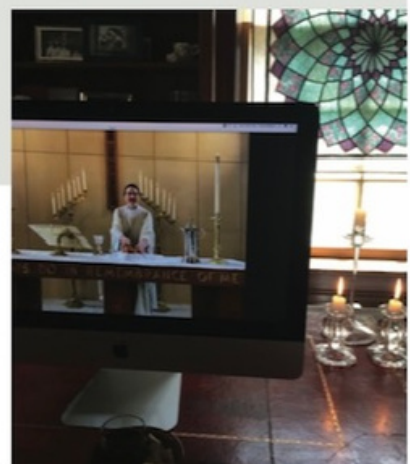
Spotlight – Godly Play

Your gifts have helped to provide a new learning environment for Redeemer's youngest members. Come check out the Godly Play classroom where new furniture and learning materials help Bible stories come to life. Your gifts help to ensure the church's future!



Congregational Life

Our smallest ministry area by expense, coming in at only \$6,500, Congregational Life has some of the biggest impact. Events like our annual picnic, books for congregational study, and weekly coffee hour expenses all come from this budget item. How sweet it is!



Spotlight – Picnic

This year Redeemer was able to improve both the quality and cost of our picnic offerings thanks to the gifts of one of our newer members who also happens to be a professionally trained chef! Your gifts provided a feast for all our Redeemer friends and neighbors without needing to ask for additional donations. What a lovely way to share Christian hospitality and to create new friendships for the future!



Administration

Paying for postage stamps and toilet paper isn't the most fun thing we do, but it is important. Administration expenses include inspections, building and grounds maintenance and improvements, the copier contract and utility bills. As with bills everywhere, all these costs are going up. Your generous gifts preserve what we have for future generations.



Spotlight – Technology

Thanks to your generous donations Redeemer is able to keep up with modern technology, updating our computer, microphone and camera systems so that you can keep in touch and participate in community events no matter where you are! Whether you are ZOOMing in to Bible Study or watching a sermon from the website, keeping up with Redeemer on Facebook or emailing staff, the future is now!

Staff

The largest single expense at Redeemer is staffing costs. Paying our Senior Pastor, Music Director, Office Manager, Custodian, AND adding an Associate Pastor is one important way Redeemer serves our members and makes an impact on our community.

Spotlight – Associate Pastor

Redeemer is making a bold step forward in adding an Associate Pastor to our staff. This will add to the budget we approved last July which only accounted for a lay staff member. While this added expense will be a challenge for us, we think that adding a staff member will increase our ability to reach new people and improve the faith lives of current members. Truly this is a project of future hope for Redeemer!



Your gifts come together to do so much for Redeemer and for our community. THANK YOU for doing your part to make God's promise of a Future and a Hope real for everyone!

Redeemer Stewardship

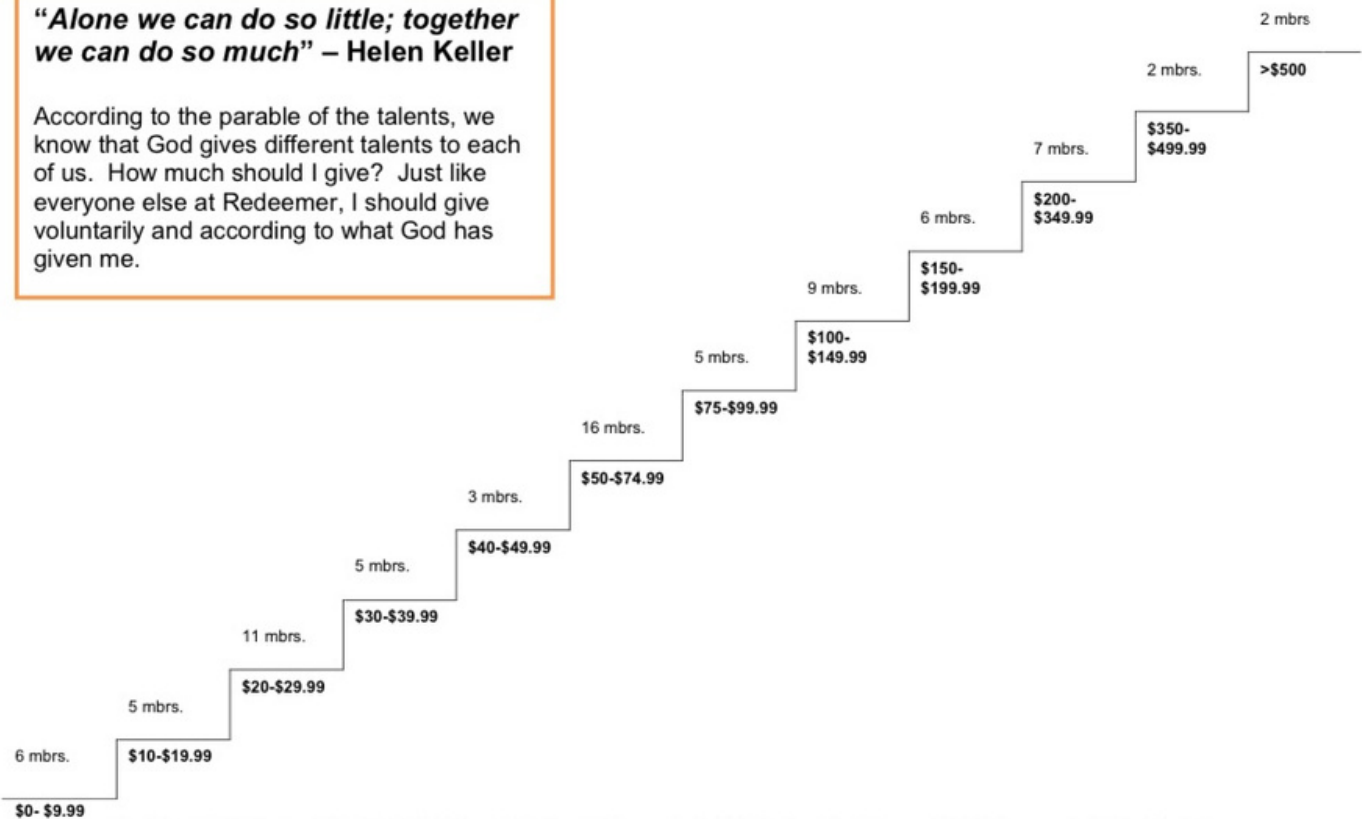


BY DEBORAH KRAUS

*Pledges Expressed as Weekly Giving for 2023

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much” – Helen Keller

According to the parable of the talents, we know that God gives different talents to each of us. How much should I give? Just like everyone else at Redeemer, I should give voluntarily and according to what God has given me.



*Note: Fiscal Year 2024 Budget calls for \$615,000 in Tithes & Offerings. Pledges submitted (77 pledges) for 2023 were \$467,477 represented 76% of the total.

Every step you take in your giving brings us closer to a Future with Hope!

Redeemer Stewardship October 8th



BY MELISSA ROBERTS

A Future With Hope

When I was in 3rd grade here at Oak School, I remember telling my grandfather how scary it was to be a jack-in-the-box in the school play. It went OK and I lived through it relatively unscathed, although to this day my middle sister likes to remind me that I popped a few seconds early. I remember sharing with my grandfather how badly I felt that I was so scared and that I was not brave at all. And he told me that if I hadn't been afraid, I wouldn't have been brave – that's what it means to be brave.

There is a phrase I have heard: braving hope. It means allowing yourself to continue to operate out of hope even when it feels risky and vulnerable. Lots of things feel risky to me (which is probably good because my career is risk management). Things like the decline of religion in the US, global warming, loss of animal habitat, retirement savings, the list goes on and on – but through it all I pledge and give to Redeemer Lutheran Church because we operate out of hope. We have this gift that gives us peace, and fellowship, and the ability to share our bounty with our neighbors, and model a Christian life and it shines like the brightest beacon of hope – now and with our generosity, for the next generation.

Years ago, during a Sunday School class on taking a leap of faith, I took a sheet of printer paper and I told the kids I knew of a way they could fit inside. They were skeptical. But we cut around and around and around and that piece of printer paper turned into a hoop. The class had fun hopping in and out of it and were delighted at their new trick! But before we ended, one of the boys looked at me and pointed out that I had not climbed through the paper hoop. It was one thing to have a little 8-year-old climb through, but talk about skeptical! I was pretty sure I was about to ruin their well-established leap of faith lesson if my – not 8-year-old body – tried to get through what suddenly looked to me to be a teeny tiny paper circle. But leap of faith there I went. And you know what happened, right? God is good and so are children.

Please join me in braving hope... or maybe my call to action is... let me follow all the good and generous Christians that have come before me. Let me join you in your bravery and hope.

Redeemer Stewardship October 15th



BY GALEN BANASHAK

My stewardship temple talk today is a big “thank you”! For 40 years of ministry – as a missionary and a pastor – we were blessed to have so many churches that supported our family of 7. Now that I’m fully retired, this is the first time our income doesn’t come from the generous financial gifts of Christians and churches! I’m sure I speak for all ministers of the Gospel in appreciation of the sacrificial giving of you folks “in the pews”! In 1 Corinthians 9:14, The Apostle Paul reminds the Church, “So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”

No pastors I know entered full time ministry for the money! They give in many ways too, and we are grateful.

And, the pastors and church staff I know never take for granted the pledge cards we all fill out and all the financial gifts you share at Redeemer.

But stewardship isn’t just about giving, it’s about receiving too. We can dare to be generous because God is generous toward us. Sometimes that generosity comes in surprising ways!

Carol and I and our children have many examples, essentially all of our lives, of the Lord’s blessings and provision. So, a few years ago, at our former church, it was Christmas and we were trying to figure out how we could stretch the money so all 5 children would have nice gifts. One Saturday, the kids were all home and as I brought the mail in, I remember saying “oh, this envelope looks interesting.” When I opened it there were 7 \$100 bills inside! Besides the huge blessing that was, it also showed our children how amazing being a “preachers’ kid” could be! Which just goes to show, acts of generosity usually end up blessing others well into the future.

As you consider your pledge this year, please join me in keeping this truth in mind. Our financial gifts this stewardship year assures that Redeemer will have “A Future with Hope!”

Redeemer Stewardship October 22nd



BY LANNY WILSON

A Future with Hope

Redeemer is blessed to have so many good people who stepped forward to work on our stewardship theme this year..." A Future with Hope". Pastor Katie, Vicar Kelsey, Vicar Brent, Margaret Schlegel, Jim Toomey, Mark Rosland, Deborah Kraus, and Rodney Holmes joined me to pray and talk and laugh and dream together about the future of Redeemer, with hope and with confidence. Thanks to each of you! Also, thanks to Missy Roberts and Galen Banashak for bravely providing the other two temple talks.

If you do a google search of one of our neighboring churches, St. James ELCA (at 5129 Wolf Road in Western Springs), you will see in red letters "closed". That is a permanent notice because St. James held its last worship service there in early September, 2023. They are not alone. About 4,500 Protestant churches closed in 2019, the last year data is available. All is not 'Doom & Gloom' however, according to the research, about 3,000 new churches opened that year. Why do some churches close, others stay open, and still others are being built anew? We don't know, but...

We do know that Redeemer just celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2022; and your stewardship team firmly believes that Redeemer has a future with hope for the next 100 years – and beyond – because of your incredible generosity. **You are good and generous Christians, Redeemer!** In Matthew 6:21 we read "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." You generously give part of your treasure to Redeemer through your tithes and offerings and your pledges; but you give part of your heart and soul here as well! **You are good and generous Christians, Redeemer!**

Linnea and I are members at Redeemer because of you **good and generous Christians**. Redeemer prayed for us and brought us food when our Lauren died, and we did not know how we would survive. Through its mission work, we are proud that Redeemer is caring for Refugees near and far. We have worshiped at many places through our travels, but the Worship and Music here are second to none! Redeemer is educating the young and the not-so-young in Bible-inspired ways. Redeemer is making a Leap of Faith by adding an Associate Pastor, whose name is Kelsey Johnson. How fortunate we are that she is available at this time in our history! Her call here shows an investment in the future of this Church so that we will survive and thrive and be a beacon of Christian Light in a world that is searching for A Future with Hope. **You are good and generous Christians, Redeemer friends.** Thanks be to God!

Music & Worship

BY GRAEME SHIELDS



Recently, I was alerted to a new subtlety of worship. This subtlety is not worrisome or dangerous, but it was a surprise: the chair arms in the chancel (and even the hallway outside the sanctuary) were vibrating last Sunday. This was, of course, due to the thundering of the organ pedals. It reminds me that these marvelous sound waves not only tickle our ears each week but permeate our bodies; they run through our very building. The organ's installation and continued upkeep and improvement over the years is no small feat. In fact, the instrument is about to celebrate its 40th birthday! The dedication we show to this instrument would not be possible without the generous contributions of this congregation.



In addition to Redeemer's organ, the Alleluia Ringers recently received a new octave of handbells. These are not just instruments of musical creation, but instruments of collaboration. By their very design, handbell choirs necessitate teamwork and collegiality, a sympathy and importance of belonging that all of our ringers experience weekly.

Similarly, Festival Choir and Childrens Choir are bonded by rehearsal, but there is so much more at work than their wonderful voices. They are bolstered with expert arrangements, well-written anthems, the weekly support of our section leaders Sal and Erin, the occasional percussion instrument, and even accompaniment by Gargoyle Brass. These elements all contribute to a kind of heightened music making that could not be achieved otherwise.

All of these gifts have found their way into Redeemer's worship only with the continued financial support of the church. What a joy it is to both experience and participate in these gifts each and every week. It would not be possible without our musicians, but it also would not be possible without the each and every contribution from this congregation. Thank you for your continued support!



The Behnke Bequest – A Future with Hope for Redeemer



BY PASTOR KATIE HINES-SHAH



By now you have probably heard the story of the Behnke Bequest, but if this is new to you, a short recap:

Last Spring I received a call from a lawyer in Green Bay, Wisconsin letting Redeemer know we had been named as the recipient of the estate of former member Susan Behnke. Though she had an extensive career, and had worked with a number of Lutheran charities and churches, Susan's health left her isolated and alone at the end of her life. She did not have family, and a guardian appointed by the state found her will after an extensive search. While there were (and are) some legal steps left to be completed, Redeemer will be receiving well over \$3M by early next year.

Over the last few months Redeemer's leadership has been praying for guidance, thinking about Susan, and working out how to best manage her generous gift in light of our mission: To share God's love in an ever-changing world.

Praying for guidance is important. There are many ways we could potentially use this gift. Many of you have already shared some ideas with me or with council members. Some ideas include using money for repairs – like putting on a new roof and fixing the windows of the sanctuary. Some would like capital improvements – like updating the sanctuary or adding solar panels to the church. Others think we should underwrite ministry costs – like helping to fund our new Associate Pastor position. Many have stated Redeemer should be generous – sharing the bequest with charities and churches Susan supported during her life as well as Redeemer's current mission partners. Ideas about using the money to support youth or reach out to those who do not currently have a church have also been shared. We'd love to hear even more ideas! **We will have two adult forums on November 5th and 12th at 9:45 to learn more about the bequest and to hear from each other.** The council will use this information to help set priorities going forward.

I've also been thinking about Susan. We don't know much about her – she seems to have been a private person, even though she was successful in business and savvy in investing. I am struck by the fact that of all the charities she was involved with, she chose to leave her money to Redeemer. I wonder if Susan knew that Redeemer is successful and savvy enough to manage this gift well without letting it affect our stewardship. **God did not give us this gift so that we could stop being generous. Each of us has the opportunity and responsibility to give.** I think that's what Susan would have wanted.

Redeemer's leadership is working on plans to receive this gift well. An Investment Committee made up of Dave Mahon, Erik Held, Deborah Boling, and Joe Kinahan has been interviewing investment groups that can help Redeemer more actively put our money to work for us. They have suggested a bylaw change (see the previous newsletter) to ensure we can use the gift in a variety of ways. Redeemer's leadership knows, the purpose of the church is not to be a bank – but we think this is the right step in fulfilling our duty to carefully manage our gifts to that they can provide for ministry long into the future. **God has given us this gift to steward, and we plan to do that well. Redeemer's leadership hopes by demonstrating our readiness to receive such gifts others may plan on making a gift to Redeemer in their wills.** If you would like to know more about the process of including Redeemer in your will, please contact our Financial Secretary, Debra Kraus.

Susan Behnke's bequest affords Redeemer an amazing opportunity. Through prayerful discernment, thoughtful giving, and careful plans, Susan's gift will provide a new avenue for a Future with Hope right here at Redeemer. Thank you for your help in this process.

And thanks be to God!

Healthy Spiritual Journey

BY LANNY WILSON



A FUTURE WITH HOPE

Jeremiah is a major prophet in the Hebrew Bible; but his writings also hold a place of importance for Christians and Muslims today. About 2,600 years ago, the prophet Jeremiah used the words of the Lord to predict a future with hope. With that hopeful thought in mind, and believing that ‘The Lord helps those who help themselves’, I have been thinking about the concept of a future with hope.

Certainly, those of us who believe in an everlasting paradise, the place many call heaven, envision a future with hope in that space and time. However, very few want to wait until the afterlife to experience a hopeful, joyful life; and I don’t believe that the Lord meant for us to wait until then either. Everything comes from God: free-will and all that exists on this earth are expressions of God’s love for humanity. Using our free-will, we can be fruitful and help God co-create. This is best done if we take what has been given to us and use it in the service of others, of creation, and of life itself.



For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

- Jeremiah 29:11

In ‘The Lord’s Prayer’, we pray “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” This is challenging since some are born into a life of poverty while others are born into wealth. Also, it is a mystery why some are born healthy and others are born with disabilities; and many have had to endure tragedies while others are seemingly spared. This diversity of riches, poverty, sadness, and joy is beyond any simple explanation; yet, we have the following truisms with which to work:

- “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required...”- Luke 12:48b
- We should care for others the way we want to be cared for. – The Golden Rule
- It’s good to be blessed. It’s better to be a blessing. – Unknown
- People with a purpose, or a ‘why’, can do great things and bear with almost any ‘how’.



The purpose of the faith-based hospital where I work is to extend the healing ministry of Christ. The purpose of the church where I worship is united in Christ, we share God's love in an ever-changing world. I believe in those missions; and so, am motivated to give time, talent, and treasure (in collaboration with them) to help bring a future with hope for many. I trust those places of work and worship to steward my resources for the good of humanity. Giving to those places is an act of faith, hope, and love for God and God's people. Both have been in the business of welcoming, healing, praying, holding the hands of those in need, and sharing God's love in this ever-changing world for more than one hundred years.

As we continue our healthy spiritual journey, let us help provide a future with hope, for ourselves and for those with whom we journey. When we add our time, talent, and treasures to others whose purpose is in harmony with our own, we multiply our ability to provide a future with hope and to live out the words of 'The Lord's Prayer': "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

In God's love,
Lanny F. Wilson, MD

